

ESCWA

Annual Report 2010

A Year in Review



ESCWA

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

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Foreword



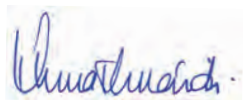
The year 2010 represented a year of stock-taking and change for ESCWA and the region. This Annual Report documents the Commission's response and its efforts to promote socio-economic development, advance regional integration and enhance coordination between its member countries across a broad range of substantive areas.

Throughout 2010, ESCWA continued to push the agenda of inclusive and sustainable development, and over the course of the year strengthened its partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders. Together with our member countries – who reaffirmed our mandate and their confidence in the organization – ESCWA mapped the way forward at the twenty-sixth session of the Commission in May 2010. Key areas, such as the challenges and opportunities of youth, and the need for human and institutional capacity-building, were discussed in detail, and concrete actions and recommendations proposed to address them.

To increase the engagement of stakeholders on priority issues and in its role as convenor of the Regional Coordination Mechanism meetings, ESCWA brought together high-level representatives from United Nations organizations and key regional actors at the fourteenth meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for the Arab States, convened under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General in Beirut in November 2010. In the face of the challenges to resource mobilization resulting from the global slowdown, ESCWA continued to drive efforts for regional coordination and cooperation to make optimal use of all available human and financial resources.

Last year was an important year for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In a joint effort between 11 United Nations agencies in the Arab region, and in close collaboration with the League of Arab States, ESCWA led a review of the MDGs in the region, culminating in the publication of *The Third Arab Report on the Millennium Development Goals 2010 and the Impact of the Global Economic Crises*. The Report documents the progress in our region towards achieving the MDGs by 2015 and highlights the challenges posed by the global economic crises. While the ESCWA region is on track to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, it has had mixed success in achieving universal primary education and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Additional efforts are needed to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as to ensure environmental sustainability in the region and to provide increased support for the least developed countries.

As the events of the Arab Spring continue to unfold, ESCWA looks forward to tackling the pressing issues of the coming year, including the challenges posed by forging a new social contract, the transition to democracy, the impact of conflict and political instability, food security, depletion of natural resources and climate change. Finally, I should like to thank my predecessor, Mr. Bader AlDafa, for handing over an organization that is well-placed to respond effectively to the developing political, economic and social situation in the region, and to express my appreciation for the commitment and achievements of all ESCWA staff in the last year.



Rima Khalaf

Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCWA



Introduction

2010 in brief

In 2010, ESCWA held the twenty-sixth session of the Commission in Beirut from 17-20 May, providing a forum for member countries to meet and to discuss the extensive challenges facing member countries individually and the region as a whole. The focus of the session was youth, and a broad range of key challenges facing young people were addressed in a ministerial round table. In recognition of the importance of matters related to young people in the region, the session adopted the *Guiding Declaration of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on Giving Greater Attention to Youth Policies: An Opportunity for Development*, which stressed the commitment made by member countries to youth-related issues and policies.

The Commission carries out its substantive work through seven subprogrammes, namely integrated management of natural resources for sustainable development, integrated social policies, economic development and integration, information and communications technology for regional integration, statistics for evidence-based policymaking, advancement of women, and conflict mitigation and development. By hosting a platform for coordination which, in turn, offers a forum for brainstorming and in-depth discussion, by providing a framework for the formulation of standards, and by encouraging and facilitating the harmonization of policies across member countries, the Commission makes a clear, solid contribution towards moving the development agenda forward.

Once again in 2010, a major challenge for

ESCWA was to promote integrated sustainable management of natural resources in the region, emphasizing water, energy and the production sectors, and incorporating strong, effective climate change responses into sectoral strategies and plans. Significant project work was undertaken, focusing on building the capacity of policymakers and civil society in the adoption of renewable energy technologies in order to enhance energy security and improve access to energy services in poor rural areas. Emphasis was also placed on developing green production sectors, thus paving the way for a green economy in the region. ESCWA strongly encouraged all member countries, when drawing up their national economic plans, to include the development of small and medium-sized enterprises working in the fields of renewable energy and energy efficiency as a small but specific step towards increased adoption of such technologies.

ESCWA also worked intensively to foster an environment that enables the development of the information society. This was achieved through the creation of a reliable legal and regulatory framework, cybersecurity insurance, and the building of trust in cyberspace and e-services. A further challenge in the field of information and communications technology (ICT) was Internet governance, and the completion of the Arab Regional Roadmap for Internet Governance, developed jointly by ESCWA and the League of Arab States, was a major step forward in this area. Measuring science, technology and innovation (STI) using international standards remained a priority issue and ESCWA continued to

provide support, encouragement and technical assistance to member countries to create national STI observatories. Preparing and promoting the ICT sector in the region to meet the regional and global challenges of the knowledge economy remained an overarching objective in this field and, with a view to achieving that challenge, work continued on the development of the ESCWA Technology Centre, which will be launched in Jordan in 2011.

In the economic sphere, the Commission adopted a programme of actions which aimed to enhance the capacity of member countries to design and implement sound economic policies and strategies to foster sustainable economic growth, employment creation and poverty alleviation, thus strengthening regional cooperation and integration. The flagship publication of the Commission, the *Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region 2009-2010*, analysed the magnitude of the global financial crisis, assessed its impact on the world economy in general and the ESCWA region in particular, and proposed a set of macroeconomic exit strategies for immediate implementation by member countries.

Ten years after the Millennium Declaration at the World Summit in 2000, ESCWA carried out extensive work to review the progress made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the Arab region. The findings were highlighted in a major report, the *Third Arab Report on the Millennium Development Goals 2010 and the Impact of the Global Economic Crises*, published in cooperation with the League of Arab States.

In the statistics sector, ESCWA continued to work closely with national statistical offices in member countries, focusing on enhancing economic, social and cross-cutting statistics with a view to keeping countries abreast of regional and global statistical developments,

and facilitating the exchange of expertise. Particular emphasis was placed on assisting national statistical offices to migrate to the 2008 version of the System of National Accounts. Other work in the area of statistics in 2010 included promoting and encouraging interregional cooperation for the measurement of the informal sector and informal employment, strengthening the development of international merchandise trade statistics, and the compilation of statistics on e-commerce.

The social development work of the Commission focuses on measures to foster social dialogue, promote civil society participation and bridge the urban social divide. Through a series of normative and technical cooperation activities, including training workshops and meetings, ESCWA also plays a pivotal role in assisting member countries to formulate national youth policies. In other areas of its work it pays particular attention to vulnerable groups such as the poor and unemployed, migrants, youth, the elderly and people living with disabilities. In 2010, it continued to work towards enhancing partnership between Government institutions and civil society organizations in the areas of policy formulation, implementation and monitoring, with the overall objective of promoting an inclusive and equitable process of social development in the region.

A number of member countries are in or emerging from a situation of conflict. The needs of such countries are a priority for the Commission, which provides support for the adoption and application of good governance models to strengthen countries for the future, and assists countries in the implementation of peacebuilding policies, strategies and mechanisms geared towards the structural prevention of conflict or potential sources of conflict. The efforts of the Commission in 2010 continued to be directed towards empowering member countries experiencing instability and conflict to reclaim opportunities for social and economic growth. Together with the United

Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and a number of ministries in Iraq, ESCWA led the ICT in Education for Iraq project, supporting the improvement of teaching and learning by enhancing ICT skills and literacy. A situation analysis on decentralization and local governance, and a parallel capacity and gaps assessment were conducted at the level of municipal, district and Governorate councils in Iraq, and a number of capacity-building activities were devised to complement and build on the findings of the situation analysis. Food security continues to pose an economic and political challenge for many member countries and the regional food import bill remains close to 5 per cent of national income. In 2010, ESCWA conducted an extensive study on the link between food security and conflict in the region, which concluded that greater regional cooperation would lead to new economic opportunities, which would in turn contribute to breaking the apparently intractable link between food security and conflict.

In the field of gender and the advancement of women, ESCWA continued to work to

build the capacity of member countries to fully implement international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and, to this end, held a workshop in cooperation with other regional organizations on implementing CEDAW and ending violence against women. As a result of the continuing efforts of the Commission and other United Nations entities, thirteen ESCWA member countries have now ratified CEDAW. In 2010, the ESCWA Centre for Women also conducted a capacity-building workshop for members of national machineries for women to improve their technical skills in drafting national CEDAW reports. In order to assess regional progress in achieving the MDGs from a gender perspective, the Centre produced a study entitled *Progress in Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the ESCWA Region: A Gender Lens* and held a workshop to increase the awareness of member countries of the importance of gender mainstreaming as a tool for good governance and for the achievement of greater equality and social justice.



Overview of ESCWA

Inside ESCWA

Mission

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) provides a framework for the formulation and harmonization of sectoral policies for member countries, a platform for congress and coordination, a hub for expertise and knowledge, and an information observatory.

ESCWA activities are coordinated with the divisions and main offices of the Headquarters of the United Nations, specialized agencies, and regional and international organizations, including the League of Arab States, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Objectives

- To support economic and social development in the countries of the region;
- To promote cooperation between the countries of the region;
- To encourage interaction between member countries and promote the exchange of experience, best practice and lessons learned;
- To achieve regional integration between member countries, and to ensure interaction between Western Asia and other regions of the world;
- To familiarize the outside world with the circumstances and needs of the countries in the region.

The Commission and other intergovernmental bodies

Headquartered in Beirut, Lebanon, ESCWA

is one of the five regional commissions under the administrative direction of the United Nations Economic and Social Council. ESCWA was first established in 1973 by the Economic and Social Council as the United Nations Economic Commission for Western Asia, a successor to the United Nations Economic and Social Office in Beirut. The changing face of challenges in the region prompted the Commission to broaden its activities, leading in 1985 not only to a change of name (from the Economic Commission for Western Asia to the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia), but also to a new mandate reflecting the need to address development in a more comprehensive manner.

ESCWA promotes economic and social development in Western Asia through regional and subregional cooperation and integration. It formulates, promotes and implements development assistance programmes and projects in response to the needs and priorities of its member countries in particular and the region in general.

With a view to ensuring complementarity and exchange of knowledge, as well as avoiding duplication of effort, ESCWA coordinates its activities with other major departments and offices of the United Nations, with specialized United Nations agencies and with other intergovernmental organizations in the region.

The governing body of ESCWA, which defines mandates and policy, is its ministerial session (the Commission Session), held once every two years. In addition, ESCWA has seven

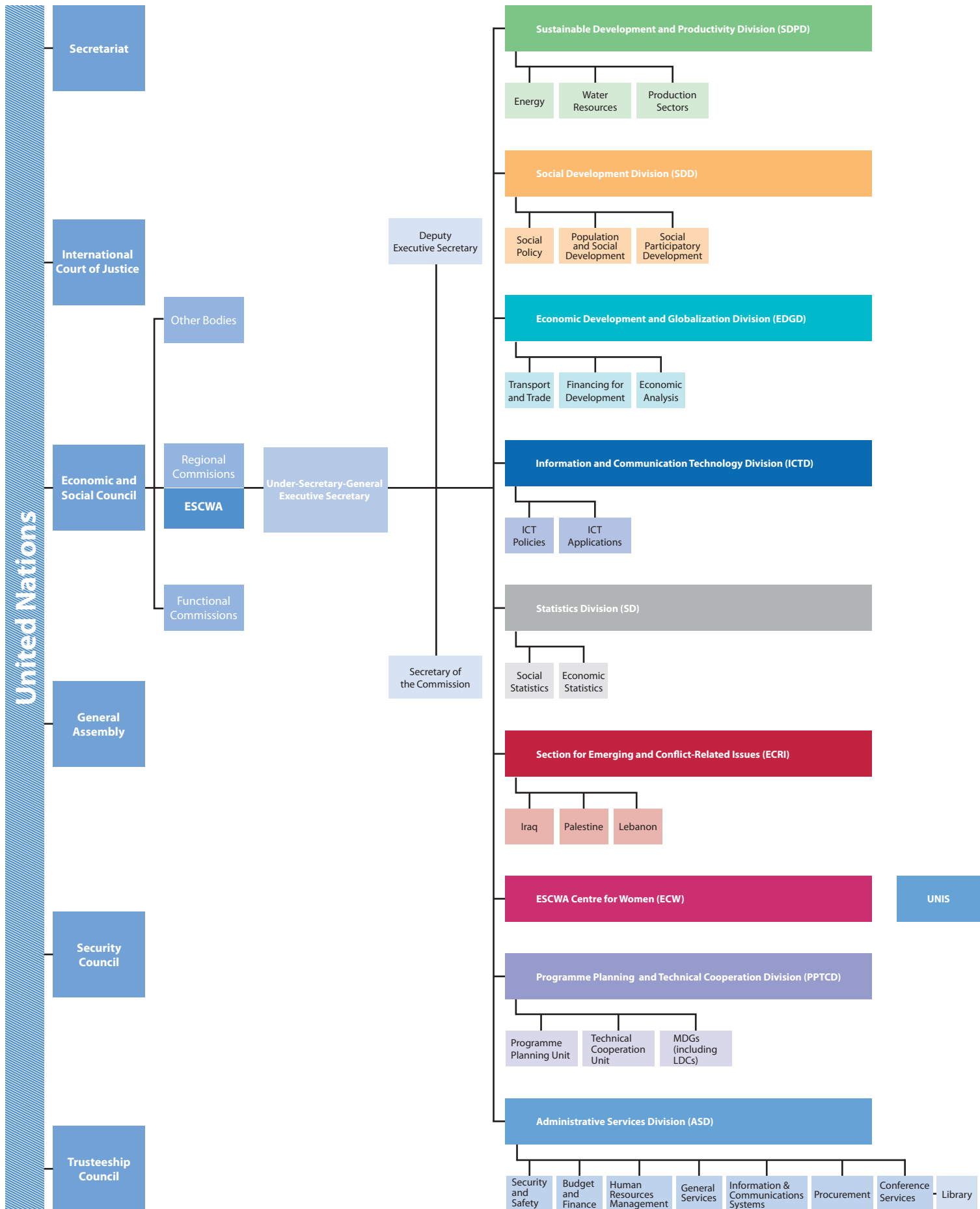
ESCWA fast facts

- Established: 1973
- Location: Beirut, Lebanon
- Member countries: 14 (Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates and Yemen)
- Budget for 2010: US\$55.7 million
- Executive Secretary: Dr. Rima Khalaf
- Staff posts: 361
- Official languages: Arabic, English and French

specialized subsidiary intergovernmental committees that meet biennially (with the exception of the Committee on Transport, which meets annually). These are as follows:

- The Statistical Committee
- The Committee on Social Development
- The Committee on Energy
- The Committee on Water Resources
- The Committee on Transport
- The Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development in the Countries of the ESCWA Region
- The Committee on Women.





ESCWA financial resources in 2010

ESCWA administers financial resources approved by the General Assembly under the United Nations regular budget for its regular programme of work, safety and security, Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation and Development Account projects. It also receives voluntary contributions from a variety of donors to support the implementation of a number of technical cooperation and capacity-building activities.

In 2010, funds available to ESCWA from various sources totalled US\$55.7 million. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the available resources.

Under the budget for its regular programme of work, almost half the appropriated resources are devoted to the substantive work programme of the Commission. The balance is shared between executive direction and management, information services, policymaking organs, programme management and administrative services. The following charts provide the distribution of those resources.

Resources have also been appropriated by the General Assembly under the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation and the Development Account. For 2010, total available resources under the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation were US\$2.4 million. As at 31 December 2010, US\$1.9 million had been spent on technical cooperation activities and support to member countries, accounting for some 80 per cent of the budget. The Development Account funding supports multi-year projects to enhance the capacity of

TABLE 1. Budget for 2010 (thousands of US\$)

Regular budget	47 704.9
Regular programme of work	31 896.5
Safety and security*	10 409.6
Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation	2 423.6
Development Account	2 975.2
Budget covered from voluntary contributions	7 694.2
Budget covered from programme support account	343.8
Total budget 2010 (thousands of US\$)	55 742.8

* Includes funds for the project to enhance security at United Nations House in Beirut for the biennium 2010-2011 only.

CHART 1. DISTRIBUTION OF ESCWA 2010 REGULAR BUDGET RESOURCES BY FUNCTIONAL AREA (TOTAL: US\$31.90 MILLION)

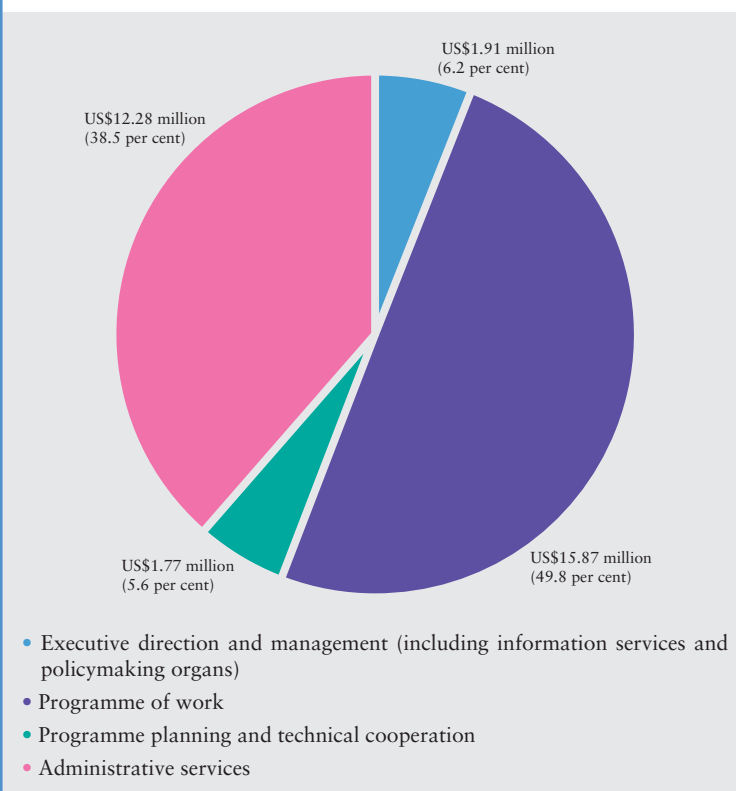


CHART 2. DISTRIBUTION OF ESCWA 2010 REGULAR BUDGET RESOURCES BY SUBSTANTIVE AREA OF WORK (TOTAL: US\$15.87 MILLION)

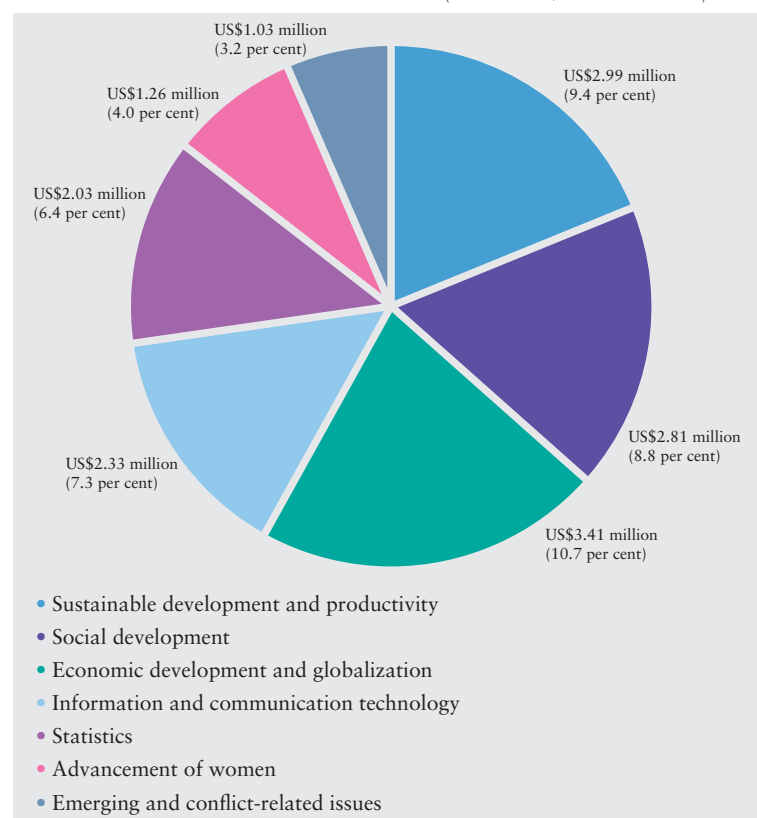
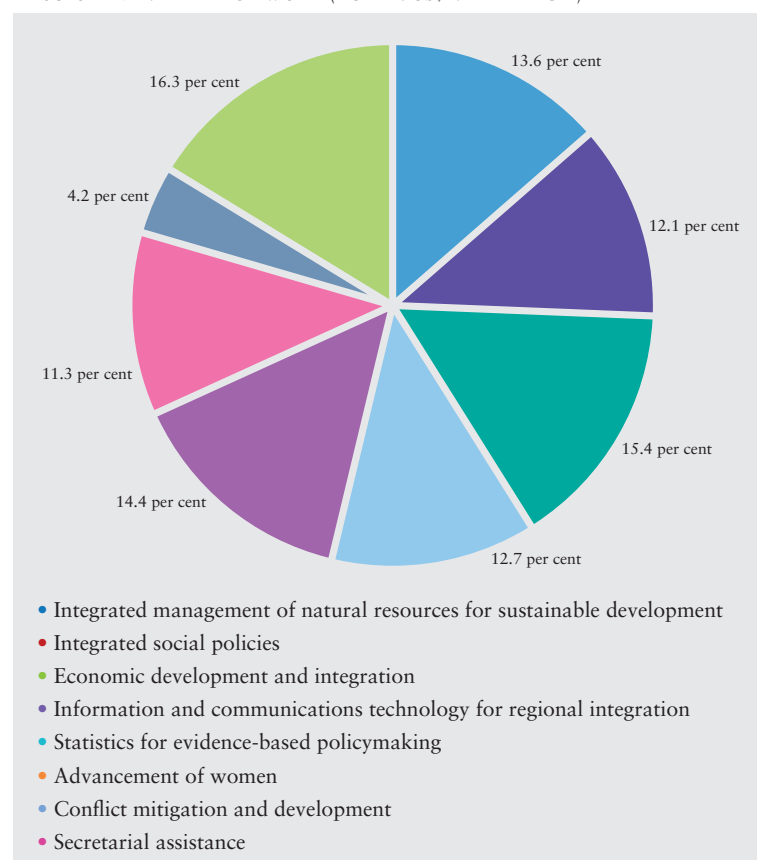


CHART 3. DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES UNDER THE REGULAR PROGRAMME OF TECHNICAL COOPERATION BY SUBSTANTIVE AREA OF WORK (TOTAL: US\$2.42 MILLION)



member countries in the priority areas of the United Nations Development Agenda.

There are currently five projects being implemented under the Development Account, as detailed in table 2.

In addition, six ESCWA-led regional and global projects were endorsed in 2010 under the seventh and eighth tranches of the Development Account, totalling US\$2.9 million. These projects will commence in 2011 when funds are received from United Nations Headquarters.

In 2010, the ESCWA Project Committee reviewed 34 projects for extrabudgetary and Development Account funding. The year was particularly successful in terms of attracting voluntary contributions, and ESCWA more than tripled the extrabudgetary resources received in comparison with each of the previous two years. Major donors included the United Nations Development Group Iraqi Trust Fund, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, United Nations Development Programme Iraq Office, World Bank, Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development and UN Women.

ESCWA will continue to expand its technical cooperation activities in 2011 by supporting innovative projects and promoting interdisciplinary activities.



TABLE 2. Current Development Account projects with budget and expenditure to 2010 (in US dollars)

Name of project	Start year	End year	Budget	Expenditure to 2010
Knowledge networks through ICT access points for disadvantaged communities	2006	2011	970 000	936 659
Strengthening national capacities in environment statistics, indicators and accounts (ESIA) in the ESCWA and ECLAC regions	2007	2011	602 000	583 604
Participatory human development in post-conflict countries	2009	2011	500 000	233 370
Regional harmonization of cyberlegislation to promote the knowledge society in the Arab world	2009	2011	401 000	107 944
Strengthening capacities in the ESCWA region to negotiate bilateral investment treaties	2010	2014	502 200	53 562
Total			2 975 200	1 915 138

TABLE 3. Voluntary contributions received 2008-2010 (in US dollars)

Donor	Amount
2008	
United Nations Development Programme	747 478
United Nations Office for Project Services	131 586
King Khalid Foundation	116 613
Salahaddin University – Hawler	53 084
Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations	35 000
Others	53 127
Total 2008	1 136 888
2009	
United Nations Development Programme	827 144
Awqaf and Minors Affairs Foundation	125 000
United Nations Fund for Women	35 000
Ministry of Transport, Yemen	19 983
Community Development Authority, Dubai	19 210
Others	51 667
Total 2009	1 078 004
2010	
United Nations Development Group Iraq Trust Fund	1 448 695
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency	1 225 955
United Nations Development Programme	844 068
World Bank	200 000
Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations	120 000
UN Women (formerly United Nations Development Fund for Women)	7 000
Total 2010	3 845 718

ESCWA *in Action*



ESCWA Substantive Work

Subprogramme 1 *Integrated management of natural resources for sustainable development*

Subprogramme 2 *Integrated social policies*

Subprogramme 3 *Economic development and integration*

Subprogramme 4 *Information and communications technology for regional integration*

Subprogramme 5 *Statistics for evidence-based policymaking*

Subprogramme 6 *Advancement of women*

Subprogramme 7 *Conflict mitigation and development*

Programme Support

Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation

Administration

Media and Communications

Subprogramme 1

Integrated management of natural resources for sustainable development

Western Asia is an arid and semi-arid region characterized by too little water and enormous oil reserves. The management of these natural resources has direct implications for water, energy and food security in ESCWA member countries. The situation is complicated by the dependency of many member countries on freshwater resources originating outside the Arab region, the dominance of energy-intensive desalination to meet basic water needs in a number of member countries and the importance of the agricultural sector for generating income and reducing migration from rural to urban centres, while other parts of the region lack basic access to clean drinking water and reliable sources of electricity. An oil-rich endowment has also encouraged unsustainable consumption and production patterns that have skewed development towards energy-dependent growth and squandered resources that could otherwise have been used to meet the needs of current and future generations.



Climate change is further hampering efforts to ensure security and sustainable development in the region by increasing freshwater scarcity and the frequency of extreme weather events, such as droughts, floods and cyclones. Member countries may also experience accelerated desertification, soil aridity and erosion, as well as rising sea levels and marine pollution, which will affect coastal cities, tourism facilities and energy installations throughout the region. Even greater pressure will be placed on already scarce water resources as rising temperatures and growing populations demand ever more freshwater for drinking and irrigation. Rising sea levels may also affect desalination plants, the source of two thirds of the water used to fulfil the water needs of the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which are already among the world's highest emitters of greenhouse gases per capita. The inability to adapt to and mitigate such events will increase economic and social instability, threaten rural livelihoods, damage urban infrastructure and impede progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally-agreed development objectives.

The use of renewable energy is one of the most effective methods of mitigating climate change. The Arab region enjoys large untapped potential in terms of both wind and solar energy, the deployment of which could help to reduce the adverse environmental impact of fossil fuels, as well as satisfy increasing energy demand. Rural electrification is an important priority, bringing

power to remote villages. This is a field in which technology transfer is of primary importance in identifying and implementing alternative and sustainable sources. Of increasing significance is the nexus between water and energy, as how much water is used in the production of energy and how much energy is used in the treatment and transportation of water to the consumer becomes of critical importance for policy planning.

Against this backdrop, the Sustainable Development and Productivity Division (SDPD) carries out activities that support the integrated sustainable management of natural resources in the region by fostering regional frameworks for cooperation on shared water resources, access to electricity, the monitoring of water supply and sanitation services, and ways of promoting sustainable development through a greener and more efficient way of doing business. It does so by promoting sustainable production and consumption patterns in the water, energy and production sectors, in particular with respect to the use of fossil fuels, with a view to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It assists countries in identifying, examining and addressing threats to their water security by building legal and technical instruments for the management of shared water resources, the delivery of water-related services and the assessment of the impact of climate change on scarce water resources, agriculture, energy and employment. In doing so, the Division enhances the capacity of member countries to formulate, adopt and implement policies and measures to improve the sustainable management of natural resources by incorporating climate change responses into sectoral strategies and plans, with particular emphasis on progressing towards full achievement of the MDGs. To this end, SDPD promotes best practice and methods for improving sustainable agriculture and rural development, and increasing the productivity and competitiveness of small and medium-scale enterprises through the use of appropriate and affordable environmentally-sound technology, while continuing to strengthen South-South cooperation in the integrated management of natural resources.

Roula Majdalani

Director, Sustainable Development and Productivity Division

Overview

In 2010, SDPD concentrated on facilitating the formulation, adoption and implementation of integrated sustainable development strategies and policies within the framework of global mandates arising from the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the Millennium Declaration, in particular Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1 (eradicate extreme poverty and hunger) and Goal 7 (ensure environmental sustainability), and the outcomes of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at its thirteenth session (Bali, 3-15 December 2007) and at its fifteenth session (Copenhagen, 7-18 December 2009). The main activities of the Division in 2010

were thus formulated within the context of a long-term regional outlook and the priorities of the United Nations in these fields.

The Sections of SDPD undertook quality research and analytical work; disseminated best practice; built capacity on the national and regional level; and provided advisory services on priority sustainable development issues, especially in the fields of integrated water resources management, energy efficiency, renewable energy applications and cleaner fossil fuels, while continuing to promote South-South cooperation through partnerships with other regional commissions, and regional and international organizations,

facilitating coordination and preparation for the implementation of regional and global commitments on sustainable development.

The Division advocates for improved access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation for all people in the region. It serves as a forum for promoting policy dialogue as a means to enhance synergy between countries on priority issues in sustainable development, facilitating cooperation between member countries on the management of shared water resources and the development of energy networks, and contributing to an increased awareness on the part of member countries of the potential impact of climate change on water resources.

Achievements in 2010

Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region

In a pioneering step, the Division collaborated with regional and international partners to conduct the first ever assessment of the impact of climate change on water resources across the full Arab region to be based on global and regional climate models and hydrological modelling tools. The assessment is being conducted as part of the Regional Initiative on the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region, which was adopted as an inter-agency initiative within the framework of the Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Climate Change (RCM TWG-CC) in November 2010 and subsequently endorsed by the Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC). Following a series of expert group meetings involving regional and specialized organizations of the United Nations and of the League of Arab States, the regional initiative was formalized in May 2010 and adopted as an interagency project led by ESCWA under

the RCM TWG-CC. The initiative is based on four pillars: knowledge management, climate change impact and vulnerability assessment, capacity-building and institutional strengthening. The outcome will identify and quantify the expected impact of climate change on member countries in terms of freshwater resources, population centres and such key economic sectors as agriculture and tourism. The Regional Initiative is supported by a generous grant provided by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency in December 2010, which supports an ESCWA-led project to be implemented in cooperation with the League of Arab States, Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD), Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute, and World Meteorological Organization.

MDG+ Initiative

According to ESCWA staff calculations from figures released under the World Health Organization (WHO)/United Nations Children's Fund Joint Monitoring Programme *Progress on Sanitation and Drinking-water: 2010 Update*, of an Arab population estimated at 345 million people, some 57 million (17 per cent) do not have access to improved drinking water sources and 76 million (22 per cent) do not have access to improved sanitation facilities. Target 7c of MDG 7 seeks "to halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation". However, since many people in both urban and rural areas of the Arab region may have access to the water infrastructure, yet do not receive clean water through it, the indicators that currently monitor access to the water delivery infrastructure and sanitation services clearly do not present the full story. With a view to tackling this problem, the AMWC, at its first and second sessions in June 2009 and July 2010 respectively, mandated ESCWA to lead a regional mechanism for improved monitoring on water supply and sanitation.

Efforts in 2010 included the preparation of a harmonized set of region-specific indicators which reflect the quality and reliability of the water supply and sanitation services more accurately, and the preparation of a questionnaire template for collecting information on those indicators. The Commission is collaborating with the Arab Countries Water Utilities Association, the Center for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe, the Arab Water Council, the Arab Network for Environment and Development and the WHO to establish a regional mechanism to follow up on the AMWC resolutions and prepare the biannual reports requested therein.

Increasing the competitiveness and profitability of rural microenterprises

In 2010, ESCWA implemented a pilot project which sought to increase the competitiveness and profitability of a cluster of female-led microenterprises producing handicrafts in the rural area of Baalbek, Lebanon. In cooperation with al-Anamel Azahabiah, a women's support group active in the area, three training workshops were conducted, covering the production of four types of traditional needlework; the preparation of a variety of traditional foods; and techniques for developing marketing strategies, maximizing fundraising opportunities, and developing and growing a business. The training workshops benefited more than thirty local women, providing them with the skills needed to initiate income-generating activities.

Given the high poverty and illiteracy rates in the region, particularly among women, this type of training has been found to have significant impact in terms of providing women with skills which will enable them to perform revenue-making activities from their homes. A secondary benefit from such training is the conservation of traditional techniques, which are rapidly disappearing as a result

of a variety of factors, including poverty and emigration. The project highlighted the importance of building on local knowledge and agricultural resources, a dominant sector in that area, while attempting to develop a marketable product, attractive to locals and tourists alike.

Energy projects for small and medium-sized enterprises

Ensuring sustainability of the regional energy sector and dealing with the requirements of effective climate change management requires the adoption of policies to improve energy efficiency and develop the use of renewable energy sources. In cooperation with the League of Arab States Arab Union for Youth and Environment and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, ESCWA organized an expert group meeting (EGM) on Promoting the Participation of the Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Sector in Implementing Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Projects (Beirut, 28-29 April 2010). The meeting highlighted the potential of projects with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) working in the field of energy services to provide job opportunities for young people. Significant business opportunities exist for SMEs, particularly in the fields of energy efficiency and renewable energy. These include the conducting of studies, surveys and consultancies, and the design, manufacture, sales, marketing, installation and operation of related projects. The breadth and depth of such potential business and employment opportunities means that it is vital that national economic plans incorporate the development of opportunities for SMEs working in these fields.

Sustainable livelihood approach

Inadequate energy and water supplies and sanitation services in rural, remote and poor urban areas, coupled with limited use

of sustainable environmental technologies, combine to adversely affect opportunities for employment creation and income generation. The limited availability of water resources and other threats to the natural resource base need to be addressed in a holistic manner by focusing firmly on the well-being of the population and the natural resources to which they have access. Facilitating a sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA) in this way would enhance the management of the rapidly-depleting and degrading natural resources of the region across a broad spectrum, from promoting beekeeping technology to developing roof-top gardens to mitigate concerns regarding food security in conditions of political instability, high population density and limited access to natural resources. Such an approach would also have the potential to reverse rural-urban migration by enhancing conditions in rural areas. Furthermore, as has been seen within the framework of the green economy, by providing additional sources of revenue, such endeavours can become a



driving force for improving livelihoods and ensuring sustainable development.

In 2010, substantial resources were devoted to clarifying the concept of SLA and promoting it within the region, culminating in the organization of an EGM on Promoting Best Practice for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods in the ESCWA Region, (Beirut, 24-25 November 2010). Participants reviewed and discussed a forthcoming technical guide on the ways in which countries could integrate the SLA

concept into development planning and implementation. Experts were provided with a forum in which to discuss such matters as natural resource management and the management of emerging issues, including climate change and the green economy, and benefited from the opportunity to exchange views and experiences on the impact of SLA on sustainable agriculture, food security and rural development.

Outlook

Climate change mitigation for poverty alleviation

In 2010, ESCWA finalized a Development Account project document on capacity-building on climate change mitigation for poverty alleviation in Western Asia, a delivery-oriented programme for the promotion of renewable energy technology applications. The project has been developed to address the fact that in certain ESCWA member countries, a large percentage of the population lives in isolated rural communities, where they depend primarily on biomass in the form of firewood and charcoal to meet their energy needs. The goal of the project is to improve access to energy services in such areas, and to build the awareness and capacity of policymakers and civil society on the ways in which renewable energy technologies can be harnessed to enhance energy security. Collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and the regional office of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Cairo will be sought in the implementation of project activities and the development of guidelines and training modules. The project will also benefit from the establishment of a Clean Technologies Innovation Centre at which ESCWA, in collaboration with UNESCO, intends to organize a series of technology-transfer and research and development activities.

Sustainable transport

In recognition of the energy intensity of the transport sector, the issue of sustainable transport is gaining increased impetus, both within the ESCWA region and globally. In cooperation with the United Nations University, in 2011 the Division will organize a panel on sustainable transport in the Arab region, which will focus on energy efficiency and cleaner fuels, integrated management of the transport sector and the financing of sustainable transport projects. An EGM on Promoting Emissions Reductions in the Transport Sector will also be organized (Beirut, 5-6 July 2011) in cooperation with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Gas Centre, and will highlight successful emissions-reduction and mitigation efforts, with a particular focus on the European experience. These events will be complemented by the preparation of a specialist publication on policies and measures promoting sustainable energy use in the transport sector in the ESCWA region.

Inventory of shared waters in Western Asia

The joint water project between ESCWA and the German Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR), which is implemented within the framework of cooperation between ESCWA and the

Government of Germany, is preparing an inventory of shared waters in Western Asia, which will be issued in December 2011. The inventory will be the first publication of its kind to analyse and map both surface and groundwater resources shared between Arab countries. Formulated with a view to informing regional dialogue and cooperation on the management of shared water resources in the ESCWA region, it will include thematic chapters, chapters on shared water basins and maps.

Preparation of a draft legal framework for shared waters in the Arab region

At its second session in July 2010, AMWC mandated ESCWA to prepare a draft legal framework for shared waters in the Arab Region in partnership with the Center of Water and Arab Water Security Studies of the League of Arab States and in coordination with ACSAD and the Stockholm International Water Institute. In December 2010, an expert consultation involving all partners was convened, organized with support provided by BGR. This led to the preparation of a background paper which will serve as the basis of a high-level intergovernmental consultation on the draft legal framework with delegates from Arab member countries, to be held in Beirut from 24 to 26 May 2011.

Green economy and preparations for Rio+20

In response to the financial, food and climate crises which have affected the global economy in recent years, the concept of the green economy is migrating to the heart of the international agenda, reinforcing the economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development through increased integration. In recognition of this developing role, the green economy within the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication will be one of the primary focuses of Rio+20, the United Nations Conference



on Sustainable Development (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 4-6 June 2012). The Conference will also focus on the institutional framework required for sustainable development and the Division will prepare reports addressing both topics in preparation for the Conference.

The Commission will organize a regional workshop on economic policies supporting the transition to a green economy in the Arab region (Beirut, 20-21 July 2011) with the aim of building the capacity of technical staff of ministries of economy, planning and finance in the region. In collaboration with the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization, ESCWA will hold a conference on the role of green industries in promoting

socio-economic development in the Arab region (Beirut, 28-30 September 2011), which will feature a series of presentations and a round table to review the draft Arab action plan on green industries. This plan of action and both the above-mentioned reports will be discussed at the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting, which will be convened by ESCWA (Cairo, 16-17 October 2011) to formulate an Arab ministerial green economy initiative for consideration and adoption at the twenty-third session of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (Cairo, 21-22 December 2011). The Initiative will provide a unified framework for action and support the position of the Arab countries at the Rio+20 Conference in 2012.



Subprogramme 2

Integrated social policies

The Social Development Division (SDD) of ESCWA supports ESCWA member countries in formulating, implementing and monitoring social policies and strategies designed to ensure a more inclusive and equitable process of social development. The main objectives of SDD are to support social development in member countries; act as a regional platform for the exchange of experience and good practice; provide technical assistance at the request of member countries; and increase interaction in the area of social development between Western Asia and other world regions.



In 2010, the normative and technical cooperation activities of SDD focused on a broad range of social policies targeting such vulnerable social groups as the poor, the unemployed, youth, the elderly, people living with disabilities, urban low-income groups and international migrants. The Division also focused on the promotion of civil society participation and social dialogue, and this work has assumed an added sense of urgency in view of the ongoing socio-political developments in the region.

The Division made key contributions to the broad goals and activities of ESCWA in the areas of integrated social policy, population and development, participatory development and urban social development. A particular highlight was the substantive contribution made by the Division to the main theme of the twenty-sixth ESCWA session, which addressed key youth challenges in the region. This contribution included a major paper on national youth policies, a booklet on youth development in the ESCWA region and preparations for the ministerial round table held during the session.

On the global front, the Millennium Development Goals have remained high on the international development agenda and will become an even greater priority in the run-up to the 2015 review. As a contribution to the forthcoming debate on the future of the development agenda of the United Nations, the Division will take the lead by producing a joint regional commission publication – tentatively entitled *Beyond 2015: The Future United Nations Development Agenda* – during the next biennium.

Looking ahead, the eighth session of the ESCWA Committee on Social Development, to be held in Beirut on 24-25 March 2011, will address a number of key issues from the perspective

of Governments of ESCWA member countries, and the Division will continue to respond to current socio-political developments in the region by focusing on key social development areas, including civil society participation, youth development, social security provision, socially-oriented labour market policies, poverty reduction and international migration.

Frederico Neto

Director, Social Development Division

Overview

At the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995), Member State Governments made a commitment to foster social integration through the promotion of human rights, equality of opportunity and participation of all people, including vulnerable groups. This commitment was reinforced in the Millennium Declaration, adopted in 2000, which called on all stakeholders to take concrete action towards strengthening inclusive development by 2015. Yet fifteen years after the adoption of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and with only five years left before the target date for attaining the MDGs, the goal of a fully-inclusive society remains elusive in Western Asia and other regions of the world. Recent regional and global assessments of development indicators have yielded a mixed picture: while considerable progress has been achieved in such areas as education and health, significant socio-economic disparities persist at the regional and national level. In addition, recent socio-political developments in the region have thrown a new light on long-standing challenges in the areas of social integration, human rights, democracy and participatory development.

The Division has responded to those emerging challenges by strengthening its normative and technical cooperation activities to promote an inclusive and equitable process of social development in the region, concentrating on measures to bridge the urban social divide. Particular attention is being paid to vulnerable groups, including the poor and unemployed, youth and the elderly, people living with disabilities, and migrants.

Achievements in 2010

Mainstreaming youth issues

Empowering young people and strengthening their capacity to participate as active agents in the development process has been recognized by the international community since the United Nations adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (WPAY) in 1995. The Programme has paved the way for effective national and international action by providing a comprehensive framework within which critical youth issues can be addressed with a view to empowering young people as key agents of socio-economic development. The Division plays a pivotal regional role in assisting member countries in formulating national youth policies that contribute to WPAY implementation, through a series of normative and technical cooperation activities, including training workshops and meetings.

In this context, ESCWA focused on national youth policies as the main theme of the twenty-sixth session of the Commission (Beirut, 17-20 May 2010). The session tackled salient youth issues in a ministerial round table, which concluded with the adoption of a declaration entitled *Giving Greater Attention to Youth Policies: An Opportunity for Development*, with the aim of moving forward the youth development agenda in the region. The Division provided critical substantive support to the ministerial session and has continued to offer ongoing assistance to member countries in the development of youth policies.

Participatory development

In 2010, ESCWA continued to work towards enhancing partnerships between Government

institutions and civil society organizations (CSOs) in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring, particularly in countries emerging from war and armed conflict. Initiated in 2009, a major project on participatory human development has been implemented by the Division in Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and Yemen. Two sets of back-to-back workshops (Beirut, 15-20 February 2010 and 27 September-1 October 2010) on building national capacity in social participatory development and training of trainers in that field brought together Government officials, CSOs, and other national and regional stakeholders. The workshops provided a platform for the sharing of knowledge and the exchange of experience in participatory development. A number of participants have already had the opportunity to use the knowledge and experience acquired during the workshops to conduct training programmes in their respective countries, along the lines of a “training-the-trainers” approach.

Between July and October 2010, ESCWA convened three major regional electronic forums on different dimensions of participatory development, which provided an opportunity for productive dialogue between Government institutions, CSOs, the media, academia, and regional and international organizations. The forums addressed key issues related to participation in public policies and the role of the media in development and social integration. Responding to the feedback received from participants, SDD produced a report consolidating the principal issues raised and addressed in the three forums, together with a set of recommendations.

Labour market policies

For most people, employment is their main source of income. This makes labour market policies inherently central to social development policies. Labour market policies are also intertwined with other sectoral policies, such as education, poverty reduction and macroeconomic policies, and thus require

both flexibility and integration. Recognizing this interlinkage, ESCWA has embarked on a regional initiative to address labour-related challenges facing Governments in the region. One of these challenges is the provision of accurate, timely and substantial data to inform policymakers, researchers and other stakeholders on key labour-market issues and guide their policy response.

To that end, SDD has adopted an interactive and participatory approach to information gathering, under which all member countries were requested to nominate a focal point to assist in coordinating data collection from different ministries and institutions. On the basis of the information received and further research, the Division prepared a study on labour statistics, structures and challenges in the ESCWA region. Eight member countries, namely Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen, acknowledged the importance of this work by actively participating in the process. The broad-based participation of different Government sectors in those member countries enabled the collection of a wide array of data, facilitated subsequent analysis, and developed a sense of ownership among the officials participating in the initiative.

Persons with disabilities

Communicable diseases, malnutrition, chronic illnesses and congenital defects, despite in many cases being preventable, are the most frequently reported causes of disability in the region. However, recent evidence suggests that disabilities due to road accidents, work-related injuries and civil conflict are on the rise. The high number of disabilities resulting from conflict and war in Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and the Sudan is of particular concern. With the increasing number of conflicts in the region, the mapping of disability becomes more challenging, since conflict causes not only physical disabilities, but also mental and psychological disorders, which are often overlooked in censuses or

surveys and therefore frequently under-reported. Against this backdrop and as part of the ongoing contribution made by ESCWA to the implementation of the Arab Decade for Persons with Disabilities (2004-2013), SDD has continued to work on advocating a rights-based approach to disability, and in 2010 published a report on disability and poverty, and a working paper on the regional and international practices that foster the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market.

Bridging the urban divide

The countries of the ESCWA region are confronted with a variety of challenges associated with rapid urbanization. With a view to addressing the social divisions created by such changes, SDD held an expert group meeting entitled Bridging the Urban Divide in the ESCWA Region: Towards Inclusive Cities (Beirut, 25-26 November 2010). The meeting focused on the spatial dimension of the urban divide and the challenges faced by member countries in promoting more inclusive cities. A special session was dedicated to discussing the outline of the forthcoming UN-HABITAT report, *State of Arab Cities*, which will include contributions from ESCWA and other regional organizations. By way of follow-up to the meeting, SDD is preparing a major report focusing on the spatial dimension of the urban divide, including strategies aimed at inclusive urbanization, social equity and economic balance.

Outlook

Looking forward, the Division will continue to work towards enhancing the capacity of member countries to adopt social policies and institutional mechanisms that promote an equitable and inclusive process of social development in five key areas: civil society participation, youth development, social security, labour market policies and international migration.

Civil society participation

In an attempt to respond to the contribution of civil society to recent socio-political changes in a number of member countries, SDD will implement a selection of activities aimed at strengthening national capacity in participatory development. This will be achieved through the exploration of civil society needs and aspirations, while acknowledging social development priorities, challenges and opportunities. Two major capacity-building workshops will be held in Jordan in April 2011 to train Government officials and civil society representatives from several ESCWA member countries on participatory development research.

Labour market policies

A comprehensive social development strategy must include measures to create jobs and enhance job quality, especially for vulnerable groups. Recent socio-economic crises have exacerbated poverty, unemployment and vulnerability, creating an even greater need for effective social policies. In order to respond to the needs of its member countries in this area, in 2011 SDD will focus on the formulation of employment policy options by organizing an expert group meeting and a regional workshop on labour market policy in March, and by publishing a major report on labour market policies.

Social security

In view of the urgent need to improve social security provision to achieve socially-inclusive development, in September 2011 SDD will organize an expert group meeting on social assistance and social security in the ESCWA region. Participants will attempt to identify policy options for promoting accessible and financially-sustainable social security systems and explore the possibility of building a regional approach to social security that could be presented to the third World Social Security Forum, to be held in Qatar in 2013.

Youth development

In 2011, SDD will continue to prioritize youth issues through a variety of activities, including an expert group meeting in March on the development of national youth policies, the publication of a major report on youth exclusion in the region and the implementation of a large project, funded from the United Nations Development Account, on strengthening national capacity in formulating youth policies, as a response to the implementation of WPAY. A project to develop a regional initiative for youth employment will also be implemented in collaboration with the Arab Labour Organization.

International migration

Preparations are underway for an interregional workshop entitled Strengthening Dialogue to Make Migration Work for Development in Asia and Western Asia, to be held in Beirut in June 2011 in collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. The workshop will promote an increased understanding of the issues related to managing labour migration from the perspective of countries of origin and destination, and will explore policy options to maximize both the positive development impact of international migration and the benefits enjoyed by migrant workers, their families and their countries of origin.



Subprogramme 3

Economic development and integration

The episodes of high growth observed in the ESCWA region in the recent past were dependent on one unsustainable trend: the huge surge in the price of oil. In addition to the weak link between growth and employment, growth did not automatically translate into development, nor into a decline in poverty levels. The new vision of the Economic Development and Globalization Division (EDGD) revolves around the fact that adherence to traditional macroeconomic policies will consign the current episode of growth to a time-bound gain, similar to that seen during the oil boom of the 1970s. The region needs a shift in its development paradigm in order to create jobs and eradicate poverty. The new path involves the development of productive capacities in such a way as to expand productive employment. In this regard, the issues that will be addressed by the Division include the essential role of domestic demand (with less reliance on volatile exports, focusing on the utilization of existing capacity); the role of competition policy in diversification and development; export diversification into higher-end products; restructuring the economy and production; regional integration; the coordination of monetary policy with financial sector and industrial policies for the promotion of investment; the investigation and promotion of development-led exports, rather than export-led development; and the effects of democracy, knowledge and gender inequality on development.

To this end, EDGD will adopt a three-track strategy, combining knowledge management with research, policy analysis and empirical analysis, in support of which it will also conduct national, regional and global economic monitoring and assessment. Effective knowledge management will ensure the development of top-quality policy options, best practice and facilitation of capacity development and knowledge-building through meetings, technical advice and staff missions. Research, policy analysis and empirical analysis will focus on long-



term structural and development issues with a view to enhancing the analytical work that is the core of ESCWA's flagship publications. These efforts include undertaking "ahead of the curve" research, using modelling and forecasting techniques to provide the region with regular updates on the national and regional outlook; developing economic and statistical methodologies to estimate the impact of trade facilitation and trade policy on the countries of the region; and developing MDG-based macromodelling initiatives. Moreover, continuous national, regional and global economic monitoring and assessment will be conducted for the timely identification and analysis of policy issues.

The ESCWA region has reached a turning-point, with social movements sweeping several member countries, indicating that the time for change has come. Having failed to capitalize on previous opportunities to enact the extensive reforms which could have led to substantial leaps in development, the current situation offers another opportunity for the Governments and peoples of the region. The uprisings and the recent series of economic crises have combined to expose the weaknesses of the development models adopted in the past and have raised questions on the most effective ways in which to reshape policies and create the space needed to fully address the needs of all members of society, reaching even the most deprived. This is the time to put in place a new approach to development: an approach that is holistic, integrating the economic and social spheres, in which strong institutions and full democratization come together to ensure the widest possible participation in the decision-making process; an approach that plans outcomes from a multidisciplinary perspective, synchronizing economic and social policies, while enforcing new political dynamics and institutional frameworks that are not anti-developmental, as has too often been the case in the past, but fully, resolutely developmental.

Tarik Alami

Director, Economic Development and Globalization Division

Overview

The Economic Development and Globalization Division (EDGD) comprises the Transport and Trade, Financing for Development and Economic Analysis Sections and the Millennium Development Goals Unit. The Division aims to enhance the capacity of ESCWA member countries to design and implement sound economic policies and strategies for sustainable economic growth, employment creation and poverty alleviation. It seeks to strengthen regional cooperation and integration across the ESCWA region, thereby facilitating the transboundary flow of goods, services and capital necessary to meet the economic and social challenges posed by globalization. Realizing this objective requires increasing the knowledge of stakeholders in the region of the issues which need to be taken into account in designing and implementing appropriate

macroeconomic policies and strategies to achieve the sustainable economic growth, employment creation and poverty alleviation enshrined in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Division therefore provides in-depth analyses of macroeconomic trends and associated policy issues for end-users in the region by conducting studies, supported by expert groups; disseminating the results regarding macroeconomic issues and forecasting; and engaging in dialogue with regional and national stakeholders with the intention of increasing their influence on policymakers in member countries. More specifically, the role of the Division is to lead the agenda on economic development and regional integration; to foster collaborative economic research with regional and global institutions; to develop "ahead of the curve"

research to enhance the reputation of ESCWA as a think-tank; to provide policy advice based on original research; to translate policy recommendations arising from the normative analysis carried out by the Division into capacity development and work programmes; and to identify major developmental challenges and emerging issues which could have the potential to become major challenges to development in the region.

Achievements in 2010

Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region 2009-2010

The magnitude of the global financial crisis and its impact on the world economy in general and the ESCWA region in particular was the theme of the *Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region 2009-2010*, the flagship publication of the Commission. The Survey argued that the crisis has directly affected the region through trade and capital flows. Weaknesses in the macroeconomic policies pursued in the region, the weak linkage between regional trade and financial integration, and heavy dependence on external resources to finance development in ESCWA member countries all constitute important channels through which the global financial crisis has been funnelled into the economies of the region. Having analysed the current situation in detail, the Survey proposed a set of macroeconomic exit strategies for immediate implementation by member countries.

Millennium Development Goals

Even prior to the crisis, the performance of the Arab region with respect to the achievement of the MDGs was uneven. Security issues continued to pose a serious threat to the achievement of the MDGs in conflict-affected countries, including Iraq, Palestine and the Sudan. The documentary centrepiece of 2010 with regard to the MDGs was the joint

publication by the United Nations and the League of Arab States of *The Third Arab Report on the Millennium Development Goals 2010 and the Impact of the Global Economic Crises*, which reviewed progress made in the Arab region towards achieving the MDGs ten years after their declaration at the World Summit in 2000 and with just five years left until the target date for their achievement in 2015. The report, which contributes to global efforts towards meeting the challenge of the MDGs and provides an up-to-date, detailed account of progress in the Arab region, highlights the need for member country Governments and other stakeholders to accelerate progress if the MDGs are to be realized as envisioned.

Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development

The Division continued its efforts aimed at enhancing the ability of member countries to implement the policies and measures recommended by the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development, adopted by the International Conference on Financing for Development (Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002) and revisited at the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus (Doha, 29 November-2 December 2008). The efforts undertaken in 2010 built on the progress achieved in the previous biennium and focused specifically on two recommendations of the Monterrey Consensus, namely the mobilization of domestic financial resources for development and the mobilization of international resources for foreign direct investment (FDI) that produces developmental outcomes.

As part of its follow-up activities to the Monterrey Consensus and the Doha Conference, and in collaboration with the Government of Dubai, ESCWA organized the Dubai International Conference of

Endowments on Innovative Sources to Finance Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (Dubai, 16-17 February 2010) to assist endowment funds in the Arab region to explore existing investment opportunities in the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector and determine the optimal means of engaging in the financing of SMEs in the region. ESCWA also held an expert group meeting entitled *The Role of Workers' Remittances in Development Finance* (Beirut, 28-29 September 2010), which provided a forum for member countries to exchange experience and study the economic impact of workers' remittances on consumption, labour, poverty and economic performance, and suggested ways in which some of the funds received in the form of workers' remittances could be channelled into investment. In parallel, ESCWA prepared a study entitled *Progress Made by ESCWA Member Countries on Financing for Development: Challenges and the Way Forward*, which analysed the impact of the recent financial crisis on the mobilization of financial resources in the ESCWA region and found that inflows of FDI and foreign trade were negatively affected by the reduction in global demand and oil prices. The study concluded that ESCWA member countries should adopt appropriate policies with a view to directing foreign investment towards the productive sectors of their economies.

Technical assistance

Within the framework of the technical assistance provided to member countries in the field of FDI, ESCWA organized two national training workshops on the negotiation of agreements on double taxation avoidance (Damascus, 22-28 May 2010 and Amman, 19-23 December 2010). These workshops upgraded the skills of 63 Government officials from the host countries in the negotiation and understanding of bilateral agreements on double taxation avoidance. As part of the Development Account project on

strengthening capacities in the ESCWA region to negotiate bilateral investment treaties, begun in June 2010 and implemented in partnership with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, ESCWA organized two national training workshops on the negotiation of bilateral investment agreements (Damascus, 1-5 August 2010 and Amman, 7-11 November 2010). These workshops upgraded the negotiation skills of a total of 52 Government officials from the host countries by introducing the basic concepts related to bilateral investment and familiarizing participants with the legal and regulatory framework of investment agreements and dispute settlements through the use of practical exercises and role play. All four workshops received highly favourable feedback from participants and Governments, both in terms of quality of delivery and relevance of content.

Inter-agency cooperation

In July 2010, ESCWA submitted data on 2009 aid for trade flows to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development for inclusion in its annual report on aid for trade. The Division also continued to work in collaboration with the other United Nations regional commissions, specialized funds and agencies, and in September 2010 contributed to the concept note of the United Nations Development Account project on facilitating effective integration of developing countries into the global economy through aid for trade schemes. This wide-ranging project is led by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and will be jointly implemented by all five regional commissions.

Outlook

In 2011, EDGD will investigate the nature and extent of the decoupling of the economic, institutional and social dimensions of development in the ESCWA region by revisiting earlier socio-economic policies. Based on that analysis, it will suggest a

new development paradigm to reconcile policymaking on various fronts. While it remains abundantly clear that there is no one-size-fits-all model, the research efforts of the Division will highlight those elements which are critical to ensure that the development process will not only be sustainable and equitable, but will also create trickle-down effects for human development and the achievement of the MDGs in the countries of the ESCWA region.

2011 Millennium Development Goals Report

Building on the above approach, the 2011 MDG report will focus on the missing links between economic growth and human development in an attempt to explain why, despite the adoption of adjustment plans over the last two decades, the few macroeconomic successes recorded by Arab countries have had little effect on inequality, and have failed to trickle down into human development or significantly reduce levels of poverty. Based on a detailed analysis of the pace of progress required for Arab countries to attain the MDGs by 2015, the report will be policy-oriented, identifying essential cross-cutting priorities with multiplier effects, and will propose a set of actions at both the national and regional level. The report will come at a critical juncture in the Arab world, as new regimes, leadership and decision-making mechanisms are set or reformed, a time when leaders old and new should be ready to listen, cooperate and respond with renewed enthusiasm and rigour. With only four years to the 2015 deadline, this report will “ring the bell”, identify key drivers and advocate policies to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the MDGs.

The growing role of financial deepening and financial inclusion in development

Financial deepening is a development issue concerned with the financing of individuals


and enterprises. Hurdles associated with reduced access to finance weaken the link between growth and formal employment, posing a serious threat to inclusive economic development. Financial deepening and financial inclusion are thus essential if social and development objectives are to be met. In the coming year, the Division will therefore devote particular attention to these areas, assessing the financial infrastructure of the region through the analysis of financing patterns for SMEs and fostering discussion on the role of policymakers in advancing financial inclusion.

Single window systems

During 2011, the research and capacity-building work of EDGD will concentrate on the establishment of Single Window systems for handling import/export procedures and formalities in the ESCWA region. Single Window systems were developed as an effective means of simplifying procedures relating to international trade through the use of an integrated electronic system in accordance with international standards. The Single Window environment simplifies procedures, assists in the verification of data and information between all parties working in the field of international trade, and helps to expedite the customs-clearance process. Single Window systems have already been implemented in many countries worldwide and have proved effective in promoting and raising the efficiency of trade facilitation. The establishment of such systems in ESCWA member countries would bring similar benefits to the region and will therefore form the focus of the capacity-building activities of the Division in the coming year.

United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety

The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed the period 2011–2020 as the Decade of Action for Road Safety. The Decade aims to stabilize and then reduce the



forecast level of road traffic fatalities around the world by increasing activities conducted at the national, regional and global level. Road traffic injuries constitute a major public health problem and are a leading cause of death, injury and disability. Such injuries not only place tremendous emotional and financial stress on the families affected, but also threaten to hinder achievements in economic and human development, placing a heavy burden on national economies through their direct impact on health-care and rehabilitation services, as well as indirect costs. Indeed, it has been estimated that global losses due to road

traffic injuries currently total US\$518 billion and cost Governments between 1 and 3 per cent of their gross national product. Against this backdrop of personal, social, financial and economic impact, EDGD will organize the regional launch of the Decade of Action for Road Safety (Beirut, 17 May 2011), at which an action plan for the Decade, prepared jointly by the five United Nations regional commissions, the World Health Organization and other international organizations in the Global Road Safety partnership, will be announced.



Subprogramme 4

Information and communications technology for regional integration

The global spread of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has reached unprecedented levels. Bridging the digital divide and building the information society is an ongoing priority for ESCWA and in recent years progress towards the achievement of these twin goals has included the establishment of the Information Society Portal for the ESCWA Region and the harmonization of cyberlegislation. Despite such progress, however, the digital divide not only persists, but remains wide. The gap is particularly evident at the extremities of the development spectrum, both in the more developed countries of the region, such as those of the Gulf Cooperation Council, and in less-developed and conflict-affected countries.

Closing the digital divide and enjoying the benefits of the information society is clearly of great importance to member countries, but high-technology sectors do not flourish if they are left to market forces alone. If they are to grow, they require a favourable, proactive environment, which includes a reliable legal and regulatory framework, cybersecurity insurance, and the confidence of Governments and citizens in the reliability and security of cyberspace and e-services.

Although ICT as a stand-alone economic sector has grown at a healthy pace in recent years, it remains underdeveloped in the ESCWA region, especially when compared with the ICT sector in countries which are truly part of the knowledge economy. Indeed, even in the implementation of projects that foster the development of a knowledge economy in the ESCWA region, both the public and private sectors still tend to be consumers of existing technology, rather than creators and innovators, and tremendous progress is required for the region to close the digital divide as a first step towards transforming its default position from one of passive consumption to one of active innovation.

The use of data-driven mechanisms for policymaking is a powerful tool for social and economic change. However, for policymakers to accurately determine which developmental strategies



will be the most effective, the question of the measurement models used and the existence of reliable, internationally-comparable data is vital. To ensure optimal effectiveness, standardized indicators must be relevant to a broad spectrum of national circumstances and cultural contexts.

ESCWA continues to take the lead in ICT-related regional and international activities, and its recent work has included undertaking regional cyberlegislation studies, including developing legislative templates; advancing digital Arabic content; measuring the information society; and providing professional advisory and technical support to member countries. The Information and Communication Technology Division (ICTD) has forged partnerships to develop many of its activities and has participated in a number of expert forums at the regional and international level.

As part of its ongoing capacity-building work, ESCWA assists member countries in formulating effective, forward-looking national ICT policies and, as part of this mission, has encouraged member countries to work towards establishing science, technology and innovation observatories (STIOs). Five member countries (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Qatar and the Syrian Arab Republic) have already benefited from capacity-building workshops and a range of other preparatory activities organized by ICTD to support them in establishing, operating and managing STIOs. Progress towards the establishment of the ESCWA Technology Centre has also continued with the signing of the host country agreement with Jordan and the Centre will open in Amman in the coming year.

Yousef Nusseir

Director, Information and Communication Technology Division

Overview

The diffusion and adoption of technology throughout the world has established information and communication technologies (ICTs) as long-term drivers for economic growth, capable of positively impacting the socio-economic development of communities and countries alike. However, significant differences exist in the capacity of countries to adapt to changes in technology and knowledge, and developing countries in particular are increasingly vulnerable to reduction in productivity and economic capacity as a result of the digital divide. In recognition of the close relationship between the adoption of ICTs and economic performance, Governments have continued to invest heavily in ICT-based development projects and initiatives with the aim of achieving universal access to ICTs in order to reap their promised benefits. The links between ICTs and development are not always clear or well-established, and

international calls for both benchmarking and the meaningful monitoring of progress have increased, driven by Governments, international organizations, donors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector, all of whom wish to assess the impact of their investment in this field.

Mobile phone technology has revolutionized the global communication landscape and is by far the fastest growing ICT today. Many mobile phones have access to the Internet made possible by third and fourth generations of mobile phone standards and technology networks. The adoption of ICTs in the ESCWA region has grown exponentially in recent years and it is perhaps no surprise that one of the targets set by the World Summit on the Information Society, namely that of ensuring that more than half the inhabitants of the world have access to ICTs, has been

reached several years in advance of its 2015 target date.

The year 2010 marked the conclusion of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) process on the global level and the launch of a regional Arab dialogue on Internet governance issues, with a call by stakeholders in the region for the establishment of an Arab IGF. The principal area of focus in terms of Internet governance in the ESCWA region is the implementation of the Arabic domain name system as part of the Internationalized Domain Name Standards. When that has been achieved, it will open up the Internet as a tool for all Arabic language communities and facilitate the representation of Arab identity and culture on the Internet.

Achievements in 2010

ESCWA Statistical Information System

As part of its role as a key knowledge repository for its member countries, ESCWA has developed the ESCWA Statistical Information System (ESIS), a bilingual (Arabic/English), database-driven application for organizing, storing and presenting data in a standardized way. Compliant with international statistical standards, the system incorporates a core database, which can be accessed through both desktop and web-based components (<http://esis.escwa.org.lb>). Designed to help policymakers and decision makers reach informed, evidence-based decisions on socio-economic development issues, the system also increases accessibility and data sharing between national statistical offices, Government departments, United Nations agencies and other organizations in the region. In 2010, ICTD initiated a major upgrade of the system, ensuring that it continues to incorporate the latest technological advances and responds fully to the changing needs of member countries. A series of training workshops on the upgraded system will start in early 2011.

Measuring science, technology and innovation

The collection and monitoring of indicators charting the state of STI in the ESCWA region continues to pose a major challenge. To assist decision makers and policymakers to perform informed strategic analysis and allocate resources effectively, the promotion of STI observatories (STIOs) has become a priority for the Division. As part of its capacity-building programme, in 2010 ESCWA provided technical assistance to a number of member countries with a view to encouraging the establishment of STIOs. Building on the capacity-building workshop held in the Syrian Arab Republic in 2009, the Division organized similar events in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Qatar in 2010. The workshops raised awareness of the importance of STI measurement, provided a forum for stakeholders and partners to discuss the studies, policies and strategies which had been prepared in advance for them by ESCWA, and encouraged member countries to adopt a plan of action for establishing national STIOs and managing their operations.

Knowledge Networks through ICT Access Points for Disadvantaged Communities

The project on Knowledge Networks through ICT Access Points for Disadvantaged Communities was successfully completed in 2010. Initiated in 2006, the project was implemented globally by the five United Nations regional commissions, with ESCWA as the lead agency. It aimed to maximize the benefits of ICT access points in disadvantaged communities by transforming existing telecentres in selected countries into networked knowledge hubs. It also established a knowledge-networks portal for the ESCWA region, which hosts information of relevance to the communities served. Project activities ensured that beneficiaries were fully involved in the networks, acquiring

and sharing knowledge for overcoming development problems in the areas of employment, education, gender and health. Partnership for the ESCWA region component of the project involved NGOs from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. In 2010, meetings were held in Egypt, Lebanon, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic, with the dual objectives of creating a steering committee for the knowledge network and strengthening the capabilities of established knowledge hubs to ensure their sustainability beyond the lifetime of the project.

Internet Governance

accomplishments for each of the following priority areas: institutional empowerment, critical Internet resources, access, cultural and linguistic diversity, security and openness.

At the fifth IGF, ESCWA co-organized a session with the League of Arab States entitled Arab Dialogue on Internet Governance. The session shed light on joint efforts led by ESCWA and the League of Arab States in Internet governance and top-level domain matters, and launched a regional dialogue directed at aligning the Arab region with global Internet governance, renewing the IGF mandate for a further five years.

The ESCWA Technology Centre

The ESCWA Technology Centre is being created pursuant to resolutions taken at the twenty-sixth session of the Commission in May 2010 and by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in July 2010, and follows signature of the host country agreement with Jordan in December 2010. The mandate of the Centre is to assist ESCWA member countries, and public and private organizations in the region to acquire the tools and capabilities necessary to accelerate socio-economic development in order to attain technological parity with other nations and regions of the world, and to contribute to converting the economies of member countries into ones based on scientific and technological knowledge.

The activities of the Centre will include

Far-reaching commitments and policy measures voicing a shared vision and understanding of Internet governance will aid in transforming the threats and challenges of the Internet into opportunities for development. The result of multi-stakeholder involvement, including ESCWA, the League of Arab States, member country Governments, and representatives of the private sector and civil society in the region, the Arab Regional Roadmap for Internet Governance presents a clear strategic framework addressing Internet governance from a regional perspective. Developed in 2010, the Roadmap went through several stages of public viewing and comment, including an online forum and the fifth IGF (Vilnius, 16 September 2010). The Roadmap structure is based on the Logical Framework concept, setting objectives and expected



conducting research and analysis; providing advisory services; disseminating information and promoting best practice; developing partnerships and other networks with regional and international organizations and key stakeholders; training national personnel, including scientists and policy analysts; and measuring performance indicators of the production and service sectors in terms of transfer of scientific and technological knowledge. From a practical point of view, the Centre will facilitate coordination and networking between national STI centres of excellence in a number of ESCWA member countries, as a complement to other activities and resources for socio-economic development in the region. The Centre is being hosted and supported by the Royal Scientific Society and the Higher Council for Science and Technology in Jordan, and will be staffed and fully functional in 2011, with a broad workplan of activities and programmes.

Outlook

World Summit on the Information Society

In 2011, follow-up on the outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society will continue, with a particular focus on standardizing information society measures through the application of models. Activities to promote and benchmark the sector in the ESCWA region will continue, as will the building of an enabling environment for the development of Arabic e-services. A third phase of the project supporting the implementation of Arab top-level domain names will further efforts towards the establishment of the «عرب» (“Arab”) registry. The principal documentary activity of the year will be the production of the recurrent flagship publication of ICTD, the *Regional Profile of the Information Society in Western Asia 2011*.

Promoting the ICT sector to meet the challenges of the knowledge economy

In 2010, ESCWA initiated an in-depth study on promoting the ICT sector to meet the challenges of the knowledge economy. The study, which will be published in 2011, will analyse the status of the ICT sector in the region from both business and governmental perspectives, with a view to determining the most appropriate options for developing the sector in the region. It will review the role of member country Governments in promoting the ICT sector and propose guidelines to accelerate the evolution of the sector in order to meet the needs of the emerging knowledge economy in the region. From the business community perspective, the study will focus on determining the obstacles and challenges facing the development of a regional ICT economic sector and suggest solutions to increase the contribution of the sector to socio-economic development in the region. The publication will also present case studies from selected ESCWA member countries on the contribution of the ICT sector to national economic growth, and highlight methodologies and indicators to measure that contribution.

Standardizing information society measurement in the ESCWA region

The ICT Applications Section is planning a series of theme-based activities in 2011, dedicated to standardizing information society measurement in the ESCWA region. The first is the publication of *Information Society Measurement: Building a Common Benchmarking Model for the ESCWA Region*, which will focus on statistical irregularities and shortcomings in existing measurement models within the framework of the specificities of the ESCWA and Arab regions. The findings of the study will be discussed and validated by an expert group meeting on Standardizing

Information Society Measurement in the ESCWA Region (Beirut, 3-4 May 2011). Building on these efforts, a training workshop will be held for stakeholders in the region, providing a platform for knowledge transfer of the latest measurement techniques and methodologies discussed in the publication and adopted at the EGM.

Regional harmonization of cyberlegislation



During 2011, ICTD will focus on the regional

harmonization of cyberlegislation in the Arab region by implementing the Development Account project Regional Harmonization of Cyberlegislation to Promote the Knowledge Society in the Arab World. The purpose of the project is to enhance regional integration and strengthen the capacity of member countries to build a strong and sustainable ICT sector through the development of appropriate legal and regulatory structures. ESCWA will adopt a set of directives covering six areas of cyberlegislation, namely personal data protection, e-communication, e-signature and e-transactions, e-commerce and consumer protection, intellectual property and cybercrime. The directives will regulate matters related to the usage of cyberspace, ICT applications and e-services, and will include legislative templates that can easily be adapted and implemented at the national level.



Subprogramme 5

Statistics for evidence-based policymaking

Though it may be late in the day to ask whether better informed policymaking could have helped to anticipate the social movements which started to spread across the Arab region in late 2010, now is unquestionably the time to draw lessons for the future. Statistics have a strong role to play in providing a more accurate picture of socio-economic status and quality of life in Arab societies. Official statistics must provide more data, not only more frequently, but also of higher quality. Policymakers need data at quarterly and monthly periodicity, reliable information on demographic structure, and data on education and labour markets.

The role of the Statistics Division is to help member countries to improve the frequency and regularity of surveys, increase the quality and comparability of data, and communicate those data to policymakers in meaningful ways.

Political and economic leaders recognize the power of information. Statistics are used, more than ever before, to inform their arguments and substantiate their claims, which in turn highlights the discrepancies and gaps in the data available. The current wave of social upheaval in the Arab region opens up new opportunities for official statistics. Now is the time to garner support for the further development of statistics and its institutional and legislative framework. Statistics are useful only if they are impartial, accurate, relevant, timely, and compiled and interpreted purely on the basis of scientific principles. Our member countries need professionally independent, scientifically sound and fully empowered central statistical organizations which coordinate the collection, production and publication of national statistics. It is the role of the Statistics Division at ESCWA to help member countries to develop these institutional and legislative frameworks.

The democratization of societies brings with it undeniable human rights, including the right to information. Statistics should be made available to all potential users, to every citizen. Data should be released simultaneously to all: ministers, researchers, media outlets and the population at large. We have long had the technological means to allow everyone access to official statistics, but now we can use the new political climate to guarantee such access.

The continuous development and enhancement of methods, practices and policies regarding the production and dissemination of high-quality socio-economic statistics and indicators, including macroeconomic and social indicators, Millennium Development Goal achievement



indicators, sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators, is essential to facilitate evidence-based policymaking by national and international decision makers and civil society. ESCWA has long been recognized by its member countries as having the technical capacity to assist them in the field of statistics. The developments of the Arab Spring will pose even greater challenges and demand the continued commitment of the Division in its efforts to develop this capacity for the benefit of the region.

Juraj Riečan

Director, Statistics Division

Overview

The role of the Statistics Division is twofold, providing internal clients at ESCWA with statistical data to support the work of the Commission, and assisting member countries, generally through national statistical offices, to develop capacity in a variety of statistical priority areas. The Division also acts as a regional focal point for the United Nations Statistics Division and other United Nations organizations. With the twin objectives of strengthening national statistical systems and harmonizing official statistics across the ESCWA region, it coordinates the meetings of the ESCWA Statistical Committee, organizes expert group meetings, and holds workshops and seminars on developing statistical capacity.

Major concerns in the field of statistics in 2010 included the launch of the 2011 round of the International Comparison Program, aimed at calculating purchasing power parity; developing interregional cooperation for measurement of the informal sector and informal employment; strengthening the development of international merchandise trade statistics; and the compilation of statistics on e-commerce. Other efforts focused on supporting member countries by formulating strategies to facilitate migration from the 1993 version of the System of National Accounts to the 2008 version; developing a strategy in accordance with the regional action plan of the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to put in place an effective governance

structure; and encouraging member countries to adopt international standards in energy and environment statistics. The Division also helped a number of member countries, namely Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic, to develop a roadmap on social statistics for poverty measurement and related fields. The Division thus carries out its dual objectives of maintaining a high level of expertise in substantive work while providing strong, focused support to national statistical offices in member countries.

Achievements in 2010

Coordination of statistical activities

The ESCWA secretariat, in common with other international agencies active in the field of statistics, has long recognized the necessity of a coordinated approach. Such coordination should ensure less variation (fewer discrepancies) in data published by individual organizations (or by different divisions of ESCWA) and greater efficiency through the avoidance of duplication in statistical work, including the development of statistical capacity. ESCWA has therefore taken internal measures to ensure that all its statistical activities are coordinated by the Statistics Division. To bolster such action at the regional level, the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) decided in October 2010 to create a working group on statistics at the level of heads of statistical functions of the

organizations involved, and invited other important statistical players in the region who are not members of the RCM to join the working group.

Strategic vision for official statistics in the ESCWA region

The strategic vision of the Statistics Division was discussed in depth at the ninth session of the Statistical Committee (Beirut, 13-15 October 2010). This discussion was preceded and followed by written consultations, from which it emerged that the principal priorities of the statistical work of ESCWA were considered to be the development of statistical capacity in member countries; data work, with particular focus on quality and the reduction of variation; and coordination, both within ESCWA and within the region. To achieve these priorities, members of the Statistical Committee decided to create three permanent groups, covering economic, social and cross-cutting statistics, which would follow statistical developments and facilitate the exchange of expertise.

Economic statistics

In the area of economic statistics, the Development Account projects on Interregional Cooperation for the Measurement of the Informal Sector and Informal Employment, and Strengthening the Development of International Merchandise Trade Statistics and the Compilation of e-Commerce Statistics in ESCWA Member Countries were both finalized in 2010. The former contributed to enhancing the awareness of member countries of the importance of taking the informal sector into consideration in order to provide a full, accurate estimation of employment statistics in national accounts, while the latter assisted member countries in identifying and implementing the actions required for the accurate estimation of international goods transactions in line with international definitions and recommendations.

Social statistics

In the area of social statistics, ESCWA established a temporary post of Regional Advisor on Social Statistics and, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme office in Amman, assisted the Department of Statistics in Jordan to establish a new poverty measurement division. In cooperation with experts from Jordan, the Statistics Division prepared a roadmap and organized a series of capacity-building workshops, involving not only the Department of Statistics, but also other stakeholders who provide and use poverty-related data. This created a national network of experts in poverty measurement and related fields, the positive effects of whose work will be evident in Jordan well beyond the parameters of the initial project.

Environmental statistics



The Statistics Division also completed a Development Account project on environmental statistics and accounting in 2010, within the framework of which ESCWA worked to enhance the capacity of member country officials in adopting international standards in energy and environment statistics. ESCWA also facilitated the review

by its member countries of the Energy Statistics Manual, a joint compilation by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the International Energy Agency and Eurostat, which has been translated into Arabic. Throughout 2010, ESCWA continued to promote the System of Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting, which will become an international standard in 2012. This work included not only in-depth work with member countries, but on a broader regional level, presenting the System of Environmental and Economic Accounting for Water at the Arab Ministerial Council (Cairo, 24-26 January 2010) in cooperation with the League of Arab States.

Launch of the 2011 round of the International Comparison Program

The International Comparison Program (ICP) represents a global effort to establish a method for comparing per capita and total GDP (or its sub-aggregates) in real terms between countries in order to understand cross-country variations in standards of living, levels of investment, Government expenditure and the purchasing power of currencies. The Program has developed an alternative “rate of exchange”: purchasing power parity (PPP). Compared with interbank exchange rates, PPPs eliminate financial market speculation and thus constitute an essential tool for international comparison in socio-economic studies related to economic performance and quality of life. The ICP is based on national price surveys and coordinated by regional executing agencies (in Western Asia, this role is played by ESCWA), with the World Bank assuming the role of global coordinator. While ESCWA has the ability to handle methodological and capacity development issues, it depends on donor support for this costly project, which is sought on a year by year basis. Despite the lack of ready resources, ESCWA has completed the work plan for 2010 and has been successful in obtaining funding to launch the 2011 round of the ICP.

Regional strategy for the System of National Accounts

ESCWA member countries have started to join the global initiative in migrating to the 2008 version of the System of National Accounts (2008 SNA) from earlier versions (1968 SNA and 1993 SNA). Given that 2008 SNA is a mirror of national statistics, it is essential that those economic and social statistics that are central to its implementation must first be present in member country national statistics. As a first step towards the implementation of 2008 SNA, all ESCWA member countries must be brought to full implementation of 1993 SNA. For certain member countries, therefore, the path to implementation of 2008 SNA must start with full implementation of 1993 SNA, while others have already achieved that and will be ready to migrate to 2008 SNA much sooner. With such wide variation in the current levels of implementation, it is vital that ESCWA provide individually-tailored support to each member country. With the support of the United Nations Statistics Division and the Ministry of National Economy of Oman, ESCWA organized two meetings, one for all ESCWA member countries (Muscat, 23-26 May 2010) and another for GCC countries (Muscat, 27 May 2010), which resulted in the establishment of a strategy for a regional action plan. The governance structure to oversee the implementation of the plan was also put in place.

Outlook

Capacity development and strategic cooperation between national statistical offices

The capacity development activities of the Statistics Division are demand-driven, focusing on harnessing the substantive expertise of the Division's staff to respond to the real needs of member countries. The successful completion of such activities has resulted not only in higher demand for the

service, but also in offers of partnership from other organizations with statistical functions. Yet statistical capacity-building is not simply about organizing elementary training workshops. National statistical offices of member countries already possess high levels of skill, knowledge and competence. What is needed is the opportunity for national statisticians in the region to learn, not only from one another, but also from countries beyond the region about optimal methods for putting in place specific surveys, adjusting organizational structures to new statistical tasks, developing relationships with policymakers and encouraging legislators to formulate clear, updated mandates for national statistics. The Statistics Division has already facilitated the exchange of experience between member countries in a number of specific areas, including measurement of the informal sector, national accounts, and population and housing censuses, all of which have proved extremely valuable, and plans to expand such activities to cover other statistical areas.

ESCWA also continues to bring together members of the statistical community in the region with a view to developing common positions on a variety of issues. Starting in February 2011, the Division will organize a consultative meeting of the Working Group of the Statistical Committee to discuss United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) agenda items prior to the annual session of the UNSC. Common positions will be agreed upon by all member countries, resulting in increased visibility for the region at the Commission and ensuring that regional positions are fully reflected in UNSC conclusions.

Deficits and gaps in official statistics

Analysis of the data collection activities of ESCWA continues to reveal not only lower than desirable response rates on the part of member countries, but also significant

deficits in the data provided. Since this may, in part, be attributable to the high burden of data requests placed on member countries by regional and international organizations, ESCWA is adopting a double-edged approach to reducing this burden: first, by endeavouring to ensure that its own data requests are better coordinated, and second, by convening a coordination mechanism involving all statistically active organizations in the Arab region. This mechanism, known as the Task Force on Statistical Coordination, will respect existing mandates of international organizations while seeking new ways to improve and facilitate statistical coordination. At its first meeting (Beirut, 30 May 2011), the Task Force is expected to set as its main priority the coordination of data collection and sharing of data through harmonized databases.

The lack of statistical capacity at the regional level can be also attributed in part to lack of statistical capacity at the national level. In 2011, the Statistics Division, in cooperation with other national and regional stakeholders, will prepare a report on gaps and deficits in statistics in the region, with a view to substantially reducing their incidence. The report will complement the regular studies assessing the statistical capacity-building needs of member countries that are currently produced by ESCWA. Following the assessment, it is planned that the Commission, in close collaboration with heads of national statistical offices (forming the ESCWA Statistical Committee), will streamline its statistical capacity-building activities, refocusing its work programme on major priority areas.

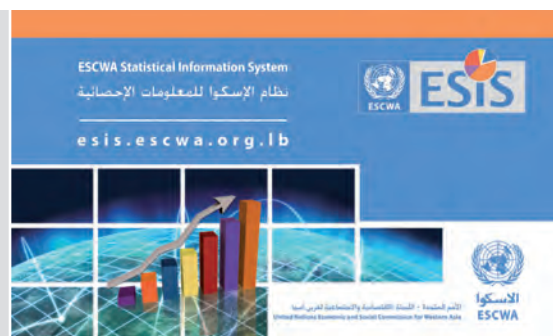
Coordination of statistical activities in the Arab region

The Task Force on Statistical Coordination was created to lay the foundations for a collaborative approach between United Nations agencies and other regional and

global partners in the production of statistics on Arab countries. Its long-term goal is to achieve fully-coordinated data collection by international organizations, based on joint questionnaires collected according to an established, published calendar and shared through harmonized databases accessible via a regional data portal. The detailed nature of this goal means that it can be only achieved by systematic work on a few selected priority areas each year.

However, the focus of regional cooperation should not be limited to data collection and sharing. Quality data cannot be produced without addressing methodological and organizational issues in member countries, and agencies undertaking statistical activities in the region also share responsibility for building and developing statistical capacity in the region through the upgrading of skills and knowledge, and the updating of institutional setups, organizational platforms and legal frameworks.

Dissemination of statistical data



Each year, the Statistics Division prepares some 10 statistical publications, ranging from

flagship reports to wall charts and brochures. Yet just as the readership base has changed over the years, expectations have also altered. The readers and users of data today expect more timely delivery, instant online access and the opportunity to reuse such data. The Statistics Division has responded to these changing needs by moving towards the electronic publication of data. The electronic versions of traditional publications are already available on the ESCWA website, and a new portfolio of print publications will be developed with value-added graphs, charts and data analysis. As a next step, the ESCWA Statistical Information System (ESIS) database will become the principal tool for data dissemination. This will help to improve service to data users and rationalize the use of resources currently dedicated to the lengthy and costly preparation of printed publications.

The ESIS database is currently a repository for statistics on environment, water, energy, and information and communications technology. Data on population, national accounts and Government finance are currently undergoing final revision and adjustment before being added, and data on prices, industrial indices and international trade will follow shortly afterwards. Specialized databases on youth, gender and the Millennium Development Goals are currently available in a different database system, but will eventually be migrated into ESIS, creating a comprehensive tool for data dissemination.



Subprogramme 6

Advancement of women


During the last five years, the ESCWA region has witnessed significant advances in the health and education of women. Female life expectancy has increased, fertility rates and maternal mortality rates have declined, and the female literacy rate and the access of women and girls to all levels of education has risen considerably. The gender parity index, which can be used to measure the relative access to education of girls and boys, has increased at all levels of education in most member countries. The region has also witnessed legislative reform, with a number of laws discriminating against women being amended, while new legislation was enacted to protect women and ensure their increasing participation in public life.



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Despite such achievements, however, the ESCWA region still has one of the lowest rates of economic and political participation of women in the world. According to the recent ESCWA publication *Charting the Progress of the Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region: A Statistical Portrait*, only 22 per cent of Arab women currently participate in the labour force. According to the joint United Nations and League of Arab States publication *The Third Arab Report on the Millennium Development Goals 2010 and the Impact of the Global Economic Crises*, representation in national parliaments across the region in February 2010 stood at just 10 per cent. Furthermore, violence against women is widespread in the region, especially in conflict-afflicted countries. Other factors that impede gender equality and undermine the economic and political empowerment of women tend to be either structural in nature or related to certain traditions and stereotypes about the role of women in society.

Given the discrimination faced by women at the legal, structural and behavioural level, a holistic approach is required if such discrimination is to be eradicated and women fully empowered. It flows from this that interventions to assist policymakers in achieving gender equality and advancing women should be of a tripartite nature, focusing on (a) normative work, including analytical studies and sex-disaggregated databases that can shed light on the gender gap in a variety of sectors, assisting policymakers in evidence-based policy formulation; (b) capacity-building activities to hone the skills of policymakers and train them on ways in which a gender perspective can be integrated into national policies, plans and programmes, and on promoting the implementation of international instruments; and (c) awareness-raising and advocacy activities with the clear objective of modifying the negative cultural patterns and stereotypes that limit the role of women and their contribution to society in the region.



The ESCWA Centre for Women has therefore adopted this holistic approach, promoting gender equality and the political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights of women, as it assists member countries to bridge gaps and overcome challenges. Its normative work thus includes the production of analytical publications on key gender issues, carefully targeted at policymakers; advisory services on the formulation of gender-sensitive policies and action plans for the empowerment of women; and technical cooperation activities advising member countries on their responsibilities under such international instruments as the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on women and peace and security. The Centre also offers capacity-building activities, targeted at parliamentarians, judges and other stakeholders, on ways in which legislative change can be used to empower women and bring an end to gender discrimination. It also raises awareness of the rights of women through a variety of campaigns, including the organization of meetings and the provision of material to media and grass-roots organizations.

This threefold approach has resulted in further enhancement of the institutional capacity of national machineries for women, regular dissemination of updated information on gender issues, the development of advocacy tools and research methodology, and the provision of capacity-building training to increase knowledge and enhance skills. The Centre also provides regular forums in which national mechanisms for women in the ESCWA region can meet to share knowledge and experience with those in other regions.

The Centre continues to work closely with its regional partners, including the League of Arab States and the Arab Women Organization, as well as with other United Nations entities within the region and beyond, to consolidate and enhance the impact of development support in the area of the advancement of women.

Nabil Abu Dargham

Officer-in-Charge, ESCWA Centre for Women

Overview

Supporting member countries in their efforts to empower women and mainstream gender in all planned activities is the main objective of the ESCWA Centre for Women (ECW). It is within this context that the work of the Centre in 2010 focused on continuing to encourage member countries to fulfil their responsibilities under international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Declaration and the Beijing Platform of Action; integrating a gender perspective into the implementation of the MDGs in the ESCWA region; promoting gender mainstreaming at the level of regional institutions; and providing support to women

experiencing domestic violence and those involved in conflict mitigation, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Women in situations of conflict and those experiencing domestic violence, in particular, remained a high priority for the Centre during the year and, in cooperation with the newly-established United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), representatives of national machineries for women (NWM) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the region were brought together to discuss how to best address the issue of domestic violence. The subject of violence against women was also centre-stage on the occasion of Human

Rights Day in December 2010, when it was debated in a round-table discussion at United Nations House in Beirut within the context of situations of conflict in the region.

Achievements in 2010

Progress towards full implementation of CEDAW

Most ESCWA member countries have now ratified CEDAW, but a number retain reservations to certain articles of the Convention. Within the framework of the efforts undertaken by ESCWA to encourage all member countries to fully implement the Convention without reservations, the Centre continued to work to build the substantive capacity of legislative bodies to withdraw the reservations. To this end, a regional workshop for Arab parliaments on implementing CEDAW and ending violence against women was organized in cooperation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the National Assembly of the Lebanese Republic and the United Nations Development Programme (through the Parliamentary Development Initiative in the Arab Region, a joint initiative of the Global Programme on Parliamentary Strengthening and the Programme on Governance in the Arab Region) (Beirut, 27-29 July 2010). Parliamentarians from the ESCWA region and the European Union, regional and international experts, state prosecutors from Spain and gender experts from Latin America came together to share success stories and best practice on enacting legislation to protect women from domestic violence. As a result of such efforts and those of other United Nations entities, a total of thirteen ESCWA member countries have now ratified CEDAW, many of which are currently working towards withdrawing their reservations to certain articles of the Convention. Recent progress can be seen in the fact that Egypt, Jordan and Kuwait have withdrawn their reservations to articles 9, 15 and 7 of the Convention respectively.

Enhancing technical skills

Countries which have ratified CEDAW are required to present national periodic reports to the CEDAW Committee. In order to facilitate the drafting of such reports, ESCWA conducted a capacity-building workshop (Beirut, 28-29 April 2010) for members of NWMs to improve their technical skills and ensure that their reports are produced in accordance with CEDAW Committee guidelines. The meeting also offered an opportunity for participants to share experience and solutions related to the reporting process.

Regional progress towards the Millennium Development Goals

Integrating a gender perspective into reporting on the MDGs and their implementation remained a major concern of ECW in 2010. With a view to assessing regional progress from a gender perspective, the Centre produced a report entitled *Progress in Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the ESCWA Region: A Gender Lens*, which highlighted the cross-cutting nature of gender issues in the Goals and proposed a number of policy recommendations to assist decision makers in addressing gender-related issues pertaining to the implementation of the MDGs.

Gender mainstreaming for good governance

Within the framework of the ongoing cooperation of ECW with ministries and NWMs in the region, a number of activities were undertaken in 2010 to increase the awareness of member countries of the importance of gender mainstreaming as a tool for good governance and achieving greater equality and social justice. The Centre organized a workshop (Beirut, 3-5 August 2010), at which delegates and experts representing the ministries of labour and NWMs in Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestine, the Syrian Arab Republic and

the Sudan were given the opportunity to participate in a number of practical training sessions. Topics revolved around the way in which gender assessments should be conducted, and focused on how to analyse an institution from a gender perspective, including its internal policies, structure, hierarchy, procedures and processes of work, the representation of men and women, the culture of the institution and the ways in which people link with each other in both formal and informal networks.

Tenth anniversary of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325



The special situation of women in conflict was highlighted during the events held to celebrate the tenth anniversary of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, adopted by the Security Council on 31 October 2000, which underlined the role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, and urged Member States to provide adequate protection for women and girls in conflict situations. At ESCWA, the anniversary was celebrated with a workshop designed to build the capacity of NWMs in developing national action plans to implement resolution 1325, the publication of a study entitled *Enhancing the Role of Women in Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding* and a round-table discussion at the launch of the publication. The study provided an overview of conflict in the region, with particular focus

on the devastating consequences of armed conflict and war on women and girls. This was complemented by three detailed country studies (on Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine) and an in-depth analysis of the ways in which the implementation of international legal instruments for the protection of women and girls in situations of armed conflict and war can protect them. The study concluded with 10 recommendations addressed to civil society, Governments and international organizations on how to put such instruments – in particular resolution 1325 – to optimal use.

Outlook

Status of the ESCWA Centre for Women

In recognition of the importance of the efforts exerted by ESCWA for the empowerment of women, through building the capacity of national machineries for their advancement, integrating women into national policies, and implementing international conventions and other international resolutions, the twenty-sixth session of the Commission adopted resolution 293 (XXVI), in which it called upon member countries to support the Centre for Women with additional human resources in order to upgrade it to the level of a division, with the aim of increasing its efforts in assisting member countries in the area of empowerment of women.

Developing gender strategies

Following the subregional workshop on gender mainstreaming for ministries of labour and NWMs in August 2010, participants began to prepare gender assessments of their Ministries of Labour, to be submitted to ESCWA prior to a follow-up expert workshop. That workshop, entitled *Mainstreaming Gender into the Plans and Programmes of the Ministries of Labour in Selected ESCWA Member Countries*, is scheduled to take place in March 2011, and discussion will focus on

the ways in which the strategies developed following the expert group meeting and further developed after the expert workshop could be translated into concrete action plans.

Media campaigns promoting the rights of women

Acknowledging the importance of the media in promoting the rights of women in national agendas, ECW will convene an expert group meeting on Strategies and Media Campaigns to Promote the Empowerment of Women in the ESCWA Region (Beirut, 21-26 June 2011). Participants will discuss ways in which to put the Arab Women Media Strategy 2009-2015, developed by the Arab Women Organization, into practice and will benefit from a forum for the exchange of regional experience in launching media campaigns promoting the rights of women and gender equality.

Status of Arab Women

In 2011, the ECW flagship publication *Status of Arab Women*, issued each biennium, will focus on the highly-topical issue of political empowerment. It will discuss the ways in

which recent political changes in the region have affected the advancement of women and offer recommendations on the ways in which member country Governments can minimize the potential negative effects of recent developments while ensuring that women enjoy maximum benefit from the changes.

Observatory for women in the Arab region

In 2012, ECW, together with the Islamic Development Bank and the Hariri Foundation for Sustainable Human Development, will establish an observatory for women in the Arab region. The objectives of this project, recommended by the fourth session of the ESCWA Committee on Women (Beirut, 21-23 October 2009), are to assess the status of women in the region and provide decision makers with appropriate tools for evidence-based policy formulation. It will include the creation of sex-disaggregated databases on the economic, social, legal and cultural status of women, and an index – devised specifically for the Arab region – to track the progress of women in achieving gender equality and empowerment.



Subprogramme 7

Conflict mitigation and development

Development in the ESCWA region, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, has traditionally been hindered by instability, conflict and their secondary effects. Instability trends result from the interplay of a number of existing and emerging social, economic, political and environmental factors. Between 1980 and 2009, the population of the Arab region more than doubled, surging in urban areas, while increasing military expenditure turned the Middle East into the most militarized region in the world, home to seven of the ten highest global military spenders.

Many ESCWA member countries suffer from conflict-driven displacement and communal tensions, and the Israeli occupation of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, continues to intensify the economic and social hardship of the Palestinian people. Given scarce freshwater resources, an arid climate and an increasing threat from climate change, the region is also at a disadvantage in terms of agricultural production. Protracted crises lead to depleted assets, increased vulnerability of populations and compromised institutional capacity, which in turn create a negative impact on food security and other development priorities.



The Emerging and Conflict-Related Issues Section (ECRI) focuses on building the development capacity of ESCWA member countries – in particular, those affected by conflict – to deal with the ramifications of emerging global issues and to implement peacebuilding policies, strategies and mechanisms that are geared towards the structural prevention of conflict or potential sources of conflict, thus mitigating its impact on development and addressing its regional spillover effects. Efforts have been made to help build sustainable capacity in the Iraqi Ministry of Education to improve the quality of teaching and learning by focusing on the use of information and communications technology. The programmes developed by ECRI strengthen the capacity of member countries to improve service delivery, pre-empt conflict, and achieve reconciliation and peace. By providing officials across the region with exposure to successful models of good governance and best practice, the programmes also assist member countries in their progress towards attaining internationally-agreed development goals.

In 2010, the programmes and activities organized by ECRI focused on the following areas: advocacy and awareness-raising to address the root causes and impact of conflict and occupation, with particular focus on their regional consequences; institutional and human development, with a view to modernizing State institutions through the implementation of sound governance practices, development strategies, policies and programmes that address and mitigate the impact

of conflict and crisis; and, as a complement to such governance initiatives, promotion of local community development, aimed at building the resilience of local communities to conflict and post-conflict repercussions. In recognition of the work of the Section, the twenty-sixth session of the Commission adopted resolution 292 (XXVI) requesting the upgrading of ECRI to the level of a division and the establishment of a governmental committee on emerging issues and development in conflict settings. This milestone reflects the importance of the work carried out by the Section and the urgency of the issues that it addresses.

As a division, ECRI will continue to work closely with ESCWA member countries, the United Nations system (in particular, United Nations country teams in conflict-affected countries), the League of Arab States, other multilateral and regional organizations, and civil society to develop conflict-sensitive policy recommendations that will enhance recovery and peacebuilding efforts in the region. Support for member countries will take the form of advisory missions, field-oriented situation analyses, desk research and in-depth studies on the root causes of conflict, its impact on development and the spillover effects which it generates. The newly-created Division will develop policies, strategies and mechanisms that promote regional integration in order to reduce tension, prevent conflict or mitigate its impact, and facilitate attainment of national development goals.

Youssef Chaitani and Vito Intini

Joint Officers-in-Charge, Emerging and Conflict-Related Issues Section

Overview

Instability and conflict in the Middle East are estimated to have cost the region some US\$12 trillion in missed economic growth and development over the last two decades. Compounded by domestic and global challenges and their spillover effects, including large numbers of displaced persons seeking refuge from ongoing strife, these conflicts continue to significantly hamper the realization of the full development potential of the region. Growing population numbers, especially in urban areas, have put tremendous pressure on the infrastructure and the ability of Governments to deliver essential services. Agricultural productivity in many countries in the region is low, particularly in the Sudan, which has the largest untapped land potential among ESCWA member countries. Demographics and the youth bulge, climate change, water scarcity and the food crisis may also have the potential to cause social unrest and even war. In an attempt to bridge the gaps in the delivery of essential services, informal networks have appeared, yet this has led to the

politicization of certain networks, which may in turn have the potential to threaten social cohesion and stability, or even to reintroduce conflict.

Against this backdrop, ECRI structures its projects to understand the underlying causes of such problems and support member countries in finding solutions. In documenting and promoting awareness of the condition of populations living under occupation or in areas affected by recent or ongoing conflict, the Section seeks to shine a spotlight on regional issues that require the concerted efforts of the entire United Nations community for their resolution. Recent examples of the ways in which ECRI has worked towards empowering member countries to reclaim opportunities for social and economic growth include research into the nexus between conflict and food insecurity, which underpinned the formulation of policy recommendations developed by the Section in 2010 to promote national food security; a study trip to Italy for Iraqi officials, which

provided exposure to successful Government models and practices; and efforts to support educational and Governmental institutions in building their ICT capacity, which contributed practical solutions for the more efficient use of local competence and expertise.

Achievements in 2010

Socio-economic repercussions of the Israeli occupation of Palestine

In 2010, ESCWA prepared the *Note of the Secretary General on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab Population in the occupied Syrian Golan* for presentation to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. The 2010 Note stressed that the Israeli occupation of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, continues to intensify the economic and social hardship of the Palestinian people. As highlighted in the Note, between February 2009 and February 2010, Israeli military operations caused the death of 85 Palestinians and injury of 845. Most of the casualties resulted from Israeli air strikes in the Gaza Strip. Movement has been restricted by the construction of the barrier wall, which had reached 58 per cent completion in February 2010, with a further 10 per cent under construction. Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip continue to suffer from the Israeli blockade, with many goods prevented entry, while in the West Bank, settlement activity continues in clear violation of the provisions of humanitarian laws, including article 55 of the Hague Regulations and article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The Note concluded by reiterating that the implementation of General Assembly resolution 64/185 (reaffirming the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people) and Economic and Social Council resolution 2009/34 (calling for the lifting of the severe restrictions) remains far from realization.

Impact of conflict and political tension on socio-economic development

At the twenty-sixth session of the Commission in 2010, ECRI presented a paper highlighting the impact that conflict and political tension have on socio-economic development, stressing that countries at the centre of conflict and instability in the ESCWA region experience even higher levels of destruction in their economic and human capital than countries in a similar situation in other regions. In a paper entitled *Impact of Conflict and Political Tension on the Socio-economic Development of the ESCWA Region*, ECRI stressed the need for efficient and capable public institutions, as their existence would make a significant difference to the success with which national and regional challenges are addressed. Enhancing the capacity of public institutions, as the following programmes demonstrate, should rest high among development priorities.

ICT in Education for Iraq project



In order to build sustainable capacity in the Iraqi Ministry of Education for the continuing improvement of the quality of teaching and learning, and with a view to enhancing the ICT skills and literacy of Ministry staff, teachers and students, ECRI led the ICT in Education for Iraq project (funded by the United Nations Development Group – Iraq Trust Fund), in partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and ministries in Baghdad and

the Kurdistan region. The project strengthened the institutional capacity of the Ministry to a level where it is now able to design, develop and distribute a variety of e-learning resources, along with an accompanying programme of professional development to assist teachers in using them effectively.

An ICT development centre, in which ICT training centre trainers were trained and certified on the International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL) curriculum and other e-packages, was established in Baghdad, while five ICT training centres were opened in the governorates of Baghdad, Basra, Erbil, Mosul and Najaf, and teachers were trained on the same material. In each of the five governorates, two pilot schools, one for girls and one for boys, were fully refurbished and equipped for leading the incorporation of the ICT in Education project into the Iraqi school curriculum. In addition, a mobile ICT training laboratory (E-Caravan) was constructed, equipped and made operational, to be used for travelling to remote rural communities to offer training courses and train teachers on the ICDL curriculum and other e-packages. Ten mobile laptop carts were built and two training workshops conducted to build the capacity of the Ministry of Education in designing and establishing new training centres and in installing and maintaining the physical and logistical infrastructure of local ICT networks.

Decentralization and local governance for Iraq

For the purpose of improving work efficiency and enhancing coordination, and with a view to ensuring effective local accountability, a situation analysis on decentralization and local governance, and a parallel capacity and gaps assessment were conducted at the level of municipal, district and governorate councils in Iraq. In this endeavour, ECRI relied primarily on national partners and counterparts from the public sector for implementation, thereby developing national

capacity to conduct analysis and assessments. The way in which local partners were chosen was significant, as it secured national ownership of the results and facilitated the development of nationally-owned and accepted recommendations. The results of the analysis enabled the identification of a series of policy recommendations to address major limitations and gaps restricting the efficient provision of services at the local level.

Capacity-building activities complemented the situation analysis and focused on providing senior officials with exposure to best practice in the field of decentralization and local governance. A study and networking visit for the transfer of expertise and knowledge in support of decentralization and local governance in Iraq was organized by ECRI to Turin, Italy, from 28 June to 1 July 2010, benefiting 19 senior officials and decision makers from central ministries and councils of governorates. The visit provided exposure for the officials to the Italian decentralized model of government and local governance practices within the city of Turin and the Piedmont region. The participants were also introduced to successful models for improving workflow and internal processes, with the aim of decentralizing decision-making and improving delivery of essential services. The study visit also strengthened the planning and management capacity needed to infuse local governance with innovative practices.

Food security and conflict in the ESCWA region

Food security has long posed an economic and political challenge for the countries of the ESCWA region. In recent years, the cereal import share of the region as a percentage of total consumption has regularly ranged between 40 and 50 per cent, reaching as much as 70 per cent in Iraq and Yemen, and even more in Lebanon and Palestine. The regional food import bill is close to five per cent of national income. Agricultural productivity in many countries in the region is relatively low, due

in part to limited research and development, and the lack of efficient essential services. The combination of a limited economic resource base and low productivity levels means that most member countries continue to be vulnerable to weather and commodity price shocks.

In 2010, the Section conducted a study entitled *Food Security and Conflict in the ESCWA Region*, which argued that the nexus between conflict and food insecurity could be broken through the provision of new economic opportunities resulting from greater regional cooperation. Conflict-affected countries do not have the fiscal space or public administrative capacity needed to finance and introduce targeted food security within comprehensive social assistance programmes, while prevailing political constraints prevent existing barriers between ruling elites and disenfranchised factions within society from being easily dismantled. The study found that in view of the regional dimension of many of the threats to food security, the potential benefits from investment in food security are greater when taking advantage of regional cooperation, and this in turn requires a regional solution in line with the principle of subsidiarity.

Outlook

Governance deficit and conflict relapse

During 2011, ECRI will publish a study on governance deficit and conflict relapse in the ESCWA region. The study, to be presented at an expert group meeting (Beirut, 31 May 2011), will contend that the lack of good governance practices is one of the most prominent root causes and drivers of primary conflict and relapse into conflict – particularly in the case of civil strife – while also stunting socio-economic and political development. Good governance, on the other hand, is a conduit for reconciliation and lasting stability, and a catalyst for sustainable

development. The study will therefore propose a new governance paradigm, emphasizing the efficient delivery of public services as a tool for building State legitimacy, strengthening institutions and engaging conflicting parties in constructive dialogue.

The nexus between conflict and the Millennium Development Goals

A study on conflict and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will be published in 2011 and presented at an expert group meeting (Beirut, 31 May 2011) prior to publication in July. The study will investigate the nexus between conflict and the MDGs through the use of a composite index, prepared primarily to engage stakeholders in a discussion on the connection, prior to reporting on the cost of conflict and the efficacy of MDG-friendly budgets.

Civic values and life skills

In 2011, the Section will initiate a perception assessment on civic values and life skills within the Promoting Civic Values and Life Skills through Education for Adolescents (12-19 years) Project. The survey will target youth, parents, educators, school administrators and legislators in four governorates in an attempt to identify the factors which undermine nation-building, citizenship, tolerance, human rights and gender equity. The planned perception assessments, encompassing focus group discussions and interviews with stakeholders, will provide the Government of Iraq and United Nations implementing partners with primary data on the perceptions and hindrances that impede the development of civic identity among Iraqi youth. The results of the survey will be used to design specific sensitization and capacity-building interventions to help create a sense of civic identity among Iraqi youth and provide guidance for the development of a dedicated action plan for the promotion of civic values and life skills in Iraq.



Programme Support



Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation

In 2010, ESCWA took concrete steps to increase strategic planning, both within the organization and across the region. Internally, ESCWA instituted collective processes for the design and review of the strategic framework; developed a system to increase monitoring of budget expenditure and programme implementation; issued a new and revised evaluation policy in line with the most up-to-date global standards; undertook an evaluation of the ESCWA intergovernmental mechanism; and worked with other divisions within the Commission and in cooperation with national statistical offices, regional United Nations agencies and the League of Arab States to increase statistical coordination across the region.

Through its technical cooperation programme, ESCWA interacts with its member countries, responding directly to their needs with expertise and services, whether in the form of pilot field projects, policy advice or capacity-building activities, all of which in turn inform ESCWA research and analysis. The technical cooperation programme bridges the gap between normative and operational work,

providing a channel for the realization of concepts and policy recommendations. In 2010, ESCWA revamped the coordination process, introducing holistic, integrated technical cooperation plans; improved coordination with United Nations agencies at the country level; organized multidisciplinary advisory missions; and produced an updated and revised technical cooperation website and menu.

Through its role as the convener of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for the Arab States (RCM), ESCWA made it a priority in 2010 to reach out to a wider group of regional development partners than ever before. In an effort to enhance interregional cooperation, policy cohesion on priority issues and partnership building, the fourteenth RCM meeting (Beirut, 11-12 November 2010), which was convened under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, focused on the potential and role of Arab Youth in poverty reduction, and included high-level participation by more than 30 United Nations organizations, the League of Arab States, the International



Monetary Fund and the Islamic Development Bank. The participation of these high-profile international actors is the result of consistent efforts by ESCWA to reach out to regional stakeholders to bolster the effectiveness of United Nations discussions on economic and social development, and regional priority issues in particular. As recommended, a Civil Society Advisory Board is being formed, providing a platform for civil society organizations to provide input and critical assessment of the work of the United Nations in the region.

Reaching out to other partners within Western Asia and beyond also included participation in the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) through the Peer Support Group and the review of five United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and Common Country Assessments in the region. The Commission also contributed to the development of the UNDG Arab States two-year Regional Strategic Action Plan on Young People through membership in the Inter-agency Technical Task Team on Young People.

Areas of work

Joint programme and budget monitoring system

In 2010, ESCWA developed a joint programme and budget monitoring system, the first of its kind in the United Nations, which will be launched in April 2011 with the overall aim of increasing the efficiency and impact of ESCWA programmes and activities. The objectives of this monitoring tool are to: (a) create links between programme performance reporting and budget performance reporting in line with results-based budgeting; (b) improve cost information for the preparation of budgets; (c) increase accountability; (d) improve cost control; (e) empower divisional directors to manage available resources more efficiently; and (f) improve the overall performance of

ESCWA, providing an environment conducive to a smooth transition to the soon-to-be launched United Nations-wide Enterprise Resource Planning system.

Revised ESCWA evaluation policy

The ESCWA evaluation policy has recently been revised in the light of changes to the United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards, and was reissued in September 2010, containing a complete tool kit for all substantive staff to use as a guide when conducting evaluations at all levels. The policy emphasizes accountability, credibility and continuous learning as its fundamental principles. In an effort to systematize the sharing of knowledge between ESCWA divisions, these evaluations will be centrally managed by PPTCD and cover the full scope of each of the seven subprogrammes, focusing on the linkage between programme objectives, expected accomplishments, workplan and impact.

Funding technical cooperation

Technical cooperation resources include funds under the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation (RPTC), extrabudgetary resources and the Development Account. Resources from RPTC allow the organization to move swiftly in response to member country demands for policy advisory and technical cooperation services. Six full-time regional advisors represent ESCWA in the areas of social policy, the Millennium Development Goals, national accounts and economic statistics, environment and water, information and communications technology, and the empowerment and advancement of women. Responsiveness to the needs of member countries culminated in servicing 141 requests in 2010, including eight training workshops, three fellowships and 106 advisory missions.

In 2010, ESCWA sought to expand its portfolio of technical cooperation development projects,

reviewing 34 projects and succeeding in attracting US\$5.82 million in new funding for extrabudgetary projects and US\$2.9 million for Development Account projects. Seeking to expand its partnership base, ESCWA entered into collaborative activities with regional development partners including the United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Children's Fund, International Labour Organization, United Nations Development Fund for Women, Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations, the Arab Urban Development Institute, Islamic Development Bank, United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the United Nations Office for Project Services.

Achievements in 2010

Systematic coordination with United Nations agencies at the country level

In its efforts to increase the impact of technical advisory services in member countries, ESCWA has made it a priority and a policy to coordinate with resident United Nations agencies on the ground, capitalizing on human and financial resources while fulfilling the goal of the United Nations to "Deliver as One" in fruitful cooperation on specific multisectoral projects. Recent examples include cooperation with the International Labour Organization in Bahrain on a project assisting the Ministry of Labour to document and improve its labour market reform policies, and with the United Nations Development Programme in Jordan on the development of a multidimensional poverty index.

Technical Cooperation Menu and portal

As part of its efforts to reach out to member countries and ensure that services and activities respond optimally to their identified priorities, ESCWA has fully refurbished its

web portal on technical cooperation and produced advocacy material to support countries in accessing technical cooperation activities. The website for the Technical Cooperation Network (www.escwa.un.org/divisions/pptcd/TCnetwork) offers users up-to-date information on ESCWA advisory services and capacity-building activities, forms, reports and evaluations. It also features a password-protected gateway providing focal points in member countries with access to past mission reports and resource material. The ESCWA Technical Cooperation Menu provides member country officials with a quick overview of the various advisory and training activities supported by the Commission.

Multidisciplinary missions

In 2010, ESCWA undertook two high-level multidisciplinary missions to the Sudan and Yemen, the two least developed countries in the region, in an effort to ensure a more holistic approach to technical cooperation. These missions mobilized a number of regional advisors and staff, and were closely coordinated with the respective embassies in Beirut. In Yemen, the ESCWA mission resulted in concrete plans for a coordinated plan of action on the MDG Fast Track being agreed with the United Nations Country Team in Sana'a, and the contribution of the mission to the five-year socio-economic development plan was adopted by the Government. The mission also led to greater awareness by national stakeholders of the breadth and scope of the technical cooperation activities offered by ESCWA.

Outlook

Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation

In 2011, the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation will launch the RPTC Activities Tracker System, in cooperation with the ESCWA Information and Communication

Systems Section, in order to improve the management and monitoring of advisory services requested by member countries. The new system will enhance the capacity of ESCWA in monitoring and reporting on the status of requests, promote information sharing and create further opportunities for information sharing and interdisciplinary work in carrying out technical cooperation activities.

Regional Coordination Mechanism

Two RCM meetings are planned for 2011, one on transition to democracy (Beirut, 1 June 2011) and another (17-18 November 2011) on climate change and preparations for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), to be held in 2012. In addition, ESCWA will continue its engagement through the regional undg and the Peer Support Group, with the review of the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks for Jordan and the Sudan. The Commission will also seek to conclude strategic agreements with the United Nations

Population Fund, the Islamic Development Bank and the League of Arab States. These multi-year agreements will be developed in response to the need for consistent and substantive engagement with key regional stakeholders in order to enhance economic and social development in the region.

Country profiles

In 2011, ESCWA will develop a country profile for each of its member countries, taking into account national priorities and identifying areas for potential support and research. The country profiles will consolidate up-to-date political, economic and social development information and data in one short reference document, identifying key development challenges and successes, and highlighting areas of potential ESCWA thematic and interdisciplinary support. The profiles will describe the United Nations and donor development framework in each country, identify stakeholders, summarize past ESCWA activities and achievements, and highlight activities for the coming year.

Roberto Laurenti

Director, Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Division



The Administrative Services Division provides advice to the Executive Secretary on policy guidelines, monitors the management reform process and coordinates central common services. It also represents the United Nations in negotiations with the host country on issues relating to the implementation of the headquarters agreement. The Division is the enabler and facilitator of the substantive work of the Commission, underpinning the efficient implementation of its substantive mandate in the region, responding to the needs of its staff and contributing to the success of its programme of work. Its services are provided through several distinct sections and functional areas.

Human Resources

The Human Resources Management Section provides policy advice and services to client managers and staff members of ESCWA within the established staff regulations, rules and procedures of the United Nations, and develops local human resources (HR) policies. The Section comprises four distinct functional areas: recruitment, benefits and entitlements, training and staff development, and medical services. It is responsible for drafting administrative and policy documents on matters such as performance management, biennial HR budget submission, consultants, internships, overtime and recruitment; recruiting the best-qualified candidates to serve in the Commission, including those who have passed national and specialized competitive examinations; collaborating on training matters with peacekeeping missions in Lebanon and the broader region; and providing performance management advice to managers and staff members.

General Services

The General Services Section provides client-oriented support services in the areas of facilities management, travel, visas and shipping, property and inventory control, insurance and claims, mail, archives and records management, and coordination of operational services. The Section proactively implements and monitors greening initiatives, including energy-saving measures and recycling activities, for a greener United Nations under the mandate of the Secretary-General to combat climate change.

Conference Services

The Conference Services Section presents the work of the Commission to member countries, Governments and civil society through the provision of documents, publications and conferences. Its professional services are wide-ranging and client-oriented, covering the practical organization of intergovernmental meetings, expert group meetings and workshops in Beirut and elsewhere in the region, and the processing of documents and publications produced by the substantive divisions. It supports, promotes and disseminates the work of the Commission.

Information and Communication Systems

The Information and Communication Systems Section supports the substantive, administrative and management processes of the Commission by providing innovative technological solutions and maintaining the ICT infrastructure of the organization. Working within the framework of the United Nations ICT policy, the ongoing objective of the section is to introduce applications to enhance business process automation and improve business efficiency.

Security and Safety

The Security and Safety Services Section, the largest and most visible section at ESCWA, is responsible for preventive and protective measures to guarantee the safety and security of United Nations House, the United Nations staff, and delegates and participants in conferences, meetings and other events held by the Commission and other United Nations agencies.

Budget and Finance

The Budget and Finance Section is responsible for the provision of sound budgetary, financial

and accounting management of the funds available to the Commission, which in 2010 amounted to US\$55.7 million. Of this figure, US\$47.7 million was approved by the General Assembly under the United Nations regular budget for the regular programme of work, safety and security, Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation and Development Account projects of the Commission, and the remainder was received in the form of voluntary contributions from various donors to support the implementation of a number of technical cooperation and capacity-building activities. Further information on ESCWA funding can be found in the 'Inside ESCWA' section of this report.

David Iyamah

Director, Administrative Services Division



The United Nations Information Services (UNIS) belong to the public information network that supports the work of the United Nations and its agencies, programmes and funds. In addition to information services, this network includes United Nations Information Centres and Offices, operating in 63 countries worldwide. The mission of UNIS is to link the United Nations with people around the world, disseminating United Nations messages to audiences locally and internationally. UNIS is also an active member of the United Nations Communications Group common communications platform in Lebanon, whose function is to strengthen inter-agency cooperation in the field of communications and enhance the media profile of United Nations projects and activities at the national level.

Guided by a coordinated communications strategy that mirrors the strategic priorities of ESCWA, UNIS reinforces the impact and image of the Commission, publicizing issues, events and projects undertaken in its member countries. Visibility of information assumes added importance in a region characterized by disparity, conflict and rapid change. Through its media outreach, UNIS provides a comprehensive range of public information services to accompany and support the work of ESCWA in fields including sustainable development, energy, agriculture, water

resources, conflict-related issues, gender issues, information technology, social development, statistics, transport and finance.

The information team builds and maintains close and solid contacts with national, regional and international media outlets, disseminating background information, press materials and media advisories, placing op-ed articles and feature reports, arranging interviews, and organizing press conferences and briefings on a wide range of topics and themes. Working with all the divisions and sections of the Commission, UNIS releases regular information products that serve its outreach goal by providing a constant reminder of the presence of ESCWA in the fields of economic and social development.

By providing reliable, up-to-date information to a wide range of audiences across the ESCWA region, UNIS promotes the work of the Commission to journalists, Government officials, decision makers, legislators, civil society representatives, students, educators and researchers. Whether at the level of the host country or the region as a whole, UNIS is the voice of ESCWA in the media.

Bahaa ElKoussy

Director, United Nations Information Centre – Beirut



2010

in pictures





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1. Arab Water Day (2 March)
2. Completion of the project on knowledge networks through ICT access points for disadvantaged communities (31 December)
3. Celebrating the tenth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on Women and Peace and Security (25 October)
4. Twenty-sixth session of the Commission (19 May)
5. Signing of memorandum of understanding for Italy to join ESCWA as an observer (30 September)
6. Appointment of Ms. Rima Khalaf as Executive Secretary of ESCWA (15 November)
7. Celebration of the first World Statistics Day (20 October)
8. ICT in Education for Iraq project (9 December)

