

# Common Country Analysis

## Tunisia

### April 2020

United Nations  
Resident Coordinator Office (RCO)  
Tunisia

## Contents

Contents .....	2
Executive summary.....	3
Country context.....	10
National vision for sustainable development .....	21
Progress towards the 2030 Agenda.....	24
Challenges .....	32
Analysis of key risks .....	49
Opportunities.....	53
Moving forward .....	55
Reference List .....	58

## Executive summary

Tunisia's remarkable democratic transition is testimony to its resilience and resolve in the face of endemic structural challenges and regional conflict. Having approved a new constitution in 2014 and successfully held the country's fifth consecutive free and credible elections in 2019, Tunisia has made exceptional progress. Tunisia is the only country in the region to have improved human rights, political rights and overall governance since the Arab uprisings. Its success can largely be attributed to institutionalising social dialogue, nationally and within sectors and enterprises. This includes the 2013 national dialogue and creating the National Council for Social Dialogue in 2017, which is a tripartite framework for social democracy.

### Tunisians are disenchanted with politics

Tunisia's democratic gains, however, are fragile. The country faces a weakening of citizen trust due to the pressing need to implement the newly established social contract. People's disenchantment with the political class has resulted in more social protests and a steady decline in voter turnout since 2011 (although voter turnout for the 2019 presidential elections was higher—49 per cent in the first round and 55 per cent in the second). The 2018 municipal elections provided an opportunity to strengthen political participation and efficiency (47 per cent of municipal council representatives were women and 37 per cent of elected representatives were youth). However, the decentralisation process requires more time to consolidate the local administrative system.<sup>1</sup>

### Tunisia's most pressing problem is youth unemployment

Tunisia's most pressing problem is high youth unemployment. Young people are among those most likely to attempt the perilous journey across the Mediterranean. Tunisia has also experienced an increase in suicide attempts, which are predominantly by youth. The number of suicides tripled in the first five years since the revolution; this is an alarming number, but it may partially be explained by better reporting.

### Social inequalities are at the heart of Tunisia's challenges

At the heart of Tunisia's diverse political, social, economic and environmental challenges is one central observation: despite making significant democratic progress, Tunisia's multi-faceted exclusion and multi-dimensional inequalities may prevent it achieving its 2030 Agenda aspirations. The current COVID-19 outbreak is likely to exacerbate this risk.

### Tunisia is unlikely to meet the objectives of its five-year development plan

To respond to these diverse and complex challenges, Tunisia has developed a five-year development plan for 2016 to 2020. This plan focuses on:

1. good governance, public administration reform and anti-corruption
2. Tunisia being an economic hub
3. human development and social inclusion
4. positive discrimination to achieve greater regional equality
5. sustainable development based on a green economy.

The plan's quantitative objectives are:

- a 4 per cent increase to the GDP growth rate

---

<sup>1</sup> International Crisis Group, *Décentralisation en Tunisie: Consolider la démocratie sans affaiblir l'Etat*, Brussels, International Crisis Group, Brussels, 2019.

- a 2 per cent reduction in the poverty rate
- a 25 per cent increase in the investment rate
- 400,000 new jobs
- a 12 per cent reduction in unemployment
- an 18 per cent increase in the national savings rate
- a reduction of the informal sector to 20 per cent of GDP.

The Tunisian think tank Solidar conducted a mid-term evaluation of the development plan.<sup>2</sup> This demonstrates that, while significant progress has been made, Tunisia is unlikely to meet these ambitious objectives by the end of 2020. For example, in 2018 the GDP growth rate was 1.8 per cent; the investment rate was 18.8 per cent; and only 109,000 new jobs had been created. The socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic—which will have severe repercussions on micro, small and medium enterprises, the informal economy, unemployment rates and food prices—will make 2020 even more challenging.

According to Solidar’s analysis (which took place before Tunisia’s COVID-19 related measures and the slow-down of the world economy) Tunisia’s weak economic performance is caused by:

- an excessively regulated environment
- huge subsidies
- corruption
- weak competition
- heavy bureaucracy
- rent seeking
- deteriorating quality of services
- weak productivity of enterprises
- a rigid labour market
- industrial policies that promote activities with low added-value
- a market policy that does not incentivise investment
- a fiscal policy that prioritises consumer spending
- an agricultural policy that favours European crops
- low-quality investment.<sup>3</sup>

Despite these challenges, Tunisia has good opportunities. These include a strong and well-established civil society; an effective electoral mechanism that has proved resilient to political contingencies; progressive social and reproductive health laws that support gender equity and women’s empowerment; and a business climate that fosters innovation and new technologies.

### Tunisia is making progress towards the 2030 Agenda

Tunisia is also making progress towards the 2030 Agenda (Tunisia’s adoption of the Agenda coincided with it establishing a new coalition government in 2015<sup>4</sup> and committing to the 2016–2020 development plan). An integrated analysis of Tunisia’s constitution demonstrates that 65 per cent of its content aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 91

---

<sup>2</sup> Solidar, Trabelsi, Salwa; Zrelli, Nedra, *Tunisie, Evaluation du plan de développement 2016-2020*, Solidar-Tunisie, August 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Solidar, Trabelsi, Salwa; Zrelli, Nedra, *Tunisie, Evaluation du plan de développement 2016-2020*, Solidar-Tunisie.

<sup>4</sup> République Tunisienne et Les Nations Unies Tunisie, *Rapport National Volontaire de la mise en œuvre des Objectifs de Développement Durable en Tunisie*, Forum Politique de Haut Niveau, New York, 2019. Tunisia met only two of the eight Millennium Development Goals (reducing the rate of poverty and reducing the numbers of people without access to water and other basic services). It has since introduced mechanisms to accelerate progress towards the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda.

per cent aligns with SDGs that relate to ‘people’.<sup>5</sup> However, only 35 per cent aligns with SDGs that relate to ‘planet’, despite Tunisia having environmental protection laws (including in its constitution<sup>6</sup>) and needing to guarantee the rights of future generations. A closer look at individual SDGs demonstrates even more variation. For example, the constitution and SDGs are 100 per cent aligned on quality education (SDG 4); 90 per cent aligned on peace and justice (SDG 16); 20 per cent aligned on industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9); 14 per cent aligned on life under water (SDG 14); and only 11 per cent aligned on life on earth (SDG 15).

To ensure national ownership of the SDGs, Tunisia has introduced an exemplary strategy—an innovative national consultation process called ‘The Tunisia we want’. This process involved consulting with ministries, parliamentarians, civil society, regions, youth, students and children to identify Tunisia’s post-2015 priorities. Tunisia has also created strategies to integrate the SDGs into development plans, finance laws, and national plans, strategies and budgets. At the local level SDGs have been integrated into five-year regional development plans, and over six hundred representatives from the public and private sectors, civil society, universities and professional organisations have participated in their elaboration. During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, which will have unprecedented effects on global and regional systems, achieving development goals will require even stronger efforts from Tunisian authorities and citizens.

### Tunisia has insufficient data to measure changes to social inequalities

This Common Country Analysis (CCA) aligns with the UN’s Leave No One Behind (LNOB) agenda. It is underpinned by an analysis of Tunisia’s most fragile and vulnerable groups, which was commissioned by the UN Resident Coordinator Office (RCO) and the UN system and conducted by the Tunisian Observatory of Economy (TOE). The analysis was hampered by insufficient data: out of 244 SDG indicators, data has been collected for only 90 and only 15 are disaggregated (predominantly by geography and gender). This will make it hard for any analysis of Tunisia to measure and monitor changes to social exclusion.

The lack of systematically collected and disaggregated data means that the UN could not include several groups in its LNOB analysis:

- people with a migratory status (such as vulnerable migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, nomads, and the homeless)
- people from minorities (this includes religious and ethnic groups, LGBT and people of colour)
- people living with disabilities
- informal workers and those without official papers
- isolated individuals, including women, children and the elderly.

### Tunisia has four vulnerable groups

Despite these problems, the analysis made some interesting findings. Its rigorous multi-dimensional methodology identified four vulnerable groups:

1. rural poor families with an uneducated head of family
2. rural women and girls aged 15 to 24
3. men and boys living in rural areas of Tunisia’s interior regions

---

<sup>5</sup> République Tunisienne et Les Nations Unies Tunisie, *Rapport National Volontaire de la mise en œuvre des Objectifs de Développement Durable en Tunisie*, Forum Politique de Haut Niveau, New York, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Article 45 of the constitution states: ‘The state guarantees the right to a healthy and balanced environment and the right to participate in the protection of the climate. The state shall provide the necessary means to eradicate pollution of the environment.’

4. poor and illiterate women and girls (rural and urban).

These groups are excluded for multi-faceted and overlapping reasons, which underscores the need for an integrated and holistic approach to exclusion. Marginalized groups, people affected by multiple vulnerabilities, and portions of Tunisia's middle class, are all likely to be severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, through a loss of jobs and income, or by temporarily constrained access to basic services.

### Tunisia's human rights practices do not reflect its progressive laws

As outlined in many reports to the United Nations Human Rights Council,<sup>7</sup> Tunisia is a party to most international human rights treaties. Since 2011 it has removed several reservations it previously held under certain treaty bodies. Tunisia's 2014 constitution enshrines the principles of transparency, neutrality, good governance, social justice, equality of rights and duties between all citizens— male and female— and equity between the regions. Several independent constitutional bodies uphold these principles:

- Audio-visual Community Authority
- Authority for Good Governance and the Fight against Corruption.
- Authority for Sustainable Development and the Rights of Future Generations
- Human Rights Authority
- Independent Higher Authority for Election

In 2013 Tunisia adopted the Transitional Justice Law to address human rights violations and corruption between 1955 and 2013. The law established the Truth and Dignity Commission<sup>8</sup> to investigate, expose the truth, and propose accountability measures, remedies, and rehabilitation. Since it was established, more than 60,000 applications have been filed. The Commission held the first public hearings at the end of 2016 and presented the recommendations of its final report in 2019 (these recommendations have not yet been implemented).

However, there is a significant gulf between Tunisia's progressive legal framework and the lived experiences of rights-holders. This gap is perpetuated by these factors:

- endemic corruption and illicit financial flows
- Parliament's inability to elect members of the Constitutional Court, the National Human Rights Commission and the Commission on Corruption and Good Governance
- an incomplete process to pursue accountability for historical human rights violations through specialised criminal chambers
- the 2015 counterterrorism law and related emergency legislation and powers vested in the police (these powers have led to prolonged abuse of detention and house arrests; inappropriate orders restricting freedom of movement; coerced confessions; and allegations of ill-treatment and torture)
- failure to translate the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees into national legislation; sign and ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights

---

<sup>7</sup> See for example: Human Rights Council, *Report A/HRC/37/54/Add.1: Report of the Independent Expert on the Effects of Foreign Debt and Other Related International Financial Obligations of States on the Full Enjoyment of all Human Rights, particularly Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, UN General Assembly, 2018; and Human Rights Council, *Report A/HRC/40/52/Add.1: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism*, UN General Assembly, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> The commission has a four-year mandate that can be renewed for up to one year.

of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families;<sup>9</sup> and sign and ratify two ILO conventions on migrant workers (numbers 97 and 143).

Similarly, despite Tunisia's progressive human rights framework and significant legal protections to women's rights, women remain under-represented in Tunisia's state institutions. The situation for Tunisia's LGBT community is also a serious concern.

### The region's instability is a significant threat to Tunisia

Regional instability poses a significant risk to Tunisia. Active commercial strategies have helped Tunisian banks benefit from Libyans' deposits,<sup>10</sup> and Algerians have helped the tourist industry stay alive, but the deteriorating situation in Libya since January 2020 raises further concerns. According to the UN-ESCWA, the Libyan crisis hampered a possible 24 per cent profit of Tunisia's economic growth between 2011 and 2015 (this equated to a loss of USD 580 million each year, equivalent to 2 per cent of GDP in 2015). 60 per cent of this loss came from declining private investment; 36 per cent from decreased tourism; and 1.4 per cent from reduced remittances. It also led to public funds being diverted from development and towards security-related goals.<sup>11</sup> The crisis cost TND 5.8 billion between 2011 and 2015 and caused income tax to rise by 41 per cent over those five years.<sup>12</sup>

The latest escalation of conflict in Libya increases the threat to Tunisia. It creates risks of more displaced persons, an infiltration of extremists, military incursions on Tunisian soil and increasing alliances between weapons dealers, drug traffickers and armed extremists in the fragile border regions. Displaced persons are a particular concern since the number of refugees and asylum seekers rose by 155 per cent between 2018 and 2019 (2,300 displaced persons were recorded in 2019).

This dynamic situation, including the turmoil in the Sahel, means the risk of terrorist activity remains relatively high. In the last three years alone Tunisia has held 1,270 people on terrorism charges. Tunisia has also experienced multiple high-profile attacks, including the 2015 attack at the Tunis Bardo Museum and the Sousse beach resort, and the 2016 attempted takeover of the border town Ben Guerdane, which was planned by an Islamic State cell. To help prevent and respond to these risks, Tunisia has increased its national security budget. International partners have also helped to strengthen the security sector and supported cooperation on border security and counterterrorism, notably through the G7+7 mechanism.

### Tunisia's economy has been damaged by the 2011 revolution

Tunisia's dynamic economy has been undermined by the effects of the 2011 revolution:

- The growth rate dropped, from an average of 4.4 per cent between 2000 and 2010, to around 1.4 per cent in 2019 (this was well below the initial forecast of 3.1 per cent).
- High levels of unemployment have persisted at around 15.2 per cent (the impact for youth and women is even greater).

---

<sup>9</sup> Human Rights Council, *Report A/HRC/23/46/Add.1: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants*, François Crépeau, UN General Assembly, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> World Bank, Macroeconomics and Fiscal Management Global Practice Middle East and North Africa Region, *Republic of Tunisia - Impact of the Libyan Crisis on the Tunisia Economy*, February 2017.

<sup>11</sup> ESCWA, *Impact of the Libyan Crisis on the Tunisian Economy: An Estimation of the Macroeconomic and Fiscal Impacts of the Libyan Crisis on the Tunisian Economy*, United Nations, Beirut, 2017.

<sup>12</sup> ESCWA, *Impact of the Libyan Crisis on the Tunisian Economy: An Estimation of the Macroeconomic and Fiscal Impacts of the Libyan Crisis on the Tunisian Economy*, United Nations, Beirut, 2017. The crisis resulted in other related costs including debt financing of TND 7 billion, interest payments of TND 274 million and depreciation costs of TND 920.



- The budget deficit rose but has now declined to around -3.9 per cent, although it has not yet offset public debt (debt reached 76.7 per cent of GDP in 2018).
- A complex monetary policy was introduced that had to contend with a weakening currency against the euro; increasing inflation; and a structurally deficit trade balance of -17.9 per cent of GDP.

The Central Bank controlled the increase to inflation by raising its key interest rate from 4.75 per cent in 2015 to 7.75 per cent in 2019. However, despite recent progress with implementing policies and reforms, Tunisia faces persistent macroeconomic imbalances. With Tunisia now facing the COVID-19 shock, the IMF forecasts its GDP will shrink by 4.3 per cent in 2020. To sustain the impact of COVID-19-recovery measures in the medium and long term, Tunisia will need to make these political reforms to ensure its growth is sustainable and inclusive:

- address corruption and transparency
- eliminate competition distortions
- reform the labour market
- remove subsidies.

Three major obstacles impede Tunisia's prosperity and prevent the country fully benefiting from its diverse positive multilateral and bilateral economic relationships, and its strategic geopolitical position, including its close ties with Europe:

1. inequality between richer, metropolitan regions and poorer, peripheral interior and rural regions (the exclusion of youth from the formal economy is particularly striking)
2. weak and inappropriate macroeconomic policies that can, for example, reduce the public debt to GDP ratio
3. weak and decreasing private investment due to administrative 'red-tape' (this problem is exacerbated by the bifurcated dynamics between Tunisia's 'onshore' and 'offshore' economy that traps them both in low productivity).

#### Tunisia's progress towards the SDGs could be undermined by five risks

This CCA is underpinned by a unique inclusive process for identifying and analysing risks; the focus on risks aligns with the UN Secretary-General's *prevention* agenda. This process was led by the UN RCO. It involved UN agencies consulting with 240 national and international experts about risks, risk drivers and resilience factors related to 12 themes. The outcomes of these conversations led the UN Country Team (UNCT) to formulate five interconnected risks that could undermine Tunisia's ability to achieve the SDGs:

1. Tunisia's development gains over the last two decades (such as helping vulnerable populations out of poverty) could be reversed by the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19, because its economy is insufficiently inclusive and sustainable.
2. Tunisia's democratic transition remains incomplete or leads to an erosion of gains as a result of insufficient tangible changes to people's lives.
3. Tunisia's persistent inequalities and lack of progress in human development create frustration due to a mismatch with people's expectations. This will weaken social cohesion;
4. Tunisia's inappropriate management of its natural resources, ecosystems and environment hinders wealth, increases vulnerabilities and undermines sustainability. This risk is aggravated by climate change.
5. Tunisia's achievements may be jeopardised by multiple large-scale crises and shocks.



To tackle the drivers of these risks, Tunisia needs an integrated approach that addresses structural factors as well as the deprivation that people face in their daily lives. This CCA places SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 10 (reduced inequality) and SDG 16 (peaceful and inclusive societies) at its heart. By doing so, it shows that greater equality and inclusion will lead to a more peaceful and prosperous Tunisia.

## Country context

Tunisia is faced with a diverse set of political, social, economic and environmental challenges. Despite significant progress in many areas, however, systemic *exclusion* and multi-dimensional *inequalities* may prevent Tunisia from achieving its aspirations articulated as part of the 2030 Agenda. This section will describe some key elements of the recent history and the trajectory that Tunisia has taken.

## Democratic gains

Tunisia's remarkable democratic transition is testimony to its resilience and resolve in the face of endemic structural challenges and regional conflict. Following the death in July 2019 of Beji Caid Essebsi, Tunisia's first democratically elected Head of State since the 2011 Jasmine Revolution, the 2019 presidential and parliamentary elections marked the country's fifth consecutive free and credible elections. These included the 2011 Constituent Assembly elections, the 2014 parliamentary and presidential elections and the 2018 municipal elections, the latter of which formed a vital part of Tunisia's decentralisation process. The approval of the Constitution in 2014 was a milestone in Tunisia's political evolution. It lays the foundations for a new social contract based on inclusion, equality, transparency and non-discrimination, which enshrines freedom of religion and conscience and a commitment to gender equality. Tunisia has made exceptional progress: it is the only country in the region to have experienced an improvement in human rights, political rights, and governance since the Arab uprisings. It currently ranks above average on the Worldwide Indicator of Voice and Accountability.<sup>13</sup>

Tunisia has substantial experience in institutionalizing social dialogue at the national, sectoral and enterprise levels. It is the only country in North Africa that has 54 sectoral collective bargaining agreements, which contribute to the improvement of working conditions and wages of about 80 per cent of workers in the private sector. The promotion of social dialogue and the strengthening of labour governance were given a major boost with the adoption of the Social Contract enacted by the Government and two national trade unions (UGTT and UTICA in January 2013), which guides the tripartite negotiations around priority areas for economic and social reforms (in particular, to set objectives for regional development, targeted employment and vocational training policies, industrial relations based on the principles of decent work, better social protection and the institutionalisation of social dialogue). In 2013, amidst great political and social instability, UGTT and UTICA<sup>14</sup> decided to combine their efforts with other national organisations (the Tunisian League for Human Rights and the Tunisian lawyers Association) to launch a national dialogue among the country's main political forces. The resulting political agreement is based on a national roadmap that establishes the Government's priorities in stabilizing the political and security situation, improving cohesion and social justice, reviving the national economy including boosting economic growth. These efforts have been recognized both nationally and internationally, having been awarded a Nobel Peace Prize for their contribution to preventing a serious political and social crisis in the country. The creation of the National Council for Social Dialogue (CNDS) in July 2017 further advanced the institutionalization of social dialogue in Tunisia. The CNDS acts as a tripartite framework for the exercise of social democracy, and its first constitutive meeting (held in December 2018) confirmed the importance of social dialogue in the governance of the country's economic and social affairs.

---

<sup>13</sup> UN-ESCWA, 'Rethinking inequality in Arab countries', ESCWA, Economic Research Forum, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail; Union Tunisienne de l'Industrie, du Commerce et de l'Artisanat.

## Disenchantment with politics

Tunisia's democratic gains, however, are fragile. The country faces a "crisis of democratization"<sup>15</sup> due to the pressing need for a new social contract. Tunisia's current model of consensus-driven politics – embodied in the 2016 'Pacte de Carthage' (primarily between the political parties Nidaa Tounes and Ennahdha) – was critical to overcoming political polarisation, but has hampered structural reforms addressing multidimensional inequalities and exclusion. The country's political gains are therefore perceived as having come at the expense of shared socioeconomic prosperity, particularly amongst young men and women in the marginalised interior regions. This is evidenced by the declining quality of basic services, since national budgets have not been able to address structural divides and systems have become less efficient and perform worse over time. Disenchantment with the political elite has resulted in a steady decline in voter turnout (from 86 per cent in 2011 to 41 per cent in 2019 for legislative elections) and a dramatic increase in social protests (from around 5,500 protests in 2015 to 9,091 in 2019).<sup>16</sup> The 2018 municipal elections provided an opportunity to strengthen political participation and efficiency, but since the consolidation of local administrative system under the decentralisation process requires time and resources<sup>17</sup> public mistrust has grown.<sup>18</sup>

The election of Kais Saied as President of the Republic in October 2019 (with 73 per cent of the vote) represents a rejection of the nation's political establishment. Saied, a constitutional law professor with no prior political experience or current political affiliation, has promised to prioritize social justice, fight corruption and pursue decentralisation and a more representative political process. His popularity represents an opportunity to foster a much-needed shared vision and hope among frustrated Tunisians. However, if insufficiently managed, Saied's pledges can also create expectations that will be hard to meet in a context of political fragmentation and macroeconomic constraints. Moreover, the inertia of political and socioeconomic reforms vital to achieve the 2030 Agenda may be further exacerbated by a polarized parliament that is unable to agree on a way forward. Finally, these challenges may be aggravated by the COVID-19 crisis, during which Tunisia has adopted strict measures to limit its spread.<sup>19</sup> While restrictions may be considered to be inevitable under these circumstances, their impact will require a comprehensive and sustained socio-economic response. The IMF forecasts Tunisia's economy will contract by 4.3 per cent in 2020 under the weight of COVID-19.<sup>20</sup> The economic crisis that the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to trigger in Tunisia may also deepen the mistrust of the population towards the authorities.

## Human rights

Tunisia is party to most international human rights treaties<sup>21</sup> and the 2014 Constitution enshrines the principles of transparency, neutrality, good governance, social justice, equality

---

<sup>15</sup> Sadiki, Larbi, 'Order from Chaos: Tunisia's Migration to the North', Brookings Institution, 2019.

<sup>16</sup> FTDES, 'Rapport mouvements sociaux annuel 2019', FTDES, Tunisia, 2020. See bibliography for web link

<sup>17</sup> ICG, 'Décentralisation en Tunisie: Consolider la démocratie sans affaiblir l'Etat', International Crisis Group, Brussels, 2019.

<sup>18</sup> According to the Afro Barometer, in 2018, only 46 percent of Tunisians surveyed said that "democracy is preferable to any other kind of government" compared to 71 percent in 2013.

<sup>19</sup> Authorities extended the already enforced national state of emergency for another three months; and the Assembly of the Representative of the People (ARP) voted for a delegation of legislative power to the Head of Government on measures related to the national COVID-19 response. Social distancing measures (total confinement, curfew and travel bans except for the repatriation and quarantine of national returners) are also in force

<sup>20</sup> Request for purchase under the rapid financing instrument – Press release; staff report; and statement by the executive director for Tunisia.

<sup>21</sup> Tunisia is not party to one of the major conventions: The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families

of rights and duties between all citizens— male and female— and equity between the regions. Several independent constitutional bodies uphold these principles, including the:

- Audio-visual Community Authority
- Authority for Good Governance and the Fight against Corruption
- Authority for Sustainable Development and the Rights of Future Generations
- Human Rights Authority
- Independent Higher Authority for Election.

Since 2011, there has been a significant increase in citizens' capacity to participate in political life. Indeed, Tunisia has made the most dramatic progress with regard to the 'freedom' of its citizens: Freedom House's 'Freedom in the World' ranks Tunisia as 2.5 out of 7 in 2019, a jump from 6 in 2010 (where 1 is the freest and 7 the least free).<sup>22</sup> The adoption of the 'Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination' law of 2018 was likewise a major development. There is a significant gap, however, between Tunisia's progressive legal framework and the lived experiences of rights-holders, in part due to the lack of legislative and policy coherence, weak mechanisms for implementation and the absence of a Constitutional Court to safeguard against unconstitutional legislation and violations. Additional challenges in upholding human rights remain in the context of counterterrorism, including:

- The misuse of emergency legislation and powers vested in the police
- The overly broad definition of terrorism in national legislation
- Prolonged periods of custody
- The conditions of detention
- The use of executive orders to restrict freedom of movement and impose house arrest without proper judicial review
- Allegations of ill-treatment and torture
- The use of counter-terrorism law and other legislative acts against journalists.<sup>23</sup>

Social injustice, regional inequalities, and enduring discrimination undermine equality of opportunity and outcome.<sup>24</sup> According to a study conducted by the National Institute for Statistics, 60 per cent of Tunisians have experienced discrimination of some kind (sexual, regional, political, etc.).<sup>25</sup> Although gender parity is enshrined in the Constitution,<sup>26</sup> meanwhile, the composition of Parliament demonstrates a different reality: only 23 per cent of parliamentarians elected in 2019 are women, compared to 36 per cent in 2014.<sup>27</sup> This is largely due to shortcomings in the electoral law, which lacks specific clauses on the need for horizontal as well as vertical parity (horizontal parity only exists for municipal elections; 47 per cent of elected representatives at the municipal level in 2018 were women). Inequality is further exacerbated — and the enjoyment of human rights threatened — by austerity measures and

---

<sup>22</sup> For more information see Freedom House website: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/tunisia>.

<sup>23</sup> A/HRC/37/54/Add.1, Report of the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights, on his mission to Tunisia - Note by the Secretariat

<sup>24</sup> For more information, see: UN-ESCWA, 'Rethinking inequality in Arab countries', ESCWA, Economic Research Forum, 2019.

<sup>25</sup> Institut National de Statistiques, Enquête sur « La perception des citoyens envers la sécurité, la liberté et la gouvernance locale en Tunisie », INS, 2018.

<sup>26</sup> Article 34 states: The rights of election, of voting and of being a candidate are guaranteed, in accordance with the provisions of the law. The State ensures the representation of women in elected assemblies; and, Article 46 states: The State undertakes to protect the acquired rights of women, supports them and works to improve them. The State guarantees equal opportunities between women and men to assume different responsibilities and in all areas. The State works to achieve parity between women and men in elected councils...".

<sup>27</sup> As a result, in 2019 Tunisia went from 30th position to 80th in the global ranking of women representation in parliament, close to Afghanistan and the United States.

related labour market reforms,<sup>28</sup> as well as endemic levels of corruption. A nationwide poll conducted in 2017 found that 89 per cent of Tunisians perceived corruption to have increased since the revolution.<sup>29</sup> Corruption is particularly damaging since it results not only in the misallocation of public funds, but also diminishes investment in public services that are essential for the realization of rights (and thereby disproportionately affects the poor).<sup>30</sup>

### The status of young people

Tunisia's most pressing national crisis is reflected in the frustration of many of its young people.<sup>31</sup> Their frustration has the potential to reverse democratic gains, particularly in the interior regions and rural and peri-urban areas where two thirds of Tunisia's poor live. The disillusionment and vulnerability of Tunisia's youth is due to a series of complex and ongoing employment challenges that helped set the stage for the 2011 Revolution) and are now compounded by the COVID-19 outbreak.

First, the jobs that have been created over the last decade have not met the expectations of high-skilled youth. Educated young people are disproportionately unemployed, a trend which reflects a mismatch between the demand for unskilled labour and a growing supply of high-skilled labour.<sup>32</sup> As a consequence, Tunisia is facing a brain drain:<sup>33</sup> by 2017, nearly 100,000 highly educated and skilled workers had left the country because of poor employment prospects (including a lack of continuity between volunteering or mechanisms fostering youth employability and professional opportunities) and difficult socio-economic conditions.<sup>34</sup> In addition, the confinement and other measures related to the ongoing pandemic have already forced enterprises to scale down their staff and in some cases declare bankruptcy. Much of the workforce will suffer from the short, medium and long-term consequences of the pandemic, especially those in vulnerable employment (e.g. those in the informal sector, domestic workers and self-employed people) with limited or no compensation.

Second, many are willing to risk their lives for a better future. In 2018, Tunisia overtook Eritrea as the country with the largest number of outgoing migrants who make the perilous journey to enter Italy by sea.<sup>35</sup> A 2016 survey by the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES), meanwhile, found that 9 per cent of interviewed youth had tried to emigrate and more than 54 per cent *would like* to emigrate.<sup>36</sup>

Thirdly, Tunisia remains one of the largest contributors of foreign fighters to the Islamic State. Since 2011, around 30,000 Tunisians attempted to go to Iraq and Syria,<sup>37</sup> while over 2,900

---

<sup>28</sup> Human Rights Council, 'Report A/HRC/37/54/Add.1 - Report of the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights', UN General Assembly, 2018.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Conceicao, Pedro, 'Human Development Report 2019', UNDP, New York, 2019. In the report it is stated that Tunisia's HDI for 2018 is 0.739. However, when the value is discounted for inequality, the HDI falls to 0.585, a loss of 20.8 percent due to inequality. The Human inequality coefficient for Tunisia is equal to 20.2 percent

<sup>32</sup> Martinage, Jean-Luc, 'Breaking the cycle of poverty in Tunisia, International Labour Organization, 2016.

<sup>33</sup> The phenomenon of the diaspora is however complex. The migration of high-skilled professionals from middle- and low-income countries may indeed create brain drain, but at the same time can enhance the social and economic development of their home countries, regardless of whether or not those people decide to return home, thus complicating what used to be seen as a straightforward case of brain drain. Moreover, in the case of Tunisia, the diaspora invests in Tunisia not only via their remittances.

<sup>34</sup> Yerkes, Sarah; Ben Ya, Zeineb, 'Tunisians revolutionary goals remain unfulfilled', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 06, 2018.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> 1,168 young Tunisians interviewed, of whom two thirds were aged 20 between 29 years. Referenced in: Flayols, Alexandra; Jongerius, Dario and de Bel-Air, Françoise, 'Tunisia: Education, Labour Market, Migration', Annex C to "Dutch labour market shortages and potential labour supply from Africa and the Middle East" (SEO Report No. 2019-24), SEO Amsterdam Economic, Commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019.

<sup>37</sup> Zelin, Y, Aaron, 'Tunisian Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria, Policy Notes, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2018.

Tunisians made it to Syria or Iraq and 1,500 made it to Libya.<sup>38</sup> Besides geopolitical and historical factors, the appeal of jihadism has grown in a vacuum caused by social, economic and educational challenges and the disappearance of “values” inherited from the old regime. The socio-economic frustrations generated by the impact of the COVID-19 crisis may be a boon to terrorist groups looking to recruit Tunisian youth.

Fourth, the number of protests has increased since 2011 (sometimes turning violent). The drivers of current protests, however, are in many ways the same as those in 2011. 72 per cent of protests in 2019 were related to economic, social, and administrative concerns and frustrations regarding infrastructure, while 15 per cent were related to education.<sup>39</sup> The short-term effects of COVID-19 might have a dampening effect on widespread social unrest. In the long-term, however, the response of citizens to the related measures may strain relations between the government and the public—especially if the health care system and socio-economic measures are perceived to be ineffective.<sup>40</sup>

Fifth, there has been an alarming increase in suicide attempts. The number of attempts tripled in the first five years since the revolution, and between 2016 and 2018 there were 1,885 self-immolation attempts (437 of which were fatal).<sup>41</sup> These numbers indicate that many young people are willing to risk or take their own lives rather than face the realities of their marginalisation from all spheres of life. It is too early to fully evaluate the impact of confinement and the stress generated by COVID-19 on society (especially if it is coupled with a possible economic downturn), but the global anecdotal evidence suggests it has an impact on individuals’ mental and physical health.

Sixth, there is a decline in youth participation in the political process, with low rates of participation in public affairs, visible in the 2019 elections, and inability of the development process and the governance system to integrate youth and provide opportunities for their contribution to economic and social growth. This has created a sense of continued exclusion and marginalization.<sup>42</sup> The inclusion of young people has direct, economic, political, social and cultural implications for public and community life.<sup>43</sup> Young people increasingly turn to their own methods through innovation, lobbying and advocacy. In the context of the response to the COVID-19 outbreak, youth-led initiatives are being implemented in health, social assistance and community services.<sup>44</sup>

## Regional instability and conflict

The internal drivers of disenchantment and social unrest are exacerbated by regional instability and conflict. Tunisia is exposed to the internal instability of its neighbours on both borders: in the West anti-government protests have rocked Algeria since 2019, and in the East armed conflict has been ongoing in Libya since 2014. The escalation of the conflict in Libya in April 2019 and again in January 2020 is of significant concern. Tunisia’s economy has already

---

<sup>38</sup> From the start of the mobilisation until about April 2017, the Tunisian government prevented around 26,000 from going. Among those who succeeded in travelling, only 1,000 came back being transferred or by their own means and only 552 have been reported dead. It is likely that the remaining foreign fighters moved on to the Libyan battlefield between spring 2014 and December 2016, and that many hundreds more remained in Iraq or Syria with IS and, to a lesser extent, al-Qaeda and other jihadist groups active in northwest Syria. See Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> See the most comprehensive analysis of social movements, see the Forum Tunisien pour les Droits Economiques et Sociaux (FTDES) website: <https://ftdes.net/>.

<sup>40</sup> International Crisis Group, ‘COVID-19 and Conflict: Seven trends to watch’. Special Briefing N°4, 24 March 2020.

<sup>41</sup> See: FTEDS, ‘Rapport annuel suicides et tentatives de suicide 2019’, Forum Tunisien pour la Droits Economiques et Sociaux, Tunis, 2020.

<sup>42</sup> National Report on ICPD+25

<sup>43</sup> “Breaking the barriers to youth inclusion”, World Bank

<sup>44</sup> Site Web du Ministère de l’Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche scientifique : « Initiatives Tunisiennes pour vaincre le COVID19 »



incurred losses of USD 580 million per year between 2011 and 2015<sup>45</sup> because of the Libyan conflict, and has experienced increased social tensions as a result of border closures and rising numbers of displaced persons arriving from Libya (close to 1,500 people arrived from Libya in 2019 by land and sea).<sup>46</sup> There is also a trend of scarce public funds being diverted away from development for the purpose security-related spending (the budget of the Ministry of the Interior has almost doubled since 2011).<sup>47</sup> A further escalation of violence may induce more Libyans and migrants in Libya to seek protection and safety in neighbouring countries (Tunisia, Egypt, and Algeria), or to undertake the dangerous journey to Europe by sea. For the first time since the Algerian refugee crisis in 1956, Tunisia has faced a massive influx of population displaced by the 2011 conflict in Libya. Insecurity in the border areas has increased the presence and activity of traffickers seeking to control lucrative trade routes and traffic in drugs, weapons, oil and people, which has a significant effect on the lives and livelihoods of those living in border communities. As a consequence of these regional dynamics— including the effects of ongoing turmoil in the Sahel— the risk of terrorist activity remains relatively high. In the last three years alone, 1,270 people have been held on terrorism charges and Tunisia was the victim of multiple high-profile attacks, including the 2015 attack on the Bardo Museum in Tunis and the Sousse beach resort and the Islamic State’s attempted takeover of the border town Ben Guerdane in 2016. Tunisia, therefore, continues to invest considerable human and financial resources in counter-terrorism efforts with the support of multiple international actors.

## The economy

Tunisia’s economy suffers from longstanding structural challenges (including enduring inequalities), the effects of the political transition, regional instability and poor integration into global economic markets. Tunisia’s growth rate dropped from an average of 4.4 per cent between 2000 and 2010 to around 1.4 per cent in 2019.<sup>48</sup> A persistently high level of unemployment— which disproportionately affects young people, women, and those living in interior regions and rural areas— is Tunisia’s most pressing socio-economic challenge, with employment rates having stagnated at around 15.3 per cent since 2014, and 34.83 per cent for youth.<sup>49</sup> Whilst the budget deficit has declined from -6.1 per cent in 2017 to -3.9 per cent in 2019, public debt rose to 76.7 per cent of GDP in 2019<sup>50</sup> (compared to 68.9 per cent in 2018). The high inflation rate is particularly troubling since it seriously affects the purchasing power of the poor and middle classes, which further increases inequalities and undermines social cohesion. Heavy subsidies, furthermore, negatively impact the economy and do not serve the poor.

These challenges are compounded by the declining competitiveness and low productivity of the national economy, which is principally due to weak economic governance: corruption, lack of transparency and market distortions keep Tunisia back from realizing its significant potential. The biggest obstacle to shared prosperity is the marked inequality between richer metropolitan regions, which tend to be more economically active, and poorer peripheral neighbourhoods and rural regions. The combination of conflict in Libya, instability in Algeria, the volatility of oil prices and uncertainties in Europe (which is Tunisia’s main economic

---

<sup>45</sup> UN-ESCWA, ‘Impact of the Libyan crisis on the Tunisian economy’, An estimation of the macroeconomic and fiscal impacts of the Libyan crisis on the Tunisian economy’, United Nations, Beirut 2017, page 11.

<sup>46</sup> For Libya brief see International Organization for Migration (IOM) ‘Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)’ database’: <https://dtm.iom.int/libya>.

<sup>47</sup> MARSAD website, see bibliography for web link.

<sup>48</sup> UNESCWA-ECA, ‘Note d’analyse macro-economique de la Tunisie’, Novembre 2019, page 5.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.



partner) creates additional pressures on Tunisia's fragile economy. Stalled economic reforms<sup>51</sup> (which are particularly slow when compared to the pace of political reforms), a challenging macro-economic context, and low investment in infrastructure could further impede Tunisia from delivering on the 2030 Agenda.

The country has taken positive steps towards boosting its economic outlook, however: while additional efforts to improve tax equity are needed, Tunisia has improved tax collection and has instituted other related reforms designed to enhance the business environment while also accruing benefits for the economy. Tunisia's ranking as the number one country in Africa for innovation in 2018 is a testament to the success of these efforts.<sup>52</sup> Tunisia has also begun to capitalize on its strategic assets by entering the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)<sup>53</sup> and by securing bilateral partnerships which have the potential to help Tunisia achieve shared economic prosperity and greater social justice.

### Health, education, and social protection

Although Tunisia has made significant progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda since 2011, significant inequalities remain. Adjusted for inequalities, the Country Human Index drops down at 0.585 vs. 0.739 in 2019 with a decreasing trend in terms of ranking (-4 vs. 2018)<sup>54</sup>. The percentage of those living on less than USD 5.50 a day decreased from 30.3 per cent in 2010 to 18.3 per cent in 2015,<sup>55</sup> and extreme poverty halved during the same period from 6 to 3 per cent.<sup>56</sup> However, efforts to reach the most vulnerable households remain unsuccessful and children are therefore twice as poor as adults (at 24.2 per cent).<sup>57</sup> The Government's National Programme of Assistance for Needy Families adds around 20 per cent to the income of poor families but, according to a World Bank Study, has reached only 12.6 per cent of the poorest 20 per cent of the Tunisian population.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, those living in coastal regions are considerably better off than those living in the interior of the country. In 2015, the poorest regions—the North-West, Central-West and South-West—were home to 70 per cent of the country's extremely poor and 55 per cent of all of the poor (although they accounted for only 30 per cent of the total population).<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, lack of access to quality health and education services as well as social protection underscores the prevalence of enduring inequalities.

Tunisia's health system has experienced improvements and contributes to a significant increase in life expectancy (75.1 years in 2015) and a reduction in the mortality rate of children under 5 (from 233 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1965 to 14 per 1,000 in 2015). In addition, 285,000 families benefit from the 'Free Medical Assistance Programme.' However, although 80 per cent of Tunisians rely on the public health-care system it employs only half of all doctors and has only 28 per cent of all advanced diagnostic medical equipment. There are also regional

---

<sup>51</sup> For analysis on economic reforms see: The World Bank, 'Note stratégique sur les réformes prioritaires. Pour une Tunisie forte, prospère et inclusive', the World Bank, 2019.

<sup>52</sup> According to Invest in Tunisia, 'Tunisia First Arab and African Country in Terms of Innovation According to the 2018 Bloomberg Innovation Index'. Ranked according to seven criteria: research and development intensity, manufacturing value added, productivity, high-tech density, tertiary efficiency, researcher concentration and patent activity. See bibliography for web link

<sup>53</sup> See, for example: Jaballi, Chawki, 'Adhésion de la Tunisie au COMESA', République Tunisienne Ministère du Commerce, 17 May 2019.

<sup>54</sup> UNDP Human Development Report 2019 <http://www.hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2019.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> MACROTRENDS, see bibliography for web link

<sup>56</sup> For more information about poverty see OPHI, 'Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2019', Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative, 2019.

<sup>57</sup> For extensive report on challenges facing Tunisian children see: UNICEF, 'Analyse de la situation de l'enfance en Tunisie 2019', UNICEF Tunisia, 2019.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Aldana, Medinilla, Alfonso and Fassi, el Sahra, 'Briefing Note, Tackling Regional Inequalities in Tunisia No. 84, April 2016', European Centre for Development Policy Management, 2016.

disparities with regard to health care: while Tunis has an average of 3.5 medical doctors per 1,000 inhabitants, for example, the populations of Jendouba, Kairouan and Tataouine are served by only 0.6 doctors per 1,000 inhabitants.<sup>60</sup> Tunisia's contraceptive prevalence rate has decreased from 62.5 per cent to 50.7 per cent between 2014 and 2018, and unmet needs for family planning has increased from 9 per cent to 19.9 per cent.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, Tunisia is not on course to meet the global targets for reducing anaemia in women of reproductive age, low birth weight, male diabetes, female diabetes, or obesity,<sup>62</sup> and maternal mortality rates remain elevated at 43 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.<sup>63</sup> The Tunisian health system will be stretched to its full capacity by the COVID-19 pandemic and may have difficulties recovering.<sup>64</sup>

Tunisia's education system has also improved. School is obligatory and free for children aged 6 to 16 years old with an enrolment rate of 95.5 per cent. Dropout rates for adolescents, conversely, are of concern: 26 per cent of girls and 20 per cent of boys do not complete lower secondary education.<sup>65</sup> The most significant challenge, however, pertains to the quality of education. Results from international (PISA, TIMSS) and national assessments show a decreasing level of learning outcomes for children.<sup>66</sup> Data from 2019, for example, indicates that 33 per cent and 72 per cent of children aged 7–14 years do not possess foundational skills in reading and maths, with wide disparities depending on setting (urban/rural) and socio-economic profiles (poorest/wealthiest). Only 42 per cent of students passed the national baccalaureate exam in 2019 (the average number of students who pass has been in decline over the past ten years).<sup>67</sup> In addition, the COVID-19 outbreak creates difficulties for children of households that are heavily reliant on meals provided at school and deepens inequalities between students who can continue the academic year online while others (living in more deprived areas with limited internet access) cannot. This division is mainly visible in public and private schools as well as rural and urban areas. The long-term consequences of this situation have yet to be determined.

In terms of social protection, Tunisia benefits from one of the most advanced—albeit imperfect—systems amongst middle-income countries,<sup>68</sup> which covers all socio-professional categories in the public and formal private sector (approximately 85 per cent of the active population).<sup>69</sup> Informal sector workers—the majority of whom are below the age of 40<sup>70</sup>—are not covered, although they account for around 37 per cent of the workforce<sup>71</sup> (including 52 per cent in the agricultural sector).<sup>72</sup> Tunisia's population is rapidly ageing: the proportion of people aged 60 and over is expected to rise from 11.7 per cent in 2014 to 16 per cent by 2026 and will

---

<sup>60</sup> Human Rights Council, 'Report A/HRC/37/54/Add.1 - Report of the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights', UN General Assembly, 2018.

<sup>61</sup> See: <https://mics.unicef.org/surveys>

<sup>62</sup> Global Nutrition Report, 'Tunisia Nutrition Profile', see bibliography for web link

<sup>63</sup> World Health Organization, 'Maternal mortality in 2000-2017', see bibliography for web link

<sup>64</sup> Le Point Afrique, Covid-19 : la Tunisie entre inquiétude sanitaire et désarroi économique, 8 April 2020.

<sup>65</sup> République Tunisienne et Les Nations Unies Tunisie, 'Rapport National Volontaire de la mise en œuvre des Objectifs de Développement Durable en Tunisie', Forum Politique de Haut Niveau, New York, 2019.

<sup>66</sup> Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) database, see bibliography for web link.

<sup>67</sup> OECD, 'PISA 2015, Results in Focus', OECD, 2018.

<sup>68</sup> Le Centre de Recherches et d'Etudes Sociales et la Banque Africaine de Développement, 'Protection sociale et économie informelle en Tunisie', Mai 2016, page 10.

<sup>69</sup> Human Rights Council 'Report A/HRC/37/54/Add.1 - Report of the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights', UN General Assembly, 2018

<sup>70</sup> Le Centre de Recherches et d'Etudes Sociales et la Banque Africaine de Développement, 'Protection sociale et économie informelle en Tunisie', Mai 2016

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. No accurate figures on the number of informal workers are available;

<sup>72</sup> Trabelssi, Karim 'Current state of the informal economy in Tunisia as seen through its stakeholders: facts and alternatives, reality diagnosis and perspectives, UGTT, Solidarity Center, 2014.

be around 20 per cent in 2036.<sup>73</sup> This phenomenon will have health, social and economic productivity implications which need to be addressed proactively. In addition, children are underrepresented in the current social protection system, since 59 per cent of children do not benefit from any cash transfers (whether contributory or non-contributory)—despite the fact that levels of children in poverty (21.6 per cent in 2016) is almost double that for adults (12.8 per cent).<sup>74</sup> The unexpected medical and other socioeconomic costs needed to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic will increase the difficulties to respond to the need of Tunisians, in particular those most in need. While the authorities have put in place a set of measures to support different sectors and vulnerable population groups, Tunisia's social protection system does not include an unemployment benefit scheme (even though such a scheme would have been an appropriate tool for the COVID-19 crisis). The lack of social protection may lock people in poverty, spur unemployment and informal work, and decrease resilience.

## The environment

Ineffective management of natural resources and the environment combined with the effects of the climate crisis exacerbates inequality and jeopardizes economic growth because those most dependent on the land and those who live in the interior regions—who are often the poorest, most marginalised and vulnerable—are disproportionately affected.<sup>75</sup> The World Bank has calculated that environmental degradation at the national level will cost Tunisia an estimated 2.7 per cent of GDP as a result of agricultural loss due to soil degradation, and a decline in tourism as a result of coastline degradation and dam siltation.<sup>76</sup> Tunisia is considered to be the most exposed to climate change of the Mediterranean countries, and is likely to suffer temperature increases and more frequent natural disasters with humanitarian impacts linked to droughts, desertification, earthquakes, flooding and forest fires. From 1983 to 2013, for example, Tunisia experienced 2,500 natural disasters that led to 1,075 deaths and economic losses of around USD 756 million.<sup>77</sup> Tunisia's vulnerability to climate change stems both from conditions in the sea and on land.

79 per cent of economic activity and 76 per cent of tourism-related investment is tied to the coastal regions,<sup>78</sup> which are also the most heavily populated areas. It is estimated that coastal regions will experience 116,000 hectares of land loss by 2100, particularly in the Gulf of Tunis and Gabes, which will have significant impacts on people's homes, livelihoods, agriculture, tourism and the economy. Water resources are also threatened. The Institute of World Resources ranks Tunisia 30 out of 164 countries, indicating that it is highly exposed to water stress with less than 500 m<sup>3</sup> available per capita, per year. Water resources will be increasingly affected by rising demand (including tourism), inadequate sewage solutions that pollute the water table, overexploitation of aquifers and the salinization of coastal water tables due to the rise in sea level as a result of climate change. The quality of water is, furthermore, affected by chemical pollution and the degradation of marine ecosystems.

In terms of conditions on land, Tunisia is vulnerable to desertification and soil degradation: 44 per cent of soil in Tunisia is classified as being severely degraded, which has significant

---

<sup>73</sup> Statistiques Tunisie, 'Les Projections de la Population 2014-2044', République Tunisienne Institut National de la Statistique', December 2015.

<sup>74</sup> UNICEF, 'Towards universal social protection for children: achieving SDG 1.3', UNICET, May 2019.

<sup>75</sup> Gsir, Sonia and Bounouh, Abdelala, 'Migrations et environnement en Tunisie : Relations complexes et défis pour le développement', Organisation Internationale pour les migrations OIM, 2018.

<sup>76</sup> MDICI, 'Etude de la BM et aussi Note d'orientation, Plan Quinquennal de Développement 2016-2020 de la Tunisie', See Bibliography for web link

<sup>77</sup> DESINVENTAR database, see Bibliography for web link

<sup>78</sup> Oueslati, Ameer and Elamri, Tharouet, 'Le littoral Tunisien Chiffres-clés, UNDP, Tunis, December 2015.

consequences for the health and functioning of the ecosystem and knock-on effects for the agricultural sector and the nation's food security. Increasing temperatures, droughts and desertification also increase the risks of forest fires, which are devastating for natural habitats and biodiversity.

As natural resources become increasingly scarce, there is a heightened risk of such factors feeding into instability and conflict. Tunisia committed to tackling the climate crisis when it adopted the UN Framework on Climate Change in 1992; ratified the Kyoto Protocol in 2002; and signed the Paris Agreement in 2016 when its Nationally Determined Contributions became a formal commitment towards the international community to enhance climate actions.<sup>79</sup> Despite these impressive commitments,<sup>80</sup> the country will need to rapidly develop a socioeconomic strategy resistant to climate change in order to meet its obligations to both current and future generations. The structural and growing energy deficit that Tunisia has faced since the early 2000s has worsened since 2011 due to the continuous growth in energy demand (2 per cent per year between 2010 and 2018) and the drastic decrease in national hydrocarbon production. This has contributed to the country's energy dependency (up to 50 per cent) and increased energy imports (40 per cent of the country's trade deficit in 2019). With a limited development of renewable energy (3 per cent so far), Tunisia has the opportunity to use its renewable resources in a sustainable and affordable way and contribute to an inclusive growth and a low carbon development.

### COVID-19 in Tunisia

The presence of COVID-19 in Tunisia was first confirmed on 2 March 2020 in Gafsa. Like other countries, there has been an exponential increase in the contamination rate. As of 15 April, Tunisia had 780 confirmed cases of COVID-19, 35 related deaths, and was at epidemiological stage three.

Two weeks after a vote of confidence in the government (on 27 February) Tunisia implemented a preventive approach to limit the spread of the virus according to WHO recommendations. The Ministry of Health has announced that since 22 March, 2,390 Tunisian nationals have been repatriated, 818 of whom have completed their quarantine period, and 29 of whom tested positive for COVID-19. They have been placed in self-isolation centres. By 12 April, 3,500 persons who had had direct contact with confirmed COVID-19 cases were confined to self-isolation centres. The government has adopted several public health measures to help control the spread of COVID-19, including a continuous lockdown (declared on 22 March), a 12-hour daily curfew and practice of social distance. Tunisia has also closed its land and air borders.

There is an urgent need to inject liquidity to ease cash flow pressures on enterprises and compensate workers for lost income. To that end, a funding line of approximately USD 100 million has been released to compensate for lost wages. More than USD 50 million was also released in the form of cash transfers to help vulnerable households. Measures have also been taken to support enterprises and reduce the financial, social and tax burden, mainly by postponing payment deadlines for the next 3 to 6 months and implementing a tax and customs amnesty. Sector-specific funds have also been set up: one by the Ministry of Health to collect donations to finance medical equipment for medical facilities, and another by the Ministry of Culture to support artists who are in a precarious situation (i.e., they do not benefit from a

---

<sup>79</sup> For more information see UNDP, 'Feuille de route pour la mise en œuvre de la NDC', UNDP Tunisia, Tunis, 2019.

<sup>80</sup> La Conférence des Parties COP 25, 'La Tunisie en action, pour un développement bas carbone et résilient à l'horizon 2050', Ministère des Affaires Locales et de l'Environnement avec le PNUD, 2019.

stable income or social security coverage).<sup>81</sup> On April 10, the IMF Executive Board approved a USD 745 million loan under the Rapid Financing Instrument to support Tunisia's policy response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The UN is supporting the government's response by playing a coordination, advocacy and advisory role (with the WHO and RCO at the forefront of this engagement). UN agencies were able to quickly mobilize their teams to adapt and scale up their support for health and socioeconomic priorities. The establishment of a platform to coordinate action with international financial institutions and donors (in particular the WB and IMF) was crucial to build a coherent and integrated response.

---

<sup>81</sup> 'The economic impact of COVID-19 in Tunisia', UNDP, 2020

## National vision for sustainable development

Tunisia's Five-Year Development Plan 2016–2020 (drafted using participatory approaches at the local, regional and national levels) was formulated according to five priority areas:

- Good governance and reform of public administration and anti-corruption measures
- Tunisia 'as an economic hub'
- Human development and social inclusion
- Positive discrimination to achieve greater regional equality
- Sustainable development based on a green economy.

These objectives were designed to address the gaps observed during the previous five-year period. To provide additional economic resources for this Plan, its strategy aimed to transform Tunisia from a low-cost economy to an economic hub by overcoming three principal challenges: the lack of economic diversification, low investment and weak business climate, and insufficient exports and low economic integration in the world economy. The quantitative objectives are to achieve:

- A growth rate of 4 per cent
- A reduction of the rate of poverty to 2 per cent
- An increase in the investment rate to 25 per cent
- The creation of 400,000 jobs
- A reduction of unemployment to 12 per cent
- An increase in the national savings rate to 18 per cent
- The reduction of the informal sector to 20 per cent of GDP
- An increase in the export/GDP ratio by 42 per cent by 2020.

In line with these objectives (as will be discussed in greater detail in the next section) Tunisia selected six priority Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning (SDG 4); promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (SDG 8); reduce inequality within and among countries (SDG 10); take urgent action to combat climate change (SDG 13); promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, accountable and inclusive institutions all levels (SDG 16); and, strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development (SDG 17).

A mid-term evaluation conducted by the think tank Solidar<sup>82</sup> between 2016 and 2018 demonstrates that the objectives of the plan are unlikely to be achieved by 2020 due to Tunisia's challenging national trajectory.<sup>83</sup> While significant progress has been made, across the board Tunisia is likely to fall well short of its ambitious objectives (see Table 1). GDP in 2018, for example, stood at 1.8 per cent, well below the objective of 4 per cent; the investment rate was at 18.8 per cent rather than 25 per cent, and whilst 109,000 jobs were created, the 400,000 target is well out of reach in the time left available. Additionally, the impact of COVID-19 will affect the overall economy through shocks to labour supply, the cost of production, consumer demand, and government expenditure. Some economists are predicting a double-digit economic contraction.<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> Solidar, Trabelsi, Salwa; Zrelli, Nedra, 'Tunisie, Evaluation du plan de développement 2016-2020', Solidar-Tunisie, Aout 2019.

<sup>83</sup> For discussion on future challenges for development see report: Kwasi, Stellah; Cilliers, Jakkie and Welborn, Lily, 'The Rebirth: Tunisia's potential development pathways to 2040', African Futures and Innovation programme (AFI), 2019.

<sup>84</sup> The North Africa Journal, 27 March 2020, <http://north-africa.com/2020/03/north-africa-faces-unprecedented-economic-crisis>.

Table 1: Comparison of macro-economic indicators

Objectives of the development plan 2016–2020	Actual achievements 2016–2018	Difference objectives and actual achievements
Achieve a growth rate of 4%	1.8%	-2.2 % points
Reduce the poverty rate to 2%	15.2% (2015)	Not available
Increase the investment rate to 25%	18.8%	-6.2 % points
Create 400,000 jobs	109,000	291,000 jobs
Reduce the unemployment rate to 12%	15.39%	-3.39 % points
Increase the national savings rate to 18%	9.6%	-8.4 % points
Reduce the informal sector to 20% of GDP	52% in 2015 55% in 2018	-35 % points

Sources: Development Plan 2016–2020 and Evaluation Report of the Development Plan 2016-2020, Solidar.

The reasons for low performance relative to the stated objectives of the development plan are diverse and highly complex. According to the extensive analysis of the National Development Plan conducted by Solidar, Tunisia's weak performance is a result of:

- An excessively regulated environment that restricts the effectiveness of market mechanisms;
- Large subsidies
- Corruption
- Low levels of competition
- A heavy bureaucracy
- Rent-seeking
- Mediocre quality of service provision
- Weak productivity of enterprises
- A rigid labour market that discourages hiring and hampers production
- Industrial policies that promote activities with low added-value
- A non-investment friendly market policy
- A fiscal policy that prioritises consumer spending
- An agricultural policy that prioritizes European crops
- Low and qualitatively poor levels of investment.<sup>85</sup>

These challenges are exacerbated by political and social instability, trafficking, the threat of terrorism and regional spill over effects and now also by the COVID-19 outbreak. The pandemic has disrupted the new government's programme (2019–2024) since it has necessitated severe temporary measures such as limiting the manufacturing system's production capacity and several services.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.



Tackling these diverse challenges requires a level of strategic harmonization and coherence between and amongst diverse stakeholders that is currently lacking. The lack of coordination is counter-productive because individual actors – including government departments and the central bank – tend to prioritize the concerns of their respective entities without considering the impact that such decisions will have on the system as a whole, or on the ability to achieve strategic national objectives.<sup>86</sup> These trends are compounded by a disconnect between desired impact and the tools used to achieve it. Solidar highlights some excellent example of this dynamic: the goal of monetary policy is to reduce inflation, but this leads to reduced investment and increased interest rates; the fiscal policy encourages consumer spending but has the effect of minimising public investment; and trade policy stimulates greater imports of consumer goods, which exacerbates the trade deficit. Strategic vision combined with coordinated and collaborative efforts will be required to overcome the structural challenges facing Tunisia.

---

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

## Progress towards the 2030 Agenda

Considering the country's context, SDG 16 on peace, security and inclusion and SDG 10 on inequalities – which are two out of six SDGs identified as a priority by the government – emerge as central to achieving all the other inter-related SDGs in Tunisia. These two SDGs are also intricately connected to SDG 5 on gender equality, since barriers to the inclusion and empowerment of women and girls impedes not only the ability to achieve SDGs 16 and 10, but all the SDGs. Combined, therefore, these three SDGs are key 'enablers' and instrumental to unlocking Tunisia's potential.

Tunisia continues to make progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, especially since its adoption coincided with the establishment of a new coalition government in 2015<sup>87</sup> and the commitment to the 2016–2020 development plan. As outlined in Tunisia's Voluntary National Review,<sup>88</sup> an integrated analysis of Tunisia's Constitution demonstrates that 65 per cent of its content is aligned with the SDGs and 91 per cent is aligned with SDGs that relate to 'people'. However, only 35 per cent is aligned with 'planet' goals, despite the existence of important laws on environmental protection (including articles in the Constitution)<sup>89</sup> and the need to guarantee the rights of future generations. A closer look at individual SDGs exposes even higher degrees of variation: for example, there is 100 per cent alignment between the Constitution and SDG 4 on 'quality education', 90 per cent for 'peace and justice' (SDG16); 20 per cent for 'industry, innovation and infrastructure' (SDG9); 14 per cent for SDG 14 'life under water'; and only 11 per cent for SDG 15 on 'life on earth'. Similar disparities are noted with regard to the National Development Plan: 80 per cent alignment with SDG targets but only 58 per cent are 'perfectly aligned', whilst 42 per cent are only 'partially aligned'.

To address these challenges the government launched a reinvigorated SDG operationalisation process in 2018 (with the support of the UN system) which places the interdependence of the SDGs at its core. The process was designed to identify priority SDGs; consider the complexity of SDGs during programming; integrate the SDGs and their targets into the national development plan; and accelerate the process by orienting the national budget towards specific targets and by paying particular attention to intersectoral synergies. As noted above, six priority SDGs were selected; examples of the achievements and principal challenges that relate to these and the other SDGs are provided in

Table 2.

---

<sup>87</sup> From République Tunisienne et Les Nations Unies Tunisie, 'Rapport National Volontaire de la mise en œuvre des Objectifs de Développement Durable en Tunisie', Forum Politique de Haut Niveau, New York, 2019. Tunisia had only met two of the eight Millennium Development Goals (reducing the rate of poverty and reducing the numbers of people without access to water and other basic services. It has since put in place mechanisms to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda.

<sup>88</sup> République Tunisienne et Les Nations Unies Tunisie, 'Rapport National Volontaire de la mise en œuvre des Objectifs de Développement Durable en Tunisie', Forum Politique de Haut Niveau, New York, 2019

<sup>89</sup> Article 45: The state guarantees the right to a healthy and balanced environment and the right to participate in the protection of the climate. The state shall provide the necessary means to eradicate pollution of the environment.

Table 2: Thematic analysis of SDGs, a selective summary/overview made on the basis of National Voluntary Report on the implementation of the SDGs in Tunisia, 2019<sup>90</sup> and the current COVID-19 outbreak.

Thematic analysis of priority SDGs		
SDG	Selective examples of achievements	Principal challenges
<b>SDG 4: Quality education</b>	<p>School is compulsory and free for children aged 6 to 16 years old. The enrolment rate is 99.5% for 6-year-olds and 99.2% for 6- to 11-year-olds.</p> <p>Kindergarten enrolment increased from 34% in 2016 to 45% in 2018.</p> <p>90 thousand school-age children from the poorest families are covered by Tunisia's National Programme for Assistance to Families in Need.</p> <p>Scheme in place for the training and/or education of young women from rural areas.</p>	<p>The quality and effectiveness of the education system is a significant challenge: Tunisia ranks 65 out of 70 countries (PISA).</p> <p>Only 50.6% of children aged 0 to 6 years old have access to any kind of ECD services or pre-primary education.</p> <p>High secondary education dropout rates, especially amongst boys.</p> <p>High regional disparities: 59% of children from rural regions complete lower secondary school compared to 82% from urban areas, and the disparities are even wider by socio-economic status (95% wealthiest; 53% poorest).</p> <p>Disparities between private and public education in the use of online education as a substitute for classic tools during confinement.</p>
<b>SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth</b>	<p>Relevant policies in place, including the National Strategy for Employment (adoption of which is planned for 2020), the Country Programme for Decent Work in Tunisia 2017 – 2022, the National Strategy for Entrepreneurship 2019, and the National Plan of Action for the Fight Against Child Labour.</p> <p>Support Programme for Small Business Owners.</p> <p>Availability of diverse contractual modalities for professional integration.</p> <p>National strategy for the economic and social empowerment of women and girls in rural areas.</p> <p>Cultural and creative industries are flourishing with freedom of artistic expression and civil society's interest in the creative economy.</p>	<p>Deep socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 and slow recovery</p> <p>High levels of unemployment (15.5%), particularly for women (22.9%), and recent graduates (17.2% for men, 38.8% for women).</p> <p>High number of informal workers (37% of the total workforce).</p> <p>Absence of a strategy for evaluating employment strategies.</p> <p>Child labour at 7.9%.</p> <p>Poor employability enhancement structure.</p> <p>Culture is still perceived as being recreational or for leisure. It is not yet an investment field in its own right, even</p>

<sup>90</sup> République Tunisienne et Les Nations Unies Tunisie, 'Rapport National Volontaire de la mise en œuvre des Objectifs de Développement Durable en Tunisie', Forum Politique de Haut Niveau, New York, 2019.

Thematic analysis of priority SDGs		
SDG	Selective examples of achievements	Principal challenges
		though all economic studies show the benefits of investing in culture.
<b>SDG 10: Reduced inequalities</b>	<p>The consumption rate of the poor increased more quickly than that of the rich. The Gini coefficient decreased between 2000 and 2015 in all regions of the country.</p> <p>Regional Development Programme in place designed to improve the standards of marginalised Tunisians.</p> <p>Human Opportunity Index has increased by 6% for primary school (children aged 6 years old), 5% for sanitation, and 7% for access to a flushing toilet.</p>	<p>The profile of poor households has not fundamentally changed.</p> <p>Inequality between the regions remains high and a source of tension.</p> <p>Lack of access to services remains one of the main reasons for persisting inequalities.</p> <p>New forms of inequality resulting from the health crisis could emerge, as well as new groups of vulnerable people.</p>
<b>SDG 13: Climate change</b>	<p>Article 45 of the Constitution affirms that the State must “guarantee the right to a healthy and balanced environment and contribute to its protection. The State is required to ensure the necessary means to eliminate environmental pollution.”</p> <p>Tunisia hosted the Arab African Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.”</p> <p>Civil society is engaged through two principal projects: “les universités alternatives du climat” and “le forum vert pour les climats” (amongst others).</p> <p>Recent law bans the use of plastic bags.</p>	<p>Tunisia is one of the Mediterranean countries most exposed to climate change since 96% of its territory is arid or semi-arid.</p> <p>Tunisia is committed to reducing its carbon intensity by 41% by 2030 compared to 2010.</p> <p>All stakeholders’ capacity to adapt to climate change must be increased.</p> <p>Tunisia to transition to a greener economy, increased public transport services, greener transport solutions, greener energy and greener waste management.</p>
<b>SDG 16: Peace, justice and effective institutions.</b>	<p>Successful, non-violent democratic transformation underway (awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015).</p> <p>Drafted a comprehensive and progressive constitution guaranteeing respect for fundamental rights.</p> <p>The media is being reformed, including through the establishment of regulation and self-regulation mechanisms.</p> <p>The right to information and the establishment of the oversight body and related: importance of transparency, accountability, participation and the fight against corruption.</p>	<p>Persistent issues related to the interpretation, application and implementation of laws.</p> <p>High levels of corruption and weak public services.</p> <p>Building and increasing the capacity of independent institutional bodies remains a challenge.</p> <p>Adoption of new laws in line with the new constitution and international laws and standards in order to maintain the independence of regulators.</p> <p>The contribution of volunteer groups to social cohesion is not always framed, evidenced and measured.</p>
<b>SDG 17: Partnerships</b>	<p>High-level international conferences on diverse topics (‘Invest in Tunisia – Start-up democracy’; ‘Tunisia 2020’; the ‘Tunis Gender Equality Forum 2019’; ‘The PPP Forum’, and the ‘Global</p>	<p>Insufficient financial resources for sustainable development.</p>

Thematic analysis of priority SDGs		
SDG	Selective examples of achievements	Principal challenges
	<p>Child Nutrition Forum') to mobilize funds for development.</p> <p>2017 reform of the management of public investments.</p> <p>'Digital Tunisia' strategy for innovation.</p>	<p>Need to reform data collection and management, including the identification and targeting of all population categories left behind.</p> <p>High public debt.</p> <p>Weak financial diaspora engagement.</p>

Implementation of other SDGs		
SDG	Selective examples of achievements	Principal challenges
<b>SDG 1: Poverty</b>	<p>Poverty rate decreased from 25.4% in 2000 to 15.2% in 2015. Extreme poverty decreased from 7.5% to 2.9% during the same period.</p> <p>23% of GDP allocated to social expenditure (2019).</p> <p>Social Contract signed in 2013 defines the major axes of the necessary reforms for social protection and social justice.</p> <p>Minimum threshold for retirement established (TND 180 per month).</p> <p>Reduced transport rates for pupils and students.</p>	<p>High levels of poverty remain despite these efforts: 15.2% of the population lives in poverty, with high regional disparities (30.8% in the Centre-West, 28.4% in the North West, 11.5% in the Central East and 5.3% in the Tunis region) prior to the COVID-19 outbreak.</p> <p>Child poverty remains high at 21.1%, again with high regional disparities. 52.4% of children are denied at least one of their fundamental rights.</p>
<b>SDG 2: Zero hunger</b>	<p>Food security and the promotion of durable, inclusive and resilient agriculture forms part of the 2016 – 2020 development plan.</p> <p>Less than 5% of the population suffers from under-nourishment despite population increases.</p> <p>Reduced quality of school meals for pupils.</p>	<p>Disruption of main staple supply chains due to the COVID-19 crisis and increased food prices.</p> <p>Vulnerable categories of the population remain without access to adequate food.</p> <p>Tunisia will lose 50% of its usable agricultural land by 2050.</p> <p>600,000 people suffered from under-nourishment between 2015 and 2017. 8.3% children have stunted growth and 2.1% are emaciated (2018).</p> <p>High prevalence of being overweight or obese (46% and 28.7% of adults, respectively).</p> <p>The nutritional status of children: growth retardation under 5 years of age affects 8%, while being overweight affects 17% and can go up to 44%.</p> <p>Universal assistance overly focused on high calorie but nutritionally insufficient products.</p> <p>Large regional disparities persist.</p>

Implementation of other SDGs		
SDG	Selective examples of achievements	Principal challenges
<b>SDG 4: Good health and well-being</b>	<p>Tunisia achieved its objective of reducing the number of maternal deaths to fewer than 70 per 100,000 births.</p> <p>Revised goal is to achieve fewer than 22.8 maternal deaths per 100,000 births before 2023.</p> <p>Reduction in the death rate attributed to cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases: from 12.4% to 12.1% for women and from 22.6% to 21.1% for men.</p> <p>Coordinated efforts to reduce the number of deaths and illnesses caused by dangerous chemical substances and air/water/soil pollution.</p> <p>Nairobi Commitments of the Tunisian Government to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) agenda aim to end preventable maternal mortality and cater to the unmet need for family planning.</p> <p>Proactive efforts to enhance preparedness to face the COVID-19 crisis.</p>	<p>Low service quality and insufficient operating hours of public health institutions, in addition to possible increasing pressure on the health system due to COVID-19.</p> <p>Disparities and inequality of access.</p> <p>Poor information systems.</p> <p>Adaptation to epidemiological transition and increase of non-communicable diseases.</p> <p>Brain drain of health professionals.</p>
<b>SDG 5: Gender equality</b>	<p>Extensive legal framework to combat gender-based violence (integral law) and discrimination and to promote gender equality.</p> <p>The number of women parliamentary representatives increased from 26% in 2011 to 33.2% in 2014, then decreased to 23% in 2019.</p> <p>In 2018, Tunisia was ranked 55 out of 149 countries in the domain of political empowerment (Rapport mondial sur la parité homme-femmes de 2018).</p> <p>In 2016, Tunisia received the African Union prize for its efforts to improve gender equality.</p>	<p>Tunisia is ranked 63 out of 162 (Gender Inequality Index 2018). Unemployment rates higher for women (22.7% compared to 12.5%) and only 6.5% of women are heads of enterprises.</p> <p>Women are more vulnerable to exclusion and precarious working contexts, particularly in the informal sector. Unequal right to inheritance compounds this disadvantage.</p> <p>Violence against women and girls remains a matter of concern despite the adoption of the Integral Law 91 (53.5% of women were victims of GBV in public spaces between 2011 and 2015) because there is not enough information sharing of the law, awareness and shelters for victims. The number of reported cases of GBV towards women has increased fivefold during the confinement.</p>
<b>SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation</b>	<p>The right to water is recognized and protected by the Constitution.</p> <p>97.6% of the population has access to drinking water.</p>	<p>Transporting water from the north to the south remains technologically costly.</p>

91 Journal Officiel de la République Tunisienne, Loi organique n° 2017-58 du 11 août 2017, relative à l'élimination de la violence à l'égard des femmes, Journal Officiel de la République Tunisienne, August 2017. See Bibliography for web link.

Implementation of other SDGs		
SDG	Selective examples of achievements	Principal challenges
	<p>The rate of connection to the public sanitation network in urban areas increased from 80% in 2005 to 86% in 2017.</p> <p>Adoption of the comprehensive ‘Eau 2030’ strategy.</p>	<p>Water losses are estimated to be around 30% due to accidents or age of the waterworks.</p> <p>Significant efforts are required to better separate water for industrial and domestic use.</p> <p>250,000 people remain dependent on water from wells or other non-treated water resources. These disparities in access to water and sanitation are even more impactful during the COVID-19 crisis since hygiene and sanitation are crucial to stopping the spread of the virus.</p> <p>Ground water is being polluted, over-exploited and/or salinized.</p> <p>Ecological plans for water consumption, management and provision are needed.</p>
<b>SDG 7: Clean energy</b>	<p>Tunisia benefits from 100% access in urban areas and 99% in rural areas.</p> <p>Tunisia ranks 20<sup>th</sup> in the world for energy efficiency (and second in Africa in terms of renewable energy).</p> <p>Adoption of a comprehensive strategy to reduce energy dependence from imports and to increase renewable energy sources.</p>	<p>Electricity produced from renewable energy sources is marginal: 1.6% in 2013 to 3% in 2018.</p> <p>Biofuels aside, Tunisia’s energy is based on 57% natural gas, and 42% petrol.</p> <p>Rapid diversification and increased use of clean technologies is required.</p> <p>Energy dependency rates needs to be decreased.</p>
<b>SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure</b>	<p>Acquisition of 1,108 new public transport buses and 600 second-hand public transport buses.</p> <p>Extension of road transport networks.</p> <p>Completion of the Grand Tunis Rapid Railway Line.</p> <p>2040 Transport Strategy.</p> <p>Instauration of multiple technical centers, ‘pôles’ and laboratories across industries to improve technical, scientific, industrial and commercial knowledge and expertise.</p> <p>Comprehensive ‘Tunisia Digitale 2020’ strategy.</p>	<p>Only 30% of journeys are conducted on public or collective transport.</p> <p>Tunisian industry is poorly integrated into global value chains and is technologically weak.</p> <p>Exports are concentrated on few products with weak added value.</p> <p>Lack of adequate infrastructure in rural areas contributes to inequality and poverty.</p>
<b>SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities</b>	<p>The number of housing units has increased from 2.5 million in 2004 to 3.3 million in 2014.</p> <p>77.2% of the population own the house they live in.</p>	<p>Tunisia has one of the highest urbanization rates in the region (approx. 67.7% in 2014), which creates urban management challenges.</p> <p>Informal settlements (particularly in cities and peri-urban areas) have poor service delivery and lack decent</p>



Implementation of other SDGs		
SDG	Selective examples of achievements	Principal challenges
	<p>National Housing Strategy targets the construction of 300,000 new housing units, including 100,000 social housing units.</p> <p>‘Local Development Plans’ serve as reference points for diverse actors.</p> <p>Access to public spaces is guaranteed by law.</p>	<p>housing, which contributes to inequality, poverty, marginalization and crime.</p> <p>Deterioration of the quality of life and the environment in cities, and loss of their economic attractiveness.</p> <p>Deterioration of Tunisia’s cultural heritage and natural environment due to urban sprawl and unsustainable urbanization.</p> <p>Significant lack of accessibility for the disabled, older persons and children in cities.</p> <p>The institutional and legal framework does not always ensure the effective safeguarding of heritage sites.</p> <p>The safeguarding of heritage, particularly in urban areas, is perceived as a concern as financial and institutional challenges persist in terms of protection and management.</p>
<b>SDG 12: Sustainable consumption and production</b>	<p>Participation in ‘Switch-Med’ programme focused on social and ecological innovation.</p> <p>Pilot programmes underway on green tourism, amongst others.</p> <p>Adoption in June 2018 of the strategy on social responsibilities of enterprises is considered a good practice for businesses to adopt sustainable practices.</p>	<p>New and increased modes of consumption and population growth are putting considerable pressure on limited resources.</p> <p>High levels of food waste, including of subsidized commodities such as bread.</p>
<b>SDG 14: Life below water</b>	<p>National Plan for Biological Diversity seeks to control and fight the pollution of natural sites, including maritime/coastal areas.</p> <p>Creation of marine and coastal protected areas and gradual plastic ban.</p> <p>The establishment of two artificial reef belts in the Gulf of Gabes, a site renowned for its natural wealth but under significant pressure due to industrial charges and pollution.</p> <p>National teams in place to fight against illegal fishing.</p>	<p>High risk of natural disaster given that 300 million tons of petrol crosses the Mediterranean, coming close to Tunisian coastlines.</p> <p>Tunisia is vulnerable to the effects of climate change and suffers from the over-exploitation of natural resources.</p> <p>Invasive species introduced as a result of the effects of climate change.</p>

Implementation of other SDGs		
SDG	Selective examples of achievements	Principal challenges
<b>SDG 15: Life on land</b>	<p>Government action has allowed for reduced deforestation. The surface area of parts of the country covered by forest grew from 8.12% in 2010 to 8.36% in 2016.</p> <p>National Strategy for the Sustainable Development and Management of Forests and Forest Areas (2015–2024), Programme of National Action for the Fight Against Desertification (2018–2030), National Strategy for the Prevention, Management and Fight Against Invasive Species (2019–2030), amongst others.</p>	<p>96% of the country is arid or semi-arid and highly vulnerable to climate change.</p> <p>Deforestation remains a significant problem despite some progress and is difficult to monitor due to lack of data.</p> <p>Uncontrolled and/or illegal urbanization systematically contributes to loss of natural resources.</p> <p>Lack of judicial framework and specialized institutions for the protection of the environment and themes related to biodiversity.</p>

Tunisia has put in place a robust strategy for ensuring national ownership of the SDGs through its innovative national consultation process, *‘The Tunisia we want’*. The initiative involved consultations with ministries, parliamentarians, civil society, volunteer groups, the regions, youth, students and children to identify post-2015 priorities. Tunisia has, furthermore, developed strategies for ensuring the SDGs are integrated into development plans and finance laws; national plans, strategies and budgets; and at the local level (through the five-year regional development plan and the participation of over six hundred representatives from the public and private sectors, civil society, universities and professional organisations from the region and volunteer groups).

Tunisia re-iterated its commitment in 2018 to the Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Supports (MAPS) approach. The Ministry of Development, Investment and International Cooperation,<sup>92</sup> with the support of the UN, undertook four studies:

- (i) A data gap analysis
- (ii) An Integrated Rapid Analysis of the National Development Plan and Strategies 2016-2020
- (iii) A Rapid integrated analysis of the constitution and conventions ratified by Tunisia through the prism of human rights (RIA +)
- (iv) An analysis of the alignment and integration of the SDGs in the governance sectors (SDG 16), sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), energy (SDG 7), and the fight against climate change (SDG6, 13, 14, 15). The same exercise was repeated for the other twelve SDGs.

These studies provided invaluable information to ensure a greater rate and effectiveness of implementation and monitoring and should be revisited in order to take into account new trends and realities generated by the pandemic.

<sup>92</sup> b.MDICI, ‘Ministère du développement, de l’investissement et de la coopération internationale (MDICI)’, see Bibliography for web link

## Challenges

### Data gaps

The above studies demonstrate that Tunisia, despite its planning efforts, exhibits important data gaps relevant to the SDGs that will need to be addressed. The country will have to implement disaggregated data collection processes if it is to effectively monitor and adapt its policies and programmes to achieve the SDGs. Tunisia currently has no data on SDG 12 on ‘sustainable consumption and production’ or SDG 14 on ‘life below water.’ Furthermore, Tunisia lacks two-thirds or more data relevant to SDG 13 on ‘climate change,’ SDG 10 on ‘inequalities,’ SDG 11 on ‘sustainable cities and communities,’<sup>93</sup> SDG 15 on ‘life on earth,’ SDG 2 on ‘zero hunger,’ SDG 16 ‘peace, justice and effective institutions,’<sup>94</sup> and SDG 6 on ‘clean water and sanitation.’ All these data gaps require filling, but the absence of data on priority SDGs is particularly concerning (SDGs 10, 13 and 16 on ‘inequalities,’ ‘climate change’ and ‘peace, justice and effective institutions,’ respectively). As will be explained below, the lack of disaggregated data per vulnerable groups also impedes the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Leave No One behind agenda since “quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data will be needed to help with the measurement of progress and to ensure that no one is left behind.”<sup>95</sup>

The ability to better target those most left behind would be improved by expanding the data available on vulnerable and marginalised groups. Out of 244 indicators relative to the SDGs only 90 have been collected in Tunisia, and only 15 are disaggregated (predominantly by geography and gender). This underscores three data gaps: a small number of indicators with available data; a small number of indicators with disaggregated data; and limited levels of disaggregation that prevent a more extensive and multi-dimensional analysis. As such, while the findings of an extensive analysis undertaken by the Tunisian Observatory of Economy (TOE) (commissioned by the RCO Tunisia in November 2019) entitled, *‘Leave no one behind’ Report, Tunisia 2019*,<sup>96</sup> provides vital insights into marginalisation and exclusion, they present an incomplete picture of exclusion in Tunisia.

Groups that could not be included in the LNOB study due to the lack of systematized and disaggregated data include:

- Diverse individuals with a migratory status, including vulnerable migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, and the homeless
- Minorities, including religious and ethnic minorities, LGBT, and people of colour
- Persons with disabilities
- Informal workers and those without official papers
- Marginalised youth
- Isolated individuals, including women, children, older persons, and people living with HIV or tuberculosis.

A deeper understanding of the multi-dimensional exclusion experienced by these diverse groups is therefore imperative to developing targeted and comprehensive strategies to bring them into the social, political, economic and cultural life of Tunisia. For example, despite

---

<sup>93</sup> Tunisia is a pilot country for the implementation of SDG 11 and has developed a methodology for data collection, and data for the UN-Habitat City Prosperity Index for the cities of Monastir and Tozeur.

<sup>94</sup> CGLU, ‘Vers la mise en œuvre des Objectifs du Développement Durable au Niveau Local, Cités et Gouvernements Locaux Unis, Barcelona, 2017.

<sup>95</sup> See in paras. 23 and 48 of A/RES/70/1, General Assembly Resolution of 25 Sept. 2015

<sup>96</sup> Tunisian Observatory of Economy, ‘Leave no one behind’ Report, Tunisia 2019, commissioned by the RCO Tunisia, November 2019.

increased efforts by the government to build a more formal and reliable protection system since 2015, there is no national procedure for determining refugee status and the Aliens Entry and Residence Act 1968 does not regulate the specific situation of refugees and asylum seekers.<sup>97</sup> Regardless of nationality, almost all refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants have experienced egregious human rights violations during their migratory journey by various state and non-state actors needing immediate and specialized attention. Also, while most refugees hosted on Tunisian territory have de facto rights and access to services (education, health, accommodation), they remain in a precarious legal and socioeconomic situation.

#### Leave no one behind (LNOB)

The TOE report was conducted on the basis of a multi-dimensional methodology of 16 SDG indicators.<sup>98</sup> Based on these indicators, the report identified four key groups to be the most 'left behind':

First, poor rural families whose head of family has a low level of educational attainment. These families tend to have children with only basic abilities in reading and mathematics (SDG 4): for example, only 52.8 per cent of children aged 7 to 14 have basic reading abilities (compared to 72 per cent in urban areas) and only 45.2 per cent of children from poor families have basic reading abilities (compared to 80.2 per cent of those from richer families). These families also have lower schooling rates for their children of a younger age (SDG 4): in rural areas schooling rates are around 82.8 per cent (compared to 94.1 per cent in urban areas), just as schooling rates for children from poor families are 79.1 per cent (compared to 99.2 per cent of those from richer families). These families also tend to have poor access to drinking water (SDG 6): only 40.5 per cent of families living in rural areas have access to drinking water (compared to 64.9 per cent for families in urban areas) and 50.3 per cent of families whose head of the family has a low level of educational attainment have access to drinking water (compared to 71.9 per cent for families of whose head of the household has received a higher education in relative terms).

Second, rural women and girls aged 15 to 24 years old. These women and girls are more likely to not be in education, employment or training (NEETs) (SDG 8): 50.4 per cent of young, rural women are NEETs (compared to 33.4 per cent of young rural men and 32.4 per cent of young urban women). Women aged 20 to 24 in this group are also more likely to marry before the age of 18 (SDG 5): 2.2 per cent of rural women are married before they are 18 years old (compared to 1.2 per cent of women in urban areas). Lastly, these rural women and girls also experience high levels of discrimination and harassment (SDG 10):<sup>99</sup> Over the course of 2019, 18.2 per cent of women living in rural areas have felt discriminated against or have reported being harassed (compared to 15 per cent of women living in urban areas).<sup>100</sup> The principal

---

<sup>97</sup> UNHCR assessment and profiling exercises reveal that persons of concern in Tunisia constitute a vulnerable group. They arrive in Tunisia in a traumatised state. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable after being subjected to sexual and gender-based violence and exploitation sometimes resulting in unwanted pregnancies. Cases include survivors of violence attended by torture, forced labour and exploitation, LGBTI suffering abuse and rape, minors and men subjected to slavery, detention in crowded centres, kidnapping for sexual slavery and repetitive gang rape, as well as other inhumane, cruel and degrading treatments. Furthermore, most refugees and asylum seekers who settle in cities and rural areas of Tunisia are destitute, with limited if any access to basic assistance. The greatest challenge for refugees/asylum seekers is finding and sustaining employment, also because they have no formal right to work legally. Moreover, refugee children have access to public education, but due to economic vulnerabilities, learning gaps, language barriers and high mobility of some refugee families – notably those from some Syrian communities, many refugee children are not enrolled or drop out of school, especially in Southern Tunisia. This puts their future at heightened risk of early marriage, exploitation and/or child labour. Additionally, while no legal obstacles barring refugees and asylum seekers from access to justice, many refugees and asylum seekers lack the financial means to resort to the services of a lawyer and knowledge of administrative and judicial procedures.

<sup>98</sup> See point 18 for an analysis of the data gaps and implications; of these 16 indicators, 11 come from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey of 2018 and the rest are based on studies conducted by the Tunisian National Institute for Statistics and UNICEF.

<sup>99</sup> During 2018.

<sup>100</sup> This statement does not mean to minimise the discrimination or harassment experienced by women in other categories – all discrimination and harassment must be addressed. This analysis simply serves to highlight the multidimensional nature of the exclusion experienced by rural women and girls in the 15 to 24 years old category.

cause of harassment is ethnic origin or migration status (9.8 per cent). Women and girls aged 15 to 25 years old have experienced greater levels of marginalisation than those aged 15 to 29 (17.4 per cent compared to 15.2 per cent).

Third, men and boys living in rural areas in the interior regions of Tunisia. Boys in this region aged between 7 and 14 years old have only basic reading skills (SDG 4): for example, only 54.4 per cent of boys aged 7 to 14 years old living in rural areas in the north-west of the country demonstrate basic reading skills (compared to 75.6 per cent of those living in the area of Tunis). Furthermore, only 52.8 per cent of children aged 7 to 15 years old living in rural areas demonstrate basic readings skills (compared to 72 per cent of those living in urban areas). Men and boys in the north-western region are also more exposed to discrimination and harassment (SDG 10): 17.4 per cent of men living in rural areas feel discriminated against or have reported being harassed (compared to 14.3 per cent of those living in urban areas). Harassment seems to be related to ethnicity or migration status for 8.4 per cent of them. Men living in the north-west also experience greater levels of discrimination compared to men living in the south-eastern part of the country (25 per cent compared to 14.7 per cent). Children in this region also experience high levels of violent punishment/discipline (SDG 16): 89 per cent of boys aged 1 to 14 years old and 87.1 per cent of young girls have been subject to violent disciplinary methods during the month prior to the analysis. Children living in the north-west also experience higher rates of violent punishment than those in the Tunis area (92.2 per cent compared to 84.2 per cent). The National Authority Against Trafficking and Smuggling of Human Beings has also reported that young girls in this region are trafficked as domestic workers.

Fourth, poor and illiterate women and girls in rural and urban areas. Women and girls in this group have low knowledge and awareness of HIV/AIDS (SDG 3): only 15.3 per cent of women have in-depth knowledge of HIV transmission (compared to 17.6 per cent of men). 6.1 per cent of women from poor families have in-depth knowledge (compared to 26.8 per cent of women from the most wealthy families) and 2.2 per cent of women with low levels of educational attainment have knowledge of HIV transmission (compared to 25.9 per cent of women with higher education, in relative terms). Fewer women and girls in this category have basic skills in reading and mathematics (SDG 4). Women and girls in this category have also experienced higher levels of discrimination and harassment in the course of 2019 (SDG 10): 18.6 per cent of women from poor families feel discriminated against or have reported being harassed (compared to 11.1 per cent from richer families). Similarly, 19.8 per cent of women with low levels of educational attainment feel discriminated against or have reported being harassed (compared to 15 per cent of women who have a university-level education).

According to the analysis undertaken by TOE, the drivers of exclusion are complex, overlapping and multidimensional:

For poor rural families whose head of the family has a low level of educational attainment, the structural causes include lack of access to education and training services, lack of access to water, low political participation and extreme poverty.

The underlying causes include agricultural policies that fail to target small producers; exclusive public policies; the exploitation of manual labour; insufficient school services; lack of social protection; cultural factors; and water management services in rural areas undergoing reconstruction. The immediate causes include high levels of dependence on the land; endemic unemployment; low incomes; the inability to work; lack of qualifications to access the labour market and precarious work.

For rural women and girls aged 15 to 24 years old, the structural causes of exclusion include: lack of access to education and training; discrimination on the basis of sex and place of birth; lack of access to information; non-inclusive policies and low participation in political processes. Underlying causes include high dropout rates for young girls and their economic exploitation; insufficient school services; child marriage; non-inclusive public policies; lack of appropriate structures and services in schools and colleges; lack of social protection; and cultural factors. Immediate causes include lack of professional opportunities; unequal access to education and transport services; endemic unemployment; inability to work; discrimination and harassment; social isolation and insufficient qualifications to access the job market.

For men and boys living in rural areas of the interior regions the structural causes of exclusion include lack of access to education and training; discrimination on the basis of gender and place of birth; lack of access to information; non-inclusive public policies and lack of participation. Underlying causes include anti-discrimination laws which target women rather than men; insufficient school services; non-inclusive public policies; cultural factors and lack of awareness of available mechanisms for protection against violence. Immediate causes include the lack of available professional opportunities for men; unequal access to education and transport services; endemic unemployment; inability to work; lack of formal qualifications to access the labour market and isolation.

For poor and illiterate women and girls (rural and urban) the structural factors include lack of access to education and training; non-inclusive fight against HIV/AIDS; lack of political participation; extreme poverty and discrimination based on gender and origin. The underlying causes include socioeconomic factors; insufficient school services; lack of social protection; weak social assistance programmes; insufficient targeting by national HIV programme; non-inclusive public policies; exploitation of manual labour and cultural factors. The immediate causes include lack of qualifications to access work; lack of knowledge of HIV/AIDS; low revenues; inability to work; difficulty accessing education services and precarious work.

The UN Secretary-General António Guterres recently declared that “the most vulnerable — women and children, people with disabilities, the marginalized and the displaced — [...] are [...] at the highest risk of suffering devastating losses from COVID-19.” In addition to the above, the vulnerability of other groups has increased as a result of the crisis. The emerging evidence suggests that people suffering from underlying medical conditions or chronic illnesses, older persons, people without access to water and sanitation, and people living in rural areas might be particularly affected in the short term. The pandemic will result in income losses that affect workers in the informal sector; domestic workers; self-employed people; micro and very small enterprises (MVSEs), particularly those subcontracting for highly impacted sectors such as tourism and transport; women, particularly those who financially support the household, working in the health sector (and therefore at high risk of contamination) and victims of violence and young people and children from poor families who are at risk of under- or malnutrition as a result of school closures (and thereby cutting off access to school feeding programmes).

The Ministry of Social Affairs has identified 260,000 needy families and 630,000 families with low or no fixed income. 21 per cent of the Tunisian population lacks basic handwashing facilities, which may impact the increase of the rapid spread of COVID-19 in the country. In addition, 9 per cent of the population has no access to basic sanitation services and 4 per cent lacks access to basic drinking water services. In this context, more people are at risk of falling

under the poverty line (which currently stands at 15 per cent of the population).<sup>101</sup> Moreover, the number of reports of violence against women, children and older persons has increased almost sevenfold during the confinement period (compared to the same period last year).<sup>102</sup>

There have as of yet been no confirmed reports of refugees in Tunisia having tested positive for COVID-19. This group would be particularly affected by preventive measures that would be adopted if the outbreak grows, especially those accommodated in collective shelters. Refugees and asylum seekers are exhausting their savings and are often unable to cover rent, food or medicines. They are at risk of resorting to harmful coping mechanisms such as lowering their food consumption and selling off assets. Many fears being stigmatized. Reported cases of sexual and gender-based violence have been recorded through UNHCR helplines. In addition, the closure of schools has affected attendance of refugee and asylum-seeking children. Without school, children may be at increased risk of hazardous or harmful child labour since their families need more support to stay safe and healthy.<sup>103</sup>

To prevent exclusion and marginalization, the Tunisian government has responded to the COVID-19 outbreak by providing cash transfers to different vulnerable groups, including heads of households who work in informal sector that are not covered by any social assistance program and those registered in the social security system. Cash transfers are also available to households containing older persons, households fostering children without parental support, and households containing persons with disabilities. Furthermore, the government has put in place social insurance support, which includes unemployment assistance for workers affected by partial unemployment, healthcare insurance, and a waiver of 3 months to businesses in the formal sector for their contribution to the social security system.<sup>104</sup>

#### Fulfilling international human rights obligations

As outlined in various reports presented to the United Nations Human Rights Council,<sup>105</sup> Tunisia is a party to most international human rights treaties. Since 2011 the country has removed a number of reservations it had previously held, including with regard to the:

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Convention on the Rights of the Child, including some optional protocols to these treaties; e.g., 3<sup>rd</sup> Optional Protocol.

It is also party to the:

- Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court
- Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
- Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and the protocols additional thereto,

---

<sup>101</sup> World Bank, 2015

<sup>102</sup> Shems FM, [https://www.shemsfm.net/amp/fr/actualites\\_shems-news/246763/ministre-de-la-femme-on-avait-conscience-que-le-confinement-allait-augmenter-le-nombre-des-femmes-victime-de-violences](https://www.shemsfm.net/amp/fr/actualites_shems-news/246763/ministre-de-la-femme-on-avait-conscience-que-le-confinement-allait-augmenter-le-nombre-des-femmes-victime-de-violences)

<sup>103</sup> COVID-19 emergency preparedness and response plan, UNHCHR, 2020

<sup>104</sup> RBC Region Social Protection Response – updated 09/04/20.

<sup>105</sup> For example see: Human Rights Council 'Report A/HRC/37/54/Add.1 - Report of the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights', UN General Assembly, 2018.; Human Rights Council 'Report A/HRC/40/52/Add.1 – Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism', UN General Assembly, 2018.



- 63 International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions and ILO protocols, including all 8 ILO fundamental conventions
- Convention against Discrimination in Education
- Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

Tunisia has accepted most of the individual complaint procedures established under UN human rights treaties, including for the:

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention against Torture.

In addition, Tunisia has accepted the inquiry procedure under the:

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Convention against Torture
- International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Tunisia is also party to the African Union African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and to its Maputo Protocol.<sup>106</sup>

In terms of gender equality, women's rights, sexual and domestic violence and discrimination on the basis of gender or sex, Tunisia has made progress but serious concerns remain. This is especially the case for Tunisia's LGBT community.<sup>107</sup> In 2017, Tunisia's parliament voted for a law on violence against women and girls, which adopted a broad definition of 'violence'. The rights of women and young girls are, furthermore, protected through:

- Electoral law, through a provision for "horizontal and vertical" parity in municipal elections and horizontal parity in legislative elections<sup>108</sup>
- The organic law relating to the trafficking and exploitation of people, especially women and children<sup>109</sup>
- Lifting the ban on marriage of a Tunisian woman to a non-Muslim
- The adoption of a law relating to passports and travel, which recognizes the mother's equivalent rights and responsibilities towards her children<sup>110</sup>
- The establishment of a council for equality of opportunities between men and women, and gender mainstreaming in planning, programming, evaluation and budgeting
- The initiation of a pilot project and sectoral protocols relating to the care of women victims of violence
- The establishment of seven safe spaces for women, the deployment of 128 specialized police units for GBV, the strengthening of family court judges to secure cases of

---

<sup>106</sup> OSAA 'Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa', Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, Maputo, 11 July 2003.

<sup>107</sup> Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender and Queer.

<sup>108</sup> Article 49 of the electoral law of 14 February 2017.

<sup>109</sup> b. Journal Officiel de la République Tunisienne, Loi organique n° 2016-61 du 3 août 2016-61 relative à la prévention et la lutte contre la traite des personnes', Journal Officiel de la République Tunisienne, August 2016. See Bibliography for web link

<sup>110</sup> c. Journal Officiel de la République Tunisienne, Loi organique n° 2015-46 du 23 November 2015-46 du 23 Novembre 2015, modifiant et complétant la loi n 75-40 du 14 mai 1975, relative aux passeports et aux documents de voyage', Journal Officiel de la République Tunisienne, August 2016. See Bibliography for web link

violence against women, the launch of a specialized hotline, and by building the capacity of service providers<sup>111</sup>

- Training sessions for senior public officials and judges on gender-sensitive programming and the management of cases of violence against women
- The repeal of the ‘marry your rapist’ law<sup>112</sup>
- The launch of a social protection programme for female agricultural workers called ‘AHMINI’.<sup>113</sup>

Despite these laws and frameworks, progress is required in key areas in order to meet the 2030 Agenda’s equality goals. The issue of inheritance (and to some extent also the law on gender-based violence), for example, remains highly contentious. Even though the Commission on Individual Freedoms and Equality recommended equality in inheritance, a bill submitted to parliament in November 2018 did not advance in 2019. In 2016, the ILO undertook an actuarial study on paid maternity leave to instigate a reform of the current maternity legislation in order to promote women’s equal treatment and opportunity in the labour market. Similarly, while Tunisia accepted a recommendation during its Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council in May 2017 to end anal testing<sup>114</sup> to ‘prove’ a person’s homosexuality, the government is yet to take action and authorities have continued to prosecute and imprison gay men under article 230 of the penal code (which punishes consensual same-sex intercourse with up to three years in prison).<sup>115</sup> Furthermore, the laws protecting the rights of LGBT people were deemed insufficient following attempts by the government to withdraw the legal registration of Shams, one of Tunisia’s leading LGBT rights entities, claiming its work contravenes “Tunisian society’s Islamic values” and laws that criminalize homosexual acts.<sup>116</sup> Crimes against people suspected of being homosexual or transgender continue to take place with impunity. Finally, a ground-breaking development is the adoption of the anti-racial discrimination law of 2018.

There are five key barriers to Tunisia meeting its commitments related to human rights. First, the absence of socially inclusive growth and equality—predominantly as a consequence of economic reform policies pursued by President Zine Ben Ali and supported by international financial institutions<sup>117</sup>—impedes the fulfilment of the economic and social rights of Tunisians. Addressing corruption and illicit financial flows and ensuring economic reforms are socially and environmentally responsible is likewise a human rights imperative. Second, the inability of Parliament to elect members to the Constitutional Court, the national Human Rights Commission, and the Commission on Corruption and Good Governance prevents the institutionalization of ‘checks and balances’ necessary to address repressive legislation, and/or violations. Third, ensuring accountability for historical human rights violations and other abuses of power remains a vital aspect of Tunisia’s transitional justice process. Pursuing the work of the specialized criminal chambers must therefore remain a priority. Fourth, the 2015 counterterrorism law and related emergency legislation and powers vested in the police (including prolonged or abusive use of detention, house arrests, inappropriate orders restricting freedom of movement, coerced confessions, allegations of ill-treatment and instances of torture) is of serious concern, particularly in light of the extension of the emergency measures

---

<sup>111</sup> Report of the Ministry of Women Affairs, Family, Children and Seniors, one year after the law, 2019

<sup>112</sup> Article 227 of the criminal code.

<sup>113</sup> “Protect me” in Arabic.

<sup>114</sup> A/HRC/36/5/Add.1 – September 2017, para. 9.

<sup>115</sup> Human Rights Watch, ‘Event of 2018’, Human Rights Watch, 2019.

<sup>116</sup> Human Rights Watch, Tunisia, ‘End persecution of LGBT people’, Human Rights Watch, May 17 2019.

<sup>117</sup> United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, ‘UN experts says human rights must shape economic policy in Tunisia’, United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, Geneva-Tunis, 28 February 2017.

(état d'urgence)<sup>118</sup> by President Kais Saied in January 2020—despite having taken a stand *against* the security measure.<sup>119</sup> In this context, despite Tunisia's moratorium on the death penalty, the ongoing imposition of death sentences on persons charged with terrorism is a matter of particular concern. Fifth, Tunisia has yet to translate the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees into national law and has not signed or acceded to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families<sup>120</sup> or ILO Conventions No. 97 and No. 143 on migrant workers. In the absence of such legislation, refugees and migrants are particularly vulnerable to marginalisation and exploitation.

In the context of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, on 4 April the ARP voted for Act No. 30-2020 (framed by article 70, paragraph 2, of the Constitution).<sup>121</sup> The Act allows the Head of Government, Elyes Fakhfakh, to issue decree-laws for a period of two months in the framework of the national response to COVID-19. Decree-laws will be issued with no prior review of constitutionality. The delegation of power from the Parliament to the head of government must be an exceptional and controlled measure if the continuity of democratic functioning is to be guaranteed. The Minister of Justice stated that the ARP has constitutional and judicial guarantees to repeal the provisions of any decree-law promulgated by the government, in case the latter does not respect the content of the law delegating power to the head of government. The Minister added that, “if the government does not respect the main objectives of this bill, the Parliament can go as far as withdrawing confidence in the government”. The adoption of this law was critical to allow the government to promptly respond to the pandemic. If the bill had not passed, it would not have been possible for the President to invoke his full authority in alignment with article 80 of the Constitution, which allows him to adopt necessary regulatory or legislative measures during the state of emergency that the Government must implement.<sup>122</sup> However, the only mechanism for the control of power provided under article 80 is the Constitutional Court, which has not yet been set up. Thus, the absence of a Constitutional Court means that the exercise of full authority by the President can be carried out without judiciary oversight.

## Peace and security

Regional instability poses a threat to the achievement of SDGs 10 and 16 in particular (and related SDGs relevant to decent work, gender equality and poverty) since it disproportionately impacts the most vulnerable, especially those living in the border and interior regions. Anti-government protests have been underway in Algeria since February 2019 but are currently prohibited due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Tunisia has resisted direct involvement in line with its historical policy of non-interference. However, because of its long border with Algeria and the strategic cooperation between the two countries (including on the trans-Mediterranean gas pipeline which connects Algeria, Tunisia and Italy), Tunisia remains exposed to the developments in Algeria. The situation in Algeria, however, has a comparatively small impact

---

118 Hajbi, Meher, ‘Tunisie: Le président Saïd prolonge de trois mois l'état d'urgence’, Agence Anadolu, Tunis, 2020.

119 Human Rights Council ‘Report A/HRC/40/52/Add.1 – Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism’, UN General Assembly, 2018.

120 Human Rights Council ‘Report A/HRC/23/46/Add.1 – Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, François Crépeau, UN General Assembly, 2013.

121 Article 70 provides that ‘[t]he ARP may, with the agreement of three-fifths [131] of its members, authorise by law for a limited period not exceeding two months, and for a specific purpose, the Head of Government to issue decree-laws of a legislative character, to be submitted for ratification to the Assembly immediately after the end of the period of authorisation’.

122 Article 80 of the Constitution provides that ‘[i]n the event of imminent danger threatening the nation's institutions or the security of independence of the country, and hampering the normal functioning of the state, the President of the Republic may take any measures necessitated by the exceptional circumstances, after consultation with the Head of Government and the President of the Assembly of the Representatives of the People and informing the President of the Constitutional Court’

on Tunisia when compared to the ongoing spill over effects of the war in Libya. The deterioration of the situation there in January 2020<sup>123</sup> and the confirmed presence of COVID-19 on 24 March has further raised concerns about the impact on border dynamics, the southern region of Tunisia and the humanitarian situation. According to the UN-ESCWA, the Libyan crisis is responsible for 24 per cent of the reduction in economic growth in Tunisia between 2011 and 2015 (with a loss of USD 580 million per year, or 2 per cent of GDP in 2015). This is due to a decline in private investment (60 per cent), a decrease in tourism (36 per cent), the reduction of remittances (1.4 per cent) and the diversion of public funds away from development and towards security-related goals.<sup>124</sup> The crisis has cost TND 5.8 billion between 2011 and 2015 and is likely to lead to an income tax increase of 41 per cent over a five-year period.<sup>125</sup>

On 23 March, the UN Secretary General called for a global ceasefire, including in Libya, to respond to the pandemic. On 17 and 18 March, the international community and UNSMIL urged for a humanitarian pause between GNA and LNA to put in place preventive measures to stop the spread of COVID-19. The warring parties agreed but the humanitarian pause was brief. Amid the escalation, the first case of COVID-19 was reported (on Tuesday, 24 March).<sup>126</sup> If the warring parties continue attacking each other, the humanitarian crisis will become worse and a health catastrophe is likely to develop. With daily shelling, electricity and water shortages, increased food prices and the presence of COVID-19, a humanitarian disaster looms in Libya. Deterioration of health conditions in refugee camps, such as the one in Tripoli, and migration towards Libya's neighbouring countries are also to be expected. On the other hand, COVID-19 might force the warring parties to halt their activities to allow authorities, international institutions and organizations to implement measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Libya.

The latest escalation of conflict in Libya represents a threat to Tunisia because of an increased number of displaced persons; the potential for greater infiltration of extremists; the possibility of military incursions into Tunisian territory and a stronger alliance between weapons dealers, drug traffickers and armed extremist elements in the fragile border regions. The situation of displaced persons is particularly of concern since 2,300 refugees and asylum seekers were recorded in 2019, which is a 155 per cent increase from 2018.<sup>127</sup> Many are fleeing the desperate conditions in Libya but the reception capacity and the provision of basic social services in Medenine governorate, where most of the refugees and asylum seekers are hosted, are overstretched and reaching maximum capacity. The inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in national and local development programmes has proved challenging, although it is increasingly acknowledge that dependency on humanitarian funding and maintaining parallel systems is costly and ineffective.<sup>128</sup>

According to IOM,<sup>129</sup> Tunisia has become an immigration and, to a lesser extent, transit country for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers traveling mainly from the Maghreb and Sub-Saharan Africa with the goal of reaching Europe by sea. They are joined by 30,000 to 40,000 Tunisians

---

<sup>123</sup> This has followed the seizure of the strategic city of Sirte by opposition forces loyal to General Khalifa Haftar, and has continued with the involvement of foreign countries in the fighting.

<sup>124</sup> ESCWA, 'Impact of the Libyan crisis on the Tunisian economy, An estimation of the macroeconomic and fiscal impacts of the Libyan crisis on the Tunisian economy', United Nations, Beirut 2017.

<sup>125</sup> Amongst other related costs, including debt financing of TND 7 billion, interest payments of TND 274 million and depreciation costs of TND 920. Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> A 72-year-old person coming from Tunisia on 5 March, according to the National Center for Disease Control in Tripoli.

<sup>127</sup> Note Thématique, 'Déplacement force et migration', HCR et OIM, Novembre 2019. UNHCR data base (proGres).

<sup>128</sup> World Humanitarian Summit' New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants; Global Compact on Refugees.

<sup>129</sup> International Organization for Migration, see Bibliography for web link

who have left their country since the fall of the Ben Ali regime.<sup>130</sup> According to a study conducted by the Tunisian Forum for Social and Economic Rights, 24 per cent of Tunisians emigrating irregularly are students, 11 per cent are aged between 15 and 19 years old, 36 per cent are 20 to 24 years old, 37 per cent are between 25 and 29 years old, and 12 per cent are aged 30 to 34 years old. The majority are from the poorest, most marginalized and overcrowded neighbourhoods of Sidi Bouzid, Kasserine, Kairouan and Gafsa.<sup>131</sup> This journey is known as the *harqa*, an exit strategy for those who experience endemic marginalisation at home.<sup>132</sup> The boats are often dangerously overcrowded and around 5,400 of those who attempted the crossing are thought to have drowned. Tunisian authorities stopped over 6,000 from leaving the country irregularly in 2018.<sup>133</sup> These dynamics along Tunisia's border areas are also intricately linked to ongoing turmoil in the Sahel, a situation that requires careful monitoring to ensure responses can be put in place where possible.

While regional instability has reduced licit economic flows, illicit economic flows have experienced a resurgence, negatively impacting some whilst serving as a vital but precarious lifeline for others. UN-ESCWA estimates that tourists' overnight stays plummeted by 34.4 per cent in 2015 compared to 2014, with a loss of on average 3.86 per cent of growth per year.<sup>134</sup> This trend is due to the proximity of Djerba (a tourism hotspot) to the Libyan border. There appeared to be a recovery in tourism in September 2019, when income from tourism increased by 43.3 per cent compared to the same period in 2018.<sup>135</sup> (However, current pandemic will complicate measuring these activities.)

Traffickers have sought to establish a monopoly over formal and informal trade routes since the fall of Gaddafi, whose regime previously had de facto control over such routes. These dynamics have destabilized long-standing informal relationships between border communities and enmeshed formal economies - upon which communities have depended for their survival. The infiltration of militias and extremist groups into these grey market areas has created new winners and losers in the flourishing war economy. According to Clingendael, the illicit flows that cross the Tunisia-Libya border can be grouped into four categories: i) fighters, including those who relocated from Mali since the formal end of the French military operation; ii) drugs, especially cocaine and heroin from Morocco or West Africa, which travels along the Libyan coast to Egypt; iii) weapons, valued between USD 15 and 30 million and iv) migrants.<sup>136</sup> The migrant smuggling trade increased dramatically from between USD 8 and 20 million to between USD 255 and 323 million per year. The journey by boat from Libya to Europe costs USD 1,500 to 1,900.<sup>137</sup> Using similar routes, cases of human trafficking have also increased from 742 in 2017 to 780 in 2018<sup>138</sup> and 1,313 cases in 2019.<sup>139</sup> To tackle this crisis, Tunisia established the National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons in 2016. The penalties for trafficking range from 10 years to life imprisonment.

The risk of terrorist activity has remained relatively high in recent years. In 2018, for example, aspiring ISIS affiliate Jund Al Khilafa-Tunisia (JAK-T), the al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb

---

<sup>130</sup> Abdeljaoued, Monia, 'Illegal Migrants Risk All to Escape Tunisia', Global Voices, Tunis, September 2013.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Sadiki, Larbi, 'Order from Chaos: Tunisia's Migration to the North', Brookings Institution, 2019.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> ESCWA, 'Impact of the Libyan crisis on the Tunisian economy', An estimation of the macroeconomic and fiscal impacts of the Libyan crisis on the Tunisian economy', United Nations Beirut, 2017

<sup>135</sup> Webmanagercenter, 'Tunisie: Déjà plus de 4 milliards de dinars de recettes touristiques (9 mois 2019)', Webmanagercenter, 2019.

<sup>136</sup> Chauzal, Gregory; Zavagli, Sofia, 'Post-revolutionary discontent and F(r)actionalisation in the Maghreb, managing the Tunisia-Libya border dynamics, Clingendael Report, August 2016, page 15.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Infomigrants, Report: Human Trafficking on the rise in Tunisia, January 2019. See Bibliography for web link

<sup>139</sup> Réalités, Journée nationale d'abolition de l'esclavage: Lutte contre la traite des êtres humains', Réalités, 2020.

(AQIM)-aligned Uqba bin Nafi' Battalion, and others conducted small-scale attacks against Tunisian security personnel in the Governorate of Jendoub. In December 2018, terrorist affiliates stole around USD 110,000 from a local bank in Kasserine and killed a Tunisian civilian in his home. In 2019, terrorist attacks were committed by jihadis hiding out on Mount Chaambi against shepherds suspected of being informers and Tunisian security forces arrested dozens of people suspected of planning terrorist attacks. As a result, in the last three years alone, 1, 270 people have been held on charges of terrorism.

While Tunisia is not an epicentre of violent extremism, it remains subject to spill over effects from Libya, where Salafist-jihadist groups see Tunisia as a convenient place to find new recruits, training hub and hideout for sustaining its operations.<sup>140</sup> The Ministry of Interior estimates that around 3,000 Tunisian citizens left to join jihadist groups in Libya, Syria and Iraq in 2017 and has prevented around 30,000 from joining.<sup>141</sup> Approximately 1,000 have returned, 552 are reported dead<sup>142</sup> and the remaining foreign fighters are in Iraq or Syria with the Islamic State, have moved onto the battlefield in Libya, or have joined al-Qaeda and other jihadist groups in Syria. Instability in Libya has facilitated the development of an extensive clandestine trafficking route for weapons, which have helped sustain terrorist activity in Tunisia.<sup>143</sup> Finally, the COVID-19 outbreak has left individuals isolated and more connected to the Internet, which could spur recruitment in Tunisia by various terrorist groups.

Counterterrorism, security and the containment of regional threats remain a priority for the Government and its partners. Tunisia is engaged in numerous international partnerships to this end: the United States and Germany, for example, support the installation of electronic surveillance equipment along its border with Libya; the EU provides support on implementing a comprehensive border policy programme and in 2018, the US Department of State (through its Antiterrorism Assistance [ATA] programme) provided interoperability and sustainment training for members of the National Police, the National Guard, Intervention Units, the Presidential Guard, and Civil Protection in Tunis, Kairouan, Medenine, Nabeul, and Sousse governorates. Tunisia is also a member of the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF) and the country's FIU, the Tunisian Financial Analysis Committee, is a member of the Egmont Group. In October 2018, the National Counter-Terrorism Committee (NCTC) published the Tunisia National Counterterrorism Strategy, which has four main pillars: prevention, protection, prosecution, and response.<sup>144</sup> Unfortunately, the implementation of the various parts of this strategy are not always mutually supportive. Indeed, the practice of 'fichés S' —as a result of which thousands of persons suspected of being associated with terrorists, suspected of terrorism (including by their relatives) or terrorist activities are 'indexed' and subject to severe restrictions on their individual liberties and constitutional freedoms—fuels resentment, potentially leading to further extremism and therefore ultimately counterproductive. Tunisia also participates in various initiatives designed to help stabilize internal dynamics in Libya, working closely with Algeria and Egypt to achieve

---

<sup>140</sup> For review of state of violent extremism in Tunisia see: Avari, Michaël, 'Analytical Review: Violent Extremism and Its Motivating Factors in Tunisia in the 2010s', Office of the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Tunisia, Tunis, November 2017.

<sup>141</sup> A Zelin, Y, Aaron, 'Tunisian Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria, Policy Notes, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2018.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> For discussion on issues related to security see: Santini, Hanau, Ruth and Tholens, Simone, 'Security Assistance in a Post-interventionist Era: The Impact on Limited Statehood in Lebanon and Tunisia', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 2018.; Santini, Hanau, Ruth and Cimini, Giulia, 'Intended and Unintended Consequences of Security Assistance in Post-2011 Tunisia, *Contemporary Arab Affairs*, Vol. 12, Number 1, 2019. See also section

<sup>144</sup> République Tunisienne, 'La stratégie nationale de lutte contre l'extrémisme et le terrorisme', République Tunisienne, 2016.

this objective. The Tunisian-Algeria initiative has so far focused on ceasefire negotiations and an inclusive dialogue process,<sup>145</sup> which further points to Tunisia's pacifying role in the region.

In addition to forms of North-South collaboration, Tunisia also participates in various regional partnerships and South-South collaboration (SSC) and triangular cooperation (TrC)<sup>146</sup> initiatives, which are key to achieving SDG 17 on 'partnerships'. In 2017, for example, Tunisia joined COMESA, which now brings together 20 Member States across the African continent. Tunisia's entry into the common market is testimony to its desire to consolidate trade with the rest of the continent while simultaneously liberalizing its internal market.<sup>147</sup> In order to realize the economic potential of this initiative trade barriers need to be addressed, including customs formalities and border fees. Tunisia, moreover, is one of the first countries to have developed a SSC policy and has therefore been appointed as a "pivot" country for technical cooperation among developing countries, having the task of promoting the benefits of SSC.<sup>148</sup> Tunisia has developed over 64 projects within the framework of TrC, mainly with African and Arab countries, with the financial support of multilateral institutions (such as AFDB, BADEA, EU, OPEC Fund, UNDP, and the World Bank) and governments.<sup>149</sup> In its capacity as a pivot country, in 2019 the Tunisian Agency for Technical Cooperation (ATCT) and the Islamic Development Bank organized a Regional Exchange Workshop on SSC and TrC (attended by representatives from Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, Senegal, Togo and Tunisia) with the goal of exchanging knowledge and experiences and exploring new partnership opportunities.<sup>150</sup> As outlined by the Technology Executive Committee on the Framework Convention on Climate Change, SSC and TrC are key mechanisms that often build upon bottom-up approaches, local practices and indigenous knowledge, which can therefore promote integrated cross-border approaches to climate change and related issues (such as agriculture, disaster risk reduction, renewable energy, energy efficiency, forestry, transport, waste resources, and waste management).<sup>151</sup> As long as adequate resources are made available, SSC and TrC approaches can help channel technological solutions and adaptive approaches tried and tested in other places to be scaled up and replicated (while being adapted, tailored and refined) to the pressing needs of Tunisia.

### SDG financing

Tunisia's economy has historically been one of the strongest and most diversified in the region. The 2011 revolution had a negative short-term effect on the economy (now hit by the COVID-19 crisis) in four keyways:<sup>152</sup>

First, Tunisia's growth rate dropped from an average 4.4 per cent between 2000 and 2010 to around 1.4 per cent in 2019, which is well below the initial forecasts of 3.1 per cent. This was predominantly due to the decline in oil and natural gas extraction as a result of decreasing reserves, social unrest and the absence of new explorations; the weak performance of the mining sector due to a decline in phosphate rock reserves and disruptions caused by

---

<sup>145</sup> Meddeb, Hamza, 'Precarious resilience: Tunisia's Libyan predicament', Future Notes, No. 5, April 2017, page 3.

<sup>146</sup> For interesting history on the evolution of South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation see, for example: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---exrel/documents/publication/wcms\\_430348.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---exrel/documents/publication/wcms_430348.pdf) and JIU/REP/2011/3.

<sup>147</sup> Jeune Afrique, 'Libre-échange: ce que signifie la future adhésion de la Tunisie au Comesa', Jeune Afrique, 2017.

<sup>148</sup> Dhokkar, Saoussen, 'Tunisia's Experience in South-South Cooperation', Ministry of foreign Affairs, Tunisia

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> ATCT, 'Regional Workshop on South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation', Tunisian Agency for Technical Cooperation, 2019.

<sup>151</sup> Technology Executive Committee, 'TEC/2018/17/10 Report - Potential application of South-south and Triangular cooperation to assist countries in implementing nationally determined contributions and national adaptation plans', Frame Convention on Climate Change, Bonn, Germany, September 2018.

<sup>152</sup> Data and analysis here summarised on the basis of: UNESCWA-ECA, 'Note d'analyse macro-économique de la Tunisie', November 2019.



demonstrations around mining sites; and a decline in textile, clothing and leather exports and reduction in the productivity of the electronics and mechanical industries, principally due to an economic slowdown in European economies. In 2020 the economy is expected to contract by 4.3 per cent because of COVID-19.<sup>153</sup>

Second, persistently high levels of unemployment—which mainly affect youth, women (especially young women) and graduates of higher education (28 per cent, 38 per cent for women) —continue to be a pressing challenge. As a result of massive recruitment into the public sector, the unemployment rate declined from 18.3 per cent in 2011 to 15.3 per cent in 2014, but has since stagnated (15.2 per cent in 2019). Slow growth has prevented the private sector from expanding and creating much-needed jobs. Gender disparities are particularly prevalent: the unemployment rate for women was 22 per cent, compared to 12.1 per cent for men in 2018.<sup>154</sup>

Third, an elevated budget deficit, which was reduced from -6.1 per cent in 2017 to -4.9 per cent of GDP in 2018 (and an expected -3.9 per cent in 2019). Despite this recent progress due to policy reform and implementation, Tunisia is facing persistent macroeconomic imbalances during the COVID-19 crisis<sup>155</sup>.

Fourth, a complex monetary policy that must support the economy and reduce high inflation rates: between 2016 and 2018 the dinar lost 37 per cent of its value against the euro, which caused inflation to rise from 3.7 per cent in 2016 to 7 per cent in 2018. Lastly, Tunisia suffers from a structurally deficit trade balance of -17.9 per cent of GDP in 2018 but a strong surplus of TND 18, 967 million in 2018 thanks in large part to the tourism sector.

Pre-COVID-19 growth was expected to improve in the medium and long-term at a rate of around 2 per cent in 2020 and 3 per cent in 2021 as a result of anticipated recovery in the agricultural, manufacturing and tourism sectors and increased gas production from the Nawara field. However, according to the IMF, Tunisia's tourism sector (representing 7 per cent of GDP with ample spill overs into the services sector) and exporters have already been hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis. As it starts to affect micro, small and medium enterprises and the informal sector, households will deplete their savings by a projected 70 per cent and decrease their consumption to cope with falling incomes, import prices will increase and unemployment will rise. Tunisia's economy is expected to contract by 4.3 per cent in 2020, which would represent the country's deepest recession since its independence in 1956. The IMF granted Tunisia financing of USD 745 million under the Rapid Financing Instrument to help the government cover large fiscal and balance of payments needs, estimated at 2.6 and 4.7 percent of GDP, respectively.<sup>156</sup> Even before the lockdown, the economy had experienced a loss of competitiveness, which could only be partly offset by the depreciation of the Tunisian dinar. Productivity growth fell from an average of 1.37 per cent during the previous decade, to only 0.05 per cent between 2012 and 2018.<sup>157</sup>

To address these challenges a number of political reforms are required, which must also ensure that interventions to restart the economy should create long-term effects and help the country to 'build back better'. Such reforms include a comprehensive anti-corruption programme; greater institutional transparency, particularly around public procurement, and the monitoring

---

<sup>153</sup> IMF (2020), <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2020/04/14/Tunisia-Request-for-Purchase-Under-the-Rapid-Financing-Instrument-Press-Release-Staff-Report-49327>.

<sup>154</sup> Statistique Tunisie, see Bibliography for web link

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> UNESCWA-ECA, 'Note d'analyse macro-économique de la Tunisie', Novembre 2019.

and evaluation of large public projects; improving the business climate<sup>158</sup> through the rapid and effective implementation of measures already identified by the government and eliminating competition distortions by improving the quality of public regulations.<sup>159</sup> Poverty and related persistent inequalities are another important challenge: over 17 per cent of the population lives on less than 5.5 dollars a day. To address this, public authorities have relied on transfers and subsidies that weigh heavily on public finances at an average of 24 per cent between 2011 and 2018. Planned reform programmes (particularly the proposed review of the energy subsidy programme) are likely to cause significant social unrest with knock-on effects for productivity in important sectors, overall growth and consumption, the impact of which will disproportionately fall on the poorest and most vulnerable. Challenges related to public debt require tax reform, improved tax collection and limits on the public service wage bill. In the framework of the IMF's recent disbursement, Tunisian authorities also committed to these reform measures once the crisis abates.

Labour market reforms will be imperative to address employment deficits and increase access to skilled labour. 30 per cent of companies report that finding skilled labour is an important obstacle, since large parts of the skilled workforce are absorbed by the public sector or are leaving the country due to the prospects of a better life abroad. The targeting of other groups of people (NEETs, discouraged workers, informal and rural workers, migrants, etc.) by labour market policies also needs to be improved. Beyond labour market reforms, a shift towards higher value-added activities will be essential. Most of the employment created by the economy is in low value-added activities and in the informal sector, offering low wages and no job security, and therefore do not meet the aspirations of the increasing number of university graduates. This leads to high rates of youth unemployment, high levels of discouragement and very low levels of labour force participation of women.

Inequality between richer metropolitan regions, which tend to be more economically active, and poorer peripheral neighbourhoods and rural regions undermines social progress and, according to the OECD, is one of three major obstacles to shared prosperity.<sup>160</sup> Another obstacle is extreme poverty, since it affects 3 per cent of the population with a clear difference between urban (1.2 per cent) and rural (6.6 per cent) dwellers. The African Social Development Index, which measures exclusion in six dimensions of well-being and sustainable development, demonstrates the importance of youth employment to the economy. In 2015, one third of exclusion occurred during the transition from school to work. The unemployment rate for young people is 34.7 per cent (which is 12.7 per cent higher than the national average) and 28.6 per cent of graduates are unemployed. Unemployment remains a source of tension and increases the risk of brain drain, which has potential negative long-term consequences for Tunisia's economic growth.

The second major obstacle<sup>161</sup> is weak or inappropriate macro-economic policies. Structural reforms, for example, are required to ensure the public debt to GDP ratio can be reduced over a medium-term trajectory. Similarly, high taxes are a disincentive to much-needed job creation in the formal sector and financial incentives have failed to attract private initiatives; public sector jobs absorb half of public expenditures; and public subsidies tend to benefit wealthy households while simultaneously encouraging excessive consumption, corruption and environmental harm.

---

<sup>158</sup> The country has gone from 52nd place in 2014 to 78th place in the ranking of Doing Business 2020

<sup>159</sup> The quality score for public regulation of the World Bank fell from 0.12 in 2006 to -0.41 in 2018.

<sup>160</sup> Etude économiques de l'OCDE, Tunisie, Mars 2018, Synthèse, page 12-13.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. See table.

The third major obstacle<sup>162</sup> to addressing inequalities through an economic lens, is weak and decreasing private investment. Such investment has already been in decline since 2010 as a result of sectoral ‘red-tape’ and cumbersome administrative procedures which tend to squash private initiatives, particularly for foreign investors. Moreover, multiple sectors are dominated by public enterprises, which tend to have weak governance structures and/or monopolizing tendencies that do not allow for fair competition between private and public sectors.

As outlined by the findings of Solidar’s evaluation of Tunisia’s national development plan and confirmed by diverse international actors, well-intentioned but misguided economic policies have had the unintended effect of increasing rather than reducing inequalities.<sup>163</sup> Many policies put in place to enhance economic development and reduce inequalities, for example, have the opposite effect by actively hindering competition and preventing the reallocation of resources. Moreover, as demonstrated by the World Bank, just as market labour rules favour activities inadvertently biased towards the already comparatively wealthy coastal regions, agricultural policies have undermined rather than improved the development of the poorer interior regions.<sup>164</sup>

According to the World Bank the origin of several of these challenges lies with policies for “onshore” and “offshore” companies (the former producing for the domestic market and the latter producing for export). A bifurcated investment policy keeps both aspects of the economy, the onshore and the offshore, trapped in low productivity.<sup>165</sup> The ‘onshore sector’ is characterized by businesses that survive predominantly because of historical privileges and rent-seeking, while the ‘offshore sector’—which represents around 50 per cent of the economy and which is open to competition—is adversely impacted by the fact that goods and services emanating from the onshore sector are either of a poor quality or not offered at competitive prices. Rather than depend on inferior and expensive ‘onshore’ products, there is a tendency for ‘offshore’ entities to import products required for their services from abroad, reducing the economic benefits and boost to employment that would come with a reversal of this dynamic. As a result, Tunisia creates less jobs, adds less value and, thus, depreciates private sector wages while simultaneously reducing competition and reducing the number of viable companies that could lead job creation, innovation and inclusive growth.<sup>166</sup> This two-tiered system creates market distortions and barriers to integration between two sectors that should be in interlinked and in a mutually beneficial relationship that would benefit Tunisia more broadly.

In the absence of companies that can create jobs, unemployment is an enduring and pressing socioeconomic challenge that manifests in the form of (and simultaneously deepens), geographical, gender and educational disparities. Employment in the public sector increased by 35 per cent between 2010 and 2014, which means that 1 in 4 employees works in the public sector. While the Tunisian economy succeeded in creating 26,000 jobs per year between 2011 and 2017, this is a significant decrease from the 68,000 jobs per year it was able to create between 2007 and 2010 (namely, a decrease of 62 per cent). This decrease has been accompanied by two key challenges. On the one hand, the quality of jobs has also decreased: one third of jobs not in the agricultural sector were informal in 2015, and 80 per cent of jobs target those with low qualifications (secondary school education or less). On the other hand, even those sectors which tend to create the most jobs (agriculture and construction, for

---

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Groupe de la Banque Mondiale, ‘La révolution inachevée, créer des opportunités, des emplois de qualité et de la richesse pour tous les Tunisiens’, Synthèse, Mai 2014, page 10.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid, page 12.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid, page 17.

example) and which are traditionally low productivity sectors, saw a decrease of 55,000 jobs between 2007 and 2016. Moreover, small businesses (i.e. those with less than 10 employers) provided almost 42 per cent of jobs in 2010 but tend to be overlooked by the majority of economic policies.

Inequalities in terms of employment are striking. The three Western regions tend to be weakest in terms of business creation, with a prevalence of one-person businesses that tend to be informal in nature with low quality of employment and low productivity. The National Programme for Employment, furthermore, focuses on Tunis and the coastal regions to the detriment of the interior regions. Professional training programmes designed to serve as a bridge between school and employment are generally focused only on a limited number of sectors and predominantly target larger businesses: as a result, professional training programmes are removed from labour markets, and their impact on the level of unemployment remains limited. The National Agency of Volunteerism, which was among the outcomes of the National Dialogue with Youth of 2016 (which involved 70,000 young people), is supposed to enhance young people's employability but has not yet been established. The unemployment rate reached a record level of 23 per cent for women in 2018, compared to 13 per cent for men. Furthermore, 40 per cent of young graduates were unemployed in 2018, which represents a significant increase from 31 per cent in 2016.

Among external pressures, the crisis in Libya weighs heavily on the Tunisian economy and exacerbates inequality since it disproportionately affects those in poorer and more marginalized regions. Prior to 2011, Libya was Tunisia's fourth largest economic partner, but since then mounting economic and political instability has had disastrous effects on the Libyan economy. ESCWA and the World Bank estimate that of the 3.86 percentage points of growth per year that Tunisia lost between 2011 and 2015, 0.94 can be attributed to the Libyan crisis. Libyan and Tunisian households lost part of their outcome and, therefore, reduced their consumption over this five-year period (-26 per cent for Libyan households and -3.4 per cent for Tunisian households). Moreover, the government increased spending by 2.2 per cent to address the security threat posed by the crisis, a move financed by a 41 per cent increase in income tax rates that put downward pressure on household consumption. Furthermore, as a result of the worsening business environment, there was a 4 per cent drop in levels of private investment. The current fall in international oil prices reduces energy subsidies and relaxes the budget, albeit by less than the expected revenue shortfall due to COVID-19-related spending and the rigidity of the civil service wage bill. A further external pressure is added due to uncertainties in Europe (Tunisia's main economic partner) related to Brexit and the trade war with the United States. France, Germany and Italy receive more than 60 per cent of total Tunisian exports meaning growth performance in Tunisia, particularly in the manufacturing sector, is strongly correlated with growth performance in Europe.

Despite multiple challenges, Tunisia benefits from diverse and promising economic opportunities. As outlined by the World Bank, Tunisia benefits from a skilled workforce with a relatively high number of graduates; good infrastructure, including roads connecting urban centres; good electricity, water and telecommunications infrastructure (this kind of infrastructure is more present in urban settings, however, demonstrating urban/rural disparities and poor adaptation to climate change) and, most importantly, Tunisia has developed and sustained a tripartite dialogue process on economic policies between the government, the unions and employer's federation. Geographically, Tunisia has the strategic advantage of being positioned near Europe: the EU is Tunisia's principal source of foreign aid and main trading partner (representing around 64 per cent of its total trade in 2017). Tunisia and the EU are

working to develop a comprehensive trade agreement, ‘Aleca’<sup>167</sup>, which aims to integrate the Tunisian economy into the EU internal market and would allow for the free circulation of goods and services, harmonization of commercial, economic and judicial regulations, and a reduction of non-tariff trade barriers, amongst other procedures.<sup>168</sup> This initiative presents both risks and opportunities and remains politically and economically controversial.<sup>169</sup> Close relations with the EU have created dependencies since total aid to Tunisia between 2011 and 2017 amounted to 2.4 billion euros (fuelled by concerns over the central Mediterranean migration route and the war on terrorism).

Bilateral economic relationships enable Tunisia to grow economically, and the country has proactively pursued economic ties in the broader Arab States region and beyond. Since 2016, Tunisia has invested considerable effort in strengthening its ties with Russia and China. At the Forum on Sino-African Cooperation in Beijing in 2018, for example, Tunisia signed its first agreement to join China’s Belt and Road Initiative, which seeks to increase trade and foreign investment. More specifically, these agreements seek to make the port of Zarzis, in the south of Tunisia, an economic and commercial hub; build a bridge which connects Djerba to Djorf in the mineral-rich region of Medenine and to build a 140 kilometre railway line which links the coastal region of Gabes (a centre for petrochemical and phosphate processing industries) to Zarzis. In addition, the two countries signed a cooperation agreement in the field of tourism which, first and foremost, provides for the establishing of an airline to facilitate exchanges between China and Tunisia. Cooperation with Gulf countries also continues: Tunisia has benefited from investments and loans from Qatar of around USD 1.5 billion since 2011 in support of the democratic transition, media, think-tanks among others, and will also receive a loan of USD 5 billion at favourable interest rates from Saudi Arabia. As suggested by the World Bank, Tunisia has all the right attributes, relationships and resources to become the ‘Mediterranean tiger’.<sup>170</sup>

Tunisia’s ability to adequately finance the SDGs is hampered by its classification as a lower middle-income country, with a GNI per capita of USD 3,970 (which is below the USD 4,036 threshold to be considered an upper middle-income country). The majority of Tunisia’s income comes from the market services sector (47.6 per cent), followed by industry (31.4 per cent), public facilities (12.9 per cent) and agriculture and fisheries (7.9 per cent). Foreign direct investment (FDI) increased by 28.6 per cent in 2018 to USD 2.742 MTD, which represents 23.4 per cent of Tunisia’s total medium and long-term external financing (compared to 16.1 per cent in 2017). Reforms have been initiated, including the promulgation of the new investment law, and actions have been taken to improve the business climate. The flows of FDI, excluding the energy sector, led to the completion of 565 investment operations and the creation of 11,469 new jobs in 2018 and 2019 in the financial and telecommunications sectors. Aside from bilateral engagements (some of which are mentioned above) Tunisia has entered into a partnership framework with the World Bank for the period from 2016 to 2020 with a related loan of USD 5 billion for Tunisia’s Five Year Development Plan, which is structured along three pillars: strengthening economic and budgetary management and improving the

---

<sup>167</sup> ‘Accord de Libre Echange Complet et Approfondi (ALECA)’. See Bibliography for web link

<sup>168</sup> For an analysis see: ALECA, ‘Risques et opportunités de la libéralisation des services dans le cadres de l’ALECA, ITCEQ, Tunis, October 2016. ; and ITCEQ, ‘Programme de mise a niveau: Bilan, réalisations et perspectives, Résultats de la 8eme enquête’, l’Institut Tunisien de la Compétitivité et des Études Quantitatives (ITCEQ), March 2017, for greater contextualisation of Tunisia’s integration into the world economy.

<sup>169</sup> There are, for example, concerns that Tunisia does not yet have the capacity to meet external demands and that Tunisian businesses are insufficiently competitive on the world stage and, therefore, may suffer as a consequence of this integration. For more information see : ALECA, ‘Risques et opportunités de la libéralisation des services dans le cadre de l’ALECA, ITCEQ, Tunis, October 2016

<sup>170</sup> Groupe de la Banque Mondiale, ‘La révolution inachevée, créer des opportunités, des emplois de qualité et de la richesse pour tous les Tunisiens’, Synthèse, Mai 2014.

business environment; reducing regional disparities; and increasing social inclusion. Tunisia also benefits from partnerships with the European Union, Japan, Germany, the United States, Italy, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Sweden, among others. These diverse partnerships allow Tunisia to supplement its internal public resources with international aid. However, to meet its SDG targets, it will need to improve tax policy, administration and collection while also integrating the informal sector into the formal economy to the greatest extent possible. Tunisia would also benefit from more effective aid coordination amongst its diverse donor base and funding mechanisms that combine public and private resources, including green bonds, triangular loans, carbon pricing and incentive mechanisms.<sup>171</sup>

### Analysis of key risks

This CCA was developed in a highly inclusive and participatory manner and focused predominantly on risks (in line with the UN Secretary-General's Prevention Agenda). UN agencies were first requested to develop thematic notes on 12 areas of relevance to the CCA and the 2030 Agenda: economic stability, political stability, democratic space, justice and rule of law, natural resources and climate change, food security, agriculture and land, access to education and health services, infrastructure, internal security, migration and forced displacement, social cohesion, equality and non-discrimination, and, regional and global influences. The RCO then organized, with the support of Solidar, 12 workshops (called 'Conversations') on each of these topics. This process engaged the whole of the UNCT and a total of 240 expert representatives from the UN system, the Government of Tunisia, bilateral and multi-lateral partners, civil society, business and academia. Each conversation allowed for a deep and rich discussion about the context and issues, the risks and drivers of exclusion, trends and resilience capacities of various stakeholders.

Following these discussions, the following principal risks were identified for each of the 12 themes:

Themes	Principal risks
<b>Economic stability</b>	Financial crisis Sluggish growth Inability to reform
<b>Political stability</b>	Poor governance Inability to reform Corruption
<b>Access to health and education services</b>	Unequal access to education services Poor quality of education Poor governance (lack of vision/strategies, etc.) Unequal access to quality health services
<b>Infrastructure (transport, water, electricity)</b>	Poor governance (lack of intersectoral and integrated sustainable development approaches)

<sup>171</sup> For further discussion on funding see: Hodges, Anthony, 'Le financement public des services destinés aux enfants', Oxford Policy Management, 2020.

	Unsustainable transport/road network (urban/rural disparities; poor accessibility) Water imbalance and floods
<b>Food security, agriculture and land</b>	Depletion of resources and reduction of production Inability to meet demands (access and usage) Malnutrition Lack of competition and inefficiencies
<b>Natural resources and climate change</b>	Climate change (lack of adaptability and prevention) Urban sprawl Food insecurity Energy insecurity
<b>Migration and forced displacement</b>	Lack of strategies for integration of non-nationals (at the local and national levels) Insufficient governance of migration and refugees Failure to maximize the potential positive impact of migration (migrants and refugees)
<b>Internal security and regional/global influences</b>	Institutional inability to prevent, manage and respond to violence Global and regional influences Terrorism
<b>Democratic space</b>	Citizen participation deficit, culture and beliefs Ineffectiveness of the Constitution and related institutions; challenges to implement the decentralization reform Failures of the political ecosystem (parties and other stakeholders)
<b>Justice and rule of law</b>	Insufficient and inconsistent legal and institutional framework Failure to improve the quality of justice services Lack of trust in the justice system is weakening the rule of law
<b>Social cohesion, equality, and non-discrimination.</b>	Inadequate economic policies (regional disparities, etc.) Ineffectiveness of social policies Lack of trust between actors Discrimination

Following the methodology applied by Solidar, the above thematic risks were then clustered into main areas or ‘families’ of priority risks, based on the perceptions of leading experts in Tunisia. Through the lens of ‘leaving no one behind’ the UNCT identified five major, crosscutting risks that could heighten exclusion and exacerbate inequality if not addressed and/or mitigated. These risks have been further updated by the RCO to capture the possible impact of the COVID-19 crisis. A focus on risks for exclusion and inequality has enabled the UN to set priorities for its support to Tunisia: first, supporting national efforts towards achieving the SDGs and leaving no one behind; second, implementing the Secretary-General’s Prevention Agenda with a focus on anticipating crises, preventing violence, and Sustaining



Peace; and third, looking at Tunisia's context through the lens of the climate change agenda. The multidimensional nature of these risks helps shed light on the root causes of exclusion and inequality, enabling a focus on systemic and structural transformation rather than simply addressing their symptoms.

**Risk one: Tunisia experiences the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis and its economic recovery and development are insufficiently inclusive and sustainable**

Since 2011, Tunisia has embarked upon multiple and diverse economic initiatives. However, consensus around a comprehensive vision for a new inclusive model of economic development—one that would exploit the potential of improved human capital, a diversified economy, geographic position, among other factors—is yet to emerge. This transition and the necessary economic recovery after COVID-19 can only be enabled by systemic institutional and governance improvements that address corruption, enhance accountability, ensure gender equality, improve efficiency, increase employment rate and enable a sound business environment (taking into account the sustainable use of resources in the context of environmental degradation).

From a LNOB perspective, economic development is not enough to reduce inequalities and exclusion. If it does not take into account the specific needs of vulnerable populations (especially women) economic development can deepen inequalities. Therefore, Tunisia's post-COVID-19 recovery will be an opportunity to reduce disparities by focusing on sustainable, gender-responsive and inclusive growth. Delays in implementing this shift—and in a context of economic stagnation, a poverty that is feminizing and the middle class' shrinking purchasing power—may further erode social cohesion and public trust in institutions and in the democratic process itself. The risk of instability and exclusion is, therefore, closely associated with the lack of a transformative economic agenda that produces dividends that reduce inequalities.

**Risk two: the democratic transition remains incomplete or leads to erosion of gains, as the result of insufficient tangible changes to people's lives**

Tunisia has progressed in the establishment of new democratic institutions and independent bodies as well as the strengthening of its legislative framework. Major achievements have been made since 2011 in expanding citizens' freedoms, especially with regard to civil and political rights and gender equality. Public authorities have also taken significant steps in the transitional justice process and in reforming the judicial and security sectors to enhance rule of law, accountability, the transparency of institutions and processes and to enshrine human rights principles. However, the disconnection between legislative progress and implementation and delays to or inefficiencies in operationalizing new institutions (in line with the Constitution) has hampered transformative change. Moreover, the weak exercise of democratic control and oversight engenders the persistence of corrosive practices such as corruption, nepotism and discrimination.

An incomplete transition accompanied by challenges associated with the decentralization process can fuel disenchantment, erode public trust in political actors and institutions and can lead to increased perceptions of social injustice—further jeopardizing the democratic process and rule of law. An incomplete democratic transition, especially if not accompanied by tangible socioeconomic improvements or exacerbated by the shock of the COVID-19 pandemic, may fuel divisive politics or radical agendas. This can deepen grievances, exacerbate exclusion and even reverse democratic gains.

Risk three: persistent inequalities and lack of progress in human development create frustration due to a mismatch with people's expectations thereby weakening social cohesion

Increasing exclusion, regional disparities, and marginalization of the youth and other vulnerable groups (particularly women and children in rural and peri-urban areas) who are critical actors of change, may constrain sustainable development and augment social instability. The ineffective pursuit and implementation of ambitious and inclusive social policies occurs in a context where the quality of all levels of education (from primary to tertiary and vocational training), health services and social protection are subject to multiple pressures, including COVID. Moreover, women and youth face significant obstacles to joining the job market because employability enhancement programmes are insufficient. This is likely to accentuate multidimensional poverty and vulnerabilities, as well as regional and social divides. This situation, which is perceived as being socially unjust, may aggravate frustrations and even prompt irregular migration or expose youth to violence, criminality, and suicide. It also affects social cohesion and fuels extremist violence. Cultural beliefs, beliefs about masculinity, and social norms may also impact the democratic space and induce more violence, hate speech and intolerance of diversity. The crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic may be considered an important factor of destabilization, as it is expected to reduce purchasing power and particularly affect vulnerable groups. This could exacerbate social grievances and impact the conflict cycle.

Risk four: inappropriate management of natural resources, ecosystems and the environment, aggravated by climate change, hinders wealth creation, increases vulnerabilities and undermines sustainability

The deterioration of natural resources, especially water and soil, as a result of their mismanagement and the impact of climate change could become a pitfall for development. The degradation of natural resources compounds vulnerabilities and widens the gap with those left behind. This would not only exacerbate the geographic divide—since levels of poverty in rural districts are higher than in urban areas<sup>172</sup>—but could also affect economic activities (especially tourism due to coastal degradation). The differential impact must be understood in terms of intersectional factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, disability, poverty and socioeconomic status.<sup>173</sup> Coupled with inadequate governance, planning systems and laws (and accentuated by increasing urbanization), this impact may hinder sustainable development and inclusive economic growth while reducing the quality of the natural environment as well as Tunisia's rich cultural heritage, which is essential for livelihoods. The frequency and intensity of natural hazards can further affect the inclusiveness of economic growth and sustainable development if national capacities are not able to adequately manage the risk of disaster (including disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery). Finally, if adequate mitigation and adaptation measures are not in place, climate change will have a critical impact on vulnerable communities and the next generations, thus particularly affecting young people and children.

Risk five: the multiplicity and scale of exogenous crises and shocks jeopardize Tunisia's achievements

The country faces several external risks such as the spill over effects of instability in neighbouring countries and economic volatility. Continued instability in Libya especially

---

<sup>172</sup> 26 % vs 10.1 % according to official statistics of INS.

<sup>173</sup> UN, 'Report FCCC/SBI/2019/INF.8, Differentiated impacts of climate change on women and men ; the integration of gender considerations in climate policies, plans and actions ; and progress in enhancing gender balance in national climate delegations', United Nations, Bonn, 12 June 2019.

represents a threat to Tunisia's security and economic growth, while the potential influx of refugees and migrants (as had occurred in 2011, when hundreds of thousands of refugees crossed the border from Libya) could further strain public resources, negatively impact the resilience of host communities and alter cross-border socioeconomic ecosystems (due to the expansion of informal and illicit economies). In the current context, a massive influx of migrants and asylum seekers would likely meet resistance and generate or exacerbate conflicts related to access to services and social cohesion. Tunisia might not be able to effectively absorb an additional influx, which would comprise the prospect of finding lasting solutions for these groups.

Due to strong political and economic links with Algeria, stability in the latter is also a key factor. The Tunisian economy remains fragile and reliant on foreign investments and tourism, both of which are contingent on security and stability along the borders and a predictable global and regional trade context (which has been negatively impacted by COVID-19). Tunisia's public investment and foreign aid have mostly been dedicated to enhancing security, protecting borders and fighting terrorism, which has reduced resources for socioeconomic needs. Risks include the impact of global economic trends (such as volatility of the oil price and shrinking European markets that would affect Tunisian exports) and exogenous challenges related to the environment, climate, phytosanitary issues and health. Poor economic performance coupled with an uncertain political landscape could further undermine the country's ability to absorb new significant shocks and therefore jeopardize Tunisia's goals.

## Opportunities

Despite the above challenges, Tunisia has a significant set of potential development opportunities: a strong and well-established civil society, an effective electoral mechanism which has shown resilience to political contingencies, and progressive social and reproductive health laws facilitating gender equity and women empowerment. Historically, the Tunisian political class has also maintained a constructive position in an eventful environment, both nationally and regionally, making Tunisia a neutral broker in the region. Additional opportunities can be found in the below areas:

### New political landscape

The democratic transition allows further political reforms and social change. The high voter turnout during the presidential and legislative elections in the autumn of 2019 is evidence that the Tunisian population supports the democratic exercise.<sup>174</sup> In addition, the very first regional elections are planned to be held under 2021 or 2022; these will represent a further milestone in the democratic transition at the local level. Furthermore, prior to the COVID-19 crisis, the government had expressed its openness to have a national debate on the abolition of the death penalty and willingness to continue the transitional justice process.

### Innovation as an accelerator

Keeping the same rank as in 2018 (87<sup>th</sup>) and with only a slight improvement of 0.8 points (56.4/100) on the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI 4.0),<sup>175</sup> Tunisia continues to make slow but steady progress in the field of innovation and information technologies. Having young people skilled in these fields and recent enabling legislation and national strategies (such as the

---

<sup>174</sup> The parliamentary elections on the 6th of October 2019 showed a countrywide voter turnout of 41.3%. The voter's turnout for the second round of the presidential elections on the 13th of October 2019 reached considerable 57.8 % (45.02% in the 1st round on the 6th of October 2019).

<sup>175</sup> The Global Competitiveness Report 2019, Insight report, World Economic Forum.

2018 Start-up Act and the 2020 Digital Strategy), Tunisia has the potential of becoming an international reference point for digital development.<sup>176</sup> In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, the agenda of increased innovation and digitalization might continue to be pursued.

#### Climate change and energy transition

At the institutional level the country is committed to mitigate the effects of climate change by legally binding itself to climate protection measures, having ratified both the Kyoto Protocol (2003) and the Paris Agreement (2017). The latter includes the COP 21 rulebook, which determines national contributions. Tunisia is also engaged in projects and programmes for the development of unconventional sources of waters supplies. Recently launched energy projects such as Nawara and Halk el Menzel are an opportunity to reduce the energy deficit and free up resources for the state budget. While the government's economic programme will most likely be revised, these actions and strategies should be encouraged to facilitate a green transition.

#### Development of the collective awareness on preparedness for crises, disasters and exogenous variables

The recent floods in Nabeul, the risk of a potential migration influx from Libya, and especially the current COVID-19 emergency, represent an opportunity for the development of policies on preparedness, risk mitigation and disaster risk reduction. A greater awareness of such phenomena helps to create a culture of prevention among public authorities and in society more generally.

---

<sup>176</sup> Synergies N° 98 - Avril 2019.

## Moving forward

Tunisia's extraordinary journey since 2011 has demonstrated its remarkable resilience and its ability to confront diverse challenges in peaceful and constructive ways. Despite meaningful democratic progress, however, enduring multi-faceted exclusion and multi-dimensional inequality remain the most important obstacles to Tunisia's ability to achieve the objectives outlined in the 2030 Agenda and to reach and surpass its potential.

As outlined in the UNDP report on *Re-thinking Inequality in Arab Countries*,<sup>177</sup> tackling multi-faceted exclusion and multi-dimensional inequality requires an integrated approach that addresses structural factors, including the deprivations people face in their daily lives.<sup>178</sup> Multi-dimensional inequality takes into account the diverse driving factors of poverty, including issues related to health (nutrition and child mortality), education (years of schooling, school attendance, and quality of education) and standard of living (access to cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, housing, and assets).<sup>179</sup> Indeed, it seeks to understand people's differential experience of poverty because of their age, where they live, and their gender (amongst other factors). An integrated approach to reducing such inequalities therefore necessitates simultaneous progress with regard to decent employment, poverty reduction, increased social spending and improved governance.<sup>180</sup> In this model, there are five key components:

1. Human capital is the instigator of progress – building upon a human-development-centred approach to the SDGs
2. Human development is enhanced through the provision of better basic services such as quality healthcare, education, infrastructures, and training to facilitate access to labour markets and school-to-work transitions
3. Effective and inclusive economic policies governed by responsive institutions help ensure that human capital gains are translated into decent productive employment, which subsequently supports inclusive economic growth and leads to poverty reductions and the expansion of the middle class
4. Good governance and law enforcement allow governments to reap the benefits of growth, widen their tax base and increase the fiscal capacity for social expenditure
5. Efficient targeting of the most vulnerable and effective management of social programmes will reduce poverty and inequality, strengthen social cohesion and help mitigate the risk of political instability.

A pre-requisite and key enabler of such an integrated approach is peace and stability, which underscores the need to address the root causes of social unrest and to carefully manage the spill over effects of crisis and instability.<sup>181</sup>

To ensure this integrated approach to inequality can be tailored to the realities of the nature and drivers of exclusion and inequality in Tunisia, the following findings of this analysis need to be taken into consideration:

Tunisia's national vision for sustainable development, formulated in such a comprehensive and inclusive manner, should set precedent. However, concerted efforts will be required to address

---

<sup>177</sup> UN-ESCWA, 'Rethinking inequality in Arab countries', ESCWA, Economic Research Forum, 2019.

<sup>178</sup> OPHI and UNDP, Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2019, 'Illuminating Inequalities', Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative and the United Nations Development Programme, 2019.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid, page 2.

<sup>180</sup> UN-ESCWA, 'Rethinking inequality in Arab countries', ESCWA, Economic Research Forum, 2019. page 12

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

structural challenges that prevent it from achieving the desired growth rate, reduction in poverty and increased investment and job creation. As previously noted, this will require greater harmonization among different government entities and sectors and the involvement of various external stakeholders. The current COVID-19 crisis should be an opportunity for structural transformations.

With regard to the 2030 Agenda, the alignment between national frameworks and the SDGs related to ‘people’ brings into sharp focus the lack of alignment with other key parts of the agenda, particularly those goals related to ‘planet’ which will become ever more important with the effects of climate change.

The principle of leaving no one behind requires significant efforts to address the structural and underlying factors contributing to the exclusion of specific groups, including where socioeconomic, political and cultural factors intersect, combine and exacerbate marginalization. However, the principal challenge in the Tunisian context is the lack of data on groups most likely to be left behind if action is not taken, including minorities (religious, racial, ethnic, and LGBT), migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, homeless persons, persons with disabilities, informal workers (including non-nationals), and isolated individuals. Specific measures will be required to collect the necessary information on such groups and the drivers of their exclusion and then to galvanize concerted action to protect them.

Tunisia’s commitments to international norms and standards are an indication of the country’s progressive social agenda. However, the gap between these aspirations and the realities of rights-holders is of significant concern. The ongoing struggle to form the Constitutional Court and operationalize the Human Rights Authority are a particularly flagrant example of this gap.

Tunisia’s commitment to the Paris Agenda through its Enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions and its commitment to building the resilience of its infrastructure and economy to climate change are an opportunity to the long-term development vision relying on sustainability, social equity, innovation and rights for future generation to the natural resources and ecosystems.

Regional instability, and the instability of Libya especially, presents an ongoing risk and challenge for Tunisia, especially when it comes to meeting the needs of those displaced by conflict and those in the border regions and the interior regions most dependent on cross-border trade with Libya. The need to bolster counterterrorism measures must, therefore, be combined with efforts to improve the daily lives and livelihoods of these vulnerable populations and with security sector reform to promote the rule of law and accountability of security forces.

Tunisia’s economy and financial landscape continue to suffer from the effects of the 2011 revolution. While Tunisia will inevitably decline as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, an improved socioeconomic governance framework—properly implemented in a transparent and inclusive manner—will enable the country to sustain inclusive growth after the pandemic is over.

These diverse risks facing Tunisia underscore the need for an ambitious and highly inclusive political agenda for the years ahead. Indeed, the present analysis presented demonstrates that the ability to achieve the 2030 Agenda is dependent on addressing three core SDGs at the heart of this analysis first and foremost: SDGs 5, 10 and 16, and related multi-faceted exclusion and multi-dimensional inequalities. Inclusion is intricately linked to ensuring accountable and transparent institutions for the management of natural resources (SDG 14); inclusive urbanization capacities for participation in human settlement planning and management (SDG 11); and promoting a culture of peace and non-violence and ensuring effective and accountable

institutions and participatory and responsive decision-making (SDG 16), amongst others. Similarly, reduced inequalities are directly linked to the fair and equitable sharing of benefits of land resources (SDG 15); ensuring health protection for all, as well as access to quality services (SDG 3); full and productive employment with secure working conditions for all (SDG 8); social, economic and political inclusion irrespective of sex, as well as equal participation and decision making and the end of discrimination (SDG 5); equitable access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (SDG 6); equal access quality education at all levels (SDG 4); access by all people, in particular the poor and vulnerable, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round (SDG 2) and universal access to public spaces, adequate, safe and affordable housing (SDG 11) —to mention only a few.

This ‘nexus approach’ to the SDGs—which places SDGs 5, 10 and 16 at its core as enabling goals—requires four key drivers to be addressed: first, an insufficiently inclusive socioeconomic model (comprising economic, fiscal, public, social and development policies) which fails to take into account the specific needs of the most vulnerable populations, especially those living in the most marginalized areas (including the interior and border regions as well as rural areas). Second, the inability to sufficiently conceive, execute and monitor the multisectoral and structural reforms required to help Tunisia continue its socioeconomic and political transformation, as the capacity for reform is closely linked to the absence of a shared national vision that can guide the country to work towards greater inclusion and equality. Third, poor and insufficiently inclusive management and allocation of resources.

As demonstrated by the above analysis, Tunisia has access to significant national and international resources, but the benefits of having these resources are not being felt equally or adequately above and beyond a growing wage bill. An important question is how Tunisia can better manage and allocate its resources to achieve shared prosperity. Lastly, the persistent gap between the aspirations with regard to human rights, as outlined in the new constitution, and their effective implementation to the benefit of all rights-holders and future generations.

Despite the global crisis caused by COVID-19, the UN has called on its Member States and “the human family” to turn the pandemic into an impetus to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The UN has urged states to prevent the crisis from derailing sustainable development efforts while laying out a vision for the affected to build back better.<sup>182</sup> This means, for Tunisia, a renewed commitment to the implementation of the SDGs.

---

<sup>182</sup> ‘UN working to fight COVID-19 and achieve Global Goals’, Department of Global Communications, 2020



## Reference List

- RBC, 'Region Social Protection Response', updated on 9 April 2020.
- Abdeljaoued, Monia, 'Illegal Migrants Risk All to Escape Tunisia', Global Voices, Tunis, September 2013.
- Aldana, Medinilla, Alfonso and Fassi, el Sahra, 'Briefing Note, Tackling Regional Inequalities in Tunisia No. 84, April 2016', European Centre for Development Policy Management, 2016.
- ALECA, 'Risques et opportunités de la libéralisation des services dans le cadre de l'ALECA, ITCEQ, Tunis, October 2016
- Alexandra Flayols Dario Jongerius Françoise de Bel-Air, 'Tunisia: Education, Labour Market, Migration', Annex C to "Dutch labour market shortages and potential labour supply from Africa and the Middle East" (SEO Report No. 2019-24), SEO Amsterdam Economic, Commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019.
- ATCT, 'Regional Workshop on South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation', Tunisian Agency for Technical Cooperation, 2019.
- Avari, Michaël, 'Analytical Review: Violent Extremism and Its Motivating Factors in Tunisia in the 2010s', Office of the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Tunisia, Tunis, November 2017.
- Chauzal, Gregory; Zavagli, Sofia, 'Post-revolutionary discontent and F(r)actionalisation in the Maghreb, managing the Tunisia-Libya border dynamics, Clingendael Report, August 2016,
- Conceicao, Pedro, 'Human Development Report 2019', UNDP, New York, 2019.
- Dhokkar, Saoussen, 'Tunisia's Experience in South-South Cooperation', Ministry of foreign Affairs, Tunisia.
- ESCWA, *Impact of the Libyan Crisis on the Tunisian economy: An Estimation of the Macroeconomic and Fiscal Impacts of the Libyan Crisis on the Tunisian economy*, United Nations, Beirut, 2017.
- Etude économiques de l'OCDE, Tunisie, Mars 2018
- FTDES, 'Rapport mouvements sociaux annuel 2019', Forum Tunisien pour la Droits Economiques et Sociaux, 2020.
- FTEDS, 'Rapport annuel suicides et tentatives de suicide 2019', Forum Tunisien pour la Droits Economiques et Sociaux, Tunis, 2020.
- CGLU, 'Vers la mise en œuvre des Objectifs du Développement Durable au Niveau Local, Cités et Gouvernements Locaux Unis, Barcelona, 2017.
- Groupe de la Banque Mondiale, 'La révolution inachevée, créer des opportunités, des emplois de qualité et de la richesse pour tous les Tunisiens', Synthèse, Mai 2014
- Gsir, Sonia and Bounouh, Abdelala, 'Migrations et environnement en Tunisie : Relations complexes et défis pour le développement', Organisation Internationale pour les migrations OIM, 2018.
- Hajbi, Meher, 'Tunisie: Le président Saied prolonge de trois mois l'état d'urgence', Agence Anadolu, Tunis, 2020.

Hodges, Anthony, 'Le financement public des services destinés aux enfant', Oxford Policy Management, 2020.

Human Rights Council, Report A/HRC/23/46/Add.1: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, François Crépeau, UN General Assembly, 2013.

Human Rights Watch, 'Event of 2018', Human Rights Watch, 2019.

Human Rights Watch, Tunisia, 'End persecution of LGBT people', Human Rights Watch, May 17 2019.

International Crisis Group, Décentralisation en Tunisie: Consolider la démocratie sans affaiblir l'Etat, Brussels, International Crisis Group, Brussels, 2019.

IMF, 'Request for purchase under the rapid financing instrument – Press release; staff report; and statement by the executive director for Tunisia', 2020.

Institute Nationale de Statistiques, Enquête sur « La perception des citoyens en matière de sécurité, de liberté et de gouvernance locale », May 2018.

International Crisis Group, 'COVID-19 and Conflict: Seven trends to watch'. Special Breifing N°4, 24 March 2020: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/sb4-covid-19-and-conflict-seven-trends-watch>.

Invest in Tunisia, 'Tunisia First Arab and African Country in Terms of Innovation According to the 2018 Bloomberg Innovation Index', Invest in Tunisia, 2018.

ITCEQ, 'Programme de mise à niveau: Bilan, réalisations et perspectives, Résultats de la 8<sup>ème</sup> enquête', l'Institut Tunisien de la Compétitivité et des Études Quantitatives (ITCEQ), March 2017.

Jaballi, Chawki, 'Adhésion de la Tunisie au COMESA', République Tunisienne Ministère du Commerce, 17 May 2019.

Jeune Afrique, 'Libre-échange: ce que signifie la future adhésion de la Tunisie au Comesa', Jeune Afrique, 2017.

Joumard, Isabelle et de La Maisonneuve, Christine, 'Tunisia: Reviving the process of economic convergence for the benefit of all Tunisians', 2018.

La Conférence des Parties COP 25, 'La Tunisie en action, pour un développement bas carbone et résilient à l'horizon 2050', Ministère des Affaires Locales et de l'Environnement avec le PNUD, 2019.

Le Centre de Recherches et d'Etudes Sociales et la Banque Africaine de Développement, 'Protection sociale et économie informelle en Tunisie', Mai 2016

Le littoral Tunisien Chiffres-clés, PNUD et APAL, 2015

Le Point Afrique, Covid-19 : la Tunisie entre inquiétude sanitaire et désarroi économique, 8 April 2020 : [https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/covid-19-la-tunisie-entre-inquietude-sanitaire-et-desarroi-economique-08-04-2020-2370598\\_3826.php](https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/covid-19-la-tunisie-entre-inquietude-sanitaire-et-desarroi-economique-08-04-2020-2370598_3826.php).

Kwasi, Stellah; Cilliers, Jakkie and Welborn, Lily, 'The Rebirth: Tunisia's potential development pathways to 2040', African Futures and Innovation programme (AFI), 2019.

Martinage, Jean-Luc, 'Breaking the cycle of poverty in Tunisia, International Labour Organization, 2016.

Meddeb, Hamza, 'Precarious resilience: Tunisia's Libyan predicament', Future Notes, No. 5, April 2017

OECD, 'PISA 2015, Results in Focus', OECD, 2018.

OPHI and UNDP, Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2019, 'Illuminating Inequalities', Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative and the United Nations Development Programme, 2019.

OSAA 'Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa', Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, Maputo, 11 July 2003.

Oueslati, Ameer and Elamri, Tharouet, 'Le littoral Tunisien Chiffres-clés, UNDP, Tunis, December 2015.

Programme de mise à niveau: Bilan, réalisations et perspectives, Résultats de la 8<sup>ème</sup> enquête, l'Institut Tunisien de la Compétitivité et des Études Quantitatives (ITCEQ) Mars 2017

Réalites, Journée nationale d'abolition de l'esclavage: Lutte contre la traite des êtres humains', Réalités, 2020.

République Tunisienne et Les Nations Unies Tunisie, *Rapport National Volontaire de la mise en œuvre des Objectifs de Développement Durable en Tunisie*, Forum Politique de Haut Niveau, New York, 2019.

République Tunisienne, 'La stratégie nationale de lutte contre l'extrémisme et le terrorisme', République Tunisienne, 2016.

Risques et opportunités de la libéralisation des services dans le cadres de l'ALECA', ITCEQ, 26 Octobre, 2016

Sadiki, Larbi, 'Order from Chaos: Tunisia's Migration to the North', Brookings Institution, 2019.

Sanitni, Hanau, Ruth, 'Limited Statehood in Post-Revolutionary Tunisia', Palgrave MacMillian, Switzerland, 2018.

Santini, Hanau, Ruth and Tholens, Simone, 'Security Assistance in a Post-interventionist Era: The Impact on Limited Statehood in Lebanon and Tunisia', Small Wars & Insurgencies, 2018.

Santini, Hanau, Ruth and Cimini, Giulia, 'Intended and Unintended Consequences of Security Assistance in Post-2011 Tunisia, Contemporary Arab Affairs, Vol. 12, Number 1, 2019.

Segneri, Giordano, 'Climate-related Security Risks and Sustaining Peace – An analytical lens', policy paper, UN RCO April 2020.

Shemfs FM, 'Ministre de la Femme : « on avait conscience que le confinement allait augmenter le nombre des femmes victime de violences »', April 2020.

Solidar, 'Rapport Synthèse des 12 conversations', December 2019.

Solidar, Trabelsi, Salwa; Zrelli, Nedja, Tunisie, *Evaluation du plan de développement 2016-2020*, Solidar-Tunisie, 2019.

Statistiques Tunisie, 'Les Projections de la Population 2014-2044', République Tunisienne Institut National de la Statistique', December 2015.

Technology Executive Committee, 'TEC/2018/17/10 Report - Potential application of South-south and Triangular cooperation to assist countries in implementing nationally determined contributions and national adaptation plans', Frame Convention on Climate Change, Bonn, Germany, September 2018.

The World Bank, 'Note stratégique sur les réformes prioritaires. Pour une Tunisie forte, prospère et inclusive', the World Bank, 2019.

Trabelsi, Karim 'Current state of the informal economy in Tunisia as seen through its stakeholders: facts and alternatives, reality diagnosis and perspectives', UGTT, Solidarity Center, 2014.

Tunisian Observatory of Economy, '*Leave no one behind*' Report, Tunisia 2019, commissioned by the RCO Tunisia, November 2019.

UNDP, 'Feuille de route pour la mise en œuvre de la NDC', UNDP Tunisia, Tunis, 2019.

UN-ESCWA, 'Impact of the Libyan crisis on the Tunisian economy', An estimation of the macroeconomic and fiscal impacts of the Libyan crisis on the Tunisian economy', United Nations, Beirut 2017.

UNESCWA-ECA, 'Note d'analyse macro-économique de la Tunisie', Novembre 2019.

UN-ESCWA, 'Rethinking inequality in Arab countries', ESCWA, Economic Research Forum, 2019.

UNICEF, 'Analyse de la situation de l'enfance en Tunisie 2019', UNICEF Tunisia, 2019.

UNICEF, 'Towards universal social protection for children: achieving SDG 1.3', UNICEF, May 2019.

United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 'UN experts says human rights must shape economic policy in Tunisia', United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, Geneva-Tunis, 28 February 2017.

Webmanagercenter, 'Tunisie: Déjà plus de 4 milliards de dinars de recettes touristiques (9 mois 2019)', Webmanagercenter, 2019.

WOLA, 'Monitoring Anti-Democratic Trends and Human Rights Abuses in the Age of COVID-19', 13 April 2020

World Bank, Macroeconomics and Fiscal Management Global Practice Middle East and North Africa Region, *Republic of Tunisia: Impact of the Libyan Crisis on the Tunisia Economy*, February 2017.

Yerkes, Sarah; Ben Ya, Zeineb, 'Tunisians revolutionary goals remain unfulfilled', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 06, 2018.

Zelin, Y, Aaron, 'Tunisian Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria, Policy Notes, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2018.

## UN documents and databases

European Union Capacity4dev database see : <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/public-migration-asylum/blog/migration-flows-throughout-%E2%80%98arab-spring%E2%80%99>

International Organization for Migration (IOM) 'Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)' database. see: <https://dtm.iom.int/libya>

Human Rights Council ‘Report A/HRC/37/54/Add.1 - Report of the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights’, UN General Assembly, 2018. See: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1483306?ln=en#record-files-collapse-header>

Human Rights Council ‘Report A/HRC/40/52/Add.1 – Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism’, UN General Assembly, 2018. See: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/40/52/Add.1>

Human Rights Council ‘Report A/HRC/23/46/Add.1 – Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, François Crépeau, UN General Assembly, 2013.

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) database:  
<https://www.oecd.org/pisa/data/>

UNCTAD, The Covid-19 Shock to Developing Countries, March 2020:  
[https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/gds\\_tdr2019\\_covid2\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/gds_tdr2019_covid2_en.pdf).

UN, ‘Report FCCC/SBI/2019/INF.8, Differentiated impacts of climate change on women and men; the integration of gender considerations in climate policies, plans and actions; and progress in enhancing gender balance in national climate delegations’, United Nations, Bonn, 12 June 2019.

UN, ‘UN working to fight COVID-19 and achieve Global Goals’, Department of Global Communications, 2020.

UNDP, ‘The economic impact of COVID-19 in Tunisia, UNDP Tunisia country office, 2020 UNHCHR, ‘COVID-19 emergency emergency preparedness and response plan’, 2020.

## Weblinks

ALECA: <http://www.aleca.tn/en/>

DESINVENTAR: <https://www.desinventar.org/>

Freedom House Libya country profile: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/tunisia>

FTDES report ‘Rapport mouvements sociaux annuel 2019’:  
<https://ftdes.net/rapports/mvtssociaux2019.pdf>

FDES website: <https://ftdes.net/>

Global Nutrition Report, ‘Tunisia Nutrition Profile’:  
<https://globalnutritionreport.org/resources/nutrition-profiles/africa/northern-africa/tunisia/>

Infomigrants: <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/14742/report-human-trafficking-cases-on-the-rise-in-tunisia>

Invest in Tunisia: [http://www.investintunisia.tn/En/tunisia-first-arab-and-african-country-in-terms-of-innovation-according-to-the-2018-bloomberg-innovation-index\\_50\\_201\\_D214](http://www.investintunisia.tn/En/tunisia-first-arab-and-african-country-in-terms-of-innovation-according-to-the-2018-bloomberg-innovation-index_50_201_D214)

International Organization for Migration: <https://www.iom.int/countries/tunisia>

a. Journal Officiel de la République Tunisienne:  
<http://www.legislation.tn/sites/default/files/news/tf2017581.pdf>

b. Journal Officiel de la République Tunisienne :  
<http://www.legislation.tn/sites/default/files/news/tf2016611.pdf>

c. Journal Officiel de la République Tunisienne :

[https://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session27/TN/43Annexe23Loi2015\\_46fr.pdf](https://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session27/TN/43Annexe23Loi2015_46fr.pdf)

MACROTRENDS : <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/TUN/tunisia/poverty-rate>

MARSAD: [https://www.observatoire-securite.tn/fr/evolution-du-budget-du-ministere-de-linterieur-depuis-2011/?doing\\_wp\\_cron=1582624902.6313080787658691406250](https://www.observatoire-securite.tn/fr/evolution-du-budget-du-ministere-de-linterieur-depuis-2011/?doing_wp_cron=1582624902.6313080787658691406250)

a. MDICI: <http://www.mdici.gov.tn/services/publications/>

b. MDICI: <http://www.mdici.gov.tn/>

MICS: <https://mics.unicef.org/surveys>

SOFI, 2019 : <http://www.fao.org/state-of-food-security-nutrition>

Statistique Tunisie: <http://www.ins.tn/fr/themes/emploi>

Tunisia's Constitution: <http://www.legislation.tn/sites/default/files/news/constitution-b-a-t.pdf>

World Bank Group, Tunisia : <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tunisia>

World Health Organization, 'Maternal mortality in 2000-2017':

[https://www.who.int/gho/maternal\\_health/countries/tun.pdf](https://www.who.int/gho/maternal_health/countries/tun.pdf)