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الجمهورية المغربية  
Kingdom of Morocco

وزارة إعداد التراب الوطني والتعمير والإسكان وسياسة المدينة  
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Ministry of National Territory Planning, Land Planning,  
Housing and City Policy



UN-HABITAT

## EVENT REPORT

### Third Arab Land Conference

Troisième Conférence Arabe sur le Foncier

### المؤتمر العربي الثالث للأراضي

18-20 FEBRUARY 2025 • RABAT, MOROCCO



Final Draft



Netherlands Enterprise Agency



Federal Ministry  
for Economic Cooperation  
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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

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<b>AI</b>	Artificial Intelligence
<b>ANCFCC</b>	National Agency for Land Registry, Cadastre and Cartography, Morocco
<b>AoR</b>	Area of Responsibility
<b>CAMA</b>	Computer-Assisted Mass Appraisal
<b>CCFGF</b>	City Climate Finance Gap Fund
<b>COP</b>	Conference of the Parties
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
<b>FELA</b>	Framework for Effective Land Administration
<b>FIG</b>	International Federation of Surveyors
<b>FFP</b>	Fit for Purpose
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GeoAI</b>	Geospatial Artificial Intelligence
<b>GIS</b>	Geographic Information Systems
<b>GIZ</b>	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
<b>GLTN</b>	Global Land Tool Network
<b>GOPP</b>	General Organization for Physical Planning
<b>HDP</b>	Humanitarian-Development-Peace
<b>HLP</b>	Housing, Land and Property
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person
<b>IGIF</b>	Integrated Geospatial Information Framework
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>ILC</b>	International Land Coalition
<b>ISIS</b>	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant / Daesh
<b>KM</b>	Knowledge Management
<b>KSA</b>	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
<b>KPI</b>	Key Performance Indicator
<b>LADM</b>	Land Administration Domain Model
<b>LGAF</b>	Land Governance Assessment Framework
<b>LAS</b>	Land-at-Scale / League of Arab States
<b>LRC</b>	Land Research Centre, Palestine

<b>LVC</b>	Land Value Capture
<b>MENA</b>	Middle East and North Africa
<b>MPC</b>	Multi-Purpose Cadastre
<b>NAP</b>	National Action Plan
<b>NBSAP</b>	National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan
<b>NELGA</b>	Network of Excellence on Land Governance in Africa
<b>NENA</b>	Near East and North Africa
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NLC</b>	National Land Coalition
<b>NRC</b>	Norwegian Refugee Council
<b>NSDI</b>	National Spatial Data Infrastructure
<b>ONIGT</b>	Ordre National des Ingénieurs Géomètres Topographes
<b>PILaR</b>	Participatory and Inclusive Land Readjustment
<b>RVO</b>	Netherlands Enterprise Agency
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SECO</b>	State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, Government of Switzerland
<b>STDM</b>	Social Tenure Domain Model
<b>TOD</b>	Transit-Oriented Development
<b>UAE</b>	United Arab Emirates
<b>UDF</b>	Urban Development Fund
<b>UNESCWA</b>	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
<b>UNCBD</b>	United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
<b>UNCCD</b>	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
<b>UNECA</b>	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>UNGGIM</b>	United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management
<b>UNRWA</b>	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
<b>USD</b>	United States Dollar
<b>VGGT</b>	Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure

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# Executive Summary

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*Figure 1: Participants of the Third Arab Land Conference. Group Photo.*

The Third Arab Land Conference, held from 18 to 20 February 2025 in Rabat, Morocco, hosted by the Government of Morocco and jointly organized by the Ministry of National Territory and Urban Planning, Housing and City Policy, UN-Habitat, the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) and the Arab Land Initiative, marked a pivotal moment in advancing sound land governance across the Arab region. The event was organized in close collaboration with a diverse group of international and regional partners, including the League of Arab States (LAS), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), the Land Portal, the International Land Coalition (ILC), the World Bank and key Moroccan stakeholders from the land sector.

Serving as a strategic platform, the Conference facilitated the exchange of country experiences, the presentation of new research and discussions on policy directions, all aimed at informing land-related investments and reinforcing political commitment to sectoral reform. It also fostered the exchange of knowledge on best practices and innovations, helped build institutional and technical capacity and to enhanced collaboration among land sector stakeholders in the Arab world. Sessions focused on the multifaceted role of land governance in fostering social equity, environmental sustainability, economic development and peace in the region, with an emphasis on developing investment-driven and inclusive policy solutions that are responsive to the complex land challenges faced by Arab states, including post-conflict reconstruction, displacement, rapid urbanization and climate-related pressures.



The event convened over 430 participants on-site in Rabat, alongside more than 7,000 online attendees, reflecting a high level of engagement from a wide range of stakeholders. Among the participants were 44 government representatives from 12 Arab countries – namely Morocco, Palestine, Somalia, Yemen, Iraq, Comoros, Libya, Sudan, Mauritania, Egypt, Lebanon and Oman. The diversity of attendees, including policymakers, technical experts, civil society representatives, academics and development partners, underscored the inclusive and multi-stakeholder nature of the discussions.

The Conference featured a total of 36 sessions, including three High-Level Sessions, six Technical Sessions, 23 Partner-led sessions, two Assemblies and two High-Level Roundtables, in addition to the Opening and Closing sessions.

The **Opening Session** underscored the urgent need for inclusive, transparent and sustainable land governance across the Arab region to address climate challenges, urbanization, legal uncertainties, and social inequities, while highlighting the critical role of regional cooperation, institutional reform, and digital innovation in promoting equitable access to land, housing, and long-term development.

### **Land Management in Conflict and Crisis**

Four sessions explored the theme of land management in conflict and crisis. This included the **High-Level Session: Land Management in Time of Crisis**, during which experts and government representatives underscored that conflict, climate change and weak governance have severely undermined

land rights and sustainable development in the Arab region, and highlighted the urgent need for secure land tenure, legal and institutional reforms, digital land systems and coordinated peacebuilding efforts to support displaced populations and build climate-resilient, inclusive recovery. The **Technical Session: Housing, Land and Property Solutions for Displacement and Crisis** emphasized that securing HLP rights in conflict and displacement contexts is essential for recovery, peacebuilding and sustainable development, with speakers calling for legal reforms, digital tools, inclusive planning and community-led approaches to protect vulnerable populations and rebuild trust in fragile settings. The Conference also hosted the **Launch of Pinheiro Principles Handbook for the MENA Region – Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons: Implementing the Pinheiro Principles in the Middle East and North Africa**, marking 20 years of the Pinheiro Principles, where speakers emphasized the critical role of HLP restitution in post-conflict recovery as well as practical tools and legal frameworks to secure rights for displaced populations and support long-term peace and stability. A session on **Crisis, Displacement and Housing, Land and Property Solutions in Lebanon** highlighted Lebanon's ongoing displacement and housing crises, which is exacerbated by conflict, economic instability and the 2020 Beirut explosion and emphasized the urgent need for legal reforms, use of vacant buildings and inclusive housing strategies to secure tenure and address the needs of displaced and vulnerable populations.

## Women and Land

Women's role in land governance was another key theme of the Conference, with four sessions dedicated to the topic. The **High-Level Session: Women and Land** underscored that securing women's land and housing rights across the Arab region, especially during conflict and crisis, is essential for economic empowerment, social stability and inclusive recovery, with legal reforms, awareness-raising and gender-responsive land governance identified as key strategies. The Conference also featured the **Technical Session: Women and Land**, during which speakers highlighted that securing both legal access and full control and use of land for women across the region is essential for gender equity, economic resilience and inclusive development, requiring legal reform, institutional capacity building and targeted support in agriculture, housing and entrepreneurship. **Advancing Women's Tenure Security in the MENA Region: Reporting, Data and Initiatives to Close the Gap** emphasized that closing the gender gap in land rights across the MENA region requires data-driven, legally grounded and socially inclusive reforms, linking SDG indicators with community action, legal enforcement and institutional transformation to secure women's access, ownership and control over land. The session **Progress in Securing Women's Land Rights in Morocco and the Arab Region: The Contribution of Land Surveyors** underscored that advancing women's land rights in the Arab region requires culturally grounded legal reforms, inclusive interpretations of Islamic law and strengthened institutional and community

engagement to overcome socio-cultural, administrative and financial barriers to secure land tenure.

## Food Security and Climate

Three Conference sessions discussed food security and climate. **Lessons Learnt on Biodiversity and Drought Resilience: UNCBD & UNCCD** emphasized that secure land tenure is essential for addressing climate change and biodiversity loss in the Arab region and highlighted the urgent need to integrate tenure rights into global environmental frameworks, particularly UNCBD and UNCCD, through inclusive, data-driven and rights-based approaches. The session **Preserving Agricultural Land from Urbanization: A Global Challenge for Sustainable Development** underscored the urgent need to protect agricultural land in Arab countries from unchecked urbanization by promoting coordinated planning, sustainable land management and technological innovation to safeguard food security, ecosystems and rural livelihoods. The Conference also featured the **Technical Session: Land for Food Security and Climate Action**, which underscored the central role of equitable and context-sensitive land governance in advancing food security and climate resilience across the Arab region, and the need for integrated approaches that combine innovative water resource management, participatory urban greening, tribal land rights protection and strengthened civil society engagement to support effective policy reform and sustainable development.

## Land-based Financing

Land-based financing was the theme of three sessions, including **Investment Pathways for**

**Ecosystem Restoration in the Near East and North Africa**, which stressed the need for a regionally coordinated, community-driven restoration agenda that addresses land tenure challenges, mobilizes sustainable investment and integrates ecosystem restoration with national development goals by scaling up innovative land and water management practices to combat escalating environmental degradation and socio-economic vulnerability. The **Technical Session: Land-based Financing and Land Valuation Solutions** emphasized land value capture as a critical but underutilized tool for financing sustainable urban development in the MENA region, emphasizing the need for legal reform, institutional capacity building and inclusive, climate-aligned planning to unlock land-based finance, including through the integration of transit-oriented development and digital land management systems in contexts with weak land governance. **Capturing Urbanization Values through Land-use Planning and Land Management in Egypt** highlighted Egypt's integrated approach to urban regeneration, demonstrating how participatory land-use planning, land value capture and land readjustment can serve as effective tools for mobilizing finance, reducing urban inequality and supporting inclusive, self-financed development aligned with the SDGs.

### **Land Sector Innovation**

Two key sessions looked at land sector innovation, including the **High-Level Session: Land Sector Innovation for Sustainable Investments and Housing**, highlighted how digital innovations such as GIS, 3D cadastres and AI are transforming land management across the MENA region by enhancing

transparency, tenure security and investment potential, and emphasized the need to align technological reforms with inclusive legal frameworks, community engagement and safeguards against marginalization to ensure socially just and sustainable land governance. The **Technical Session: Innovative Solutions for Land Management and Property Registration** underscored the role of secure land and property rights in driving socio-economic development in the Arab region, and the need for integrated legal, institutional and technological reforms such as fit-for-purpose land administration, digital land systems and spatial planning.

### **Knowledge and Information**

Knowledge and information in land governance was explored in five partner-led sessions at the Conference. **Cross-country Knowledge Exchange in Land Governance Projects** emphasized that effective knowledge management is essential for scaling sustainable land governance solutions, enabling cross-country learning, institutional adaptation and long-term impact through structured knowledge exchange, participatory approaches and integration into education, policy and practice. A session on **Data Collaboratives and Tools for Resilience in the Arab Region** highlighted the role of collaborative, transparent and people-centered land data platforms in addressing challenges like climate change and inequality in the Arab region and stressed the need to overcome fragmented data systems through legal reforms, institutional partnerships and capacity building to enable inclusive, evidence-based land governance. **Addressing Land Governance Challenges: Launch of the**

**Arab World Academic Network of Excellence** launched a new regional academic network for land governance with the aim of strengthening regional collaboration, developing harmonized academic programs and building research and technical capacity to address land governance challenges through practical, locally rooted education and partnerships. **Strengthening the Capacity Building for Scientific Production and Dissemination to Support Sustainable Development Strategies in the Arab World** emphasized building regional capacity for land governance knowledge through stronger partnerships, coordinated research and the establishment of a unified scientific platform to advance relevant, collaborative and well-funded land management research in the Arab world. A session on the **Role of Land Professionals in the Arab States: Advancing Trust and Effective Land Governance** stressed that building trust and accountability through well-organized, ethically grounded land professional networks is essential for effective land governance in the Arab region, requiring stronger recognition, capacity building and enhanced collaboration between professionals, authorities and communities.

### **Technology-driven Data Collection**

Three partner-led sessions dealt with the theme of technology-driven data collection for land governance. **From Data to Decisions through AI-Powered Geospatial Solutions: Integrating National Spatial Data Infrastructure for Effective Land and Asset Management** highlighted Egypt's use of geospatial data and a National Spatial Data Infrastructure to enhance land governance, urban and rural development and sustainable

resource management through advanced mapping, property registration and AI-driven monitoring systems. The Conference also featured a **Master Class on Integrated Geospatial Information Framework and Land Administration**, which introduced the UN's Effective Land Administration Framework (FELA) and Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (UN-IGIF) as harmonized tools to guide countries in developing geospatial land administration systems that support socio-economic development, emphasizing the need for regional capacity-building and multi-stakeholder collaboration in the Arab region. **From Fit-For-Purpose to GeoAI: The Cadastral Modernization Journey** session highlighted how integrating Multi-Purpose Cadastres and Geospatial AI into National Spatial Data Infrastructures can enhance land management, decision-making and sustainable planning, and stressed the need for institutionalizing fit-for-purpose methodologies, modernizing cadastral data and investing in coordinated, cost-effective geospatial solutions.

### **Land for Housing and Development**

The theme of land for housing and development featured in six partner-led sessions, including **Land as the Basis for Inclusive and Resilient Territorial Development**, which highlighted Morocco's innovative and collaborative approaches to sustainable urban and territorial development, including strategic planning, legal reforms, technological integration and vertical urbanization as adaptable models for the Arab region to address challenges of rapid urbanization, land governance and ecological sustainability. **Mobilizing Land Resources for**

**Rural Development** focused on Morocco's land mobilization policy, which transforms collective rural lands into legally secure assets in order to attract investment and drive socio-economic development through coordinated legal, institutional and environmental reforms under the Green Morocco Plan. A session on **Land Registration and Cadastre at the Service of National Land Governance ANCFCC** featured Morocco's land registration and cadastre system, which is being modernized through legal reform, digital transformation and expanded coverage to enhance property security, promote investment and support inclusive and efficient land governance across rural and urban areas. **Multi-purpose Land Consolidation for Inclusive Rural Transformation in the Arab Region** examined the potential of multi-purpose land consolidation as a tool for improving land governance and rural development in the Arab region, highlighting its role in addressing fragmentation, enhancing tenure security and promoting climate resilience through inclusive and gender-sensitive approaches. The session **Land for Housing and Slum Transformation** explored innovative, inclusive land governance and urban planning strategies that integrate digital tools, migration-informed approaches and youth engagement, to address housing challenges, informal settlements and climate resilience in the rapidly urbanizing Arab region. **Land for Housing and Territorial Development** examined the challenges and opportunities of land mobilization and governance to support sustainable housing and territorial development in Morocco, emphasizing the need for legal and institutional reform,

integrated regional planning and public-private collaboration.

In addition to the thematic sessions, the Conference featured two high-level roundtables and two assemblies. The **Ministerial Roundtable** focused on modernizing land and property registration systems in the Arab region through digitalization, capacity-building, public-private partnerships and regional cooperation, with an emphasis on enhancing tenure security, sustainable land use and data-driven investment planning. The **Roundtable: Heads of Land and Property Registration Offices** showcased digital innovations in land governance from Jordan and Palestine, emphasizing the role of e-cadasters, data systems and dispute resolution in improving transparency, efficiency and investment, while highlighting the need for regional collaboration and capacity building in the Arab region. The **Civil Society Assembly** highlighted the vital role of civil society in promoting people-centered land governance in the MENA region and showed how National Land Coalitions in Jordan and Palestine are advancing inclusive, rights-based approaches to land management amid climate challenges and political constraints. The **Youth and Land Assembly** emphasized the critical role of youth in land governance and urban resilience in the Arab region, highlighting the need for inclusive, culturally grounded approaches that empower young people through secure housing, land and property rights, leadership opportunities and meaningful participation in policymaking.

The **Closing Session** celebrated the collaborative achievements of the Third Arab

Land Conference and introduced the Morocco Declaration, a shared commitment by regional and international stakeholders to advance inclusive, climate-resilient and gender-equitable land governance in the Arab region through concrete actions and continued cooperation. A notable outcome of the Conference was the commitment expressed

by key regional organizations, including LAS, UNESCWA and UNECA, to integrate the Conference outcomes into their ongoing intergovernmental processes. These endorsements lend momentum to regional efforts to harmonize land policies, strengthen legal frameworks and enhance cooperation among Arab states on land governance issues.

# Introduction

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The Third Arab Land Conference, held from 18-20 February 2025 in Rabat, Morocco, marked an important milestone for the region in advancing good land governance for the achievement of social, economic, environmental and peace dividends in the Arab region. The Conference was hosted by the Government of Morocco, and organized by the Ministry of National Territory and Urban Planning, Housing, and City Policy, UN-Habitat, the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN), and the Arab Land Initiative, in partnership with the League of Arab States, UNESCWA, UNECA, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), the Land Portal, the International Land Coalition, the World Bank and Morocco land sector stakeholders. It aimed to share knowledge on good practices and innovations, develop capacities and promote collaboration and coordination among land stakeholders in the Arab region. The Conference also provided an important platform to discuss country experiences, present new research, guide and inform investments and foster high-level commitment to improving the land sector.

Over three intensive days, the Conference brought together a diverse group of policymakers, experts and practitioners, providing a vibrant platform for knowledge exchange and collaborative problem-solving to strengthen land governance frameworks in different contexts across the region. The

Conference was attended by 430 participants in Rabat, including 44 government representatives from 12 countries (Morocco, Palestine, Somalia, Yemen, Iraq, Comoros, Libya, Sudan, Mauritania, Egypt, Lebanon, Oman), with 7023 participating online. Attendees engaged in meaningful discussions on sustainable land governance, investment-driven solutions and inclusive policies to foster stability, economic growth and social equity.



*Figure 2: Opening remarks by Ms. Sukaina Al Nasrawi, Lead of Sustainable Urban Development Portfolio, UNESCWA.*

The Conference featured participation and contributions from the League of Arab States (LAS), UNECA and UNESCWA, all of which committed to incorporate the Conference outcomes into their intergovernmental processes. It also hosted high-level meetings, including a Ministerial Roundtable, organized with LAS, and a Roundtable of the Heads of Land and Property Registration Offices.

Through the Conference, the Arab Land Initiative reconvened the land professional community under the leadership of the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG), launched the Arab Academic Excellence Network for Land Governance and brought civil society perspectives into the discussions through a partnership with the International Land Coalition.

The Conference featured a total of 36 sessions on a range of land-related themes important to the Arab region, in addition to the Opening and Closing sessions. Three **High-Level Sessions** focused on (1) Land sector innovation for sustainable investments and housing, (2) Land management in time of crisis and (3) Women and Land.

Six **Technical Sessions**, organized by UN-Habitat, GLTN and the Arab Land Initiative, were (1) Innovative Solutions for Land Management and Property Registration, (2) Women and Land, (3) Housing, Land and Property Solutions for Displacement and Crisis, (4) Land-based Financing and Land Valuation Solutions, (5) Land for Food Security and Climate Action and (6) Land for Housing and Slum Transformation.

**Partners-led Sessions** held at the Conference were (1) Investment Pathways for Ecosystem Restoration in the Near East and North Africa Region, (2) Land as the Basis for Inclusive and Resilient Territorial Development, (3) Lessons Learnt on Biodiversity and Drought Resilience: UNCBD & UNCCD COPs' Outcomes, (4) From Data to Decisions through AI-Powered Geospatial Solutions: Integrating National Spatial Data Infrastructure for Effective Land and Asset Management, (5) Cross-country

Knowledge Exchange in Land Governance Projects, (6) Master Class on Integrated Geospatial Information Framework and Land Administration, (7) Mobilizing Land Resources for Rural Development, (8) Advancing Women's Tenure Security in the MENA Region: Reporting, Data and Initiatives to Close the Gap, (9) Capturing Urbanization Values Through Land-Use Planning and Land Management in Egypt, (10) Data Collaboratives and Tools for Resilience in the Arab Region, (11) Land Registration and Cadastre at the Service of National Land Governance ANCFCC, (12) Preserving Agricultural Land from Urbanization: A Global Challenge for Sustainable Development, (13) Multi-purpose Land Consolidation for Inclusive Rural Transformation in the Arab Region, (14) Addressing Land Governance Challenges: Launch of the Arab World Academic Network of Excellence, (15) From Fit-For-Purpose to GeoAI: The Cadastral Modernization Journey, (16) Strengthening the Capacity Building for Scientific Production and Dissemination to Support Sustainable Development Strategies in the Arab World, (17) Housing, Land and Property Rights Solutions in Post-Conflict Iraq: Gender Equity and E-land Governance, (18) Launch of Pinheiro Principles Handbook for the MENA Region – Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons: Implementing the Pinheiro Principles in the Middle East and North Africa, (19) The Role of Land Professionals in the Arab States: Advancing Trust and Effective Land Governance, (20) Land for Housing and Territorial Development, (21) Progress in Securing Women's Land Rights in Morocco and the Arab Region: The Contribution of



Land Surveyors, (22) Crisis, Displacement and Housing, Land and Property Solutions in Lebanon and (23) Restoring Housing, Land and Property for Displaced Communities: Syria, Yemen and Beyond.



Figure 3: Participants in the Third Arab Land Conference.

There were also two **assemblies**: (1) the Civil Society Assembly and (2) the Youth and Land Assembly, and two **High-Level Roundtables**: (1) the Ministerial Roundtable and (2) Roundtable: Heads of Land and Property Registration Offices.

This report contains summaries of each session, grouping the high-level, technical and partner-led sessions into eight themes: Land Management in Conflict and Crisis, Women and Land, Food Security and Climate, Land-based Financing, Land Sector Innovation, Knowledge and Information, Technology-driven Data Collection and Land for Housing and Development. Summaries of the Opening and Closing Sessions, Civil Society Assembly,

Youth and Land Assembly, Ministerial Roundtable and Roundtable: Heads of Land and Property Registration Offices are also contained in this report.

The Conference culminated in the adoption of the [Morocco Declaration for Land Governance](#), aimed at strengthening land governance frameworks and fostering sustainable development in the Arab states. The Morocco Declaration outlines a series of targeted reforms, including the digitalization of land records, the implementation of streamlined regulatory frameworks and policies to secure land tenure for vulnerable groups, especially women, youth and marginalized communities. It is a call to action for land sector stakeholders in the Arab world, aiming to transform land governance and housing through stronger regional partnerships and technological innovations. The Morocco Declaration serves as a roadmap for future initiatives in the region, reflecting a pragmatic approach that acknowledges both the challenges ahead and the steps needed for resilient, inclusive land governance systems.

The [Arab Land Initiative website](#) provides access to all materials from the Conference through its [e-library](#), which includes the papers and presentations prepared for the event, as well as supplementary publications submitted by participating experts and organizations.

# Opening Session

**Organizer:** UN-Habitat and Kingdom of Morocco

**Chair:** Fikrqt Abdeluahed, Ministry of National Territory Planning, Urban planning, Housing, and the City Policy, Morocco

**Speakers:** Mr. Mahmoud Fathallah, Director of the Department of Housing, Water Resources, and Disaster Reduction, League of Arab States; Mr. Sebastian Wilde, Head of Cooperation, German Embassy; Mr. Elim Mohamud Nor, Minister of Public Works, Reconstruction and Housing, Somalia; Ms. Joan Kagwanja, Chief, Land and Agricultural Transformation (LAT) and Coordinator for the African Land Policy Center (ALPC); Ms. Sukaina Al Nasrawi, Lead of Sustainable Urban Development Portfolio, UNESCWA; Ms. Rania Hedeya, Regional Director, Regional Office Arab States UN-Habitat; Mr. Elim Mohamud Nor, Minister of Public Works, Reconstruction and Housing



Figure 4: Opening remarks by Mr. Mahmoud Fathallah, Director of the Department of Housing, Water Resources, and Disaster Reduction, League of Arab States.

## Introduction

During the opening session of the Third Arab Land Conference, ministers from across the Arab region addressed the urgent need for robust land governance and sustainable management solutions. They highlighted the

challenges posed by climate change, resource scarcity and conflicts, and demonstrated how inclusive policies and equitable access to land and housing foster social stability and economic growth. This inaugural discussion set the tone for the conference, emphasizing

the critical importance of cooperation among governments, civil society and international partners to ensure long-term resilience and prosperity in the Arab region.

### Summary

Speakers addressed the central role of land in sustainable development, emphasizing its critical importance for economic growth, the ability to attract investment and the fulfillment of current and future societal needs. Land serves social, economic and environmental functions, directly influencing urban planning, access to housing, food security, climate change resilience and resource management. Effective land governance supports social peace, agricultural productivity and the conservation of natural resources. Sound urban planning coordination is essential to prevent uncontrolled land expansion and urban sprawl, which undermine effective land use. Policies must be tailored to individual country contexts, balancing historical and cultural backgrounds with the need for legal and institutional reforms to enhance investment and sustainable land use.

Rapid urbanization and population growth pose significant challenges. In Morocco, 60 percent of the population is already urban, a figure expected to rise further by 2050, in line with global trends projecting a predominantly urban world population. This shift necessitates sustainable urban planning to accommodate expanding urban populations. Unplanned urban expansion has resulted in the spread of informal settlements, especially in areas affected by conflict and displacement, and in the degradation of agricultural land.

The growing urban footprint also encroaches on fertile lands, threatening food security.

Addressing the housing needs of low- and middle-income populations requires targeted policies and financial support, such as assistance for first-time buyers. High land and housing prices continue to be barriers, especially for women and youth, while informal settlements persist due to weak governance and inadequate legal frameworks.



Figure 5: Opening remarks by Ms. Rania Hedeya, Regional Director, Regional Office Arab States UN-Habitat.

Environmental challenges, including climate change, desertification and water scarcity, further strain land management. Land degradation reduces agricultural productivity and undermines food security, while climate change accelerates this degradation through increasing desertification, drought and extreme weather. These environmental pressures complicate the already fragile balance of land use and planning in many parts of the region.

Land tenure insecurity exacerbates socio-economic instability. Regional conflicts disrupt infrastructure, displace communities



and erode social cohesion. The overlap of traditional customary land practices with single ownership systems introduced during the colonial period has created legal uncertainties and grey areas that undermine land rights. A lack of transparency and legal clarity in land ownership contributes to vulnerability, evictions, displacement and conflict. Legal and institutional reforms are urgently needed to clarify land rights, secure tenure and promote fair land administration. Gaps in governance and institutional capacity, including outdated legal frameworks, weak enforcement and limited administrative capabilities, hinder effective land and housing policy implementation. Inequitable land distribution reinforces socio-economic disparities and obstructs inclusive growth.



Figure 6: Opening remarks by Mr. Sebastian Wilde, Head of Cooperation, German Embassy.

Women, youth and Indigenous groups face disproportionately high barriers to accessing land, financial services and economic opportunities. Legal reforms must prioritize gender equality and youth empowerment. Institutional capacity building should aim to

improve land management practices, promote fair land distribution and ensure inclusive access. Strengthening the role of institutions is essential to addressing inequities and supporting sustainable development outcomes.

Several regional and international platforms were highlighted as key to advancing land governance and sustainable development. These include UNECA's African Land Policy Conference and African Urban Forum, the Conference on Land Policy in Africa and UNESCWA's initiatives supporting regional cooperation and Sustainable Development Goal implementation in urban planning. The Arab League's Sustainable Development Strategy (2016) promotes inter-Arab collaboration, while the Arab Leaders Academy (initiated in 2024) focuses on enhancing land governance decision-making capacities. Additionally, the Arab Academic Excellence Network for Land Governance, launched by UN-Habitat during the Conference, aims to promote knowledge exchange and support young professionals and researchers. Opportunities for sharing best practices and building institutional capacities remain vital for fostering effective and inclusive land governance across the region.

## Recommendations

Strengthening land governance requires developing flexible and efficient legal frameworks to regulate land markets. Transparency and accountability in land transactions can be enhanced through digitalization and modern technologies. Policies must promote equitable access to

land, particularly for women, youth and marginalized groups.

Capacity building and knowledge exchange are essential. Investments in training programs can build the technical skills of land administration officials. Regional collaboration through platforms for sharing best practices and supporting academic research will guide informed policy-making. Promoting sustainable urban development calls for integrated urban-rural strategies to balance growth with environmental protection. Nature-based solutions and green technologies should mitigate climate impacts

and enhance resilience. Public-private partnerships can drive sustainable investment in housing and infrastructure. Awareness campaigns can educate communities about land rights and the importance of sustainable practices. Regional and international cooperation is necessary to address common challenges.

Technology can improve land governance, increase transparency and facilitate evidence-based policymaking. Examples include urban data analysis, digital land cadastres and satellite monitoring.

## Land Management in Conflict and Crisis

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### High-Level Session: Land Management in time of crisis

**Organizer:** UN-Habitat

**Chair:** Ms. Nihal Elmegharbel, Senator, Member of the Housing, Local Administration, and Transportation, Egyptian Senates

**Speakers:** Dr. Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, Chair, Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic; Mr. Badr Al-Deen Al-Toumi, Minister of Local Government, Libya; Mr. Elim Mohamud Nor, Minister of Public Works, Reconstruction and Housing, Somalia; Mr. Waleed Radman Amer, Deputy Minister of Public Works and Infrastructures, Yemen; Mr. Alaa Tamimi, Head of the Palestinian Land Authority; Mr. Ahmed Luaebi, Director General of Judicial Relations, Iraq

#### Introduction

The session highlighted the Arab region's growing challenges, including climate change, water scarcity, land degradation and rapid urbanization. By 2030, renewable water resources may drop by 20 per cent due to rising temperatures and saltwater intrusion.

Desertification and poor land management are threatening food security and the livelihoods of rural populations. Violent conflicts have displaced over 15 million people and left 50 million in need of humanitarian aid. While not the sole cause of conflict, poor land governance exacerbates instability. Equitable land distribution, legal

land rights, adequate housing and effective land administration were emphasized as key tools for peacebuilding and sustainable development. The session also addressed urban pressures, with nearly 60 per cent of the population living in cities and over 82 million in informal settlements. Combined with macroeconomic instability and limited investment, this situation increases vulnerability and weakens the region's capacity to manage sustainable urban growth.



Figure 7: High-Level Panel Discussion: Land Management in Time of Crisis.

## Summary

Speakers highlighted a number of land-related challenges in the Arab region resulting from crisis. Across the region, conflict, climate change and weak governance have led to displacement, social instability and economic decline, as well as weak land management. Countries are dealing with large population movements that require land for displaced populations, as well as land management and planning for forced evictions, returns, restitution, internal displacement and the settlement of refugees. Crises often result in large scale migration to urban areas, cities and to other rural areas, putting more pressure on

urban areas and raising the price of land for migrants as well as host communities.

In Iraq, post-ISIS land restitution is hampered by the destruction of property records. Unregistered land also presents missed financial opportunities for taxes and revenue. In Syria, the lack of housing, land and property (HLP) rights, climate change and poor land management fuels conflict which has resulted in the displacement of 50 million people. Forced evictions have altered village demographics, and widows and orphans face significant barriers to claiming HLP rights. Yemen's prolonged war has resulted in land insecurity, food shortages and slum growth, worsened by a lack of land registration and reliable statistics.

In Palestine, most of the population of the Gaza Strip has been forcibly displaced by Israeli attacks, and the majority of housing and infrastructure has been destroyed or severely damaged. Land in both Gaza and the West Bank is impacted by foreign occupation and land appropriation. Israeli land restrictions, including 900 iron gates, have severely disrupted access to land. Large-scale bombardments and environmental damage have polluted Gaza's Mediterranean coast, compounding climate-related challenges. Destruction and loss of land records and data further complicates land governance efforts, however 80 per cent of land records in Palestine have been digitally archived.

Governments during and after conflict also have lower budgets available for land administration and management projects. If land is not registered it is very hard to get funding from banks and investors. Conflicts

over the authority to rule and control the land leads to a lack of rule of law and regulations. Laws and regulations reflect doctrines of government, so when governments change, land laws change, and this can have huge impact on the land management system.

Somalia faces climate-driven rural-to-urban migration due to floods and droughts, straining urban housing and infrastructure. A lack of government regulations and reforms exacerbates these pressures. Climate change poses unpredictable threats to communities in Libya, and outdated land-use plans hinder effective disaster response and urban development. In Yemen, changes in temperature and precipitation are damaging agricultural infrastructure. Development is stagnating, and the country faces significant setbacks in progress due to ongoing crises. Morocco has demonstrated effective land use planning in the face of climate change through large-scale infrastructure projects.

Countries such as Yemen, Iraq and Somalia lack updated land registration systems, delaying restitution and recovery. Libya's lack of structured land policies has resulted in outdated planning and ongoing disputes. Iraq is advancing digital land registration, but implementation remains a challenge.

## **Recommendations**

*Strengthen land governance and HLP rights:* Address HLP rights as a way to prevent conflict; if HLP is not addressed in conflict settings it can lead to protracted conflict. Conflict analysis and peacebuilding must include HLP to prevent, mitigate and support recovery from conflict to peace. HLP rights should be incorporated into transitional

justice to facilitate land restitution post-conflict. Address the root causes of conflicts and ensure restitution and compensation, which are integral to the humanitarian-development-peace (HPD) nexus and should be central to peacebuilding efforts, paired with accountability and HLP framework reforms. Develop compensation and resettlement procedures, including regarding secondary occupants. Stop international financing of genocide, and suspend sanctions on Syria to show solidarity and allow recovery

*Implement the Pinheiro Principles related to land,* including: land restitution, compensation and restorative justice; protection of citizens from unlawful loss of HLP rights; the establishment of the rule of law in conflict settings; reform land and housing frameworks; state protection for the HLP rights of women, wives, widows and daughters.

*Implement legal reforms in countries recovering from conflict,* ensuring secure land tenure, particularly for women. Improve land data collection and registration to strengthen land governance. Land ownership needs to be registered and documented to support displaced populations, and should be prioritized before crises occur, especially in hazard-prone areas. Open new land administration offices in liberated areas and create online platforms for displaced users to access information easily.

*Develop climate-resilient infrastructure* in remote, vulnerable areas to mitigate climate-driven displacement. Ensure reconstruction efforts in climate-affected regions adhere to

land-use regulations. Promote proactive land-use planning, following Morocco's example.

*Expand digital land administration* to improve transparency and accountability. Embrace digital technologies in land administration and strengthen partnerships with the private sector for rebuilding infrastructure and supporting agricultural development. Strengthen institutional, human and financial capacity to support land administration and land management and to address climate-related land challenges. Prioritize climate resilience through early warning systems.

*Archive and safeguard land records to secure ownership rights* in conflict contexts. Preserve land records by ensuring digital backups of records held in a secure area of the country. Open new cadaster offices in liberated areas and digitize land registries. Automate land records and reclaim land held by occupying groups (such as ISIS in Iraq), supported by legislation to restore land to its rightful owners.

*Use a digital approach to register documents of migrants* when there are large-scale waves of migration. Create digital topographic maps and use a range of data sets to analyse and make decisions about suitable land for settlement, water sources, economic and infrastructure needs and risk management. Enhance displaced populations' integration through land ownership and local support programs.

*Arab countries should partner and organize to support areas experiencing conflict*, especially

with adjacent countries; international partners should do the same. Strengthen cross-border collaboration, especially in strategic areas (such as between Palestine and Jordan) to address territorial challenges. Collaborate to preserve land data during crises and provide housing for displaced populations, especially women. Address the environmental contamination caused by conflict. Apply lessons learned from particular country contexts (such as land tenure in Libya) to improve governance in other countries across the region.

*Financing mechanisms should promote equitable land use and increase land value*, particularly countries experiencing or recovering from conflict. The destruction in Derna highlighted the urgency of climate resilience, while Somalia's shift toward privatized land ownership emphasized government-private sector partnerships for rebuilding. International cooperation, easing regulations to attract investment and addressing economic sanctions on Syria were also noted as critical factors for sustainable land management and reconstruction. Governments need to create legal frameworks that facilitate private sector investment to build back better in conflict settings, including fostering public-private partnerships. Banks and investors are only interested in land which is registered and secure. Sound land use management practices need to be implemented to unlock funding opportunities for sustainable development.



## Technical Session: Housing, Land and Property Solutions for Displacement and Crisis

**Organizer:** Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Global Housing, Land and Property Area of Responsibility (HLP AoR)

**Chair:** Jim Robinson, Co-Coordinator HLP AoR (NRC, HLP AoR)

**Speakers:** Mr. Muslim Qazimi Head of Country Programme Iraq and Yemen UN-Habitat; Ms. Ola Hatoum Regional Plans Manager, Syria Researcher, Beijing Jiaotong University, China; Mr. Mahmoud Abu Qubaita, Al Quds University, Palestine; Ms. Jia Cong Ang Programme Management Officer UN-Habitat; Ms. Haya, AL Agha, Director of Development and Economic Units

### Introduction

This session focused on the urgent need to protect housing, land and property (HLP) rights in contexts of conflict and displacement across the Arab region. It highlighted how the loss of HLP rights deepens vulnerability and delays recovery, underscoring the importance of integrated strategies that uphold dignity and support long-term solutions. Technical presentations covered post-conflict land-use dynamics in Syria, legal and humanitarian challenges in Palestine's Area C, and efforts to improve urban laws to better protect HLP rights.

Case studies from Syria, Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Gaza's Khan Younis Governorate illustrated the complex impacts of war on land governance and tenure security. The session also explored how urban legal reforms and cultural resilience, particularly among youth, can contribute to reducing violence and strengthening stability. Participants emphasized that securing HLP rights is essential for economic recovery, conflict resolution and sustainable development in crisis-affected areas.

### Summary

Yemen's HLP landscape is deeply affected by long-standing conflict, institutional collapse and informality. Only 10-20 per cent of land is formally registered, while 80-90 per cent is managed through informal transactions, tribal customs and undocumented arrangements. This is compounded by a lack of a national cadaster, poor record-keeping, paper-based systems (often destroyed) and corruption. Women and minorities, especially the Mohamoshein, are frequently denied tenure rights and face forced evictions. In response, a project was launched to map and register HLP claims using the Social Tenure



Figure 8: Technical Session: Housing, Land and Property Solutions for Displacement and Crisis.

Domain Model (STDM). Community-led efforts involved documenting HLP violations, issuing occupancy certificates and conducting house-to-house enumerations. Emphasis was placed on women's HLP rights through awareness sessions, a women's network and coordination with the Ministry of Justice. Technical training was provided to local cadastral offices with the aim of eventual digital integration. While Yemen has unified land laws across the north and south, implementation remains ineffective.

In Palestine, especially after the events of October 2023, communities in Area C (notably Yatta) face heightened Israeli settlement expansion, movement restrictions, forced displacement and destruction of crops and infrastructure. Many Palestinians have been pushed into Areas A and B, compounding the humanitarian crisis. In the West Bank, 80 per cent of farmland has been confiscated, roads are blocked for settlers and water is tightly controlled. Local councils in Area C lack municipal authority, further marginalizing residents. In Gaza, the 17-year siege and war have led to mass displacement (90 per cent of the population), overwhelmed services and widespread destruction. Legal complexities and resource constraints hinder HLP management, with most property documentation lost or informal. Almawasi, once occupied and now a key agricultural zone, lacks basic services. In Khan Younis, multi-phased rebuilding strategy involves participatory data collection using tools like QGIS, Google Earth, Kobo Collect and mobile survey offices. The aim is to secure tenure, restore systems and protect public spaces through digital archives and structured land

surveys. Ensuring open land for emergencies is a key urban planning takeaway.

Syria's complex crises have resulted in spatial inequalities, mass displacement and destruction of housing and infrastructure. Land ownership disputes are widespread due to missing documentation and fragmented legal systems. Land use planning is viewed as a vital post-war recovery tool. Predictive spatial planning models, supported by satellite imagery and data analysis, are recommended to address informal settlements, climate impacts and institutional weaknesses. Transparent governance and inclusive land policies are central to rebuilding trust and promoting spatial justice. Lessons are being drawn from post-conflict recovery in other nations. Participatory collaboration and integration of environmental considerations are emphasized to ensure sustainable reconstruction.

HLP-sensitive urban law is critical for tenure security, shelter provision and conflict prevention. When properly contextualized and implemented, urban laws can promote inclusive governance, decentralization and public participation. Case studies from Colombia, Cambodia and Tunisia demonstrate the potential of urban law in promoting long-term stability. UN-Habitat emphasized the distinction between one-off interventions and lasting programmatic change. Without effective implementation, even well-crafted laws fail. Lessons from Rwanda's land commission underscore the value of strong institutional frameworks in post-conflict settings.

Across the contexts discussed, digital tools have become central to HLP work. STDM, Kobo Toolbox, Google Earth and QGIS enable mapping, documentation and community-driven enumeration. These tools are especially valuable in fragile contexts where formal institutions are weak or non-existent. Offline capabilities and open-source platforms ensure accessibility. Stakeholder steering committees guide scenario development and ensure local relevance.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities face compounding challenges, particularly in Gaza and Syria. In Gaza, war has tripled urban populations in some areas like Khan Younis, leading to service breakdowns and overcrowding. Informal settlements have expanded rapidly. Restoration of HLP rights is essential for both IDPs and host populations, necessitating robust documentation systems and participatory urban planning.

## **Recommendations**

*Strengthen legal frameworks and implementation:* Unified legal systems are insufficient without enforcement. Contextualized, well-implemented laws are critical to securing tenure and preventing conflict.

*Prioritize digital and participatory tools:* Open-source technologies like STDM, QGIS and Kobo are essential in data-scarce, crisis-affected environments. Offline functionality supports field deployment even in insecure areas.

*Empower local authorities and communities:* Building capacity at the local level is key, especially in areas without functional governments or under occupation. Fiscal autonomy for municipalities should be encouraged. Community validation and inclusive approaches build trust and reduce disputes.

*Promote gender equity and inclusion:* Women's HLP rights are consistently undermined in conflict settings. Projects must center gender-sensitive approaches and impact assessments and collaborate with ministries and local leaders.

*Ensure coordination among actors:* Humanitarian and development actors need to harmonize efforts. Integrating HLP considerations across legal, urban planning and recovery strategies is essential for coherent, sustainable responses.

*Adopt a phased, comprehensive recovery strategy:* Post-crisis recovery must include rubble removal, re-establishment of land documentation systems and long-term land use planning. Immediate relief must transition to structured rebuilding with a build back better approach.

*Safeguard public spaces and plan for future crises:* Urban planning must account for emergencies by preserving open spaces and avoiding informal encroachments during displacement crises.

# Launch of Pinheiro Principles Handbook for the MENA Region – Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons: Implementing the Pinheiro Principles in the Middle East and North Africa

**Organizer:** UN-Habitat

**Chair:** Therese Arnesen, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

**Keynote speaker:** Dr. Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, Chair, Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic

**Speakers:** Ombretta Tempra, Human Settlements Officer, Land Specialist, Global Co- Coordinator, Housing Land and Property Rights Area of Responsibility, Arab Land Initiative Coordinator, UN-Habitat; Fidaa F. Haddad, Senior Programme Officer (Forestry), Team Leader Greening Agriculture, Secretary of the Near East Forestry and Range Commission, Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa Region, FAO; Jim Robinson, Co-Coordinator (NRC), Global Housing, Land and Property Area of Responsibility (HLP AoR), NRC; Ahmed Mansour, Regional Coordinator Habitat International Coalition's HIC-HLRN Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN)



Figure 9: Launch of Pinheiro Principles Handbook for the MENA Region.

## Introduction

This session marked the 20th anniversary of the Pinheiro Principles on housing and property restitution for refugees and displaced persons. It presented a joint

publication by several international organizations including FAO, IOM, OHCHR, UN-Habitat, NRC and UNHCR that compiled good practices from across the Middle East and North Africa. The publication aimed to support the resolution of housing and

property claims for displaced populations and highlighted the importance of restitution for durable peace and the fulfillment of human rights. Experts and practitioners working in the region shared their experiences and insights, reflecting on past efforts and proposing future directions to address ongoing challenges. The session emphasized that securing housing and property rights remains essential for long-term stability and post-conflict recovery.

### **Summary**

The Pinheiro Principles were described as both a moral compass and a technical rights-based framework for addressing housing, land and property (HLP) rights in displacement contexts. While sometimes viewed as aspirational, they provide practical guidance and have been successfully applied in various settings. The Pinheiro Handbook for the MENA Region is valued for its ability to guide practitioners in navigating complex environments shaped by displacement, involvement or interference of non-state actors and competing land claims. It encourages governments and stakeholders to address both restitution and broader housing rights. Principle 2 is central to their application, affirming restitution as a legal right and a basis for long-term peace. This Principle outlines the obligation of states to support the return of property to displaced persons and prohibits actions that violate these rights, such as forced evictions and arbitrary land seizures, as addressed in Principle 5.

The Pinheiro Handbook for the MENA region expands on this foundation with region-

specific case studies, documentation strategies and guidance on bridging the gap between emergency response and long-term solutions. Participants highlighted the importance of distinguishing between remedies and durable solutions, noting that restitution rights do not lapse because of voluntary resettlement or local integration.

Burden of proof of HLP rights presents a challenge, as displaced persons frequently lack documentation or face difficulties recovering property that has been looted, destroyed or informally transferred. One example of the application of Principle 15, addressing HLP documentation, was an intervention supporting the Yazidi return process in Iraq. Following their 2014 displacement from Sinjar, UN-Habitat documented Yazidi HLP claims using the Social Tenure Domain Model (STDM), a land administration tool designed to accommodate informal property rights. Through community mapping and HLP claim verification, more than 7,500 occupancy certificates were issued. By late 2022, Iraq's Council of Ministers recognized these as legal titles. This approach facilitated return and strengthened the sustainability of Iraq's land administration system. In Lebanon and Iraq, a UN-Habitat project also using STDM began recording HLP claims of Syrian refugees in 2020 using voluntary, participatory enumeration, with the aim of preserving documentation and preparing the legal foundation for future restitution and compensation.

Women face specific barriers in conflict-related HLP contexts, often stemming from discriminatory customs and unequal

inheritance practices. In many areas, customary law dominates and routinely excludes women from property claims.

The Pinheiro Principles recognize certain protections for secondary occupants when their occupancy is temporary and to address immediate needs, with no aim of permanent ownership. However, mediating between the rights of original owners and secondary occupants remains a delicate and complex legal and humanitarian issue.

Participants also identified a knowledge gap between land management and crisis response. There is limited capacity to process large-scale post-conflict property claims and to manage the associated documentation. Justice systems are often weak or politically compromised, which undermines restitution and erodes trust.

While the focus on restitution is vital, it has sometimes overshadowed other important rights, such as access to adequate housing under Principle 8. Many displaced persons in the MENA region were historically landless or lacked formal tenure, raising questions about how restitution applies to them. The MENA Handbook refocuses attention on the right to adequate housing and the needs of those without property.

The need to bridge the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus was emphasized. HLP rights must be addressed not only in post-conflict recovery but also during emergency response. Establishing secure tenure early can support future restitution, ease tensions in host communities and reduce the risk of further violations. Land, housing and food rights are closely linked,

requiring coordinated cross-sectoral responses in recovery efforts. In Lebanon and Jordan, initiatives are underway to connect displaced populations with host communities in agricultural activities to reduce land-related tensions and increase food production. These efforts also support climate adaptation, with participants noting that lessons from conflict-induced displacement are relevant to future climate-related challenges.

Coordination among governments, humanitarian actors, civil society and affected communities is critical. Principle 22 emphasizes the responsibility of international actors to support HLP rights, but implementation depends on a shared understanding of roles and collaboration. Participants underscored the need to turn human rights principles into practical tools. Despite a strong normative foundation, implementation often falters due to political interference, institutional weakness or lack of coordination. The Handbook was commended for translating abstract obligations into workable steps. However, political complexities, including the influence of non-state actors and foreign governments, frequently obstruct restitution efforts.

A functioning land administration system is essential for durable solutions. Without reliable property records, restitution becomes nearly impossible. The Principles stress the importance of preserving or reconstructing property registration systems, and the Handbook offers tools for doing so. These systems must accommodate diverse tenure types, including formal, informal, collective and individual. Fit-for-purpose land tools like

STDM offer scalable and flexible solutions to meet these needs.

Efforts to safeguard documentation have become a key strategy in supporting restitution. Several initiatives are focused on recording and preserving HLP claims early in the displacement cycle, reducing the burden on displaced individuals and laying a foundation for restitution, compensation or resettlement when conditions improve.

In Gaza, post-conflict reconstruction efforts include safeguards to ensure that rebuilding homes does not encroach on valuable agricultural land, much of which has been damaged by warfare. Threats to UNRWA's funding and ability to operate in Palestine were described as shameful and an attack on UN and other organizations seeking to uphold the HLP rights of refugees and IDPs.

## **Recommendations**

*Center the voices of displaced and host communities:* Ensure the active participation of displaced populations in the design and implementation of restitution processes. Strengthen the capacities of host communities and local governments to foster integration, reduce tensions and ensure that outcomes reflect local realities. Engage customary leaders where relevant, while upholding international standards for equality and non-discrimination.

*Establish inclusive and coordinated legal frameworks:* Integrate HLP rights into broader legal, institutional and post-conflict reconstruction reforms. Strengthen judicial

independence, clarify land tenure systems and mediate secondary occupancy disputes through transparent mechanisms that balance competing rights. Ensure that laws reflect international human rights obligations and are applicable in both formal and informal contexts.

*Safeguard and strengthen documentation systems:* Prioritize the preservation and reconstruction of property records and supporting evidence early in the displacement cycle. Use fit-for-purpose tools, such as STDM, to document claims and prepare for large-scale restitution and compensation efforts. This reduces the burden of proof on claimants and supports long-term land administration.

*Promote cross-sectoral and rights-based approaches:* Coordinate HLP interventions with sectors such as agriculture, food security and climate resilience to ensure cohesive and sustainable outcomes. Align restitution efforts with broader development and peacebuilding goals, recognizing the interdependence of rights to land, housing and food.

*Translate Principles into practice and prepare for future crises:* Operationalize the Pinheiro Principles through concrete actions that bridge emergency response and long-term recovery. Focus on practical implementation, not just legal frameworks. Adapt the Handbook's guidance to emerging challenges like climate-induced displacement, ensuring the lessons learned are applied in future contexts.



# Crisis, Displacement and Housing, Land and Property Solutions in Lebanon

**Organizer:** UN-Habitat Lebanon Country Programme

**Chair:** Ornella Nohra, Urban Planning Coordinator, UN-habitat Lebanon Country Programme

**Speakers:** Ms. Abir Zaatari, Urban Planner and Research Coordinator, Beirut Urban Lab (BUL); Mr. Roger Karam, Lawyer, Legalis Law Firm; Ms. Claudine El Karaki, Senior Advisor to the Minister of Finance, Lebanon; Ornella Nohra, Urban Planning Coordinator, UN-habitat Lebanon Country Programme

## Introduction

This session focused on past and ongoing crises and displacement in Lebanon, highlighting the government and public sector's approach to addressing these issues. The session included a case study on the 2020 Beirut Port explosion, exploring the lessons learned from that event. The session also presented potential solutions for addressing the displacement in Lebanon that has resulted from the escalation of 2024 the Hezbollah–Israel conflict by utilizing the vacant buildings in Beirut. Representatives from the Lebanese Government concluded by discussing the ongoing crisis and displacement, and the state's current efforts in addressing HLP issues. The main goal of the session was to increase knowledge about HLP solutions during times of crisis and displacement in Lebanon, and to facilitate discussions and collaborations that strive to advance solutions.

## Summary

Lebanon faces significant issues related to displacement, conflict and economic downturn. Displacement is not incorporated into housing strategies, and there is no overarching legal framework due to various

rental laws. According to Beirut Lab, the conflict in 2023 led to housing damage in four governorates, with approximately 40,000 units affected in Beirut. The Beirut explosion in 2020 caused significant damage to housing stock in old neighborhoods of historical and cultural value. The impact of COVID-19, refugees and economic and political instability further exacerbated the situation.



*Figure 10: Crisis, Displacement and Housing, Land and Property Solutions in Lebanon.*

Legal and operational challenges include outdated rental laws, and lack of affordable new housing and tensions between owners and tenants. To enhance tenure security, there is a need to identify vacant units and conduct updated rental value studies. There is



also a need to address vacant housing through a viable taxation system.

For refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) residing in Beirut, short-term recovery and long-term policy strategies are needed. Old, abandoned buildings are often occupied by refugees, with few rental options available. Beirut hosts a high density of IDPs, with only around 3 per cent of IDPs renting residences in Beirut, while some others are hosted in public facilities such as schools and stadiums, affecting students' education. This situation is unsustainable and environmentally costly, and it is essential to reform legislation to adapt to the displacement crisis.

### **Recommendations**

*Legal and regulatory reform:* Secure a deed of commitment from property owners to clarify ownership responsibilities. Establish clear legal frameworks governing the relationship between owners and tenants, especially in post-crisis contexts. Reform outdated rental laws to respond to current housing challenges and ensure tenant protections. Develop inclusive housing policies that address displacement and the needs of vulnerable populations, including refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

*Affordable and secure tenancy:* Introduce affordable rental agreements targeted at low- to middle-income families. Ensure tenancy security through below-market rent options for rehabilitated properties. Identify vacant

housing units and conduct rental value assessments to guide fair pricing. Monitor beneficiaries to ensure transparent and equitable access to housing.

*Short-term recovery measures:* Provide technical assistance and legal aid for tenants and owners navigating the rental process. Prevent harmful construction or demolition by safeguarding heritage structures and enforcing property regulations. Support the rehabilitation and reoccupation of buildings with appropriate safeguards for structural integrity.

*Long-term housing strategy and policy development:* Integrate displacement considerations into national and local housing strategies. Promote public-private partnerships to develop sustainable and scalable housing solutions. Design and implement a taxation mechanism for vacant housing to encourage occupancy and protect tenant rights. Ensure policy inclusivity to address the needs of diverse affected populations.

*Capacity building and advocacy:* Provide technical support and training to local authorities and stakeholders involved in housing management. Launch awareness campaigns to promote the rights of displaced persons, refugees, and tenants. Conduct data collection and continuous monitoring to inform policy decisions, track housing stock and assess program impact.

# Women and Land

## High-Level Session: Women and Land

**Organizer:** UN-Habitat

**Chair:** Ms. Nadya Khalife, Regional Gender Equality Advisor (UNESCWA)

**Speakers:** Ms. Ekhlās Adam, Secretary General of the National Council of Urban Development at the Ministry of Urban Development, Roads, and Bridges, Sudan; Mr. Mohamed Salem Boukhreiss, Secretary General of the Ministry of Housing, Urban Planning and Territorial Development, Mauritania; Mr. Ali bin Ahmed bin Issa Al-Mashani, Director General of Housing and Urban Planning in Musandam Governorate, Oman; Professor Yasmina Imani, Digital Hub for Agriculture, Forestry, and Drought Observatory. Ministry of Agriculture, Maritime Fisheries, Rural Development, and Water and Forests, Morocco; Dr. Aboubakr Abdul Latif Al-Tarabulsi, Deputy Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Local Administration, Ministry of Local Government, Libya



Figure 11: High-Level Session: Women and Land.

### Introduction

This high-level session brought together policymakers and regional leaders to discuss the transformative impact of women's secure access to land and housing. Participants

highlighted how clear tenure rights for women improved household welfare, education and community stability while enhancing their participation in decision-making processes. The session featured examples from across the Arab region, such as

legal reforms to inheritance rights and more inclusive land administration practices. Panelists emphasized that secure land rights become even more critical during conflicts and crises when women often take on greater economic and caregiving roles. By reducing vulnerability and supporting women's leadership in peacebuilding, secure tenure contributed to long-term social cohesion. The session also addressed persistent challenges including discriminatory norms, unequal power dynamics and weak institutional frameworks while presenting successful efforts that prioritized women's perspectives in legal and administrative reforms.

### Summary

Across the Arab region, women face systemic barriers to land ownership, tenure security and participation in land governance. Legal recognition of land rights often exists but is undermined by social norms, limited awareness and weak enforcement. Despite regional variations, women's access to land is significantly constrained across the region, which affects their economic empowerment, housing security and role in post-conflict recovery and development.

Sudan faces deep-rooted challenges due to ongoing conflict and the dominance of customary laws, which restrict women's access to agricultural land and land registration. Women are frequently displaced and excluded from economic participation due to lack of land tenure. They also struggle to obtain credit due to not owning land. Legal reforms are needed to facilitate access and ensure women's rights are recognized.

Promoting awareness and financial inclusion is essential to increase participation.

Although Mauritanian law formally grants land rights to women, traditional social norms continue to restrict their application. Less than 10 per cent of land is owned by women, and rural areas are particularly affected. Climate change has further intensified competition over land. However, there are government initiatives to improve access, including loans for land purchases, business support and over 10,000 land plots allocated to women through collaboration between the Ministry of Housing and the Ministry of Real Estate. Housing initiatives have benefitted over 1,000 women. Despite these efforts, awareness, implementation and bureaucratic barriers remain significant.

In Morocco, women own smaller plots than men and are often excluded from land-related decision-making, especially in agriculture and export sectors. Legal backing for women's land rights exists through the 2011 Constitution, the 2004 Family Law and other reforms, but access to real estate remains below 4 per cent. Morocco has created the *Centre d'Inclusion des Femmes au Foncier* to support women's access to land, collect gender-disaggregated data and promote awareness. There is a focus on capacity-building, increasing female entrepreneurship, and enabling access to collective lands.

Libya's instability has significantly disrupted women's land tenure. Existing legislation lacks clarity on gender equity. However, a partnership between the Supreme Council and the Women Empowerment Bureau is advocating for increased women's rights. This

has led to women being elected to leadership roles in governorates for the first time. Initiatives also support businesswomen, address climate and conflict challenges and promote inclusion through local area planning in agriculture and artisanal sectors. Inheritance remains a key channel for women's access to land. Government-led awareness and conflict resolution campaigns are contributing to positive cultural shifts.

Oman is a notable exception in the region, with 49 per cent of land owned by women. Legal frameworks are effectively implemented, and women actively participate in land governance through roles in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning. Women committee members play a decisive role in land registration processes. The government provides free housing to low-income households and ranks among the top five countries globally for equal land rights. This has set a positive example for the rest of the region.

A number of cross-cutting issues in the region were also identified. Legal implementation gaps, where despite legal provisions, actual enforcement in several countries is weak. In Jordan, for example, laws support women's access to land, but less than 10 per cent of female farmers own land. Customary and religious norms often override statutory laws and need to be addressed for reforms to be effective. For example, in Sudan and Mauritania customary practices and religious authorities heavily influence land access. Many women are also unaware of their legal rights and unable to access finance due to lack of collateral, which further prevents land acquisition and investment. Conflict and

displacement have worsened women's land insecurity, as women are particularly vulnerable to losing access to land during crises. A lack of gender-disaggregated data, especially in Morocco, hampers evidence-based policymaking. Strengthening data systems is vital to tracking progress and identifying gaps. Collaboration between governments, women's organizations and international agencies such as UN Women has shown promise, particularly in Libya and Morocco, where pilot projects are already underway.

## **Recommendations**

*Legal reform and enforcement:* While laws supporting women's land rights exist in many countries, they are not always implemented. Reforms must close the gap between legislation and practice, especially in post-conflict environments like Sudan and Libya. Laws should be updated to reflect current realities, including displacement and climate-related land pressures.

*Raising awareness and education:* Awareness campaigns are essential to inform women of their rights and available resources. Education, particularly for rural women, can play a transformative role in helping them claim and retain land.

*Financial inclusion and credit access:* Women's inability to access credit due to lack of land ownership perpetuates the cycle of exclusion. Financial institutions and governments should develop land-secured credit options tailored to women's needs.

*Empowering women through leadership and participation:* Women must be included in



decision-making processes related to land governance. Examples from Oman and Libya demonstrate the impact of involving women in administrative roles and policy formulation.

**Regional collaboration and data collection:** There is a need for coordinated regional efforts to share best practices, expand data collection, and support women across borders. Institutions like Morocco's *Centre*

*d'Inclusion des Femmes au Foncier* provide a model for others to follow.

**Climate and conflict-sensitive approaches:** Land tenure initiatives must account for environmental and conflict-related challenges. Integrating women into land use planning, climate adaptation projects, and recovery strategies is essential for long-term resilience.

## Technical Session: Women and Land

**Organizer:** UN-Habitat

**Chair:** Professor Doaa El Sherif, Senior advisor and Former Director of the Urban Training and Studies, Egypt

**Speakers:** Dr. Abderrahim Idris, Institute of Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine (IAV HASSAN II), Rabat, Morocco; Ms. Oumou Kelthoum NIANG Team Leader Youth, Gender and Innovation, FAO-Mauritania; Ms. Caroline Damieux-Verdeau, Land Tenure Specialist, FAO; Mr. Ahmed Sourani, Palestine, Co-Founder & General Coordinator, Gaza Urban & Peri-Urban Agriculture Platform (GUPAP); Dr. Inès GHARBI, Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique de Tunisie



Figure 12: Technical Session on Women and Land.

## **Introduction**

Across the Middle East and North Africa, women's secure access to land is key to achieving broader economic, social and developmental goals. When women have legally recognized tenure rights, household welfare improves, local economies become more resilient and communities experience more inclusive growth. Yet persistent barriers, such as social norms, legal complexities and gaps in institutional support, continue to limit many women's control and ownership of land. This session featured five technical papers exploring both challenges and innovative solutions in various contexts. Presenters discussed policy efforts to enhance Moroccan women's land access, analysed inheritance rights reforms in Egypt, highlight women-led agribusinesses in Gaza as a cornerstone of crisis recovery, examined multi-stakeholder platforms facilitating women's land rights in Mauritania and unpacked the realities of women's agricultural land access in Tunisia.

## **Summary**

Morocco has made notable strides in improving women's access to land, particularly for tribal women residing on collective lands. These women now enjoy equal rights to land as men, marking significant progress in gender equity in land tenure. To address housing challenges, Morocco has established a special fund granting women between 70,000 to 100,000 dirhams to improve access to housing, benefitting around 14,000 women. Furthermore, the country supports women's entrepreneurship by offering financial aid that covers approximately 40 per cent of total

project costs, thereby encouraging economic self-sufficiency among women.

Mauritania has limited arable land and deeply entrenched cultural norms that prioritize male dominance in land ownership. Traditionally, land ownership has been tied to lineages and male leaders, leaving women with minimal rights or decision-making power. Efforts to reform land governance in Mauritania face the challenge of entrenched patriarchal systems and legal frameworks that disadvantage women, particularly in marriage and inheritance laws. Key steps identified to address these include legislative reforms, enhanced awareness and sensitization on land rights, and the use of paralegals to provide legal aid. In terms of institutional support, there is a recognized need to build the capacity of local institutions. This includes training traditional leaders and religious figures on gender equity and establishing formal grievance mechanisms to help women seek redress for land rights violations.

In Palestine, particularly Gaza, women have demonstrated resilience in the face of ongoing conflict by playing a central role in agricultural production. Women account for roughly 75 per cent of agricultural activity, with around 3,000 women involved in agri-entrepreneurship. They have adopted innovative practices such as rooftop farming, home gardening, seed preservation and greywater recycling to address food security and water scarcity. These efforts underscore the critical role women play in sustaining local economies and community resilience during crises.

Despite women's significant contribution to agriculture in Tunisia, they remain marginalized due to the country's patrilineal land tenure system. This exclusion prevents many women from owning or managing land, thereby limiting their participation in key agricultural and economic processes. Improving women's economic position in Tunisia requires enhancing their access to credit and ensuring financial systems are responsive to women's local conditions. Additionally, there is a need for targeted training in modern farming techniques and improved access to market information to increase women's productivity and enable their effective integration into agricultural value chains.

Across all regions, a recurring theme is the recognition that access to land is insufficient unless accompanied by actual use, ownership and control. Legal access without practical authority over land resources undermines the goals of gender equity and economic empowerment. Therefore, a nuanced and comprehensive approach to women's land rights is essential.

## **Recommendations**

*Legal and policy reform:* Countries like Mauritania should enact legislative reforms focused on marriage and succession laws to ensure equal inheritance rights for women. Governments should integrate gender-sensitive clauses in land reform policies to

explicitly recognize and protect women's rights to own, use and control land.

*Institutional capacity building:* Local institutions, including traditional leaders and religious figures, should receive training on gender equity principles. Establish formal grievance mechanisms that allow women to seek justice when their land rights are violated.

*Awareness and sensitization:* Launch national and local awareness campaigns to educate women about their legal land rights. Promote community-level sensitization to challenge and gradually shift patriarchal norms that restrict women's access to and control over land.

*Financial and technical support:* Expand microfinance opportunities and subsidy programs that are specifically tailored to women's needs in agribusiness and housing. Support women with training in modern agricultural practices, business management and market access to increase productivity and competitiveness.

*Comprehensive land rights framework:* Advocate for a full spectrum of land rights for women, encompassing access, ownership, use and control. Recognize that legal access without operational authority is inadequate, and tailor interventions to close this gap effectively.

# Advancing Women's Tenure Security in the MENA Region: Reporting, Data and Initiatives to Close the Gap

**Organizer:** International Land Coalition (ILC)

**Chair:** Eva Hershaw, Lead, Global Data and Land Monitoring, International Land Coalition

**Speakers:** Shahd Almukhtar, Regional Coordinator, International Land Coalition; Ward Anseeuw, Land Tenure Lead, FAO; Abderrahim Id-Rais, Research Professor at Hassan II Institute of Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine, Morocco; Didier Giscard, Senior Land Administration Specialist, World Bank

## Introduction

This session examined the gendered land crisis in the Middle East and North Africa, where growing urban populations and land scarcity have intensified challenges for women's land rights. Speakers highlighted how land is central to shelter, livelihoods and justice and how control over land reflects broader power dynamics. The region faced major obstacles in ensuring women's access to, ownership of and inheritance of land, with data showing significant gender disparities in tenure security. These challenges were especially acute in conflict-affected areas. The session reviewed how Sustainable Development Goal indicators 5.a.1, 5.a.2 and 1.4.2 could support efforts to close the gender gap in land rights. Participants also examined current data limitations and highlighted successful regional case studies and initiatives that advanced women's land rights. The discussion aimed to identify entry points and tools to promote justice and sustainability through stronger land tenure systems for women in the region.

## Summary

The panel discussion highlighted the critical role of data in advancing women's land rights,

with a focus on three Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators: SDG 1.4.2: Measures secure tenure rights over agricultural land; SDG 5.a.1: Measures the proportion of the agricultural population with ownership or rights over agricultural land, disaggregated by sex; SDG 5.a.2: Tracks the extent to which legal frameworks (including customary law) guarantee women equal rights to land ownership and control.



*Figure 13: Advancing Women's Tenure Security in the MENA Region: Reporting, Data and Initiatives to Close the Gap.*

The FAO, as custodian of SDG indicators 1.4.2 and 5.a.1, shared that these metrics are crucial for global accountability but face significant implementation challenges, especially in Arab countries. These include the mismatch between global indicators and local



contexts, informal or unregistered land rights held by women, and the absence of standardized methods for collecting gender-disaggregated data.

The data reveals substantial gender disparities in land rights across the Arab region. For SDG 5.a.2, 59 per cent of 84 reporting countries have weak or non-existent legal protections for women's land rights. In SDG 5.a.1, nearly half of 49 countries show that men are at least twice as likely to own agricultural land as women. Regarding SDG 1.4.2, only 30 per cent of people have access to legal land documentation, and just 17 per cent of women are included in that figure, indicating both low documentation rates and significant gender gaps. These figures underscore persistent barriers to land ownership for women, which have broader implications for their economic empowerment, food security and well-being.

Despite legal frameworks in some countries that ostensibly support women's land rights, enforcement is undermined by cultural practices and outdated laws. Societal norms continue to favor men in land ownership and governance. Many women are unaware of their legal rights or face social resistance when asserting them. Land management institutions are often under-resourced, and legal systems are complex, further limiting women's ability to claim or inherit land. In many countries, land registration forms are ambiguous or implicitly exclude women, and corruption exacerbates these issues. Women's participation in decision-making around land governance is minimal, as they are frequently excluded from key platforms and processes.

The region is experiencing increased pressure on land due to climate change, population growth and urban expansion. Agricultural land is diminishing while urban populations are projected to grow by 40 per cent by 2050. This intensifies competition for land and presents additional hurdles for women seeking access to it for agriculture or business purposes. Access to land is often mediated through political networks, creating inequality in opportunities. In places like Egypt, outdated legal systems, high property registration fees, speculative land markets and low public land taxation further hinder equitable land distribution and development.

Despite these challenges, the panel spotlighted the following emerging opportunities:

- Collaborations among governments, NGOs and international organizations have led to community-driven land registration initiatives and reforms in land laws and governance.
- Sharing best practices across countries in the Arab region was encouraged to replicate successful gender-sensitive approaches.
- Data-driven solutions and the adoption of digital land management systems were seen as crucial tools for transparency, efficiency and inclusivity.

Ongoing engagement of stakeholders was emphasized as essential to refine and implement effective policies supporting women's land rights.

## Recommendations

*Legal and policy reforms:* Review and reform inheritance laws and marriage laws to ensure equitable access to land. Strengthen legal protections and enforce gender-equal land rights under both formal and customary law. Clarify land registration forms to explicitly include women and eliminate discriminatory language or assumptions.

*Data and monitoring:* Invest in standardized and localized data collection methods that capture women's informal and customary land rights. Use disaggregated data to guide policymaking and monitor gender gaps in land ownership.

*Institutional strengthening:* Better define the roles and responsibilities of land management institutions. Reduce corruption and inefficiency through digital land administration systems and transparent recordkeeping.

*Economic and structural measures:* Reduce property registration costs and modernize legal frameworks to support equitable access. Implement progressive land taxation to curb speculation and promote productive land use. Consolidate agricultural land and encourage climate-smart agriculture to prevent loss of rural land to urbanization.

*Community engagement and education:* Launch awareness campaigns, including through social media and podcasts, to inform communities about women's land rights. Train grassroots women leaders and gender trainers to engage in land governance and challenge discriminatory norms.

*Inclusive dialogue and platforms:* Organize national dialogues involving policymakers, civil society, and marginalized groups to co-create solutions. Use platforms like Women for Women and implement gender action plans to coordinate and scale efforts.

## Progress in Securing Women's Land Rights in Morocco and the Arab Region: The Contribution of Land Surveyors

**Organizer:** Ordre National des Ingénieurs Géomètres Topographes – ONIGT; NELGA North Africa, Global Land Tool Network, Arab Union of Surveyors; Noon Centre for Equality and Diversity, University of East London, UK; Royal Docks School of Business and Law, Housing and Building Research Centre

**Chair:** Diane Dumashie, International Federation of surveyors (FIG)

**Speakers:** Abdelali Taouss National Order of the surveying Engineers of Morocco ONIGT; Moha El-Ayachi, Network of Excellence on Land Governance in North Africa; Rafic Khouri, Arab Union of Surveyors, Lebanon; Siraj Sait, University of East London, UK; Doaa El-sharif, Housing and Building Research Centre, Egypt; Mino Ramaroson, Huairou Commission, Global civil society, Madagascar

## Introduction

This session explored women's access to land in the Arab region, focusing on the evolution of awareness and interventions since the publication of *Land, Law, and Islam* in 2006. Participants reflected on how overlapping tenure systems and socio-cultural barriers continued to challenge women's land rights.



Figure 14: Progress in Securing Women's Land Rights in Morocco and the Arab Region: The Contribution of Land Surveyors.

The session reviewed specific constraints in Morocco, particularly concerning collective lands, where women faced limited participation in land management and decision-making. Technical issues such as the identification and demarcation of land, weak coordination among local authorities and professionals, and limited access to information further hindered progress. The discussion also addressed how networks like NELGA have contributed to building capacity and advancing women's land rights. Panelists examined how research, data and partnerships have supported gender-sensitive land governance and considered technical solutions for improving transparency and accuracy in land administration. The session emphasized the importance of professional

collaboration and civil society engagement to better integrate gender considerations in land policy.

## Summary

This session explored both technical and socio-cultural factors that impact women's access to land. Drawing on diverse expert perspectives, the session examined religious interpretations, legal systems, cultural norms and institutional practices that continue to challenge gender equity in land tenure. One of the most deeply entrenched obstacles to women's land rights is the persistence of patriarchal cultural norms that position men as primary landowners and decision-makers. A key concept discussed was *qiwamah*, traditionally interpreted as a husband's authority over his wife, which reinforces male dominance and limits women's autonomy.

In Morocco, scholars within the *Maliki* school of jurisprudence and groups like Musawah are advocating for reinterpretations of Islamic law to support gender equality. Similarly, Morocco's Oulémas have been critical of traditional readings of *qiwamah*, signaling a shift toward more egalitarian interpretations within the Mudawana (Family Code).

In Egypt, reforms are underway through institutions like Al-Azhar, where there is increasing openness to reevaluating women's inheritance and marital rights within Islamic frameworks. This regional rethinking reflects a broader trend toward aligning Islamic jurisprudence with contemporary values and gender equality.

The Arab Union of Surveyors added historical context by tracing Islamic scholarship on

women's inheritance rights, from Ibn Rushd in the 12th century to the 17th-century Maliki reforms. These insights support the idea that Islamic law, if interpreted progressively, can be a powerful tool for promoting women's land rights.

Despite evolving interpretations, statutory and customary laws in many Arab countries still limit women's access to and control over land. Inheritance laws frequently disadvantage women, and legal frameworks often lack gender-sensitive provisions. Bureaucratic inefficiencies further complicate women's ability to claim or document their land rights. Land documentation remains a significant challenge. Administrative complexity, low awareness, and unclear property demarcations, especially on collective lands, make it difficult for women to secure formal land tenure. Institutions tasked with implementing land laws often lack the resources or gender-sensitive training to support women's land claims. Moreover, women's voices are underrepresented in land governance and decision-making forums, which limits their ability to influence policy or assert their rights.

Panelists emphasized that women's limited access to credit and financial services hampers their ability to purchase, invest in or retain land. Without financial independence, women struggle to participate in agricultural production or land-based entrepreneurship. Education is another key barrier. Many women are unaware of their legal rights or the procedures required to exercise them. This knowledge gap perpetuates dependency

on male relatives and undermines women's confidence in pursuing land claims. Training and outreach programs are minimal, and legal aid services tailored to women's needs are scarce, especially in rural or marginalized areas.

In regions affected by violence and displacement, women are especially vulnerable to losing property. Conflict disrupts institutional support structures, and displaced women often lack documentation or legal pathways to reclaim land. These vulnerabilities are compounded by gender-based violence and social stigma, making post-conflict land recovery particularly difficult.

The session emphasized the importance of participatory, inclusive frameworks grounded in both Islamic and customary law. Participants advocated for locally adapted legal systems that reflect women's diverse experiences and provide secure tenure within religious and cultural contexts. Audience discussions focused on the need to engage families, particularly male relatives, in awareness efforts. Mobilizing religious scholars, NGOs and civil society was identified as essential to building capacity and shifting norms. Debates also touched on concepts such as "feminist *ijtihad*," which seeks to harmonize Islamic scholarship with global human rights standards.

The event concluded with a call to continue high-level research, policy innovation and partnership mobilization across the region to advance Muslim women's land and property rights through locally relevant, rights-based approaches.

## Recommendations

*Reframe socio-cultural norms:* Promote inclusive and gender-equitable interpretations of religious doctrines by building on efforts from Moroccan Oulémas, Al-Azhar scholars and advocacy groups like Musawah. Continue public discourse and education around reinterpretations of *qiwamah*, inheritance and marital rights within Islam.

*Reform legal and administrative systems:* Enact and enforce gender-responsive legislation that addresses inheritance inequalities and property laws. Simplify land registration and documentation procedures, especially on collective lands. Provide legal aid services to assist women in navigating complex legal systems.

*Empower women economically:* Develop microcredit schemes and financial products specifically designed to support women in acquiring and managing land. Offer training in financial literacy and business development to enable women to invest in land-based enterprises.

*Increase education and awareness:* Launch public awareness campaigns using media, community workshops, and religious platforms to inform women about their land rights. Equip women with the knowledge and tools to navigate legal, financial and administrative systems confidently.

*Support women in conflict zones:* Provide tailored legal aid and psychosocial services to displaced women. Ensure land restitution policies address gender-specific vulnerabilities in post-conflict contexts.

*Strengthen women's leadership:* Encourage women's participation in local and national land governance bodies. Foster partnerships between civil society, governments and international organizations to amplify women's voices in decision-making.

*Promote inclusive frameworks:* Build land systems grounded in authentic Islamic jurisprudence while aligning with human rights standards. Use evidence-based practices from past reforms and scholarly contributions to shape policies that reflect both tradition and modernity.

## Food Security and Climate Change

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### Lessons Learnt on Biodiversity and Drought Resilience: UNCBD & UNCCD

**Organizers:** Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; International Land Coalition; United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

**Chair:** Shahd Mustafa; Europe, Middle East and North Africa Regional Coordinator, International Land Coalition (ILC)

**Speakers:** Eva Hershaw, Global Data and Land Monitoring Lead, ILC; Ward Anseeuw, Senior Land Tenure Officer, FAO; Bradley Peterson, International Land Tenure Specialist, FAO; Mariam Al Jaajaa, General Manager, Arab Group for the Protection of Nature (APN)

## Introduction

This session examined the critical role of land tenure in addressing climate change and biodiversity loss across Arab countries. Participants discussed the challenges of desertification, water scarcity and declining food security, emphasizing that secure land rights are essential to environmental sustainability. The session outlined upcoming priorities for COP 16 of both the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification. Governments were expected to align their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and to incorporate drought resilience into their National Action Plans (NAPs). The session clarified the distinctions between NBSAPs and NAPs while highlighting their overlaps. Experts stressed the need to strengthen land governance and tenure security to ensure these plans meet their goals. The event aimed to build synergies between international agreements and mobilize political and financial support for integrated climate and land strategies in the region.

## Summary

Recent international efforts have advanced the integration of land tenure indicators into major environmental conventions, particularly within the frameworks of the United Nations Convention on Biological

Diversity (UNCBD) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). These initiatives, presented by experts and stakeholders, highlight progress, challenges and pathways for embedding tenure security into global environmental monitoring.



Figure 15: Lessons learnt on biodiversity and drought resilience UNCBD & UNCCD COPs' outcomes.

ILC presented work aimed at securing a recognized land tenure indicator within the UNCBD post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Building on four traditional knowledge indicators adopted in 2016 and drawing from SDG indicators 1.4.2, 5.a.1 and 5.a.2, the ILC successfully advocated for land tenure and use to be proposed as a headline indicator under Target 22 at COP-16 (October 2024). This marked a major achievement, signaling that land tenure would become a mandatory component of biodiversity monitoring. Additionally, land tenure disaggregation was added to other headline indicators. Key adaptations were made to SDG



indicators to better suit UNCBD needs, including shifting from individual-based metrics to area-based assessments, and incorporating non-traditional and community-generated data sources alongside official statistics. This shift allows for more inclusive and accurate reporting, particularly in Indigenous and traditional territories.

The next steps involve the formal confirmation of this indicator at the resumed COP-16 session in February 2025 in Rome, followed by the refinement of methodologies with FAO (the identified custodian), and subsequent operationalization by national governments.

LANDex, a global land governance index developed by ILC, complements official monitoring systems with 33 priority indicators that incorporate data from various sources, including citizen-generated and civil society data, aligned with ILC's ten commitments and relevant SDGs.

Similar progress is being made under the UNCCD, although at a different pace and emphasis. While the UNCCD monitoring framework is more advanced, its land tenure indicator, first adopted at COP-14, remains underdeveloped. Unlike the UNCBD process, the inclusion of tenure indicators in UNCCD monitoring was a technical request from the secretariat rather than a political push.

Three primary pathways for integrating tenure into the UNCCD framework were identified: qualitative monitoring through updated national implementation surveys; inclusion of tenure in national voluntary targets and baseline assessments aligned with the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible

Governance of Tenure (VGGT); revisions to national-level progress indicators, especially under Strategic Objectives SO2 and SO3.

These changes are aligned with SDG 15.3.1, for which the UNCCD is custodian, with discussions exploring various options such as tenure disaggregation, tracking land degradation by tenure type, and using rangeland indicators. However, changes cannot be introduced in the upcoming 2025 reporting cycle and will need to follow an incremental process, starting with qualitative integration in 2026 and potential inclusion of new indicators in the 2030 framework revision.

FAO and UNCCD have also initiated joint consultations with national governments, focusing on how to mainstream tenure into UNCCD implementation. These consultations, carried out in Kenya, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Senegal and Sri Lanka, built on a Technical Guide and highlighted the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach, localized awareness and diverse land tenure systems.

Civil society plays a critical role in shaping tenure-inclusive biodiversity action plans and land restoration strategies. Her intervention highlighted the value of community participation in environmental governance, and the necessity for indicators that reflect human rights, local needs and social empowerment.

Panelists stressed the importance of an inclusive, rights-based approach that recognizes community initiatives, promotes local ownership and integrates civil society contributions into formal monitoring systems like those of the UNCBD and UNCCD. This

aligns with the broader push for fit-for-purpose indicators that reflect both quantitative and qualitative dimensions of land tenure.

### **Recommendations**

*Finalize and operationalize UNCBD land tenure indicator:* Confirm the headline land tenure indicator under Target 22 at COP-16 (resumed session in February 2025). Collaborate with FAO to refine methodologies and initiate the operationalization process with member countries. Promote the use of community-generated and geospatial data to complement government reporting.

*Advance tenure integration in UNCCD:* Begin incorporating land tenure into qualitative national monitoring tools immediately. Plan for tenure disaggregation within SDG 15.3.1 by the 2026 cycle and broader indicator revisions by 2030. Utilize pathways outlined in the Technical Guide on VGGT implementation, including tenure in National Action Plans and voluntary targets.

*Promote cross-framework alignment:* Align UNCBD, UNCCD, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and SDG indicators to create coherent and unified monitoring systems.

Emphasize shared platforms and data systems to improve consistency and comparability.

*Leverage multi-stakeholder consultations:* Continue joint FAO-UNCCD national consultations in more countries, emphasizing participatory approaches and capacity building. Tailor these consultations to reflect diverse ecosystems, tenure types, and regional contexts.

*Support civil society engagement:* Integrate civil society perspectives into indicator development and policy processes. Ensure that human rights and local community needs are reflected in biodiversity and land degradation action plans.

*Utilize and expand LANDex:* Promote LANDex as a complementary monitoring tool for national and global reporting. Leverage its citizen-generated data and alignment with ILC commitments to support evidence-based policy reform.

*Focus on incremental progress:* Acknowledge that full indicator adoption may take time and should follow a stepwise approach: starting with qualitative tools, followed by disaggregation of existing indicators, and culminating in new, comprehensive indicators by 2030.

## **Preserving Agricultural Land from Urbanization: A Global Challenge for Sustainable Development**

**Organizers:** Ministry of National Territory Planning, Land Planning, Housing and City Policy, Morocco; Regional Inspectorate of Urban Planning, Architecture and Land Planning of the Rabat-Salé-Kénitra region; Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Rural Development, Water and Forests, Morocco; Moroccan Association of Researchers in Geomatics and Land Governance



**Chair:** Lamy Sarhrouchni, Regional Inspector of Rabat-Salé-Kénitra, Ministry of National Land Planning, Urbanism, Housing, and Urban Policy, Morocco

**Speakers:** Lamy Sarhrouchni, Regional Inspector of Rabat-Salé-Kénitra, Ministry of National Land Planning, Urbanism, Housing, and Urban Policy, Morocco; Nahid Hamtami, Director of the Urban Agency of Kénitra–Sidi Kacem–Sidi Slimane; Soukaina Al Nasrawi, UNESCWA; Abdelouahid El Mokaddem, Ministry of Agriculture and Maritime Fisheries, Rural Development and Water and Forests, Direction of Irrigation and Agricultural Land Development; Mahjoub Lahrache, Regional Director, Ministry of Agriculture, Maritime Fisheries, Rural Development, Water, and Forests, Morocco



Figure 16: Preserving Agricultural Land from Urbanization: A Global Challenge for Sustainable Development.

## Introduction

This session addressed the challenge of preserving agricultural land amid rapid urbanization in Arab countries. It highlighted the conversion of agricultural land into residential and industrial areas, which threatens food security, disrupts ecosystems and increases greenhouse gas emissions. Discussions focused on balanced planning strategies to curb urban sprawl, promote densification, rehabilitate existing areas and integrate sustainable solutions. Participants

explored regulatory, technical and financial tools to protect agricultural land and the use of technologies like GIS and remote sensing for land management. The session aimed to bring together stakeholders to discuss solutions, share experiences and propose a legal framework tailored to the Arab context. Recommendations included limiting urbanization of agricultural land, adopting sustainable management practices, using geomatic tools for monitoring and enhancing

coordination between institutions, researchers and local stakeholders.

### **Summary**

Urbanization, climate change and food security were central themes of a conference discussing the growing pressures on agricultural land, particularly in Morocco. Experts from various sectors examined how rapid urban expansion, economic strain and environmental degradation are undermining sustainable development and threatening food systems, emphasizing the interdependence between urban planning, agricultural preservation and social equity.

Urbanization in Morocco, driven by both developmental and informal growth patterns, is significantly affecting agricultural areas. Urban sprawl, especially in rural zones like Douars, is converting farmland into urban spaces. This trend is difficult to regulate and exacerbates land-use conflicts, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation. Between 1990 and 2011, Morocco lost approximately 28,000 hectares of agricultural land, with the Gharb plain alone losing 20,432 hectares of irrigated land by 2022. Annually, 3,000 to 4,000 hectares of farmland are lost to urban development, contributing to a decline in hydro infrastructure and agricultural jobs.

While urban growth is partially driven by development objectives, it often lacks coordinated strategies to protect vital agricultural land. The regional director of agriculture highlighted agriculture's economic contribution, which sits at 12 to 14 per cent of Morocco's GDP, and the need for protective policies, especially given that only 17 per cent of agricultural land is irrigated.

Climate change compounds these issues by reducing food production and altering agricultural cycles. The region is experiencing a "poly-crisis" involving the pandemic, energy shortages and economic instability, all of which contribute to reduced agricultural output and increased food insecurity. A heavy reliance on food imports, with 70 per cent of the population expected to live in cities by 2050, increases vulnerability to global shocks.

Urban consumption has dramatically increased, leading to overexploitation of natural resources. This dynamic not only threatens food security but also deepens socioeconomic inequalities, as marginalized populations are disproportionately affected by food price volatility and job loss in the agricultural sector.

Morocco has a diversified legal framework for land management and urban planning, but enforcement remains inconsistent. To combat unregulated urban expansion, measures have been taken such as generalizing urban planning documents, upgrading informal settlements and delimiting rural hamlets to prevent sprawl. The importance of updated regulations and coordinated territorial development strategies was emphasized. Policies should promote compact urban growth, invest in ecological agriculture and encourage public participation in planning processes.

Advanced technologies such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), remote sensing and predictive algorithms are increasingly used to monitor land use and model urban expansion. These tools enable more informed decision-making and early detection of

agricultural land loss. One speaker projected that without intervention, all irrigated agricultural land could be lost by 2050. Between 2017 and 2021, 1,030 hectares had already been lost in the Gharb region.

Key institutions and experts called for a revised territorial development model that aligns with Morocco's "Green Morocco" and "Green Generation" strategies. These national programs aim to enhance agricultural sustainability and food security, improving rural-urban linkages and creating a cohesive policy environment for building resilience. A national fund for protecting agricultural land was proposed, alongside stricter enforcement of zoning laws and construction regulations in irrigated areas. Coordination among ministries, planning agencies, and local communities is critical to ensure that development is equitable and sustainable.

### **Recommendations**

*Strategic and policy measures:* Develop a national legislative and policy framework for agricultural land protection, especially in rural areas. Establish a national fund dedicated to preserving agricultural land. Enforce zoning maps aligned with Law 12-90 and its relevant

application decrees. Promote inclusive urban planning that supports compact city models and curbs rural-urban migration.

*Technological and innovation-based actions:* Leverage remote sensing, GIS and algorithmic modeling to monitor land use and urban growth. Create platforms for spatial data sharing and enhance community engagement in modeling urban dynamics. Institutionalize research and innovation mechanisms for sustainable agriculture.

*Socioeconomic and environmental strategies:* Reduce inequalities by investing in agricultural potential as a vital national asset. Encourage agroecological practices to balance productivity with environmental sustainability. Reinforce connections between urban and rural areas to ensure a resilient and integrated development model.

*Governance and coordination:* Strengthen government engagement through ministries and planning agencies to implement and oversee protective measures. Foster collaboration among stakeholders to manage land-use conflicts and ensure the long-term viability of agriculture in the face of urban and climate pressures.

## **Technical Session: Land for Food Security and Climate Action**

**Organizer:** UN-Habitat

**Chair:** Ms. Lamiaa Melegui, Local Development & Urban Economy Policies Programme Manager, UN-Habitat

**Speakers:** Mr. Rafic Khouri, Arab Union of Surveyors; Dr. Raed Gharib, Co-founder and CEO of Seeds Jordan; Prof. Elena Bresci, University of Florence, Italy - PRIMA AG-WaMED Project; Dr. Fawaz Rabhi Abu Hijleh, Land Administration Expert, Jordan; Dr. Hassan Elmouelhi, Habitat Unit, Chair of International Urbanism and Design, Technische Universität Berlin

## Introduction

This session examined the critical role of land governance in supporting food security and climate action, particularly in the Middle East. It focused on how conflict, climate variability and population growth intersect with legal frameworks, social dynamics and historical land management practices. Presentations addressed tribal lands in Jordan and Syria, highlighting how conflict and political shifts have altered traditional land ownership and governance structures.

The session also emphasized the importance of national coalitions in empowering civil society to influence land law reforms. Discussions underlined the need for inclusive and equitable policies to address food security and climate challenges. By drawing from technical papers and case studies, the session highlighted collaborative strategies and innovative approaches for achieving sustainable agricultural practices and enhancing resilience through improved land governance.

## Summary

Agriculture remains a cornerstone of the Arab economy, yet it is under severe threat from rising temperatures and land degradation. In Syria, significant soil degradation, compounded by the impact of conflict and unexploded ordnance, has rendered large areas of land uninhabitable or unsuitable for cultivation. Despite these challenges, Syria continues to be a vital agricultural supplier for neighboring countries like Iraq. This underscores the regional interdependency on agricultural output and the need to address

the climate-food security nexus collaboratively.



Figure 17: Mr. Rafic Khouri, Arab Union of Surveyors.

In Jordan, tribal lands present a unique set of governance challenges. Issues include disputes over land ownership, ambiguous interpretations of legal frameworks and the distinction between private and public law. The complexities of land governance are further intensified by socio-religious divisions, and the protection of tribal land rights remains a sensitive topic with implications for both social cohesion and sustainable land use.

Water scarcity, another critical issue, was addressed through innovative approaches to using non-conventional water resources in agriculture. Several projects, including AG-Wamed, AGREEMed and AGREEMar, demonstrated the feasibility of using alternative water sources such as desalinated seawater, brackish groundwater, harvested rainfall, treated wastewater and agricultural drainage water. Key lessons from these initiatives included the need for continuous stakeholder engagement throughout project implementation; the importance of farmer training and building trust to foster technology adoption; emphasis on integrating

non-conventional water sources with managed aquifer recharge to improve groundwater sustainability; recognizing the water-land degradation nexus and its socio-economic implications; the necessity of knowledge sharing and learning from previous experiences to inform future interventions.

Urban sustainability and the quality of life in Arab cities were central to discussions on public space and urban greening. Urban greening initiatives, including the co-production of green public spaces, were presented as vital strategies for climate resilience, particularly in cities facing rising temperatures and environmental stress. Challenges in this context include complex land ownership issues and bureaucratic hurdles in urban areas. However, greening efforts contribute significantly to the livability of cities by lowering temperatures, improving public health and enhancing community well-being. Greening also intersects with broader sustainability goals, including energy efficiency and ecosystem restoration. The participatory approach to urban greening, involving local communities in design and implementation, was highlighted as a means to ensure the longevity and effectiveness of these projects.

The role of civil society in land governance was discussed through the lens of national coalitions advocating for legislative reform. Jordan, with much of its territory classified as desert and only 1 per cent forest cover, faces significant land and water management challenges. The Badia lands in particular require rehabilitation and sustainable water solutions. Civil society coalitions are

increasingly working to bridge the communication gap between communities and governments, apply pressure for the implementation of existing laws, collect and disseminate land-related data and partner with international organizations like UN-Habitat for coordinated policy responses.

## **Recommendations**

*Climate and agricultural resilience:* Address the climate-agriculture-food security nexus regionally, especially in conflict-affected areas like Syria. Protect tribal land rights while clarifying and harmonizing legal frameworks.

*Water resource innovation:* Invest in the development and scaling of non-conventional water use in agriculture. Promote managed aquifer recharge systems and ensure sustainable integration with land management.

*Urban sustainability and greening:* Advance participatory urban greening initiatives that improve urban microclimates and community wellbeing. Tackle complex land tenure issues in cities with innovative, inclusive planning processes.

*Civil society and governance:* Empower national coalitions and civil society organizations to advocate for land reform and effective implementation of laws. Strengthen partnerships between governments, local communities and international organizations.

*Capacity building and knowledge sharing:* Facilitate continuous training, especially in adopting new technologies. Develop multilingual knowledge platforms for the dissemination of best practices and policy insights.



# Land-based Financing

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## Investment Pathways for Ecosystem Restoration in the Near East and North Africa

**Organizer:** Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

**Chair:** Ms Marije Louwsma, Senior Advisor, Kadaster International

**Speakers:** Mr Abdul Hakim Elwaer, FAO Assistant Director General, Regional Representative for Near East and North Africa; Ms Fidaa Haddad, Senior Programme Officer, FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa; Mr Naoufel Ben Haha, Director of the Forestry Directorate, Ministry of Agriculture, Tunisia; Mr Ahmed Alnagar, Director of the Animal Wealth Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in the Sultanate of Oman; Mr George Mitri, Professor of Environmental Sciences, Director, Land & Natural Resources Program, Institute of the Environment, University of Balamand, Lebanon; Ms Shahd Mustafa, Regional Coordinator, Europe, Middle East & North Africa, International Land Coalition (ILC); Mr Mauro Centritto, Research Director of the Institute for Sustainable Plant Protection-National Research Council, Italy; Mr. Mahmoud Fathallah, Director of Department of Environmental and Meteorological Affairs, League of Arab States (LAS)

### Introduction

This session addressed the environmental challenges in the Near East and North Africa regions and examined why many restoration efforts have not produced effective results. Despite commitments under the Rio Conventions, countries faced difficulties in translating these into practical actions due to limited investment, weak political commitment and inadequate community engagement. The session emphasized the need for a regional investment framework under the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration that aligns national development goals with ecosystem restoration priorities. Discussions focused on creating innovative partnerships and strengthening collaboration to support restoration efforts, with a

particular focus on addressing land tenure issues. Presenters highlighted the importance of involving local communities and generating employment opportunities for women and youth as key components of sustainable restoration. Technical support mechanisms and policy strategies were also discussed to overcome investment barriers and foster long-term success in environmental restoration across the region.

### Summary

The Near East and North Africa (NENA) region is experiencing a multifaceted crisis where environmental degradation intersects with social and economic instability. This "poly-crisis" is characterized by escalating food insecurity, widespread land degradation,

water scarcity, biodiversity loss and deeply rooted governance challenges. Despite a significant dependency on natural resources and agriculture, especially smallholder farming, the region remains underfunded, underprepared and under-coordinated in responding to the escalating environmental and socio-economic threats.



Figure 18: Investment Pathways for Ecosystem Restoration in the Near East and North Africa.

The NENA region has one of the world's lowest levels of land designated for restoration, with only 4 per cent earmarked for recovery, and faces a USD 332 billion funding gap to meet commitments under the Rio Conventions by 2030. A major contributor to environmental stress is unsustainable land and water management practices. Nearly 45 per cent of agricultural land in the region is severely degraded, limiting productivity and compounding the impacts of climate change, including desertification, droughts and wildfires.

Afforestation efforts in rangelands have been counterproductive when implemented without ecological consideration or consultation with pastoralist communities, threatening biodiversity and disrupting

traditional livelihoods. Restoration in areas affected by forest fires, especially in Lebanon, is further complicated by weak governance, unclear land tenure and climate-driven hydrological shifts such as flash floods and soil erosion.

Mediterranean drylands, ranging from arid to hyper-arid zones, are at high risk, with projections indicating up to a billion hectares of land could be degraded by 2030. These fragile ecosystems require urgent interventions focused on soil fertility, water conservation, and sustainable land-use practices.

Socio-economic disparities exacerbate environmental issues. Youth unemployment in the region is the highest globally, and women face 75 per cent unemployment, due in part to limited access to land, resources, and decision-making platforms. Smallholder farmers, responsible for 80 per cent of the region's food production, operate under outdated practices, with weak market connections and minimal investment support, further deepening rural poverty.

Land governance systems are often fragmented or outdated. Customary tenure systems, especially in rangelands, can conflict with formal governance, creating tension and inefficiencies. In some cases, state control or privatization of lands has alienated pastoral communities and disrupted long-standing socio-economic arrangements.

Post-fire restoration and rehabilitation efforts in countries like Lebanon have been hindered by land tenure disputes and the lack of policy coordination, despite the worsening fire risks and climate vulnerabilities. Moreover,



national climate and restoration strategies often fail to integrate private sector participation or align with community needs, weakening long-term impact and buy-in.

Water scarcity remains a core challenge, with climate change reducing rainfall and increasing the severity of droughts. Non-conventional water resources, such as desalinated water, brackish groundwater, treated wastewater and rainwater harvesting, offer promising alternatives. Projects across the region have demonstrated success with such sources when combined with techniques like managed aquifer recharge and agroforestry. The adoption of climate-smart agriculture, including water-efficient irrigation and drought-resistant crops, has shown potential to simultaneously enhance food security and ecosystem restoration. However, widespread adoption is hindered by a lack of investment, training and community engagement.

Despite the urgency, the region receives only 6.6 per cent of global climate finance, with an annual funding gap of over USD 330 billion. A more equitable distribution of climate funds is essential, considering the region's acute vulnerability to environmental stressors. Efforts such as the MENA Regional Investment Framework, developed by organizations like FAO and UNEP, aim to integrate ecosystem restoration with social and economic development. However, implementation is hampered by fragmented policies, limited technical capacity and poor alignment between national priorities and international commitments.

## Recommendations

*Integrated and community-driven restoration:* Ensure that ecosystem restoration aligns with local needs by engaging communities in the planning, implementation and monitoring stages. Promote community-led restoration to secure social stability, improve livelihoods and enhance ecological resilience.

*Innovation in land and water management:* Support the adoption of non-conventional water sources such as treated wastewater and rainwater harvesting. Encourage climate-smart agriculture, including the use of renewable energy, water-efficient irrigation and drought-tolerant crops.

*Support for women and youth:* Prioritize women and youth in restoration efforts, particularly in job creation through sustainable agriculture, eco-tourism and forestry. Foster inclusive socio-technical approaches that integrate scientific and traditional knowledge.

*Secure and inclusive land governance:* Promote people-centered land governance that respects customary systems and avoids conflicts with pastoralist communities. Support legal and policy reforms that clarify land tenure, particularly in rangelands and post-fire landscapes.

*Scaling up financing:* Diversify funding sources by leveraging public-private partnerships and innovative financing tools. Improve coordination of existing funds and ensure alignment with national priorities for maximum impact. Advocate for a fairer share of global climate finance for the MENA region, based on its vulnerability and needs.

*Regional collaboration and knowledge sharing:* Create unified frameworks for knowledge sharing, monitoring and reporting on restoration efforts to enhance transparency and accountability. Scale successful restoration models and share lessons learned across borders to foster regional solidarity.

*Long-term investment in mediterranean drylands:* Develop nature-based solutions tailored to dryland ecosystems through

collaboration with NGOs, the private sector and policymakers. Foster co-research programs that assess the ecological and social outcomes of interventions in drylands.

*Post-fire restoration focus:* Prioritize post-fire rehabilitation, especially in vulnerable areas like Lebanon, using a blend of scientific methods and traditional practices. Utilize remote sensing and artificial intelligence (AI) to monitor land degradation and support targeted, efficient restoration interventions.

## Technical Session: Land-based Financing and Land Valuation Solutions

**Organizer:** UN-Habitat

**Chair:** Ahmed Rezk, Head of Country Programme, UN-Habitat Egypt

**Speakers:** Luay Ahmad, PhD researcher Beijing Jiaotong University; Elnazir Ahmed Ramadan, Associate Professor of Geography, Department of Geography and Urban Sustainability, Al Ain, UAE; Othmane Fahim, Technical Advisor, BGF, GIZ and Abdelali Taouss, Land Administration Consultant, GOPA; Shaden El Galaly, Middle East and North Africa City Advisor, GCoM-Gap Fund Partnership, Global Covenant of Mayors



Figure 19: Technical Session: Land-based Financing and Land Valuation Solutions.

## **Introduction**

This session focused on the role of land-based financing and valuation strategies in supporting sustainable urban development amid rapid urbanization. It emphasized land value capture (LVC) as a key tool that allows governments to recover and reinvest the increased land value resulting from public infrastructure projects such as transit-oriented development. LVC was presented as a means to finance urban improvements and promote equitable growth. However, the session also addressed significant challenges to implementing LVC in regions with weak land governance systems, including regulatory, technical and institutional barriers. Discussions featured practical examples and case studies, including experiences from Sudan where governance issues influenced the application of LVC. Participants examined how integrating LVC with transit-oriented development can enhance urban financing strategies. The session aimed to identify practical, locally adapted solutions and foster collaboration among policymakers, land experts and urban planners to unlock the potential of land-based financing in addressing infrastructure needs and managing urban growth.

## **Summary**

Urbanization in the MENA region, as elsewhere, is accelerating, placing increasing pressure on cities to develop infrastructure, improve public services, and respond to climate challenges. A central theme in recent discussions has been the strategic use of Land Value Capture (LVC) mechanisms, particularly when integrated with Transit-Oriented

Development (TOD) and advanced land governance systems, to mobilize sustainable urban financing. Case studies and presentations from Sudan, Morocco and broader MENA and international contexts highlighted innovative approaches, systemic obstacles and strategic opportunities.

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) offers a model for maximizing land use efficiency around transport networks. When integrated with LVC frameworks, TOD can generate significant land value increases, which governments can then recapture and reinvest in infrastructure, housing or public services. The model operates on a cycle: public transport investments boost land values, which are captured through tools like property taxes or development fees and redirected into city improvements. This mutually reinforcing cycle enhances urban sustainability and equity. An example discussed in the session came from China, where a rail-and-property model was used to finance transit systems through land value uplift. Presenters emphasized that while TOD-LVC integration can improve transportation access and housing equity, it requires strong planning, supportive policies and administrative coordination.

Sudan's local governments face acute challenges in implementing LVC due to fragmented legal frameworks, limited resources and weak institutional capacity. Urban migration has further strained local governance, often leading to the short-term sale of public land to finance basic infrastructure. These stopgap measures hinder long-term planning and sustainable growth. Proposed interventions for Sudan

include modernizing land administration systems, strengthening local governance institutions, increasing stakeholder participation and creating legal clarity and unifying frameworks for land management.

Morocco has made notable strides in digitalizing municipal land management. A pilot project across eight communities employed GIS tools and census data to map land use, document public land occupation, and improve tax collection. The introduction of a Communal Intelligence System enabled more accurate property valuations and better monitoring of tax compliance. These efforts have supported a transition toward a communal land registration system and demonstrated how technology can streamline revenue mobilization.

Despite this progress, presenters emphasized that digitalization is a tool, not a solution in itself. The success of such systems depends on institutional coordination, clear policies, and continued investment in human and technical capacity.

A prominent initiative discussed was the City Climate Finance Gap Fund (CCFGF), which helps cities in early-stage project development for climate-resilient urban infrastructure. By supporting the preparation of climate-smart investment proposals, the fund helps cities access larger pools of financing from multilateral institutions or private investors. Cities like Fez and Chefchaouen in Morocco have benefitted from such support. The Gap Fund also addresses misalignments between local climate projects and national priorities by facilitating technical assistance, prioritization

frameworks, and stronger linkages between city authorities and financial institutions. The fund's eligibility criteria emphasize local ownership, urban classification, and a clear climate component in the proposed projects.

Several consistent challenges emerged across case studies and regional contexts: legal and administrative barriers, including vague LVC definitions, centralized decision-making and conflicting regulations limit effective implementation; capacity gaps, as many local governments lack the technical and financial capacity to manage land systems or design LVC policies; equity and social risks, as LVC and TOD initiatives can inadvertently cause displacement or widen inequality without inclusive planning; and limited private sector integration, which, despite its potential, remains underutilized in ecosystem restoration and land development financing frameworks.

## **Recommendations**

*Policy and legal reform:* Establish clear, unified legal frameworks to support LVC and land-based financing. Harmonize land use regulations across governance levels to reduce administrative fragmentation.

*Institutional capacity building:* Invest in the technical training of local government staff to manage digital land systems and design equitable LVC policies. Support institutional reforms that empower municipalities to lead infrastructure planning and revenue mobilization.

*Digitalization and technology use:* Expand the use of GIS tools and digital land inventories to enhance transparency, improve tax collection,

and support evidence-based planning. Develop smart taxation systems, such as Computer-Assisted Mass Appraisal (CAMA), to optimize land valuation and taxation accuracy.

*Inclusive and participatory planning:* Engage communities, civil society, and private stakeholders in LVC planning to ensure equitable value distribution. Incorporate social safeguards to prevent displacement and promote affordability in TOD areas.

*Strengthening partnerships:* Leverage partnerships like the City Climate Finance Gap

Fund to access technical support and bridge financing gaps. Facilitate cross-sector collaboration between urban planners, financial institutions and environmental agencies.

*Integration with climate and sustainability goals:* Align urban financing tools with broader sustainability objectives, including climate adaptation, emissions reduction and biodiversity preservation. Integrate LVC and TOD within national and local climate strategies to foster co-benefits and long-term resilience.

## Capturing Urbanization Values through Land-use Planning and Land Management in Egypt

**Organizers:** UN-Habitat Egypt, Urban Development Fund, General Organization for Physical Planning

**Chair:** Ahmed Rezk, Country Programme Manager, UN-Habitat Egypt

**Speakers:** Dr. Khaled Abdelhalim, Governor of Qena, Egyptian Government; Dr Ayman El Shehaby, Governor of Damietta, Egyptian Government; Eng. Alaa Abdelfattah, Assistant Minister of Local Development, Egypt; Eng. Khaled Sedik, Chairman of Urban Development Fund; Eng. Hesham Gohar, Head of Central Administration of Project Studies, Planning and Design of Urban Development Fund; Eng. Elham Kassem, Head of General Organization for Physical Planning Chairperson Officer and National Project Manager of Hayenna Project, Egypt

### Introduction

This session explored Egypt's approach to urban regeneration through land-use planning and land management. It highlighted how these tools supported funding for city-wide development and helped advance the Sustainable Development Goals in urban areas. Participants examined the "Participatory City-Wide Urban Upgrading Project" implemented with the Urban

Development Fund, which introduced innovative tools to optimize land value, reduce inequalities and improve urban living conditions. The session also showcased financing mechanisms designed to ensure the social, financial and environmental feasibility of development projects. Additionally, the Hayenna project, carried out in cooperation with the General Organization for Physical Planning, presented land readjustment and land value capture as key strategies for



inclusive and self-financed urban regeneration. The project applied the Participatory and Inclusive Land Readjustment (PILaR) tool alongside a local economic development strategy and innovative resource mobilization plans. Discussions focused on cross-learning and adapting these experiences to broader urban development contexts across the region.

## Summary

The session explored Egypt's approach to advancing urban regeneration by optimizing land values through strategic planning and financing mechanisms. It provided a platform for cross-learning and emphasized the role of land-use planning and management in fostering sustainable urban development, ensuring financial viability and accelerating progress toward the SDGs.

Two UN-Habitat projects were highlighted:

- The Participatory City-Wide Urban Upgrading Project in Egypt, implemented with the Urban Development Fund (UDF), which focuses on city-wide urban upgrading through innovative planning and financing tools.
- The Hayenna Project, implemented with GOPP and funded by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), Government of Switzerland, which applies land readjustment and land value capture strategies to enhance urban development in Egyptian cities.

Urban development in Egypt faces several interconnected challenges. Many areas, particularly informal and unplanned settlements, require significant investment to

improve infrastructure and living conditions. While financial resources exist, their centralized nature often slows down local-level implementation. Ensuring that funds such as the betterment levy are reinvested in the same areas remains a key concern. Additionally, gaps between urban planning and financial mechanisms have, in some cases, delayed the implementation of development plans, leading to informal urban expansion. Local authorities also require further capacity-building to manage development projects effectively and leverage available financial tools. Moreover, the evolving urban landscape necessitates updates to existing urban plans, legal frameworks and planning regulations to align with current needs. In coastal and historic cities, the complexity of urban challenges is further heightened by environmental vulnerabilities and the need to balance heritage preservation with economic development opportunities.



Figure 20: Capturing Urbanization Values through Land-use Planning and Land Management in Egypt.

## Recommendations

*Enhance financial and economic tools for urban development:* Adopt innovative



financial instruments, including land value capture and cross-financing within city development plans. Explore alternative property funds to leverage assets in both the private and public sectors.

*Advance land management strategies:* Implement participatory land readjustment to improve infrastructure provision and urban regeneration. Strengthen land tenure documentation and cadastral mapping, and ensure easier building permit processes.

*Strengthen governance and institutional frameworks:* Update planning and building regulations to align with modern urban challenges. Introduce and disseminate updated urban planning manuals with

implementable tools such as land readjustment. Promote public-private partnerships in urban project management.

*Improve data and digital tools for urban planning:* Develop up-to-date GIS databases for cities to support effective decision-making and planning. Ensure systematic data collection to monitor the impact of urban policies on economic growth and gross domestic product (GDP).

The session underscored the importance of integrated and participatory approaches to urban planning, combining financial innovation, governance reform and data-driven decision-making to support sustainable and inclusive urban regeneration.

## Land Sector Innovation

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### High-Level Session: Land Sector Innovation for Sustainable Investments and Housing

**Organizer:** UN-Habitat

**Chair:** Mr. Khalifa Alsuwaidi, CEO and Board Member of Emirates Real Estate Solutions (UAE)

**Speakers:** Ms. Badria Benjelloun, Director of Urban Planning, Ministry of National Territory and Urban Planning Housing and City Policy, Morocco; Ms. Joan Kagwanja, Chief, Land and Agricultural Transformation (LAT) Coordinator for the African Land Policy Center (ALPC), UNECA; Mr. Khaled Seddik Ebrahim, Chairman, Urban Development Fund, Egypt; Ms. Claudine El Karaki, Senior Advisor to the Minister of Finance, Lebanon; Ms. Mariam Jaajaa, General Manager, Arab Group for the Protection of Nature, Jordan



Figure 21: High-Level Panel Discussion: Land Sector Innovation for Sustainable Investments and Housing.

## Introduction

This session examined how technological innovations have supported the modernization of land management and urban development. Participants discussed how tools such as GIS, 3D cadastres and artificial intelligence have improved data quality and transparency, helping safeguard residents' rights, reduce urban sprawl and stimulate real estate growth. Ministers and high-level representatives shared experiences on using digital transformation to support sustainable investment and housing. The session highlighted how these tools contributed to stronger land tenure security, economic development and improved coordination between stakeholders. Emphasis was placed on the potential of digital solutions to create a more inclusive and efficient land sector that addresses pressing challenges in both urban and rural areas.

## Summary

Land governance in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is facing mounting pressure from rapid urbanization, land scarcity, climate change and socio-political instability. In response, governments are turning to digital tools and reforms to improve land administration, promote sustainable development and attract investment. However, while digitalization offers new opportunities, it also introduces new challenges, including capacity constraints, risks of marginalization and potential misuse.

Land in the MENA region is becoming increasingly scarce, expensive and difficult to access. Urbanization, projected to continue until at least 2050 in many Arab countries, places immense pressure on limited land resources. Governments face ongoing tension between competing land uses for agriculture, industry and housing, each of which is vital to economic and social stability. Strategic

allocation is further complicated by climate change impacts that reduce the viability of land for farming and increase development costs in vulnerable areas.

Accessing land for urban or industrial development often requires expensive infrastructure upgrades to roads, utilities and public services, which governments struggle to finance without reliable revenue from land or adequate private sector participation. This creates barriers to both small-scale local development and larger national investment initiatives.

A large portion of land in the region remains unregistered or is subject to unclear ownership, inheritance disputes and multiple claims. Customary tenure systems often coexist with formal legal systems, leading to confusion and inefficiencies in land administration. The lack of comprehensive land use maps further complicates planning and development.

Secure land tenure is lacking, particularly for marginalized communities, smallholder farmers and informal urban dwellers. In contexts where land is informally held or undocumented, rights are vulnerable to expropriation or exclusion during formalization and digitization processes. In conflict-affected areas, such as Palestine and Sudan, land rights are also deeply tied to political sovereignty and national identity.

Despite the growing emphasis on digital reform, many countries lack the institutional and human resource capacity to adopt and maintain new systems. This includes limited training, outdated bureaucratic procedures,

and fragmented governance structures, which hinder implementation.

Digital transformation risks excluding local communities, particularly where literacy, access and technical understanding are low. There are also warnings against the use of digital platforms to facilitate large-scale land acquisitions and land grabbing by powerful investors, undermining food security and local autonomy.

Reforms often falter due to a lack of political will or coherent leadership. Where governments fail to engage civil society or prioritize land reform, the process becomes vulnerable to corruption, elite capture or stagnation. The absence of coordination between the private sector, civil society and government actors limits the ability to implement complementary land projects.

Countries across the MENA region are responding to these challenges with varying strategies:

Morocco has advanced regionalization efforts and developed a strategic digital transformation roadmap to reduce geographic and sectoral disparities. Its initiatives include digitizing land registration systems, employing drones and satellite imagery for urban planning and creating a national digital platform for tracking land use and property development.

Egypt has focused on using tablets and dashboards for land monitoring, converting underutilized land to public use and introducing QR codes and national identifiers for property. These tools support transparency and provide investors with clear

information on land availability and ownership.

Lebanon, despite its ongoing crises, has pushed forward with digital land registries, blockchain applications and smart housing initiatives. It provides online access to property transactions and investor data, reducing corruption and increasing affordability for vulnerable groups.

Palestine and Jordan are using satellite mapping, remote sensing and mobile applications to document land rights and ensure local communities can access data and services. These tools help align infrastructure development with household needs, even in politically contested or resource-poor environments.

Ethiopia and Rwanda were noted for converting informal settlements into structured developments using participatory mapping tools while protecting the rights of displaced communities.

Concerns were shared that adopting innovations that do not serve social, cultural, economic and political justice, including the right to tenure security may lead to land grabbing, and that land sovereignty and food sovereignty should be prioritized.

## **Recommendations**

*Establish clear legal frameworks for land tenure:* Reform land registration systems, clarify inheritance rules and resolve multiple claims through digitized, standardized processes. Implement one-stop shops, blockchain solutions and national numbering systems for properties to improve ownership clarity.

*Integrate digital reform with legal and institutional change:* Digital transformation must be accompanied by legal updates and institutional reorganization, particularly at regional and local levels. Develop regulations and charters to govern investments and land allocation fairly and transparently, reducing disparities between regions.

*Build human and technical capacity:* Invest in training programs for government officials, engineers, and local actors to manage and utilize digital land management tools. Ensure adequate financial and institutional support for digital infrastructure and innovation across sectors.

*Safeguard local communities and prevent marginalization:* Ensure digital transformation is not imposed top-down; include communities in design, decision-making and implementation processes. Use technology to document and protect the rights of vulnerable groups, including customary land users and displaced populations. Support grassroots initiatives and agricultural investments that keep small farmers and rural communities on their land.

*Link land use to broader development goals:* Use digital tools to repurpose underutilized urban land and align planning with economic, housing and climate goals. Facilitate public-private partnerships to increase access to productive land and generate sustainable jobs, especially in agriculture and green industries. Align investments with the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests and adhere to extraterritorial state obligations.

*Ensure transparency and public access to information:* Use portals and dashboards to allow citizens as well as state actors to access land data, fees and registration status, supporting transparency and reducing corruption. Scan and archive paper records, satellite imagery and historical data to create comprehensive, accessible land databases.

*Foster regional cooperation and knowledge sharing:* Countries should collaborate at the national and regional levels to share best practices, tools and lessons learned. Use platforms like the African Union's land governance committees to harmonize standards and support regional integration.

*Leverage digital tools for conflict management:* Use technology to document land rights before conflict arises to prevent future disputes. Apply remote sensing,

surface mapping and AI to manage post-conflict land recovery and prevent elite capture or exploitation.

*Balance investment with sovereignty and sustainability:* Strengthen land sovereignty mechanisms, including historical observatories, to protect natural resources and traditional land users. Avoid over-reliance on foreign investment by ensuring development projects are aligned with national priorities and food security needs.

*Maintain cultural relevance and local adaptability:* Digital and legal innovations should reflect local cultural norms, avoiding one-size-fits-all approaches imported from other regions. Support grassroots innovation that emerges from local communities, reinforcing context-appropriate solutions to land governance.

## Technical Session: Innovative Solutions for Land Management and Property Registration

**Organizer:** UN-Habitat

**Chair:** Dr. Diane Dumashie, International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) President

**Speakers:** Mr. Hussin Mohamed Hussin, Land Administration Specialist, World Bank Middle East & North Africa; Mr. Nair Aboubacar Allaoui, Head of the Cartography Unit of the Department of Regional Planning and Urban Development, Comoros; Mr. Anloui Mbae Soilihi, Head of the Data Collection Unit of the Cartography Unit, Ministry of Territorial Planning, Comoros; Mr. Haitham Ayed Al Hamamda, Al Quds University, Palestine; Mr. Francesco Tonnarelli, Tallinn University of Technology; Mr. Mohamed Elwathig, Legal Consultant, Abu Dhabi Emirate

### Introduction

This session addressed the importance of secure land and property rights for socio-economic development in the Arab region. It explored how such rights enable investment,

support private-sector growth through collateral-based lending and contribute to government revenues. Participants noted that secure tenure also promotes equity and reduces social tensions. Despite increasing



awareness of these benefits, challenges remained due to fragmented legal frameworks, outdated registration systems and weak digital records that lack legal authority. These issues limited trust in official systems and restricted access to land data for financing and investment. The session presented forward-looking tools and successful case studies from Arab countries, including fit-for-purpose land administration techniques and spatial planning approaches. Discussions focused on aligning land governance with national development goals and highlighted innovative strategies to improve land records, strengthen institutions and modernize land management across the region.



Figure 22: Technical Session on Innovative solutions for land management and property registration.

## Summary

Egypt faces significant challenges due to rapid population growth, with most people concentrated in cities. Despite building new cities, only 10 per cent of the population increase has been accommodated. To address these challenges, Egypt is pursuing a "land revolution" with plans for megacities, new city management platforms and spatial plans to link cities. Law reforms have been issued to

address inheritance issues, and a unified first-registration template simplifies property registration. Egypt is also leveraging drone technology to map cities and identify vacant plots for development.

Comoros grapples with demographic pressures, overuse of national resources and unauthorized occupation of public land. Cultural resistance to technological change also hinders progress. To improve land management, Comoros is using aerial images for mapping inaccessible areas and plans to replace outdated imagery with updated drone footage. These technologies aim to create an accurate land information base and enhance data transparency and accuracy.

Palestine faces a lack of comprehensive land data, inefficient use of existing data by institutions, limited government-private sector coordination and a shortage of skilled human resources. To overcome these issues, a unified digital land infrastructure is proposed to support sustainable development. Additionally, creating a centralized property and land bank for both private and government land would streamline data management.

Somalia faces fragmented land administration systems, where advanced tax databases in Bosaso are not integrated with paper-based systems in land units. Refugee camps are not mapped by the land revenue department, and an overly simplified taxation system encourages development at the expense of tax revenue. Somalia also heavily depends on donor funding. Recommendations include adopting Fit-For-Purpose (FFP) land administration, increasing the detail of land



information through subsequent surveys and developing unified strategies with integration, standards and capacity-building initiatives. Long-term investments are crucial to ensure sustainability.

## **Recommendations**

*Develop integrated urban and spatial plans:* Implement megacities and interconnected spatial strategies to accommodate population growth and improve land use efficiency.

*Modernize land registration and legal frameworks:* Reform land and inheritance laws and introduce standardized, simplified property registration systems to increase legal clarity and accessibility.

*Leverage geospatial technologies:* Use drone and aerial imagery for accurate land mapping, identification of vacant or underutilized land and improved urban planning and monitoring.

*Establish unified digital land information systems:* Create centralized, digital platforms

for managing land data across institutions, ensuring consistency, accessibility and informed decision-making.

*Create centralized land and property banks:* Develop repositories to manage both public and private land, improving coordination, transparency and strategic allocation.

*Adopt fit-for-purpose land administration:* Implement flexible, phased approaches tailored to country-specific needs, including incremental surveying and mapping strategies.

*Strengthen institutional capacity and coordination:* Enhance coordination among government bodies and build technical and human resource capacity to manage land systems effectively.

*Ensure sustainable and transparent land governance:* Promote long-term investments in land administration, reduce donor dependency and improve transparency to build public trust and support sustainable development.

## **Knowledge and Information**

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### **Cross-country Knowledge Exchange in Land Governance Projects**

**Organizers:** Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), KIT Institute, Land Research Center (LRC), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN-Habitat

**Chair:** Ms. Rebecca Rosario Hallin, Knowledge Management Focal Point & Gender Advisor, KIT Institute, the Netherlands

**Speakers:** Dr. Mohamed Alsalmiya, Project Manager, LRC; Ms. Federica Acquaviva, Monitoring & Research Officer, IOM; Mr. Karel Boers, Programme Coordinator, IOM; Ms. Yasmeen Fahmy, Communication and agriculture digitalization expert, GIZ; Mr. Ahmed Maher, Land Use Consolidation (LUC) Advisor, Agriculture Innovation Project (AIP) GIZ; Ms. Aoife Ossendorp, Programme Advisor, Land-at-Scale, RVO; Mr. Javier Prieto, Programme Manager, UN-Habitat; Dr. Thameen Saleh Hijawi, Senior Technical Advisor and Academic Expert, Al Quds University



Figure 23: Cross-country knowledge exchange in Land Governance projects.

## Introduction

This session highlighted how a robust knowledge management component can leverage experiences across different themes, countries and regions to support diverse partners in advancing their respective projects through mutual learning. It brought together land governance practitioners from Egypt, Iraq, Palestine and Somalia and addressed several of the conference themes including housing, land and property (HLP) solutions for displacement and crisis, smart solutions for property registration, women and land rights and the integration of the private sector into these efforts. Experiences from the LAND-at-Scale program, spanning 12

countries from Colombia in the west to Iraq in the east, were shared. The program aims to scale up land governance initiatives to promote more sustainable and efficient use of land and natural resources. A core element of LAND-at-Scale is its knowledge management (KM) component which facilitates knowledge exchange and creation across countries and contexts while supporting adaptive programming.

## Summary

Knowledge management (KM) is viewed as a mechanism for capturing lessons and a fundamental driver of long-term impact, adaptability and systemic change. Case

studies illustrate how diverse and context-specific KM strategies can address complex land governance challenges while reinforcing local capacity and institutional learning.

Egypt's KM efforts emphasize participatory and consultative approaches in agricultural land use consolidation. With rapid population growth and fragmented land ownership, one key challenge is raising awareness among farmers about land governance. Egypt follows a four-phase sustainability framework: initiation, inception, harmonization and maturity. KM is being embedded through integrated data systems and targeted education to improve decision-making. Tools like drone mapping are used to identify land for development and involve farmers in planning processes.

In Iraq, KM extends beyond data accumulation to emphasize long-term institutional learning. The country uses key performance indicators (KPIs) to track project impacts, but KM success hinges on transferring insights in ways that inform broader systems change. Iraq's experience underlines the need to move from project-specific learning to institutional integration. Tools such as the UN-Habitat Knowledge Management framework are used to track outcomes, and there is an emphasis on developing structured, adaptable KM mechanisms within government systems.

Palestine integrates KM through educational and community outreach initiatives. These include awareness campaigns, legal training and academic programs, such as a master's degree in land governance. The aim is to build a future cadre of professionals who are

equipped to manage land systems sustainably. KM activities are targeted at universities, civil society and legal professionals, ensuring that knowledge is adapted for different audiences and institutionalized through curricula and research collaboration.

Somalia's KM approach links land tenure security directly to displacement dynamics. Research shows that securing housing is a stronger determinant for community stability among displaced populations than even employment opportunities. The country's KM strategy includes longitudinal studies and academic research, and highlights the importance of secure registration systems. However, limitations persist due to Somalia's fragmented land administration and reliance on donor funding. Institutionalizing KM in policy design and implementation is seen as essential for supporting vulnerable communities and improving land governance structures.

The broader discussion emphasized KM as essential for structuring learning, ensuring adaptability and scaling successful interventions. Effective KM is characterized by five core principles: openness – sharing experiences to build a collaborative knowledge base; flexibility – allowing projects to pivot as realities change; sustainability – ensuring long-term accessibility and usefulness of knowledge; scalability – expanding local innovations to regional or national levels; and commitment – embedding learning and adaptation as ongoing priorities. These principles ensure that KM is not limited to data collection or end-of-project evaluations but actively drives

adaptive programming and informed policymaking.

Several challenges limit the impact of KM in land governance. One issue is sustainability beyond project cycles: once external funding ends, many KM initiatives risk discontinuation without institutional backing. There is also a lack of structured modalities; cross-country learning often remains ad hoc, lacking the structured platforms needed for broader replication. There is a disconnect between documentation and action, and while many projects collect and publish findings, these insights do not always translate into policy shifts or practical interventions. There is also limited institutional embedding, as KM is often treated as an auxiliary activity rather than a core function of implementing institutions, making long-term integration difficult.

## **Recommendations**

*Institutionalize knowledge management:* Embed KM within government agencies, academic institutions and civil society organizations to ensure sustainability and continuity beyond donor-driven project timelines.

*Integrate KM into education and training:* Expand academic programs in land governance, and integrate practical learning modules into legal, engineering and planning

curricula to build long-term professional capacity.

*Establish participatory knowledge platforms:* Create platforms that engage a broad range of stakeholders from smallholder farmers to policymakers to ensure KM is inclusive and grounded in local realities.

*Strengthen data systems and dissemination tools:* Develop robust tools for data collection, visualization and analysis to support evidence-based decision-making and transparent governance.

*Encourage cross-country learning:* Develop structured regional knowledge-sharing mechanisms such as webinars, digital libraries and collaborative workshops to facilitate cross-country learning and adaptation.

*Support adaptive programming:* Use KM to guide real-time project adjustments. Embed flexibility into project design, enabling learning from failures and rapid iteration of solutions.

*Promote research-driven interventions:* Use academic research and impact assessments to inform policy development and to adapt interventions based on longitudinal insights.

*Ensure donor support for long-term KM:* Encourage donor agencies to provide flexible, long-term funding for KM initiatives to foster innovation, reflection and continuity in land governance systems.

# Data Collaboratives and Tools for Resilience in the Arab Region

**Organizer:** Land Portal Foundation

**Chair:** Dina Naguib, Arab States Coordinator, Land Portal Foundation

**Speakers:** Dina Naguib, Arab States Coordinator, Land Portal Foundation; Shahd Mustafa, Europe, Middle East and North Africa Regional Coordinator, International Land Coalition (ILC); Eva Hershaw, Global Data and Land Monitoring Lead, ILC; Salwa Saidi, Associate Professor of Geomatics, Hydrogeology and Environmental Sciences, Tunis El Manar University; Thameen Hijawi, Associate Professor of Agricultural Economics and Social Sciences, Al Quds University

## Introduction

This session explored how land data can help address key challenges in the Arab region, including climate change, social inequality and conflict-related displacement. Experts highlighted major gaps in land data, worsened by closed systems that limit access and hinder informed decision-making. The session introduced Data Collaboratives as a promising model for improving land use monitoring, securing land rights and promoting accountability.



Figure 24: Dina Naguib, Arab States Coordinator, Land Portal Foundation.

The European Commission Data Partnership served as a case study, involving organizations such as the International Land Coalition, Land Portal, Prindex and Land Matrix. Speakers emphasized the value of collaboration over

isolated efforts and discussed tools like the SOLIndex, Land Matrix, Prindex, Landex and LandMark. These tools provide insights into land issues and support more equitable and resilient land governance. The session stressed the need to turn data transparency into practical action to close information gaps and support marginalized groups across the region.

## Summary

Several innovative platforms were highlighted for their role in improving land governance. These tools are designed to track, visualize and democratize land-related data:

- Google Earth Engine was used in Tunisia to monitor land cover and urban expansion, demonstrating the potential of remote sensing to inform planning and policy.
- LandMark, an online platform mapping Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' lands, aims to extend beyond geographic data to support advocacy, knowledge creation and community empowerment. While it currently lacks some data layers in the MENA region, it presents a promising opportunity to include diverse tenure systems and rangelands.

- Land Portal and LANDex focus on democratizing land data and evaluating national governance performance. Land Portal promotes public debate and open access to land information, while LANDex evaluates governance through ten people-centered dimensions, offering insights that connect civil society and state actors. LANDex has evolved to include youth and environmental dimensions, enhancing its relevance in broader development agendas.
- SOLIndex, a global index, measures how open and complete land data is at the national level, assessing it across legal frameworks, tenure, use, development and value. This tool highlights the accountability of governments regarding their land data infrastructure.
- In Tunisia, a Ministry of Agriculture platform was launched to visualize urbanization and vegetation indexes. This case illustrates how government-academia partnerships can ensure data-driven decision-making and cross-validate research outcomes with socio-economic realities.

Despite the existence of many land-related data initiatives, a major barrier identified across the Arab region is fragmentation. Land data is often collected and maintained in institutional silos, with limited sharing between agencies or with civil society.

In Palestine, for instance, numerous institutions hold valuable land-related data, but this information is underused due to weak inter-institutional coordination and limited public engagement. A dedicated program was

launched to bridge these gaps by providing scholarships to civil servants who are tasked with enhancing data collaboration. This initiative focuses on integrating existing data repositories to create more coherent and impactful land governance policies.

Another example comes from the Palestinian Land Research Center, which developed a master's course to equip civil servants with the skills to effectively use existing land data for policymaking. The course aims to foster a new generation of public servants who can connect fragmented datasets and translate them into citizen-centered outcomes.

Several presenters stressed the value of "people's data" in shaping inclusive land governance frameworks. Platforms like LANDex are intentionally designed to include non-state perspectives, making them valuable not only for data collection but also for initiating dialogue between governments and civil society organizations (CSOs). The integration of citizen-generated indicators can ensure that data reflects lived realities, and not just institutional priorities.

The need for a bottom-up approach was echoed during concerns raised about the risks of mapping sensitive areas or making vulnerable communities visible. While data transparency is crucial, it must be accompanied by safeguards to protect communities from potential harm, particularly in politically sensitive regions.

The involvement of academic institutions emerged as a key enabler of more robust land governance systems. Universities were recognized not only as hubs for technical research and training, but also as neutral



brokers that can support cross-sectoral dialogue. Courses, such as the land governance master's program in Palestine, are examples of how academia can help institutionalize knowledge and build long-term capacity in public administration.

Additionally, academic research was noted for its role in developing and validating new platforms such as the urbanization index in Tunisia by combining technical data with socio-economic variables. These partnerships are vital for ensuring that land-related decisions are based on credible, cross-validated evidence.

## **Recommendations**

*Operationalize legal frameworks for data sharing:* Governments should enact and enforce regulations that enable data exchange between institutions and with the public. This includes defining clear roles, responsibilities and safeguards for data use.

*Improve national data portals:* Enhance the usability, accessibility and interoperability of existing land data portals to ensure they serve both institutional and public needs.

*Publicize existing data:* Increase the visibility and usability of data already in the public

domain by promoting open access platforms and user-friendly visualizations.

*Strengthen institutional collaboration:* Encourage partnerships between government agencies, civil society and academia to reduce fragmentation and ensure coordinated land governance approaches.

*Expand and support people-centered data initiatives:* Include citizen-generated data and local knowledge in land governance frameworks to ensure that policies reflect on-the-ground realities.

*Support capacity building through education:* Invest in academic programs and training for civil servants and data professionals to improve the use and interpretation of land data for policy and planning.

*Enhance regional data coverage:* Address current data gaps in the Arab region, especially related to mobile communities, rangelands and differentiated resource rights such as forest or grazing rights.

*Balance transparency with protection:* Promote open data while ensuring that mapped information, especially concerning marginalized groups, is protected from misuse or exploitation.

## Addressing Land Governance Challenges: Launch of the Arab World Academic Network of Excellence

**Organizer:** Al-Quds University, Palestine; Cairo University, Egypt; University of Duhok, Iraq; Arab Land Initiative Hassan II Institute of Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine (IAV Hassan II), Morocco

**Chair:** Dr. Samer Raddad, Associated Professor, Urban and Regional Planning, Al-Quds University, Palestine

**Speakers:** Dr. Heba Allah Essam Khalil, Professor of Sustainable Urbanism, Cairo University; Dr. Layla Rasul, Associated Professor, Urban Planning, Duhok University; Ombretta Tempra, Arab Land Initiative Coordinator, UN-Habitat; Dr. Moha El Ayachi, Professor, Geomatic Sciences and Surveying Engineering, Hassan II Institute of Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine, Morocco; Ms. Kholoud Saad Salama, Land Governance Consultant, Arab Land Initiative



Figure 25: Addressing Land Governance Challenges: Launch of the Arab World Academic Network of Excellence.

### Introduction

This session launched the Arab Academic Excellence Network for Land Governance, bringing together leading Arab universities to strengthen the role of higher education in advancing land administration and governance. The session focused on enhancing regional and international

collaboration, developing academic and training programs, supporting scientific research and building the technical skills of practitioners. Key issues discussed included community empowerment, climate resilience, urban expansion, agricultural land degradation, women's land rights and food security. The session aimed to create a unified platform for academic institutions to share

research and training experiences and to foster innovative solutions to land governance challenges. It also sought to support the localization of sustainable development goals and to develop strategies for expanding the network regionally and globally.

### **Summary**

The session marked the official launch of the Arab Region Academic Network of Excellence, an independent initiative formed by four universities from Palestine, Egypt, Iraq and Morocco. The network aims to promote academic research, knowledge exchange and capacity-building in the field of land governance, with aspirations to expand to include more institutions from the region. The discussion underscored the significance of this network in a context where land governance remains an underdeveloped academic discipline and where institutional challenges require increased support and technical expertise.

One issue raised was the absence of a structured research agenda for land governance in the Arab region. The need for updated and ongoing scoping studies was emphasized to identify academic gaps and set priorities. While there is diversity in national needs, a regional approach to academic programming was considered necessary to ensure consistency and broader recognition of qualifications. The session also highlighted the lack of comprehensive local research, noting that much of the existing academic literature on land issues in the Arab region is produced by international experts and primarily in English, which may misalign with regional priorities. The importance of local

knowledge production and South-South academic collaboration was stressed.

Participants discussed how students enrolling in land governance programs often come from diverse academic backgrounds, requiring foundational training in core land governance concepts. There is also a need for specialization in subfields such as land mapping, surveying, legal frameworks, urban planning and land valuation. An imbalance was observed in current course offerings, with topics such as land rights, dispute resolution and land taxation underrepresented in most national curricula. Furthermore, there is a global gap in courses dealing with housing, land and property (HLP) in crisis settings, which remains a critical issue for the Arab region.

Another key challenge lies in the mismatch between the skills taught in academic programs and the competencies demanded by the market. Graduates often lack practical skills in advanced technologies like Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Artificial Intelligence (AI), as well as negotiation, legal analysis and administration. The session noted the need for more practice-oriented education to close the gap between academic instruction and real-world applications. Moreover, established professionals often need upskilling to stay current with global standards in land governance, pointing to the importance of continuous professional development.

Limited access to data and issues around data ownership were also identified as major obstacles for academic research in the region. These constraints hinder the development of

localized studies and prevent students and scholars from producing evidence-based work that could inform national policy. The lack of open and accessible data is also linked to broader institutional and political challenges in the region, making it difficult to build a strong academic base for land governance.

Raising awareness among youth and incentivizing them to pursue careers in land governance was also seen as crucial for the sustainability of the sector. Scholarships, outreach programs and targeted academic pathways were proposed as strategies to attract more students into the field and to build a new generation of experts capable of addressing complex land-related challenges in the region.

The importance of collaboration was a recurring theme throughout the session. Participants emphasized fostering stronger partnerships among universities, and between academia, governments and other stakeholders. Such collaboration is necessary for academic enrichment as well as practical implementation, policy influence and improved employability of graduates. Institutional support from international and regional organizations was also acknowledged as essential in sustaining and expanding the network's impact.

Several forms of past and ongoing support were shared to reinforce the efforts of the academic network and individual institutions:

- A regional mapping of over 300 land-related courses was conducted, revealing significant content gaps, particularly in land valuation, taxation and dispute resolution.

- Plans to launch the second edition of Research Innovation Fund grants aim to encourage the development of locally rooted academic studies.
- Cross-learning initiatives, such as visiting lectureships and student involvement in field projects, promote knowledge exchange between academia and practice.
- Short courses and lectures organized by external experts, including UN-Habitat personnel, help fill content gaps and introduce current methodologies.
- Support for the creation of new master's programs seeks to institutionalize land governance education.
- Internship opportunities for graduating students are being offered to facilitate the transition into professional practice.

## Recommendations

*Establish a regional research and education framework:* Develop a coherent regional research agenda through regular scoping studies, and design harmonized academic programs that provide both foundational and specialized training in land governance.

*Align skills and curricula with market and technological demands:* Integrate practical training in GIS, AI, legal frameworks, negotiation and planning into academic programs to ensure graduates are well-prepared for evolving market needs.

*Promote lifelong and inclusive learning:* Support continuing education for land professionals, encourage research in local languages and foster local academic voices to reduce dependence on external, English-only sources.

improve data access and research capacity: Advocate for open data policies and institutional collaboration to ensure students and researchers have the necessary data for impactful, evidence-based research.

*Strengthen partnerships and youth engagement:* Facilitate collaboration among universities, governments and civil society, while promoting land governance careers through scholarships and outreach to youth across the region.

## Strengthening the Capacity Building for Scientific Production and Dissemination to Support Sustainable Development Strategies in the Arab World

**Organizer:** IAV Hassan II (Morocco), University Nouakchott (Mauritania), Cairo University (Egypt), Tunis El Manar University (Tunisia), Khartoum University (Sudan), NELGA NA, National Center for Scientific Research in Morocco, Al-Quds University, University of Dohuk, Iraq

**Chair:** Dr. Salwa Saidi, Tunis El Manar University, Tunisia

**Speakers:** Ms. Fadoua El Maguiri; Dr. Heba Allah Essam E. Khalil, Professor of Sustainable Urbanism, Cairo University; Dr. Ousmane Wagué; Dr. Samer Raddad, Associated Professor, Urban and Regional Planning, Al-Quds University, Palestine; Mr. Ahmed Malki



Figure 26: Strengthening the Capacity Building for Scientific Production and Dissemination to Support Sustainable Development Strategies in the Arab World.

## **Introduction**

This session focused on strengthening capacity building for knowledge production and dissemination related to land development in the Arab world. It emphasized the need for stronger partnerships between institutions and academic bodies to coordinate efforts and share expertise on key land governance issues. The session aimed to mobilize scientists and researchers from the Arab region and beyond to contribute to a strategy for building scientific and procedural foundations in land governance. A scientific platform dedicated to publishing research on land use, management, ownership and organization in the Arab world was presented. The platform highlighted regional relevance and scientific rigor, making it valuable to researchers, policymakers and professionals. The session also encouraged the engagement of Arab talent to address pressing land challenges such as urbanization, desertification and resource management, while welcoming international insights to enrich regional approaches.

## **Summary**

The session shed light on the new NEGLA initiative to establish a credible and competitive scientific journal from the region that will serve as a platform for building land management relevant knowledge from the region through knowledge exchange between the Arab countries and beyond.

The responsibility of using and funding research requires collective work between all

relevant parties (researchers, universities and government) to be able to produce quality relevant land management knowledge. There is a need to increase funding for research from governments and international organizations.

Collaboration between practitioners and scientists is already happening in the region, however, more of this collaboration, both nationally and regionally, is needed to be more effective. Political will is the key driving force for the joint work between governments and universities in enhancing national land governance actions.

During implementation of NEGLA's pilot project to prepare a unified Arabic knowledge guild in the field of land management, a wide gap was identified between Arabic technical terminologies used, which will require significant effort, work and funding to be unified.

## **Recommendations**

Develop a national and regional mechanism with government and the private sector to link applied programs and research agendas with the relevant governmental entities to support good land governance in the Arab region.

Having an umbrella organization under which the new initiative, Arab Academic Excellence Network for Land Governance, could be institutionalized would grant continuity and sustainability of the initiative as well as better outcomes.



# The Role of Land Professionals in the Arab States: Advancing Trust and Effective Land Governance

**Organizer:** The Arab Land Initiative and the International Federation of Surveyors

**Chair:** Dr. Rohan Bennett, Chair of Commission 7 of the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG)

**Speakers:** Ms. Diane Dumashie, President, International Federation of Surveyors; Dr. El Hadi Gashut, General Director, Regional Center for remote Sensing of North Africa States (CRTEAN); Mr. Rafic Khouri, Economy and Land Administration Specialist, Arab Union of Surveyors

## Introduction

This session unpacked and explored the relationship between the land sector, land professionals and the community in the Arab region. An overview of the key players in the region and international organizations was provided alongside the contemporary challenges of ensuring effective engagement at the national and local levels. The session emphasized the importance of fostering trust and accountability as the foundation for effective land administration and governance. By examining the diverse responsibilities of land professionals, from policymakers and surveyors to planners and technologists – the session underscored how their expertise is crucial to successfully managing both urban and rural environments.

## Summary

Land management is fundamentally about serving people, as referenced in global humanitarian frameworks. Land professionals in the four constituents of land professions (land tenure, land value, land use and land development) need to ensure that the trust of society in their work is maintained for them to be leaders towards effective and evidence-based land governance. Social trust is acquired through the adoption of high-level

ethical standards and through ensuring capacity, both in professional skills and adoption of modern technology, is up to date.

For this to be achieved strong professional networks must be built to leverage collective knowledge from all professionals at global



Figure 27: The Role of Land Professionals in the Arab States: Advancing Trust and Effective Land Governance.

and regional levels. These networks are beneficial to exchange experiences and best practices, discuss common challenges and develop solutions that are fit to the local (national) levels. In the Arab regions, the presence of land professionals at the national level is not sufficiently clear and lacks organization. Participation of Arab land professionals in international events is not adequate for several reasons, including lack of

financial support, lack of organization of land professions and due to political reasons.

Building strong land professional bodies is important for a number of reasons: so that professionals can acquire an adequate level of knowledge and experience; to build effective and well-organized communication between land professionals and the national authorities; to help investigate claims against land practitioners (building trust); and to support the wellbeing of the members of these professional bodies.

### **Recommendations**

*Regional and international networking* is required to exchange experiences, deliberate common challenges and find solutions. The

Arab Union of Surveyors is well situated to play significant role in establishing regional networks at the MENA level.

*National laws for land professionals need to be amended* to receive stronger recognition of their role, but also in order for Arab countries to improve their land administration systems and practices. National authorities should be more open to land professionals and provide recognition and information.

*Capacity building should be linked to the actual needs of each country* and should not be limited to technical aspects; it should also support professionals in converting their professional judgements and decisions into actions on the ground.

## Technology-driven Data Collection

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### From Data to Decisions through AI-Powered Geospatial Solutions: Integrating National Spatial Data Infrastructure for Effective Land and Asset Management

**Organizer:** Edge Pro for Information Systems, Egypt

**Chair:** Prof. Dr. Heba Allah Essam E. Khalil, Professor of Sustainable Urbanism, Cairo University

**Speakers:** Eng. Wessam Abdel Fattah, Business Consultant, Edge-Pro for Information Systems; Eng. Tarek Gouda Elsaid Agag, Head of Mapping sector, Egyptian Survey Authority; Eng. Jean Daniel, Vice President of Sales and Marketing, OMEQ Space; Eng. Amal El Sharnoby, Business Consultant, Edge-Pro for Information Systems

#### **Introduction**

Co-organized by the Arab Land Initiative and the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG), this session explored the critical

relationship between land professionals, the land sector and communities in the Arab region. FIG, with its global network of surveyors and land experts, promotes best

practices and innovative solutions for sustainable land management. The session highlighted the importance of trust and accountability as the foundation for effective land governance. It provided an overview of key regional and international actors and examined challenges to engaging stakeholders at national and local levels. The role of land professionals such as surveyors, policymakers, planners and technologists was discussed, with a focus on how their expertise supports both urban and rural development. The session began with a presentation on FIG, followed by a panel discussion showcasing best practices and ended with an open forum where participants shared insights and proposed ways to strengthen the role of land professionals in the region.



Figure 28: From Data to Decisions through AI-Powered Geospatial Solutions

## Summary

The panel highlighted the significant role of geospatial data in Egypt's digital transformation. Egypt has enhanced government processes, improving infrastructure planning, land management and public services, in recent years through the establishment of a National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) and the implementation of the Integrated Geospatial Information

Framework (IGIF). The initiative aligns with Egypt Vision 2030, ensuring sustainable development and efficient resource management.

As a result, several national projects have leveraged the national base map, including state asset management, spatial change detection, property registration, the unique property identifier project and support for the pre-enumeration stage of the 2027 census. The session also showcased the geospatial information system built using aerial photographs and satellite imagery.

The spatial change detection system has accelerated responses to land use violations, aiding regulatory authorities in managing encroachments. This has led to substantial financial returns. Property registration efforts have resulted in over 170,000 survey certificates issued. Integrating the national base map and unique property identifiers will streamline the enumeration phase of the upcoming census.

Egypt's NSDI is actively supporting several national projects, enhancing data accessibility, governance and infrastructure development, such as the Unified National Base Map Project; agricultural land monitoring and digital transformation; NSDI-backed remote sensing to track illegal encroachments and optimize agricultural land use; AI-powered geospatial analysis for sustainable farming; real estate registration and unique property identification; the Spatial Change Detection Center; and tracking land-use violations and unauthorized construction.

# Master Class on Integrated Geospatial Information Framework and Land Administration

**Organizer:** Ordre National des Ingénieurs Géomètres Topographes, ONIGT, Morocco

**Chair:** Said Lazrak, Director, CO EX INGENIERIE

**Speakers:** Mohamed Timoulali, Director, GTOPIG; Tarek Gouda Agag, Head of Mapping Sector, Egyptian Survey Authority (ESA)

## Introduction

This session introduced participants to the Effective Land Administration Framework (FELA), developed by the United Nations Expert Group on Land Administration and Management under the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management. The session aimed to guide countries in establishing and strengthening land administration systems aligned with the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (UN-IGIF). It highlighted the importance of geospatial information in shaping national social, economic and environmental policies in the digital age. The session was structured in five parts. It began with an overview of UN-IGIF and FELA, including their core principles, goals and strategic objectives. This was followed by guidance on implementing the frameworks, developing country-specific action plans and aligning them with national priorities. Case studies demonstrated how countries have applied these frameworks in practice. The session concluded with a discussion and Q&A, allowing participants to share insights and explore ways to apply FELA and IGIF within their national contexts.

## Summary

The Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (UN-IGIF) and the Framework for

Effective Land Administration (FELA) provide guidelines and harmonized tools for developing Geospatial Country Action Plans for UNGGIM Member States. These frameworks aim to support national socio-economic development and the achievement of international agenda goals.



Figure 29: Mohamed Timoulali, Director, GTOPIG.

The work of the High-level Group for IGIF, the working groups within the Regional Committees, and the centers of excellence created by the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UNGGIM) contribute to this effort.

This ongoing activity is transforming national geospatial and land ecosystems to address the challenges posed by rapidly evolving technology and the need for accurate, agile



and smart geospatial information solutions for decision-making.

Capacity development at various levels for the adoption and adaptation of IGIF and FELA remains a key challenge for member states in the Arab region. In the absence of a Working Group on Land Administration within UNGGIM Arab States, as seen in some other regional committees, it was recommended that national members collaborate with

academia, the private sector, civil society and international organizations to design and implement necessary training programs.

The goal is for trainees to master these frameworks, supplemented by other relevant tools such as guidelines (VVGTT), methods (Fit for Purpose Land Administration, LGAF), and standards (Land Administration Domain Model – LADM).

## From Fit-For-Purpose to GeoAI: The Cadastral Modernization Journey

**Organizer:** Esri and Geomatic

**Chair:** Katie Pickett, Project Manager, Land Administration, Esri, USA

**Speakers:** Katie Pickett, Project Manager, Land Administration, Esri, USA; Mohamed Issa, WAMEA Regional Manager, Esri, UAE; Saad Gallb AlAnzie; Saudi General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information, KSA; Pr. Reda Yaagoubi, Associate Professor, School of Geomatics and Surveying Engineering, Hassan II Institute of Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine, Rabat, Morocco; Tarek Agag, Chief of Mapping, Egyptian Survey Authority, Egypt

### Introduction

This session explored the use of Multi-Purpose Cadastres (MPCs) and Geospatial Artificial Intelligence (GeoAI) as foundational tools for building National Spatial Data Infrastructures (NSDIs). Speakers shared technical insights and international best practices from various sectors, highlighting how NSDIs can improve land management, property registration and support sustainable investments. Case studies and discussions addressed the key components and methodologies needed for successful implementation. The session demonstrated how NSDIs enhance decision making, increase government efficiency and promote economic sustainability through improved

access to geospatial data. It also emphasized that using MPCs as a base for NSDIs strengthens land administration, resource management and planning efforts. The integration of GeoAI and Fit-for-Purpose land administration methods was shown to support the development of innovative and interoperable NSDIs that meet the growing demands of both rural and urban environments.

### Summary

In Egypt, there is a need to institutionalize a step-by-step Fit-for-Purpose (FFP) geospatial methodology to improve land management and planning. Without such an approach, sustainable land use and efficient decision-making remain difficult. The cadastral system

and land surveys face challenges due to fragmented land information and outdated topographic maps. A lack of coordination between land registration and surveying authorities contributes to inefficiencies. Although new regulations and decrees have been introduced, implementation remains complex. There is also reluctance to fully integrate AI, despite its growing importance.

In Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, geographic systems are used to manage flood risks, but hydrological data collection is expensive. This data is essential for identifying water expansion zones and guiding land use planning to strengthen urban resilience.

Managing large datasets under conditions of data scarcity also poses ongoing challenges.

## Recommendations

***Institutionalize fit-for-purpose methodology:*** A structured, step-by-step FFP approach should be institutionalized to establish a solid geospatial framework for sustainable and effective land management.

***Centralize and modernize cadastral data:*** Land information systems should be centralized, and topographic maps updated. Coordination must be strengthened between land registration and surveying entities to streamline cadastral processes.

***Leverage AI proactively:*** Artificial Intelligence should be proactively integrated into land systems to improve efficiency and avoid disruptive, unplanned adoption. AI tools can enhance data analysis and streamline administrative functions.

***Invest in data for hazard management:*** Despite high costs, investment in geographic data collection is critical. Its use in hydrological and hazard studies provides actionable insights for urban planning and disaster risk reduction.

***Balance cost and precision in cadastre development:*** Adopt cost-effective, scalable methods that balance the accuracy of manual techniques with the efficiency of automated tools. Leveraging pretrained GeoAI models can address data scarcity while enhancing adaptability of the MPC for long-term use.



Figure 30: From Fit-For-Purpose to GeoAI: The Cadastral Modernization Journey.

In Morocco, the integration of a multipurpose cadaster (MPC) with the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) shows promise. However, manual delineation, while accurate, remains costly and time-consuming.



# Land for Housing and Development

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## Land as the Basis for Inclusive and Resilient Territorial Development

**Organizer:** Ministry of National Territory Planning, Land Planning, Housing and City Policy, Morocco

**Chair:** Mr. Mohamed El Habib Begdouri Achkari, Begdouri Architecture and Urban Planning Firm, Former Regional Inspector of Town Planning, Architecture and Regional Planning

**Speakers:** Mr. Youssef Hosni, Secretary General of the Ministry of Territorial Planning, Urban Planning, Housing and Urban Policy, Morocco; Mrs. Latifa Nehnahi, Development Geologist, Director of National Territorial Planning, Ministry of National Territorial Planning, Urban Planning, Housing and Urban Policy, Morocco; Mr. Mustapha Kahhak, Director of Cadastre at ANCFCC, Rabat; Mr. Moha El Ayachi, Professor, Coordinator of the NELGA North Africa Node, Hassan II Agronomic and Veterinary Institute; Pr. Hassane Kharmich, Professor of Higher Education at the National School of Architecture of Rabat; Mr. Saad Gallb AlAnzie, Field Verification Department Manager, Saudi General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information

### Introduction

This session emphasized the strategic importance of land as a driver for inclusive and resilient territorial development. It examined Moroccan approaches and initiatives that could serve as models for other Arab nations, with an emphasis on innovation and regional collaboration. The session covered strategic vision for spatial planning, analyzing land issues in Morocco in the context of increasing urbanization and territorial structuring; national land strategy, presenting the goals, governance frameworks and strategic tools for addressing land challenges; land governance in North Africa, highlighting the contributions to research of the NELGA network and training for sustainable and responsible land management; and optimization through urban planning, exploring the role of urban planning instruments in achieving efficient

and sustainable land management. The session identified innovative solutions that can be adapted to other regional contexts; fostered regional cooperation to exchange experiences and develop practical recommendations; and raised awareness of the significance of land for equitable, sustainable and inclusive territorial development.



*Figure 31: Land as the basis for inclusive and resilient territorial development.*

## Summary

Urbanization exerts pressure on natural resources, with a reduction in agricultural land in favor of expanding urban areas. The conversion of farmland into urban zones contributes to land artificialization, rendering these spaces unfit for agriculture. The expansion of urban areas in Morocco and many Arab countries occurs in two main forms: regulated urbanization (guided by planning and administrative documents) and informal urbanization (unregulated construction). Under regulated urbanization, the transition from agricultural to urban land is overseen by local authorities and urban planning agencies. Informal urbanization results in spontaneous development around major urban centers, often unplanned and lacking regulation.

Over 10 per cent of agricultural land is being converted to urban use each year, a trend with significant implications for food security and ecological sustainability. Informal urbanization remains particularly prevalent, with 80 per cent of major Arab cities struggling to manage it effectively.

To address these urbanization challenges, four different planning approaches were emphasized: strategic planning, which focuses on sustainability and responsible resource use in urban development; regulatory urban planning, which promotes urban densification and functional zoning to avoid urban sprawl; risk management integration, which incorporates environmental and health risks (e.g. natural disasters, pandemics) into urban planning, underlining the need for resilience; and

vertical urbanization, which advocates for building upward rather than outward, preserving surrounding agricultural land and reducing the urban footprint. These approaches reflect a shift toward more adaptive and future-oriented urban models that can accommodate evolving demographic and environmental pressures.

Morocco's urban landscape is managed by 30 agencies that oversee land use through a tiered system of urban planning documents. This multi-level governance ensures consistency and coherence in development strategies across different regions. However, the system faces institutional and legal challenges. Multiple legal statuses and bureaucratic hurdles impede land mobilization and urban expansion. Extensive procedures also delay the implementation of urban projects and discourage investment. To overcome these issues, there is a need for institutional restructuring and greater integration between local, regional and national planning entities. The real estate sector is also a critical area impacted by urbanization: legal and administrative barriers hinder access to land, limiting development opportunities. Existing laws do not reflect the dynamic needs of modern real estate markets.

Technology plays an increasingly critical role in urban planning. The absence of comprehensive spatial data restricts efficient land use and urban planning. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Big Data allows for improved modeling, analysis and decision-making. These tools can enhance planning efficiency and provide real-time insights for managing urban growth. E-commerce and

remote work are reshaping urban development. These changes are decreasing the pressure on central urban zones and redistributing demand across suburban and rural areas. The “15-minute city” model, in which essential services are accessible within a short walking or cycling distance, has emerged as a desirable urban vision. It promotes inclusivity, accessibility and sustainability, aligning well with emerging urban lifestyles.

## Recommendations

*Legal and administrative reforms:* Simplify land acquisition processes and modernize urban planning legislation. Establish dedicated institutions for land management at local and regional levels. Encourage public-private partnerships to enhance urban development efforts.

*Technological integration:* Leverage geospatial technologies for accurate mapping and resource allocation. Use AI and Big Data to refine urban models and predict growth patterns.



Figure 32: Mrs. Latifa Nehnahi, Ministry of National Territorial Planning, Urban Planning, Housing and Urban Policy, Morocco.

*Urban model evolution:* Embrace vertical urbanization and densification to reduce pressure on agricultural land. Adopt the 15-minute city concept to enhance livability and service accessibility. Incorporate environmental and health risk planning into urban development frameworks.

*Strategic and sustainable urban planning:* Focus on resilient and adaptable urban models to address climate change and evolving social dynamics. Ensure multi-level coordination among planning agencies to maintain strategic alignment across regions.

## Mobilizing Land Resources for Rural Development

**Organizer:** Ministry of the Interior, Directorate of Rural Affairs (Morocco)

**Chair:** Ms. Qbadou Nadia, Head of Division (Directorate of Rural Affairs, Ministry of Interior)

**Speakers:** Mr. Mohammad Hicham Ferrassi, Head of Division (Directorate of Rural Affairs, Ministry of Interior); Ms. Samira Mizbar, Independent Expert at the Higher Council for Education; Mr. Zouhri Mohamed, Partnership and Investment Promotion Division, Agency for Agricultural Development; Mr. Chahi Bouchaib, Director of Land Conversation at ANFCC; Mr. El Hassane Er-Rousse, Head of the Project Engineering Division (Agency for Agricultural Development)

## Introduction

This session explored Morocco's land mobilization policy, highlighting its critical role in the country's socio-economic development, particularly in rural areas. It traced the evolution of land policies from independence to the present, emphasizing the objectives and impacts of each phase. The process of transforming collective lands into individual properties, known as "melkization," was examined in detail, along with its advantages and challenges. The session also looked at the policy repercussions on rural society, the local and national economy and territories. The role of women, particularly "soulaliya" women, in land ownership and their contribution to economic development was emphasized. The session identified challenges in implementing this policy and proposed solutions for a more sustainable future. It underscored the importance of coordination among the various ministries involved in land management.



*Figure 33: Attendees of the Session on Mobilizing Land Resources for Rural Development.*

### **Summary**

Morocco's comprehensive land policy reform, initiated in 1999, marks a significant effort to harness rural land as a strategic asset for

national development. The reform focuses particularly on collective land, which is traditionally held by ethnic or tribal communities and administered by the Ministry of the Interior, which has been integrated into broader socio-economic strategies. Through a combination of legal, institutional and policy measures, Morocco aims to enhance agricultural productivity, ensure food security, promote inclusive economic growth and support sustainable rural development.

At the heart of Morocco's reform is the transformation of customary land tenure systems into legally recognized frameworks that facilitate ownership, investment and development. Key legislation includes laws 77-63 and 64-17, which were enacted in 2019 to define and regulate collective land rights. These laws enable the conversion of land use rights into full ownership, reduce tenure insecurity and broaden land access to women and youth – groups previously marginalized in traditional land governance. The management of collective land is overseen by the Directorate of Rural Affairs within the Ministry of the Interior, supported by two institutional bodies: the Central Supervisory Council and the Provincial or Prefectoral Supervisory Councils. These entities coordinate administrative supervision, land registration and investment facilitation. The system is designed to ensure equity, sustainability and legal clarity in managing land traditionally owned by communities of common ethnic origin.

A key pillar of the reform is the mobilization of public and collective land, amounting to 22 per cent of agricultural land, for investment

under Morocco's Green Morocco Plan. This national strategy uses rural land as a vehicle for job creation, agro-industrial development and food production. Land parcels are leased under long-term (up to 40 years) rental agreements to ensure investor confidence and allow for capital returns. Project selection is governed by competitive processes involving the Ministries of Interior and Investment, focusing on agricultural productivity, employment generation and land-use efficiency. The strategy has benefited approximately 1,000 farmers and emphasizes opportunities for young people through financial assistance, training and secure land tenure. Morocco aims to create viable commercial farming enterprises and encourage long-term rural investment by promoting land consolidation and preventing fragmentation.

A core element of Morocco's land reform is its emphasis on inclusivity and social equity. Legal changes have extended land ownership rights to women, which marks a significant shift in rural land governance and addresses historical gender disparities. State-funded development programs target vulnerable and high-risk regions, prioritizing the empowerment of marginalized groups, including rural women and youth. Participatory planning processes are central to project implementation. Authorities assess land value, community needs and agricultural potential before launching initiatives, ensuring that local contexts guide national policies. Cultural, social and medical development programs are also embedded into land initiatives to support community well-being alongside economic growth.

To attract private sector investment and stimulate rural economies, Morocco has implemented policies to strengthen land tenure security and standardize property systems. These include property valuation guidelines, unified registration systems and free registration services for collective lands. The legal framework also focuses on resolving land disputes, reducing illegal land use and facilitating financing through secure tenure arrangements. These reforms are particularly relevant in rural areas, where informal land tenure has historically restricted economic development. By converting usage rights into formal ownership, the state encourages landowners to invest in productivity-enhancing improvements, secure loans and engage in long-term planning.

The Green Morocco Plan promotes solidarity and sustainability as guiding principles of rural land use. Investments are directed toward developing resilient agricultural systems that can adapt to climate variability, particularly in regions dependent on seasonal crops. Adaptive strategies include improved irrigation, crop diversification and sustainable resource management. The government also supports eco-tourism and integrated rural development projects that enhance land value while preserving ecological assets. A national monitoring plan evaluates project outcomes, identifying weaknesses and adjusting strategies to ensure long-term success. By combining environmental sustainability with economic objectives, Morocco positions its land reform as a developmental agenda as well as a model for climate-smart rural transformation.



The reforms are projected to generate significant socio-economic benefits. The mobilization of collective land is expected to attract nearly 38 billion dirhams in investment, contribute over 2 per cent annually to Morocco's GDP, and enhance national production. The approach is designed to reduce spatial inequalities by enabling the emergence of a rural middle class and promoting balanced regional development. The government envisions collective land as a critical "land lever" for national progress, including supporting food sovereignty, securing land for future generations and ensuring equitable wealth distribution. Interministerial coordination supports the implementation of these goals, ensuring coherence across sectors including agriculture, investment and social services.

### **Recommendations**

Morocco's land policy reform reflects a multifaceted strategy to transform rural land into a catalyst for sustainable development. Through legal modernization, institutional coordination, and inclusive planning, the

country has begun reshaping traditional land systems into engines of economic opportunity.

Key pillars of the reform include: legal recognition and empowerment of rights holders, especially women and youth; institutional oversight and participatory governance, ensuring equitable and efficient land management; mobilization of land for long-term investment under the Green Morocco Plan; strengthening of land tenure security, enabling access to finance and reducing conflict; integration of sustainability and climate resilience, supporting both environmental and economic goals.

In addition, recommendations raised in the session included a need for the state to provide incentives to the private sector to partner with communities for projects that need high sustained investments, and that the capacity of local collectives on the management of land and enterprises need to be enhanced so that the collective value is realized.

## **Land Registration and Cadastre at the Service of National Land Governance ANCFCC**

**Organizer:** National Agency for Real Estate Conservation, Real Estate Survey, and Cartography-Morocco

**Chair:** Mr. Mustapha Kahhak, Director of Cadastre, National Agency for Land Conservation, Cadastre and Cartography, Morocco

**Speakers:** Mr. Mustapha Kahhak, Director of Cadastre, President & Leader, ANCFCC Maroc; Mr. Driss Lazrek, General Conservative, Leader, ANCFCC Maroc; Mr. Abderrahim Hzikar, Head of Department, Rapporteur, ANCFCC



## Introduction

This session examined the land registration system in Morocco by discussing its principles, advantages and role in strengthening land security. It also addressed issues related to registration procedures and the recording of facts, provisions and agreements in land records. The session highlighted the Moroccan cadastre, its specific features and strengths, as well as the significance of current cadastral projects. Participants emphasized the importance of cadastral and land information in improving land governance and identified key challenges in the production, updating and accessibility of this information. They also discussed the need to systematically expand knowledge of national land structures to support better management of land assets and serve as an effective tool for strengthening national land governance.

## Summary

The session on land registration and cadastral development in Morocco highlighted the central role of land governance in securing property rights, supporting economic growth and achieving sustainable development. The presentations focused on the legal, institutional and technological foundations of Morocco's land registration and land surveying systems, with an emphasis on modernizing practices and expanding accessibility.

The Moroccan land registration system has proven effective for over a century in protecting property rights and ensuring the legal stability of real estate transactions. This protection is fundamental to promoting

investment and fostering long-term economic and social development. By providing legal clarity and enhancing transactional trust, the system transforms land into a secure and productive asset.

Efforts to generalize land registration are aimed at increasing nationwide coverage, particularly in underserved rural areas. Simplification of administrative procedures, reduction of processing times and adoption of the collective registration procedure have been key strategies. This approach, characterized by no-cost registration, simple steps and wide public outreach, aims to make registration more accessible.



Figure 34: Land Registration and Cadastre at the Service of National Land Governance ANCFCC.

However, the coexistence of multiple tenure systems (private, collective and state-owned) poses administrative and legal challenges. To address these, partnerships with public institutions managing state-owned, forest and communal lands are being promoted to streamline registration and integrate more properties into the formal system.

Digital transformation has emerged as a cornerstone of modern land governance in

Morocco. The implementation of a secure and advanced digital information system has enabled the creation of real estate and engineering databases. These systems have increased operational productivity, improved service delivery and enhanced accessibility for landowners and professionals. Despite these advances, some regions and stakeholders continue to rely on paper-based methods, reducing efficiency and transparency. Broader integration of digital platforms across all regions and sectors is necessary to fully realize the benefits of modernization. Emerging technologies like Blockchain and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are also being considered for adoption. These tools can improve the traceability, speed and accuracy of land registration and surveying operations, reduce human error and increase data integrity.

Land surveying serves as the technical foundation for land governance. An overview of Morocco's cadastre system revealed efforts to modernize data collection, ensure accuracy and align with international standards. Surveying projects aim to support planning, investment and legal recognition by producing reliable and comprehensive spatial data. The quality of survey data is essential for effective land management. However, current practices suffer from inconsistencies in data collection methods and lack of standardization. Inaccurate or outdated geospatial records hinder decision-making and planning. Economic land surveying, which includes all property types, is especially important in supporting urban development and regional planning. Enhancing this system through standardization and digitalization can

improve both governance and economic outcomes.

Legal complexity is a major constraint on the efficiency and inclusiveness of the land registration system. The current legal framework is robust but difficult to navigate, particularly for rural landowners and institutions dealing with overlapping property rights. Institutionally, coordination between entities involved in land governance is often limited, leading to duplication of efforts and delays in processing. Ensuring that land conservators have the authority to correct material errors and comply with legal requirements related to urban planning processes, such as subdivision and partitioning, is essential to improving reliability and responsiveness. Limited public awareness further complicates the situation. Many property owners, especially in rural areas, are unaware of the benefits and procedures of land registration. Combined with high costs and bureaucratic hurdles, this results in low participation rates and unregistered properties.

### **Recommendations**

*Legal and institutional reform:* Simplify the legal framework governing land registration to improve clarity and accessibility. Strengthen coordination among land governance institutions to avoid redundancy and improve efficiency.

*Promote digital transformation and innovation:* Expand electronic land registration platforms to improve service access and transparency. Introduce technologies such as Blockchain to ensure secure and traceable real estate transactions.

Implement AI-driven systems to optimize surveying procedures and reduce administrative delays. Develop a 3D cadastre system to enhance spatial analysis and data accuracy across both vertical and horizontal dimensions.

*Increase public awareness and build capacity:* Launch national awareness campaigns to inform landowners, particularly in rural areas, of the benefits and processes of registration. Provide targeted training for land administration professionals and local authorities to improve institutional capability.

*Expand registration coverage:* Scale up the use of collective land registration

mechanisms, especially for communal and rural lands. Enhance partnerships with public bodies managing state-owned lands to accelerate formalization.

*Strengthen cadastre functionality:* Improve data quality and consistency by adopting standardized collection and updating methods. Align the Moroccan cadastre with international standards to enhance reliability and integration into global governance systems. Ensure full territorial coverage of cadastral information to support informed decision-making and national development planning.

## Multi-purpose Land Consolidation for Inclusive Rural Transformation in the Arab Region

**Organizer:** FAO, RVO Netherlands, Kadaster International Netherlands, IDLO Tunisia

**Chair:** Bradley Paterson, Land Tenure Specialist Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

**Speakers:** Ms. Aoife Ossendorp, Programme Advisor, Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO); Mr. Morten Hartvigsen, Land Tenure Officer, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations FAO; Ms. Marije Louwsma, Senior Advisor, Kadaster International, Netherlands; Mr. Ahmed Maher, Land-use Consolidation Senior Advisor, Agriculture Innovation Project (AIP), GIZ Egypt; Mr. Hamid Bin Kadi, Ministry of Agriculture, Representative from the Government of Morocco

### Introduction

This session explored the potential of multi-purpose land consolidation as a land governance tool to support development in the Arab region. Land consolidation, which involves reorganizing fragmented parcels into more efficient holdings with stronger tenure security, was shown to have benefits beyond agriculture. The process can boost

productivity, increase income and encourage rural entrepreneurship by improving access to credit and enabling investment in modern equipment and climate-smart practices such as soil conservation, water management and agroforestry. These efforts support sustainable land management and help address the impacts of climate change. The session highlighted successful practices from European countries and emphasized the

importance of expanding land consolidation beyond agricultural goals to include climate resilience and environmental protection. Speakers also stressed the need to integrate these initiatives with financial support mechanisms and ensure active participation of women rightsholders and land users throughout the process.



Figure 35: Multi-purpose Land Consolidation for Inclusive Rural Transformation in the Arab Region.

## Summary

Land consolidation remains a time-tested policy instrument with renewed relevance in the Arab region, particularly in light of climate change, food insecurity and the need to modernize rural economies. The multi-purpose approach allows for varied land-use goals within a single project, accommodating environmental, agricultural and economic priorities simultaneously. Resources such as the FAO technical guidelines and networks like LandNet offer a foundation for countries looking to adopt or scale land consolidation initiatives.

A major barrier to rural development in the Arab region is extreme land fragmentation, often with plots smaller than one hectare. In countries like Egypt, parcels can be as small as

0.1 hectares. This fragmentation is exacerbated by informal land tenure systems, with large portions of land either unregistered or poorly documented. Such conditions create tenure insecurity, limit farmers' access to financial services and hinder sustainable land use.

Water scarcity remains a critical constraint, reducing agricultural productivity and intensifying conflicts over land and water resources. Traditional irrigation methods contribute to the depletion of water sources, making it difficult to implement sustainable land management practices.

Persistent gender inequality in land ownership and access, particularly in rural areas, poses a challenge to inclusive land consolidation. Women's limited legal recognition and participation in land governance curtail their ability to invest in and benefit from sustainable agricultural practices.

Many Arab countries face institutional deficits that hinder effective land consolidation. These include bureaucratic inefficiencies, unresolved land disputes, lack of technical expertise and weak data infrastructure. Tunisia, for instance, struggles with backlogs in land registration. Compounding these issues are uncoordinated policies, policy gaps and underdeveloped land-use planning frameworks, which obstruct the integration of land consolidation into national development strategies.

Arab countries often have a dichotomous farm structure composed of numerous smallholders and a few large agribusinesses. The average farm size is around 0.3 hectares,

which is insufficient for economically viable operations. Population growth, urban expansion, environmental degradation and inheritance customs further complicate rural land management.

There is increasing awareness and application of land consolidation in the Arab region, with countries such as Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco taking initial steps. These efforts, however, need further innovation, scaling and cross-country knowledge exchange. Effective geospatial data systems, IT capabilities and secure land tenure arrangements are essential for implementing successful land consolidation. Digital tools can improve accuracy, reduce transaction costs and enhance transparency in land management.

## **Recommendations**

*Improve land consolidation* so that it is broadly defined in legislation to support varied objectives; planned in detail to avoid complexity and delays; linked to land banks for compensation and equitable redistribution; and supported by inclusive training and awareness programs, especially for women and marginalized groups.

*Inclusive and participatory approaches:* Land consolidation efforts must be participatory and demand-driven, involving all stakeholders, including landowners and local communities. Flexibility in legal frameworks is essential to accommodate local needs and determine the most suitable land intervention, including full land consolidation, land-use consolidation and alternative measures.

*Multi-purpose land consolidation:* The concept of multi-purpose land consolidation, integrating agricultural, environmental and climate objectives, should be a priority. Projects should include climate-smart agriculture, water and soil conservation and biodiversity protection.

*Private sector and institutional collaboration:* Engaging private sector actors and non-traditional institutions, including NGOs, can bring investment, innovation and implementation capacity. Partnerships should be fostered to extend the reach and effectiveness of land consolidation projects.

*Land mobility and fair compensation:* Policy mechanisms must facilitate land mobility and provide adequate compensation when land is withdrawn from production, ensuring voluntary participation and smoother consolidation processes.

*Gender inclusion:* Gender-sensitive policies are crucial to ensuring women's active participation in land programs. Awareness campaigns and targeted training for women can improve their land access and decision-making power.

*Technical capacity building:* Ongoing technical assistance is necessary to strengthen land governance institutions. This includes capacity building in land data management, conflict resolution, and integrated land-use planning.

*Integration of modern technologies:* Adopting digital systems and modern irrigation technologies will enhance the efficiency and impact of land consolidation efforts, especially in water-scarce contexts.

# Land for Housing and Slum Transformation

**Organizer:** UN-Habitat and Kingdom of Morocco

**Chair:** Ms. Deema Abu Thiab, Head of Country Programme, UN-Habitat Jordan

**Speakers:** Mr. Farhan, General Directorate of Lands and Land Conservation, Djibouti; Dr. Siraj Sait, University of East London, UK; Prof. Dr. Heba Allah Essam E. Khalil, Cairo University, Egypt; Mosaab El-Ayachi, Biotope, Morocco; Dr. Waleed Wahaibi, Urban and Rural Planner, Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, Sultanate of Oman; Ms. Enas Arabyat, Jordan, GIS Expert; Ms. Jia Cong Ang, Programme Management Officer, UN-Habitat

## Introduction

This session examined innovative land governance and urban planning solutions to address housing challenges in the Arab region, including urban sprawl, informal settlements and inadequate housing. These issues have been intensified by rapid urbanization, population growth and displacement. The session highlighted the need to strengthen land administration systems and adopt sustainable, inclusive approaches to urban development. Case studies and regional examples demonstrated how modern technologies such as geographic information systems (GIS) can improve housing and population data, support urban planning and enhance environmental statistics. The session also explored spatial planning strategies for areas affected by protracted displacement in dryland regions, emphasizing the role of nature-based solutions. Participants discussed practical ways to integrate land governance, spatial planning and technology to improve housing access, upgrade informal settlements and promote socially and environmentally sustainable urban development across the region.

## Summary

A central issue highlighted was the centralization of land governance, particularly in Djibouti, where regulatory tools remain concentrated at the national level. This limits local decision-making and contributes to urban congestion and the proliferation of informal settlements. Djibouti plans to decentralize cadastral services to allow regional access to land management and reduce pressure on the capital.

In Morocco, young people face persistent challenges in accessing affordable housing. Informal settlements and slums continue to grow due to fragmented land governance and limited housing policies. The region-wide youth bulge exacerbates these pressures, making access to adequate housing a growing concern.

Oman and Saudi Arabia are contending with rapid urban expansion and urban sprawl. Oman saw a 3,000-hectare increase in urban land from 2010 to 2023, driven by poor integration in land administration. Saudi Arabia faces unsustainable urbanization patterns and an overburdened transport system, revealing the urgent need for sustainable planning strategies.



The region experiences overlapping crises, including conflict-driven displacement and climate-induced migration. These poly-crises complicate urban planning, highlighting the need for migration-informed urban solutions that integrate social, economic and environmental considerations.

Djibouti's digitalization of 25,000 land titles is a promising step toward modernizing land management and enhancing tenure security. However, multiple legal frameworks continue to encourage urban sprawl and unregulated settlements. Integration of land governance with housing policies remains critical to ensuring inclusive urban development.

Slum upgrading is being tackled through different models across the region. Djibouti's "Zero Slums" Project uses in-situ upgrading, avoiding displacement and offering compensation and social support to affected households. Morocco explores varied models – from relocation to site-and-service schemes – emphasizing the need for tailored, inclusive approaches to slum transformation.

Youth engagement emerged as a central theme across case studies. In Egypt, the Ard Al Lewa neighborhood illustrates how youth-led initiatives can transform neglected spaces into dynamic community hubs. These interventions foster social cohesion and community pride, emphasizing the importance of youth empowerment in urban policy.

Saudi Arabia's Future Saudi Cities Programme demonstrates how smart data, GIS and digital technologies can drive sustainable urban planning. Djibouti's collaboration with Rwanda on land information systems further

highlights the role of regional knowledge-sharing in enhancing land governance. Comprehensive use of environmental and population data is essential to manage urban growth, reduce slum expansion, and adapt to climate impacts.



Figure 36: Land for Housing and Slum Transformation.

Climate change is expected to displace over 200 million people by 2050. This threat requires cities to adopt climate-resilient planning and recovery strategies, especially for displaced populations. The Kakuma Refugee Camp exemplifies the need for integrated urban recovery plans that address ecological, economic, and spatial dimensions of urban resilience.

## Recommendations

*Youth engagement and inclusion:* Promote bottom-up participatory planning and develop community clubs and youth activity zones in compact neighborhoods. Incorporate youth priorities in planning at all governance levels, especially to address housing needs and slum development. Empower youth to lead neighborhood transformations that foster resilience and social integration

*Affordable housing access:* Focus on proactive urban planning and targeted policy reforms to expand affordable housing, especially for youth. Prevent the growth of informal settlements through upgraded services, land title regularization and inclusive planning mechanisms.

*Data-driven and climate-resilient urbanism:* Invest in robust data systems, including GIS, census and environmental metrics (air quality, energy use) to inform planning. Use scenario-based planning tools to anticipate and address migration trends and climate-related displacement. Encourage digital transformation in land governance and urban management for more transparent and efficient systems.

*Inclusive and integrated land governance:* Integrate land governance reforms with

housing strategies to ensure equitable access to land and services. Streamline legal frameworks to reduce fragmentation and enable coherent planning.

*Slum transformation:* Prioritize in-situ upgrading to minimize displacement and increase tax revenues by formalizing informal areas. Use inclusive approaches tailored to the local context, combining infrastructure development with social support services.

*Migration-informed planning:* Recognize migration as a long-term trend and incorporate displacement dynamics into national and regional urban plans. Develop integrated spatial strategies that combine ecological design, economic opportunities and urban infrastructure for displaced populations.

## Land for Housing and Territorial Development

**Organizers:** Ministry of National Territory Planning, Land Planning, Housing and City Policy (Morocco) National Order of Topographical Engineers – ONIGT

**Chair:** Dr. Abdelwahed Idrissi, ONIGT

**Speakers:** Dr. Abdelwahed Idrissi, ONIGT; Ahmed Maliki, Faculty of Legal and Political Sciences, Settat; Taoufik Bahi, Statistical Engineer, BET; Mohamed Mourad Sekkat, Director of Real Estate, HAO

### Introduction

This session addressed the challenges and opportunities linked to the mobilization and governance of land with the aim to meet the growing needs in terms of housing and sustainable development of territories. It brought together researchers, urban planning experts, policy makers and development stakeholders to examine ways to strengthen

land management, while integrating local, regional and national scales to meet the objectives of public housing and territorial development. During this session, participants discussed ways to strengthen land management and examined the challenges and opportunities of mobilizing land to meet the objectives of public housing and development programs. The topics

covered by the speakers included the land issue in regional land use planning schemes, the role of regional housing plans as territorial governance tools as well as the role of public actors and ways for public-private partnerships in the execution of public programs.

### Summary

This session focused on the challenges and opportunities related to land mobilization, land governance, and housing planning in Morocco. Discussions covered the legal, institutional, technical and financial constraints hampering effective land management and territorial development, and highlighted pathways to improve housing provision and sustainable urban expansion.



Figure 37: Attendees of the Third Arab Land Conference.

One core issue identified was the absence of a unified and up-to-date legal framework. Existing laws are fragmented and often outdated, with some dating back to the 1950s. This legal complexity results in administrative inefficiencies, overlapping responsibilities and delays in the implementation of land and housing policies. The coexistence of multiple land tenure

systems (private, collective and state-owned) further complicates governance and coordination efforts.

A second major constraint lies in institutional and governance shortcomings. The lack of decentralized coordination mechanisms and the dominance of centralized authority have slowed down the processes of land mobilization and management. Weak inter-institutional collaboration and the absence of an integrated public land policy reduce the overall effectiveness of spatial planning and housing initiatives.

The availability and quality of data emerged as another pressing issue. Reliable, up-to-date databases and statistics are lacking, which impairs decision-making and planning at national and regional levels. Without accurate land and housing data, resource allocation becomes inefficient, and future needs are hard to predict.

Financial limitations were also discussed as a key barrier. Current funding mechanisms are insufficient to meet the demands of urban expansion and housing development, especially for vulnerable populations. The absence of a dedicated urban expansion fund further limits the execution of housing programs and the implementation of regional planning documents.

Additionally, there are technical and structural flaws in planning tools. Existing national and regional spatial planning schemes often lack preliminary studies and fail to incorporate intersectoral collaboration. This leads to short-term, reactive solutions rather than long-term, strategic development.

Rapid urbanization and land scarcity are driving an imbalance between land supply and housing demand. With over 60 per cent of the population expected to reside in urban areas by 2024, land pressure is intensifying, making it harder to provide affordable housing and maintain spatial equity. The importance of clarifying national development priorities before tackling regional land issues was also highlighted. Clear national-level priorities are essential to guide housing and spatial interventions tailored to regional characteristics. There was also a call for better coordination among land governance stakeholders, including government agencies, local authorities and private actors, to ensure consistency, reduce overlaps and foster more effective policy implementation.

Presentations also highlighted the emerging role of Regional Housing Plans as instruments of strategic territorial planning. These plans aim to guide housing policies at the regional level by: engaging various stakeholders in collaborative decision-making; assessing housing needs based on current and projected demographic and mobility trends; identifying and evaluating land reserves through a multidimensional lens, considering legal status, pricing, access to infrastructure, urban planning restrictions, and spatial constraints; and aligning housing supply with regional demand to promote balanced spatial development. Despite their potential, PRHs currently operate without a dedicated legal framework, limiting their enforceability and strategic coherence.

Another key focus of the session was the role of public real estate development institutions

in addressing housing and spatial planning needs. These institutions contribute by: mobilizing and valorizing public land to support residential, industrial, and economic development; promoting the creation of new urban centers and relieving population pressure on major cities; executing public programs to address inadequate housing, including slum upgrading and infrastructure development; enhancing public-private partnerships for more efficient and impactful land use in urban and housing projects; and investing in digital tools and governance platforms, such as GIS-based systems and digital dashboards, to streamline property management and increase transparency.

### **Recommendations**

*Reform and unify the legal and institutional framework:* Modernize and consolidate the legal foundations of land governance through the creation of a comprehensive Land Code. Clearly define institutional roles and responsibilities while promoting decentralization to improve efficiency, reduce administrative delays, and enable better coordination across national, regional, and local levels.

*Establish robust land and housing governance tools:* Create a national land registry to ensure full territorial coverage and transparency. Strengthen regional land and real estate management agencies to support strategic planning, land mobilization and the development of housing in line with regional and national priorities.

*Develop sustainable and inclusive financing mechanisms:* Set up a dedicated urban expansion and housing development fund.



Encourage public-private partnerships and explore innovative, diversified financing solutions to support large-scale housing and infrastructure projects, particularly those targeting vulnerable populations.

*Promote digital transformation and data-driven planning:* Invest in modern digital platforms and geographic information systems (GIS) for property management, data collection and decision-making. Improve data accuracy and accessibility to support

informed, evidence-based spatial planning and land use strategies.

*Align land use with socioeconomic needs and reduce speculation:* Implement a fair and proportional tax framework to curb land speculation and promote transparent land transactions. Strategically mobilize and valorize land resources to meet evolving demographic and economic needs, while ensuring balanced territorial development and adequate housing supply.

## Ministerial Roundtable

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**Organizer:** League of Arab States, Ministry of National Territory and Urban Planning, Housing and City Policy, Morocco, UN-Habitat, GLTN and the Arab Land Initiative

**Chair:** Dr. Mahmoud Fath-Allah, Director of the Department of Housing, Water Resources, and Disaster Risk Reduction at the League of Arab States

**Speakers:** Mr. Adib BEN-BRAHIM, Secretary of State to the Minister of National Territory Planning, Land Planning, Housing and City Policy, in charge of Housing; Ms. Rania Hedeya, Regional Director, Regional Office Arab States UN-Habitat



Figure 38: Ministerial Roundtable at the Third Arab Land Conference.

## Summary

The session explored strategies to modernize land and property registration systems, enhance tenure security and address unplanned urban growth. Key discussion points included advancing digitalization in the land sector, fostering public-private partnerships, building institutional capacity and strengthening South-South and cross-regional collaboration and knowledge sharing.

Sudan identified prolonged displacement due to conflict and climate change-induced environmental degradation as major challenges. Ensuring tenure security for displaced populations and integrating environmental considerations into land-use planning are crucial, particularly in areas prone to natural hazards.

Jordan emphasized the need for secure digital land services. Digitalization must be regulated and secured against cyber threats. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) are seen as a crucial tool to advance investments, and Jordan is developing a GIS-based investment map to facilitate access to land data for investors. This initiative aims to improve land value capture and benchmarking. The importance of data categorization and classification was also highlighted as a key step toward enhancing transparency and making data available to relevant stakeholders. Additionally, integrating and building capacity within the real estate sector – including mediators and surveyors – is essential. Jordan stressed that digitalization efforts must be accompanied by

capacity development to ensure effective implementation.

Egypt underscored the importance of balancing economic, environmental and cultural land uses to prevent land from becoming a mere commodity. Sustainable urban planning should enhance land value while maintaining sound land governance. Given the Arab region's water scarcity, effective land and water resource management remains a key priority. Strategic environmental assessments and transparent land registration platforms were identified as essential for fostering investor confidence and ensuring sustainable development.

Lebanon emphasized the need for greater transparency in land administration and streamlined regulatory procedures. Discussions also highlighted the importance of raising awareness on land registration procedures and leveraging public-private partnerships to invest in public land (مشاعات).

Libya emphasized the need for capacity-building and cross-learning through technical workshops to address the complexities of land registration that are a common challenge across the region. The need for a regional platform to share best practices in land administration was also emphasized.

The importance of financing mechanisms emerged as a cross-cutting theme, which links to land registration, disaster resilience, and data availability. Strengthening regional and global cooperation was also recognized as a critical step toward supporting land actors in the region in accessing financing opportunities.



## Recommendations

The session concluded with the following recommendations:

- Developing secure digital platforms and digitalization of land registration systems is essential to improve land management processes and enhance data availability and transparency.
- Promoting knowledge-sharing and capacity-building to disseminate best practices in the land sector across the region.
- Strengthening the role of the private sector and enhancing public-private partnerships.
- Innovative land-based financing mechanisms and attracting investments are priorities that are directly linked to land registration, land-use planning and data availability.

## Roundtable: Heads of Land & Property Registration Offices

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**Organizer:** UN-Habitat, GLTN and the Arab Land Initiative

**Chair:** Kholoud Saad Salama, Land Governance Expert, Arab Land Initiative

**Speakers:** Rania Hedeya, Regional Director, Regional Office Arab States UN-Habitat; Ahmed Alomoush, Department of Lands and Survey, Jordan; Sadeq Abouzanouna, Palestine Land Authority, Palestine

### Summary

The session highlighted significant advancements in e-cadasters, digital land services, land dispute resolution and data-driven decision-making across the Arab region, with key insights from Jordan and Palestine.

Jordan has successfully digitalized land administration, enhancing transparency and data availability through a website for the Department of Land and Survey and a mobile application. The department has also launched a unified call center to streamline services and reduce waiting times and is working to integrate AI and chatbots. A

dashboard with 42 land KPIs and interactive GIS maps further support urban planning and investment. The experience underscored that while international expertise is valuable, building national capacities and contextualizing best practices is essential. On land dispute resolution, Jordan has moved cases from courts to the Department of Land and Survey, leveraging technical expertise for faster settlements. Additionally, Jordan has almost fully digitalized land purchases, requiring in-person verification only for final signatures, and allows foreign land ownership through standardized online procedures. Digitization has also improved security and fraud prevention, with QR codes and

reference numbers used to prevent forgery and restrict access to sensitive information.



Figure 39; Roundtable: Heads of Land & Property Registration Offices.

Palestine emphasized the link between land governance and economic development, stressing the importance of private sector engagement, cross-sector collaboration, and transparent monitoring of land transactions, including foreign ownership. In conflict-affected settings, land governance faces

added complexities due to legal uncertainties and institutional fragmentation.

The issue of defining “informality” was raised. UN-Habitat regional report on “Informal settlements in the Arab Region” concluded that there is no unified definition across the Arab region, with interpretations ranging from unplanned areas to unauthorized properties.

### Recommendations

Two key recommendations were brought forward at the roundtable:

- UN-Habitat should enhance regional collaboration by facilitating peer-to-peer learning and knowledge exchange on land governance.
- A platform linked to the annual Arab Ministerial Council on Housing, co-organized with the League of Arab States, should be established to support capacity building and continuous collaboration.

## Civil Society Assembly

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**Organizer:** UN-Habitat and International Land Coalition

**Chair:** Shahd Mustafa, EMENA Regional Coordinator, ILC

**Speakers:** Matteo Sposato, Program Analyst, ILC; Thaer Fakhoury, Facilitator of NLC Palestine, ACAD; Raed Gharib, Facilitator of NLC Jordan, Seeds; Amina Amharsh, Representative of Indigenous People Constituency, AZUL Network



Figure 40: Civil Society Assembly.

## Introduction

This plenary session addressed climate change and biodiversity challenges in the region while emphasizing the essential role of civil society in land governance. It showcased how civil society organizations (CSOs) can lead multi-stakeholder platforms that promote people-centered land governance by uniting voices, developing shared strategies and building partnerships with local and national governments. The session featured examples from National Land Coalitions in Jordan and Palestine. In Jordan, the coalition engaged grassroots communities and authorities to address issues such as pastoralism and nature protection. In Palestine, despite conflict and occupation, the coalition advanced a rights-based approach focused on land access and food security. The session highlighted the resilience of local communities and the importance of secure tenure. It concluded

with input on a draft CSO declaration aimed at influencing the final conference declaration, reinforcing the need for strong collaboration among CSOs and other stakeholders in shaping future land policies.

## Summary

Civil society organizations (CSOs), particularly those representing local and Indigenous communities, have traditionally been excluded from land governance processes in the MENA region. Land governance has often followed top-down approaches that fail to consult or engage these groups, despite their deep-rooted ties to land and natural resources. The International Land Coalition (ILC) seeks to reverse this trend by placing people at the center of land governance. Through the creation of National Land Coalitions (NLCs), the ILC facilitates inclusive platforms where civil society, local

communities, government bodies, and other stakeholders collaborate to address land rights and governance challenges. These coalitions are designed to move beyond isolated efforts, promoting systemic, multi-stakeholder engagement that ensures marginalized voices are heard in land-related policymaking.

The NLCs have shown tangible success in shaping land policies and governance practices. By amplifying local voices and encouraging grassroots participation, they have managed to influence legislation, increase awareness of land rights, and foster collaborative relationships between civil society and government institutions. A key strength of the coalitions is their flexibility and adaptability. They are tailored to specific national contexts, allowing them to address diverse challenges ranging from legal reforms to climate change impacts. Their potential lies in rebalancing power structures, mitigating tensions between civil society and state actors, and promoting more inclusive and equitable land governance.

In Jordan, a national strategy was introduced to form an inclusive NLC involving diverse stakeholders. The focus has been on increasing legal literacy around land legislation and improving civic participation, especially of local organizations. The coalition has supported legislative change, including in land-use policy, and advocated for the rights of marginalized groups such as pastoralists, who constitute 90 per cent of Jordan's rural land users. Challenges such as climate change, land degradation, and water scarcity have deeply impacted the region. Notably, 81 per cent of grazing land has deteriorated and

traditional livelihoods like livestock farming are in decline. Jordan's NLC has worked to protect small-scale farmers, navigate complex land registration processes and push for legislative modifications. Discussions also pointed to the opportunity to economically empower women through land and agriculture-related initiatives. However, barriers persist, including opposition from certain organizations and the problem of land fragmentation.

The National Land Coalition in Palestine emerged under extremely difficult circumstances, with ongoing land occupation and legal uncertainties. Despite the geopolitical challenges, the coalition has made significant strides in advocacy, policy influence and community mobilization. It has built a strategic platform to communicate key issues around land governance and to push back against the seizure of communal lands. Palestine's experience highlights the power of coalition-building in contested spaces. The NLC has provided civil society organizations a coordinated means of addressing land rights issues and advancing community interests, particularly under occupation and political instability. Collaboration between Jordan and Palestine's NLCs has also been fostered, including through memorandums of understanding with government entities.

Civil society's involvement in land governance across the region faces several broader systemic challenges:

- Weak legal frameworks: Overlapping institutional mandates and outdated land laws (often colonial in origin) hinder effective governance and coordination.

- **Lack of public awareness:** Many communities, especially in Palestine, are unaware of their legal rights, making them vulnerable to land dispossession and occupation.
- **Climate change:** Increasing desertification, reduced agricultural productivity, and extreme weather events threaten livelihoods, especially for rural and Indigenous populations.
- **Power imbalances:** CSOs often face institutional resistance and limited access to decision-making arenas, restricting their influence.
- **Limited stakeholder dialogue:** There is a shortage of inclusive, multi-stakeholder platforms for civil society, government and other actors to engage in productive, sustained dialogue.

## **Recommendations**

*Legal and institutional reform:* Reform colonial-era land laws and harmonize institutional mandates to eliminate overlap and inefficiencies. Legally recognize Indigenous land rights in line with UN declarations. Improve enforcement of existing laws concerning communal and occupied lands, particularly in Palestine.

*Empowering civil society:* Strengthen grassroots organizations and coalitions to amplify marginalized voices. Ensure gender inclusivity in land ownership and governance, particularly for women and youth. Support self-governance models for Indigenous communities.

*Awareness and advocacy:* Launch national and regional campaigns to increase public understanding of land rights and responsibilities. Expand the use of media and community networks to share knowledge and mobilize support. Apply diplomatic pressure to prevent illegal land confiscations and promote long-term stability.

*Climate and sustainability initiatives:* Promote sustainable agriculture practices, such as urban and organic farming, to counteract climate impacts. Integrate a just transition approach into land and food policies under the UN Food Systems Summit framework.

*Building multi-stakeholder platforms:* Establish flexible, inclusive dialogue platforms at national and regional levels to facilitate communication among civil society, government, and private actors. Align civil society goals with national development priorities to enhance policy coherence. Encourage shared ownership of land governance reforms through collaborative frameworks.

The emergence of National Land Coalitions as vehicles for civil society engagement offers a promising path toward equitable and people-centered land governance in the MENA region. Continued investment in inclusive platforms, legal reform and climate adaptation will be essential in ensuring that marginalized voices are not only heard but meaningfully integrated into land governance processes.



# Youth and Land Assembly

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**Organizer:** Noon Centre for Equality and Diversity, University of East London; Cairo University; Global Land Tool Network; Arab Land Initiative; UN-Habitat; International Federation of Surveyors (FIG); International Land Coalition (ILC)

**Chairs:** Prof. Dr. Heba Allah Essam E. Khalil, Professor of Sustainable Urbanism, Cairo University; Prof Siraj Sait, Director of Noon Centre for Equality and Diversity, University of East London

**Speakers:** Salma Mustafa, Programme Officer, UN-Habitat Regional Office for Arab States, Egypt; Angela Anyakora, Vice Chair and VSCP Lead, FIG Young Surveyors Network (YSN), Nigeria; Hamza Lfalah, Land Surveyor and Geomatics Engineer, Co-Founder at AGTM, FIG YSN Africa Network, Morocco; Thaer Fakhoury, Youth Representative, International Land Coalition, Palestine; Mosaab El-Ayachi, Biodiversity Research Officer, Biotope Morocco; Khayem Chemli, Former Head of Advocacy and Research, ASF Euro-Mediterranean, Tunisia; Ayman El-Saoudi, Project Manager Youth Trainer, Development for People and Nature Association (DPNA), Lebanon; Nilofer Sait, NIHR Project Youth Negotiator, University of East London, United Kingdom

## Introduction

This plenary session explored how young people in the Arab region cope with the mental and physical challenges caused by urban crises, highlighting the importance of secure housing, land and property (HLP) rights in supporting their wellbeing. With youth making up a large share of the urban population, the session emphasized the need to strengthen tenure security and integrate youth perspectives into land governance. Drawing on experiences from GLTN partners and the FIG Young Surveyors Network, participants shared insights and best practices for creating youth-friendly approaches to land and housing. The session underscored the concept of cultural resilience, grounded in shared identity, heritage, language and faith, as a foundation for inclusive and sustainable urban development. It also reinforced messages from the World Urban Forums in

Abu Dhabi and Cairo on the importance of cultural diversity in building resilient communities. The discussion produced actionable recommendations to empower youth and promote more inclusive HLP governance.

## Summary

The plenary session showcased several successful international youth leadership models underscoring the importance of youth involvement in land governance and urban development across the Arab region. Organizations such as UN-Habitat, International Land Coalition (ILC), Global Land Tool Network (GLTN), National Land Coalition (NLC), ASF Tunisia and the University of East London presented diverse approaches to youth empowerment. These models emphasize youth participation in leadership, policy-making, peacebuilding and documentation of land rights violations.



The Youth Champions Program trains youth in leadership and peacebuilding while documenting housing, land and property (HLP) violations. UN-Habitat promotes a multi-sectoral strategy that includes capacity building, decision-making participation and awareness-raising. GLTN and World Bank-supported tools were highlighted for their youth-responsive land governance frameworks. Participatory, youth-centered projects were shown to be particularly effective, such as those by ASF Tunisia, which involve youth in leadership training and community partnerships. NLC Palestine focuses on projects tailored to youth and women, promoting equitable land access and gender-sensitive approaches.



Figure 41: Salma Mustafa, Programme Officer, UN-Habitat Regional Office for Arab States, Egypt and Dr. Heba Allah Essam E. Khalil, Professor of Sustainable Urbanism, Cairo University.

The Arab region's youth face significant structural and socio-economic challenges. Half of the youth population lacks adequate access to land, services, education and employment. Youth unemployment stands at a high 42.5 per cent, exacerbating economic insecurity and prompting migration. A high

desire for migration is fueled by economic hardship, limited opportunities and political instability. Youth struggle to gain meaningful inclusion in public decision-making processes, undermining their agency in shaping policies that affect them. Rural-urban migration contributes to urban overcrowding and places further pressure on urban resources and services.

In Tunisia, land ownership inequality is an issue, as 1 per cent of wealthy farmers control 22 per cent of agricultural land, pushing marginalized youth toward distress migration. Similarly, in Palestine, where youth make up 38 per cent of the population, there is a dire need for greater transparency, food security and access to land. Youth increasingly view land as a platform for creative and economic expression, contrasting with older generations' more traditional views of land as an agricultural or housing asset.

There is a critical need to improve youth awareness and understanding of land governance. In Africa, according to the Youth Initiative on Land in Africa (YILA), 70 per cent of youth are unaware of land governance issues. This gap underscores the need for cross-generational dialogue and targeted education to build awareness and capacity. Additionally, knowledge exchange across the region is essential to developing best practices. Experience-sharing and mutual learning can support the adaptation of successful youth-inclusive land governance models across different contexts.

The role of civil society is pivotal in driving equitable land systems and advocating for youth inclusion. Partnerships with

governments and the private sector are crucial to building capacity and ensuring meaningful participation, especially among marginalized youth, women and girls.

### Recommendations

To address the multilayered challenges facing youth in the Arab region, a coordinated, inclusive and data-driven approach is essential. The session highlighted that youth are not passive beneficiaries but active agents of change.

The session emphasized several key institutional and policy interventions:

- *Youth capacity building:* Programs must focus on enhancing youth skills to engage in governance processes and policy advocacy. They should move beyond awareness-raising to provide youth with tools, platforms and leadership opportunities. Youth-led initiatives and solutions should be fostered and supported, especially in peacebuilding, economic development and land governance.
- *Inclusive decision-making:* Mechanisms should be institutionalized to guarantee youth voices are integrated formally into land policy frameworks and governance structures. Policymaking must be sensitive to diverse youth experiences and cultural contexts.

- *Market-oriented training:* Youth training programs should align with local market demands and promote entrepreneurship, particularly in agriculture and urban services.
- *Evidence-based policies:* Co-developing land governance tools based on robust data and youth experiences is essential for creating responsive policies.
- *Database development:* Establishing comprehensive databases and tools to collect and disseminate youth land data and best practices will help policymakers and stakeholders better address youth needs.

It is also important to tackle resource distribution disparities, particularly in land access, and address the needs of marginalized youth groups. Regional campaigns and educational programs should be launched to raise awareness about land rights and governance. Collaboration between youth, NGOs, governments and international organizations should be established and strengthened to co-create innovative and inclusive land systems.

The session concluded with a call to action: to include youth, especially women and girls, more meaningfully in shaping land policies and urban development strategies.

# Closing Session

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**Organizer:** UN-Habitat and Kingdom of Morocco

**Facilitator:** Ombretta Tempra, Human Settlements Officer, Land Specialist, Arab Land Initiative Coordinator, UN-Habitat

**Speakers:** Ms. Fatima Ezzahra El Mansouri, Ministry of National Territory Planning, Urban Planning, Housing, and City Policy, Morocco; Mr. Mahmoud Fathallah Director of the Department of Housing, Water Resources, and Disaster Reduction, League of Arab States; Ms. Sukaina Al Nasrawi, Lead of Sustainable Urban Development Portfolio, UNESCWA; Ms. Joan Kagwanja, Chief, Land and Agricultural Transformation (LAT) and Coordinator for the African Land Policy Center (ALPC); Ms. Rania Hedeya, Regional Director, Regional Office Arab States UN-Habitat

## Introduction

This closing session of the Third Arab Land Conference reflected on key discussions, shared experiences and practical solutions presented throughout the event. It celebrated the achievements of diverse stakeholders from governments, civil society, academia, the private sector and international organizations who worked together to strengthen land governance in the Arab region.



Figure 42: Closing Session.

The session introduced the Conference Declaration, a unified commitment to tackling

urgent land issues such as crisis-related land management, tenure security for displaced communities and women, land-based financing and climate-resilient governance. Participants reviewed the main themes and recommendations and were encouraged to implement the Agenda for Action outlined in the Declaration. This roadmap aims to promote inclusive development and build stronger, more resilient land governance systems. The session concluded with a call for continued collaboration among all stakeholders to uphold the principles of the Declaration and turn its commitments into concrete actions for lasting regional impact.

## Summary

The closing session of the conference marked the culmination of three days of intense dialogue, collaboration and knowledge-sharing focused on land governance in the Arab region. The event concluded with expressions of deep gratitude to all those who contributed to its success. Special acknowledgment was given to those who showed exceptional dedication in

coordinating the various aspects of the conference, ensuring a seamless and impactful experience.

Throughout the conference, participants engaged in a series of dynamic sessions, including ministerial panels, technical workshops and dialogues with civil society and youth, that explored the multifaceted dimensions of land governance. These sessions underscored that land is both a technical issue and a vital development concern with far-reaching implications for economic growth, social equity and environmental sustainability. Discussions brought to light the complexity of land challenges in the Arab world and showcased innovative solutions, country-specific experiences and the value of cross-border collaboration.

One of the most significant outcomes of the event was the collaborative development of the Morocco Declaration for Land Governance. This Declaration outlines strategic priorities for the region, including the strengthening of public-private partnerships, the empowerment of women in securing land rights and the promotion of digital and technology-based tools to enhance transparency, equity and efficiency in land administration systems. These principles reflect a shared vision for inclusive, sustainable land governance and provide a roadmap for future action.

During the closing session, the Morocco Ministry of National Territory Planning, Urban Planning, Housing and City Policy emphasized that joint action guarantees results, as it is built on an exchange of best practices and

experiences that are rooted in national contexts which can evolve into transnational models. Land, characterized by its complexity and diversity across Arab countries, is an important area of cooperation, with challenges based on differing factors such as topography, climate, geographic extent and historical-cultural context, while also reflecting common needs, such as increased demand for investment and development within limited geographical areas, balancing private ownership and public interest, and supporting youth, women and children in accessing adequate housing.



Figure 43: Ms. Joan Kagwanja, Chief, Land and Agricultural Transformation (LAT) and Coordinator for the African Land Policy Center (ALPC).

As the conference drew to a close, participants were called upon to carry forward the spirit of cooperation that defined the event. Governments, civil society organizations and international institutions were encouraged to transform the Conference's insights and recommendations into concrete policies and programs that would directly impact communities across the region. The active participation of country delegations and land administration authorities was praised for enriching the

dialogue and demonstrating strong regional commitment to the cause.

The presence of international experts and organizations was also recognized as a cornerstone of the conference's success. Their willingness to engage intensively over long

hours each day, sharing global perspectives and technical expertise, greatly contributed to the depth and quality of discussions. The collective coordination, professionalism and shared dedication of all involved left a lasting impression and set a high standard for future regional initiatives.