

Dubai Declaration on Land Governance in the Arab States

We, the participants of the first Arab Land Conference, representing governments, private sector, civil society, academia, professionals, international and regional organizations, and relevant stakeholders, gathered in Dubai, United Arab Emirates to exchange knowledge, promote regional cooperation, and develop capacities and innovation in land governance and real estate reform to promote the social and economic development in the Arab region:

1. Acknowledge the importance of land within the global agenda, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the New Urban Agenda (NUA), the Voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests in the context of national food security (VGGT), and the opportunity to advance land reform at both regional and country levels;
2. Highlight the need to modernize land administration, management and governance in the Arab States to ensure full protection of property rights, promote social and economic development, investment and diversification of the economy, facilitated improved service delivery, and to ensure the sustainable use of land resources for this and next generations.
3. Identify the most pressing land-related challenges currently facing the Arab region: (i) the need for full protection of property rights for the all segments of the population; (ii) conflict over land use and land-related resources from different social and economic groups; (iii) lack of affordable access to land for women, youth, and marginalised communities; (iv) weak land tenure security for vulnerable urban and rural populations, people affected and displaced by armed conflicts, and economic migrants; (v) insufficient and ineffective land administration processes and practices; (vi) need for improved capacities of regional and locals institution to deal with land governance challenges in a holistic and integrate manner to ensure sustainable management and use of land and natural resources;
4. Advocate for an active role of Arab regional and national organisations including research centres, universities, professional organisations, intergovernmental bodies, government departments, civil society organisations and other stakeholders, in development of capacities and facilitate knowledge exchange on land governance and administration;
5. Recommend and promote sustainable and inclusive real estate and sustainable business and investment models that cater to the needs of all inhabitants of present and future generations in the region while respecting the environment;
6. Encourage governments and other stakeholders to address land-related issues for the prevention and mitigation of violent conflicts, and to facilitate the movement of conflict-affected contexts toward stabilization, reconstruction, and durable peace;

7. Advocate for the protection of land and property rights of displaced persons and refugees to allow for their safe return to their homes and properties and to sustain the peace;
8. Call for the concerted efforts of governments, civil society, and other actors toward the protection and promotion of women's land and property rights;
9. Highlight the need of utilizing new technologies for more modern, efficient, transparent and inclusive land administration;
10. Stress the importance of collecting gender and age disaggregated comparable data on land to promote informed and evidence-based decision making and policy formulation and to report progress on land-related targets;
11. Call for cooperation among countries in the region on the land governance and real estate sectors, building on successful models and lessons to bridge the gap between countries.
12. Reaffirm the central role of the private sector in development and the call for governments to partner with private sector to develop inclusive land markets that will meet the needs of all segments of the society;
13. Stress the importance of collaborating with civil society in achieving sustainable and inclusive land governance, including through the promotion of group rights for pastoralists and indigenous communities;
14. Finally, we call for continuing this effort by promoting and deepening knowledge sharing, joint research, and capacity building among Arab States to further develop the land governance and real estate reform to benefit all the people of the Region. With this spirit, we call for this conference to be organized every two years and for thematic work being done in preparation for the conference of key land-related topics, including capacity and knowledge development activities.

We thank the Dubai Land Department, the Global Land Tool Network, UN-Habitat, the World Bank, the League of the Arab States and the Arab Union of Surveyors for organizing the first Arab Land Conference and commit to provide continuous support to the Arab land governance initiative.

Dubai, 27 February 2018