Since its inaugural edition in 2002, the Arab Human Development Reports have stimulated debate and brought attention to the opportunities and challenges for enhancing human development in the Arab region.

Part of the reason for that impact stems from the fact that the Reports’ central thesis—that reform is necessary and that sustainable change can only come from within—has the authority of having been written about the region by a team of independent Arab scholars, policy analysts, and practitioners from the region.

The path breaking first Arab Human Development Report (AHDR) presented three development “deficits” which stunt human development in the region, related to the acquisition of knowledge, political freedoms, and women’s rights. This year’s Arab Human Development Report 2009: Challenges to Human Security in the Arab Countries examines human development through a human security lens.

The Report calls on policymakers and other stakeholders to move away from a traditional, state-centric conception of security to one which concentrates also on the security of individuals, their protection and their empowerment. It argues for governments and other partners to prioritize the “liberation of human beings from those intense, extensive, prolonged, and comprehensive threats to which their lives and freedom are vulnerable”. In so doing, it draws attention to a multitude of threats which cut across different aspects of human development in the region, highlighting the need for an integrated approach to advancing development, security, good governance and human rights.

In 1994 the United Nations General Assembly affirmed that the Human Development Report is “not an official document of the United Nations”. This regional report was prepared in this tradition of independence, which since 1990 has brought critical development issues to the fore at the global, regional, and national levels worldwide.

As has been noted in the forewords to previous AHDRs, they “are, deliberately, not formal UN or UNDP documents and do not reflect the official views of either organization. Rather they have been intended to stimulate and inform a dynamic, new, public discourse across the Arab world and beyond” and “some of the views expressed by the authors are not shared by UNDP or the UN.”

By providing a platform for debate which reflects the way in which a number of the most pressing development challenges are seen by some of those who live them day-in and day-out, this Report can play an important role in framing the development agenda in the region for years to come. UNDP hopes that governments, civil society, international and regional bodies, and the global development community, will find this fifth AHDR useful as a tool for motivating an open and serious discussion about human development issues in the Arab world.

Helen Clark
Administrator, UNDP
The present Report is offered as a contribution to the debate on development underway in the Arab region. Entitled the *Arab Human Development Report 2009: Challenges to Human Security in the Arab Countries*, it is a continuation of the well-known *Arab Human Development Report* (AHDR) series that, since 2002, has brought together eminent scholars and advisers from the Arab region to conduct frank, realistic analyses of development challenges in the region. The first AHDR identified gaps in knowledge, freedom, and women’s empowerment as the three critical deficits, and the three follow-up reports analyzed each in depth and in turn. Their research and analysis resonated in Arab countries and around the world, providing a platform for policy dialogue and debate, and re-focusing the development agenda firmly on people’s well-being. The present Report is intended to sharpen this focus with a new and independent look at the region through the lens of human security.

While the AHDR since 2002 has taken up a variety of development topics, the unifying theme is that of human development. Human development is a way of looking at development that is about much more than the rise and fall of national incomes. It is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accord with their needs and interests. It is about understanding that people are the real wealth of nations, and that investing in their human development is the surest way to achieve sustainable, stable economic growth.

The starting point for the present Report is that, since the publication of the first volume in the series, the region’s human development fault lines have grown more complex, and in some cases deepened. While there has been some improvement in quality of life in some countries, there are still too many people in the Arab region living insecure lives, too many people living under persistent pressures that inhibit them from realizing their potential as human beings, and too many traumatic events cutting lives short. In some Arab countries, more than half of the population lives in hunger and want, with no means to look after their families or safeguard their own quality of life. Recent fluctuations in global food prices as well as the current global economic crisis have sent even more people into poverty and malnutrition. Health systems leave many beyond their reach. Water scarcity looms as an existential threat on the horizon. And armed conflicts take their grim toll in the destruction of human lives.

In analyzing these and other threats to human security in the Arab countries, the scope of the Report is broad. But there is a common thread tying the analysis together. The AHDR 2009 argues that the trend in the region has been to focus more on the security of the state than on the security of the people. While this adherence to the traditional conception of security has in many cases ensured the continuity of the state, it has also led to missed opportunities to ensure the security of the human person, and has left the bond between state and citizen less strong than it might otherwise be. And it has hampered the region’s embrace of diversity, curtailing opportunities to welcome population groups of differing origins and inclinations into the national project. The result is an all-too-common sense of limited opportunities and personal insecurity, witnessed in the world’s highest levels of unemployment, deep and contentious patterns of exclusion, and, ultimately,
strong calls from within for reform. Indeed, the pursuit of state security without attention to human security has brought on suboptimal outcomes for the state and citizen alike. And in the long run, the government that pursues state security without investing in human security is the government that achieves neither.

The *Report* argues that the inverse is also true: that indeed human security and state security are two sides of the same coin. Ensuring human security leads not only to more opportunities for human development, but also enables states to benefit sustainably from the environment, to earn legitimacy in the eyes of the governed, to benefit from diversity, to fortify economies against global vicissitudes, to reach a higher level of food security, to imbue societies with health, and, last but not least, to be able to address sources of conflicts, and possibly avert them. Approaching human security in this way, the present report was able to use the concept as a lens through which to view a broad range of dimensions affecting people’s lives: environmental security, the state’s performance in guaranteeing human security, the human security of vulnerable groups, economic security, nutrition and food security, health and human security, and the human security impact of conflict and occupation.

While the primary responsibility to provide for human security lies with the Arab state, the *Report* also argues that the policies of international powers have not been helpful. Foreign interventions and occupations have had devastating impacts on human security in the region in the immediate sense, while also damaging long-term prospects by making it difficult for the voice of reform to be heard above the din.

Like its predecessors in the AHDR series, the present *Report* is an independent work authored by experts deeply rooted in the Arab region and its development dynamics. Like all UNDP Human Development Reports, it is neither a UN consensus document, nor an articulation of UNDP policy, nor an official publication of any government. In a region full of agendas, this is a document that caters to none. Instead, it is a self-critical look in the mirror, captured in text and disseminated to a broad audience in order to stimulate informed, constructive debate. Not everyone will agree with all of its messages, but the thorough reader will find the *Report’s* analysis quite balanced, with messages offered in a constructive spirit to enrich the thinking of all actors interested in promoting the human security of the people of the Arab region.

The AHDR 2009 is the fruit of a two-year research process drawing on the efforts of many dedicated people. I congratulate and thank all who took part in its preparation. A core team of researchers and authors contributed the bulk of the analysis. I am very grateful to them for their tireless commitment and inquisitive spirit. A distinguished Advisory Board made up of Arab scholars and former senior-level policy makers provided strategic and thematic advice. I am thankful for their wise counsel and their devotion to fair analysis. The *Report* also benefitted from the views of over 100 young people from all over the region, who taught us about human security from their own perspective. I appreciate their engagement, and I am hopeful for their future. I am also indebted to Kemal Derviş, former Administrator of UNDP, for his encouragement of this exercise and the guidance he provided. I take this opportunity to welcome the new Administrator of UNDP, Helen Clark, and to thank her for supporting the publication of this report. And I owe a particular note of appreciation to my colleagues in the Regional Programme Division of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States, for their wholehearted support and substantial undertaking. May these tremendous efforts be rewarded with a stimulating debate in the interest of human security and human development for all the people of the Arab countries.

Amat Al Alim Alsoswa  
Assistant Secretary-General and Assistant Administrator, Regional Director, Regional Bureau for Arab States, United Nations Development Programme
Report Team

Advisory Board

Core Team
Madawi Al-Rasheed, Sabah Benjelloun, Mustapha El-Sayyid (Lead Consultant), Walid Khadduri, Bahgat Korany, Khadija Moalla, Marlene Nasr, Boshra Salem, Yezid Sayigh.

Contributing Authors

Readers Group
(Arabic)

Statistics and Field Study Team
Zeinab Khadr, Feisal Yunes.

UNDP/Regional Bureau for Arab States Team
Amat Al Alim Alsoswa (Regional Director), Adel Abdellatif (Report Coordinator), Maya Abi-Zeid, Hani Anouti, Arkan El-Seblani, Lina Himani, Mary Jreidini, Theodore Murphy, Zein Nahas, Nathalie Tawil.

Senior Advisor
Zahir Jamal.

Translation Team
Arabic Version: Fayiz Suyyagh.

Editorial Team
Jacques Aswad, Shukri Ruhayem.

Cover Design
Rima Rifai.

Report Design
Alarm sarl.

* Salim Nasr: Distinguished sociologist, policy analyst and author, whose intellectual influence on the reform of Arab governance extended well beyond his native Lebanon, and whose prized collaboration with the Report Team was sustained through a long and courageous fight against illness.
### Acronyms and abbreviations

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<td>AFED</td>
<td>Arab Forum for Environment and Development</td>
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<td>AFESD</td>
<td>Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development</td>
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<td>AHDR</td>
<td>Arab Human Development Report</td>
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<td>AI</td>
<td>Amnesty International</td>
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<td>ALO</td>
<td>Arab Labour Organization</td>
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<td>AMF</td>
<td>Arab Monetary Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>AOAD</td>
<td>Arab Organization for Agricultural Development</td>
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<td>AOHR</td>
<td>Arab Organization for Human Rights</td>
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<td>BWC</td>
<td>Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHS</td>
<td>Commission on Human Security of the United Nations</td>
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<td>CIS</td>
<td>Commonwealth of Independent States</td>
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<tr>
<td>DALY</td>
<td>Disability-Adjusted Life Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DESA</td>
<td>Department of Economic and Social Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOTS</td>
<td>Directly Observed Treatment Short courses (method of detection and treatment of tuberculosis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPA</td>
<td>Darfur Peace Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESCWA</td>
<td>Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia of the United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
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<td>FGM</td>
<td>Female genital mutilation</td>
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<td>GCC</td>
<td>Gulf Cooperation Council</td>
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<td>GDI</td>
<td>Gender-related development index</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross domestic product</td>
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<td>GEM</td>
<td>Gender empowerment measure</td>
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<td>HCV</td>
<td>Hepatitis C virus</td>
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<tr>
<td>HDI</td>
<td>Human development index</td>
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<td>HDR</td>
<td>Human Development Report</td>
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<td>HIC</td>
<td>High income countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome</td>
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<tr>
<td>HPI-1</td>
<td>Human poverty index (for developing countries)</td>
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<td>HRW</td>
<td>Human Rights Watch</td>
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<td>IBC</td>
<td>Iraq Body Count</td>
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<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Chamber of Commerce</td>
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<td>ICRC</td>
<td>International Committee of the Red Cross</td>
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<td>ICU</td>
<td>Islamic Courts Union</td>
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<td>IDP</td>
<td>Internally Displaced Persons</td>
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<td>IFHS</td>
<td>Iraq Family Health Survey</td>
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<td>IHR</td>
<td>International Health Regulations</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
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<td>IMB</td>
<td>International Maritime Bureau</td>
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<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>IUCN</td>
<td>International Union for Conservation of Nature</td>
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<tr>
<td>IWM</td>
<td>Integrated Water Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>JAER</td>
<td>Joint Arab Economic Report</td>
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<td>JEM</td>
<td>Justice and Equality Movement of Sudan</td>
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<tr>
<td>KUNA</td>
<td>Kuwait News Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>LAS</td>
<td>League of Arab States</td>
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<td>LDC</td>
<td>Least developed countries</td>
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<td>LIC</td>
<td>Low income countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<td>MENA</td>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
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<td>MIC</td>
<td>Middle income countries</td>
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<td>MMR</td>
<td>Maternal mortality ratio</td>
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<td>MNF</td>
<td>Multinational Forces of Iraq</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NISS</td>
<td>National Intelligence and Security Services of Sudan</td>
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<tr>
<td>OPEC</td>
<td>Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>OCHA</td>
<td>Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>ODA</td>
<td>Official Development Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>OPEC</td>
<td>Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>OPT</td>
<td>Occupied Palestinian Territory</td>
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<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>Palestinian Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCBS</td>
<td>Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLO</td>
<td>Palestinian Liberation Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>Purchasing power parity</td>
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<tr>
<td>R&amp;D</td>
<td>Research and development</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAF</td>
<td>Sudan Armed Forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>SARS</td>
<td>Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEDAC</td>
<td>Socioeconomic Data and Applications Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIPRI</td>
<td>Stockholm International Peace Research Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPLA</td>
<td>Sudan’s People’s Liberation Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>TDS</td>
<td>Total dissolved solids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFG</td>
<td>Transitional Federal Government of Somalia</td>
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<tr>
<td>TFR</td>
<td>Total fertility rate</td>
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<tr>
<td>TPES</td>
<td>Total primary energy supply</td>
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<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNAIDS</td>
<td>Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS</td>
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<td>UNAMI</td>
<td>United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNCCD</td>
<td>United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP-POGAR</td>
<td>Programme on Governance in the Arab Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNEP</td>
<td>United Nations Environment Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNIFEM</td>
<td>United Nations Development Fund for Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNODC</td>
<td>United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNRWA</td>
<td>United Nations Relief and Works Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSC</td>
<td>United Nations Security Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>WFP</td>
<td>World Food Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
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<td>WMO</td>
<td>World Meteorological Organization</td>
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