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Executive Committee
Third meeting
Rabat, 6-7 May 2017

Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda

Follow-up issues

**Implementation of recommendations made by the Executive Committee
at its second meeting**

Summary

The Executive Committee of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) holds three meetings biennially and a fourth meeting if necessary, following consultations with the ESCWA secretariat and the Chair of the Committee. It holds its meetings once only in years when ESCWA convenes its session, and twice in years when ESCWA does not hold a session. The Committee held its first meeting in Amman on 8 and 9 June 2015, and its second meeting in Amman from 14 to 16 December 2015, attended by representatives of ESCWA member States. Participants agreed on a set of recommendations and proposals, some related to items on the Committee's agenda and others linked to the nature of the Committee's work and its operationalization.

The present document sets out the measures and activities undertaken by the ESCWA secretariat to implement the recommendations made by the Committee at its second meeting.

**RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
AT ITS SECOND MEETING AND MEASURES
TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THEM**

At the close of its second meeting, held in Amman from 14 to 16 December 2015, the Executive Committee issued a set of recommendations and proposals, some related to items on the Committee's agenda and others linked to the nature of the Committee's work and its operationalization. The present document reviews these recommendations and the measures taken to implement them.

Recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat

Recommendation (a)

To help member States to implement the 2030 Agenda by assisting in the examination of links between its goals and targets, in order to identify areas of common interest to member States, enhance their capacity to incorporate those goals effectively into their national strategies and provide multiple avenues for their achievement.

Implementation

ESCWA held its twenty-ninth session on implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab States. It prepared a document on this issue, with contributions from internal and external experts, and held three round-table discussions to consider it. The round-table discussions tackled the challenges of implementing the 2030 Agenda in Arab countries; the impact of conflict and occupation; and ways and tools to assist countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda over the next 15 years. The session adopted the Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which reflects regional agreement on the Agenda's means of implementation at the national level.

The Commission considered the interconnections between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and member States' priorities through items on the agenda of the sessions of its subsidiary committees held since the ESCWA twenty-ninth session, namely the seventeenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics, the first session of the Committee on Technology for Development and the twelfth session of the Committee on Water.

Recommendation (b)

To build the capacity of member States to monitor progress on achieving the SDGs, generate relevant statistics and ensure the consistency of indicators listed in the regional SDG monitoring framework, for use in the domestic policy of (but not limited to) conflict-affected States.

Implementation

ESCWA has prepared a first evaluation on the availability of data to monitor progress in achieving the SDGs over the period September-November 2016, and presented its outcome during discussions on the main theme of the ministerial session, "Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab States". From December 2016 to January 2017, ESCWA conducted a second evaluation focusing on data from national sources and ways to support national capacity to provide such data. The findings of this evaluation were discussed in detail at the twelfth session of the ESCWA Statistical Committee, held in April 2017, which resulted in guidance to member States on required national measures.

ESCWA is also implementing a programme funded by the United Nations Development Account on statistics and data, based on the following four pillars to build statistical capacity for the SDGs: (a) statistical infrastructure and the management of official statistics; (b) statistics on natural resources and the environment;

(c) population, demographic and social statistics, including on peace and security; and (d) economic statistics. In April 2017, a workshop was held on implementing the SDG indicator framework.

In collaboration with regional and international partners, an evaluation was conducted on the formulation of a strategy to develop statistics in view of the 2030 Agenda in Egypt and Jordan.

ESCWA continued to provide bilateral technical assistance and workshops on building capacity to collect basic data on SDG indicators. From January 2016 to March 2017, regional workshops were held on registering civil status and vital statistics; disability statistics; population and household censuses; short-term economic indicators; water, environment and climate change statistics; and sustainable energy statistics.

ESCWA has participated in the first stages of long-term bilateral projects on developing statistical capacity in the following fields:

- Registering the civil status and vital statistics of Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon (extrabudgetary);
- Strengthening cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund to provide technical assistance to the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics, in view of an analysis of priority areas that must be tackled;
- Operationalizing a working group under the United Nations team in Lebanon to provide data on the SDGs and offer assistance to the Central Administration of Statistics.

In October 2016, ESCWA published a booklet on transforming towards the SDGs in the Arab region, based on the key findings of the Millennium Development Goals Report 2016.

Recommendation (c)

To support the efforts of member States, especially those affected by conflict, to address technology for development and implement the technology aspects of the 2030 Agenda, in particular the technology bank, intellectual property rights bank, innovative initiatives platform and technology facilitation mechanism.

Implementation

ESCWA prepared working papers on technology and implementing the 2030 Agenda, which were discussed with member States at the first session of the Committee on Technology for Development. The papers addressed the features of innovation in the Arab region, international and regional processes on information and communications technology for development, the digital economy and the shift towards smart societies, and an ESCWA project to improve technology transfer systems in Arab countries. The objective was to encourage Arab decision makers to cooperate with the international and regional communities on science, technology and innovation issues, and to focus on these topics in national development policies to achieve the SDGs.

Recommendation (d)

To provide support for the preparation of national strategies and plans, the development of national science, technology and innovation systems, bearing in mind the link between those strategies and national endeavours to implement the 2030 Agenda in accordance with the priorities and challenges of each country.

Implementation

ESCWA recently prepared a study on an innovation policy framework for inclusive sustainable development in Arab countries. The study provides Arab countries with a comprehensive framework to formulate innovation policies that support economic growth and contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda. The proposed framework assists decision makers in facing innovation system challenges in Arab countries, and adapting national innovation policies to achieve the SDGs. This study is directly linked to SDGs 8, 9 and 17, and also covers SDGs 1, 5, 7, 12 and 14.

Under the project on developing institutional capacity, funded by the United Nations Development Account, ESCWA is preparing a political framework for open government to increase transparency and accountability in the public sector in Arab countries. The framework focuses on the importance of openness and the participation of citizens and non-governmental organizations in government decision-making processes, and is linked to SDGs 16 and 17.

Recommendation (e)

To present the member States with an annual report addressing the implementation of the financing for development workplan and technology support.

Implementation

The importance of financing for development increased following the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. Since then, ESCWA has implemented 34 activities, including providing technical contributions to two global reports; preparing three regional flagship publications; drafting three analytical policy briefs; conducting two evaluations to assess financing gaps and estimate the cost of financing the SDGs; preparing a draft report on illicit financial flows and trade exchange in the Arab region; and organizing two expert group meetings. ESCWA has prepared a detailed report on these issues, set out in document E/ESCWA/2017/EC.3/4(Part III), which will be presented to member States at the current meeting.

Recommendation (f)

To support States emerging from and affected by conflict in their efforts to boost their resilience, address development challenges and navigate the post-conflict phases of reconstruction, reconciliation and institution building. Such support may come in the form of technical and normative assistance to develop reconciliation plans and mechanisms, and examination of past experiences of national dialogue and the lessons to be learned from them. In that way it can be determined how best to enhance development, build institutions and foster social cohesion through the inclusion of local communities in to economic and social life, including, for example, through the study of the potential cost of reconstruction.

Implementation

ESCWA has prepared a comparative study on early warning systems to prevent conflict, and presented practical recommendations on establishing such systems. These processes entail systemically collecting and analysing data to identify threats related to violent conflict, evaluate them and develop response strategies. Early warning systems also enable decision makers to be aware of potential violent conflicts, their escalation and re-emergence, and to understand their phenomena, dynamics and effects.

Iraq

At the Iraqi Government's request and in support of local actors and decentralization in three Iraqi governorates, a workshop on the nationalization of SDGs will be held from 15 to 17 May 2017. It aims to build technical capacities of Iraqi stakeholders in the education and health sectors to expand the scope of public services in line with the 2030 Agenda.

ESCWA prepared a study that reviewed decentralization in Iraq and included recommendations on strengthening institutional structures for administrative reform.

ESCWA is also supporting the Government of Iraq in developing plans to implement the SDGs. It organized a workshop on adapting the 2030 Agenda and promoting good governance, and the role of inclusive and accountable institutions in development (SDG 16).

From 21 to 23 February 2017, ESCWA organized a workshop to discuss the various reasons of displacement and relevant response mechanisms in Iraq. This workshop addressed challenges and obstacles associated with the refugee crisis, and requirements for an effective response plan. It suggested solutions and recommendations on an effective mechanism to integrate the displaced persons into their host communities, ensure favourable conditions for their return to their homes, where possible, and devise a permanent plan to respond to the refugee crisis under the Iraqi national strategy for sustainable development.

Palestine

ESCWA held a workshop on SDGs, building partnerships for the empowerment of the State of Palestine, and promoting South-South and triangular cooperation in accordance with SDG 17. This workshop, attended by officials from the State of Palestine, was co-organized by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on 27 and 28 April 2017, in Beirut. It aimed to support the Palestinian Government in implementing the SDGs and is expected to promote a common understanding of the importance of South-South and triangular cooperation to facilitate the implementation of SDGs in Palestine. Participants reviewed practical tools and methods to explore the challenges and opportunities of this type of partnerships.

Libya

ESCWA devised a project on social and economic dialogue in Libya, which provides stakeholders with an inclusive platform to formulate strategies on the achievement of sustainable social and economic development in spite of structural challenges. These challenges include establishing a new social contract and advancing the sustainable development framework.

ESCWA also held a meeting on 26 and 27 April in Beirut to discuss the long-term impact of conflict in Libya. Participants highlighted key social and economic challenges hindering the recovery of Libyan society, short- and long-term priorities, and institutional development impediments.

Yemen

At the request of the Government of Yemen, a meeting was held on 24 and 25 November 2016 in Cairo and was attended by six ministers. It helped to devise a detailed programme for dialogue and capacity-building of stakeholders to achieve reconciliation and transition. Another meeting is scheduled to take place in May 2017 to discuss matters including the following: mitigating the impact of war on future generations and the life cycle; identifying the required institutional and human capacities and mechanisms at the centralized and decentralized levels; and developing a framework for the communication strategy needed to support reconstruction, recovery and implementation of national dialogue outcomes.

Recommendation (g)

To deepen overall assessment of the impact of conflict, crises and occupation on affected member States, including measurement of their short-term and generational impact, with a view to building the capacity of those States, and their institutions and peoples, to face challenges, and bolstering the long-term risk-assessment and crisis and conflict analysis capacity of State institutions. Such assessments would also identify shortcomings in those institutions.

Implementation

On 16 September 2016, ESCWA organized, in partnership with the American University of Beirut, a conference on the “Socio-economic ramifications of conflict: life cycle approach. Recent research and implications for the Arab region”. It addressed the impact of conflict on health, education, employment and poverty adopting the life-cycle assessment framework. It also highlighted the latest research findings of prominent academics and experts in various fields to build on their outcome and infer political lessons for Arab conflict-affected countries. These findings included identifying country vulnerabilities, developing the best protection programmes, meeting urgent needs and addressing the most pressing post-conflict issues.

On 13 October 2016, ESCWA organized the seventh annual conference of the GIFT-MENA Network on governance, vulnerability and sustainable development. It also moderated a panel discussion on development assistance and support for public administrations in fragile contexts. Discussions focused on the most recent strategic trends and the modus operandi of development partners in supporting the core functions of public administration and developing human capital.

ESCWA also conducted a study on the long-term impact of conflict on human development throughout the life cycle in Arab conflict-affected countries such as Iraq and Yemen. The objective is to deepen understanding of the most pressing development challenges facing the Arab region and its future.

Furthermore, ESCWA is conducting a study on the impact of conflict on SDGs and is estimating indicator baselines using the latest microdata from household surveys available in Arab countries. Indicator baselines cover all SDGs and provide national and subnational estimates of key indicators in several sectors, such as health, education and labour markets, to identify priorities for intervention. An additional baseline is also estimated to monitor progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

ESCWA prepared a quantitative analysis report on post-conflict risks using data on various post-civil war periods in the world since 1970, to identify risk factors that may revive civil war.

In mid-2017, ESCWA will conduct a study on development and protection of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, based on surveys carried out by the Danish Refugee Council and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Recommendation (h)

To step up efforts in support of the Palestinian people and monitor Israeli violations of international law and their economic and social repercussions, including by:

- (1) Intensifying efforts to analyse and measure the comprehensive and cumulative cost of the Israeli occupation since 1967, improve cooperation and coordination with the Palestinian Government and all concerned regional and international stakeholders, and seek to procure the necessary extrabudgetary resources;
- (2) Presenting the results of the study on the extent to which Israeli policies regarding the Palestinians can be considered apartheid as defined by international law, and its implications in terms of recommendations, to the member States during the twenty-ninth session of ESCWA;
- (3) Welcoming the communications strategy outline of the ESCWA secretariat aimed at raising awareness of the Palestinian people’s rights and Israeli violations of them, and request that the secretariat develop the outline more fully.

Implementation

ESCWA submitted three reports to the twenty-ninth ministerial session under the agenda item entitled “Justice for the Palestinian people: Fifty years of Israeli occupation”. These reports addressed the question of apartheid, premises for calculating the comprehensive and cumulative cost of occupation, and the media and communication strategy in support of the Palestinian people. In April 2016, in partnership with Birzeit University, ESCWA conducted a study entitled “A People in Danger: Effects on Health of the 2014 Israeli Offensive on the Gaza Strip”. ESCWA also prepared the annual 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 of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan. It is currently conducting a study on Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and the role of employment in protracted refugee situations, in addition to other activities (see report on the implementation of Doha Declaration and the resolutions of the twenty-ninth ministerial session).

In support of the Palestinian Water Authority and the League of Arab States, ESCWA organized the international conference on “Arab water under occupation” from 26 to 28 October 2016 in Cairo.

Recommendation (i)

To continue to build the capacity of Arab States with regard to climate change by preparing studies and training workshops in the light of the outcome of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP-21), embodied in the Paris Agreement, and in particular with regard to implementation of activities contained in reports on national contributions to emissions reduction, financing and technology transfer.

Implementation

ESCWA is supporting member States in coordinating their climate change response and disaster risk reduction efforts at the national and regional levels. The secretariat organized three regional training workshops on capacity development for climate change negotiations for the Arab countries, in cooperation with other partners, in Cairo (3-6 April 2016), Rabat (25-29 September 2016) and Beirut (10-13 April 2017).

At its sessions held on 10 and 11 May 2016 in Abu Dhabi, and from 23 to 25 April 2017 in Cairo, the Arab Permanent Committee for Meteorology adopted recommendations that solicited the help of ESCWA in providing capacity-building support in the area of climate change and establishing the Arab Climate Outlook Forum (ArabCOF).

Recommendation (j)

To provide the support requested by Morocco for the preparation of the next Conference of Parties (COP-22), to be held in Marrakesh in November 2016, in coordination with the League of Arab States, the Arab negotiating group and the United Nations Environment Programme/Regional Office for West Asia (UNEP/ROWA) through training workshops and studies in partnership with stakeholders in the country.

Implementation

The ESCWA secretariat co-organized five high-level side events and gave presentations in seven meetings during the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 22), held from 8 to 18 November 2016 in Marrakech. An ESCWA delegation to the meetings discussed Arab challenges and priorities with regard to climate change, international obligations and means of implementation. ESCWA also participated in the organization of a side event that included a video presentation on hydro-climate services for all, and assisted in presentations made by the delegations of Jordan and the Sudan.

Recommendation (k)

To prepare an assessment of the expected impact of the climate change summit, including a quantitative study of its repercussions, and the extent of its influence on the capacity of member States to achieve other development goals, provided the necessary funding is available.

Implementation

Under the Climate Change Policy for a Resilient Water Sector, issued in February 2016, the Ministry of Water and Irrigation in Jordan adopted the outcomes of climate and hydrological modelling research by the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR), in coordination with ESCWA. Lebanon and Palestine also built on RICCAR outcomes in their reports to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Recommendation (l)

To also prepare a study on the link between the adverse effects of climate change and emerging conflicts in the Arab region in the light of the results of the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR).

Implementation

ESCWA is preparing a regional report on climate change impact assessment in the framework of RICCAR. The draft was presented at two expert group meetings, held in Beirut on 27 and 28 April 2016 and from 6 to 9 December 2016. The report, a technical annex and several technical papers will be launched at a high-level meeting on climate change assessment and adaptation in the Arab region, to be organized by ESCWA and its partners in September 2017.

ESCWA is also preparing for an expert group meeting that will be held in October 2017 to coordinate climate change response and disaster risk reduction in the Arab region. The secretariat is currently preparing the Water Development Report 7: Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction in the Arab Region.

Recommendation (m)

To extend support to member States in the area of international migration by raising awareness, training decision makers and fostering regional dialogue, and support their efforts to collect good quality data on migration in all its forms in order to ensure that policies are evidence-based.

Implementation

In November 2016, ESCWA organized an expert group meeting on migration and development in the Arab region from the perspective of SDGs. The meeting aimed to enhance regional dialogue on formulating policies that take into account the positive impact of migration on countries of origin and destination, and on migrants themselves. ESCWA also prepared background papers on migration trends and patterns, with a view to increasing knowledge of international migration issues, particularly forced migration.

Recommendation (n)

To reactivate the ESCWA Technical Cooperation Network, time its next meeting, if possible, with that of the Executive Committee, and review its draft new terms of reference and proposed workplan for the biennium 2016-2017 for presentation at the next meeting of the Network, prior to its submission to the Executive Committee for adoption.

Implementation

ESCWA organized the fifth Technical Cooperation Network meeting on 12 December 2016, in Doha, at the sidelines of its twenty-ninth ministerial session. The meeting was attended by representatives appointed by member States to serve as focal points for technical cooperation services. Agenda items included enhancing coordination and cooperation between Network members and ESCWA; and reviewing the terms of reference of the Network to ensure continuity and improve coordination with ESCWA. Resolution 328 (XXIX) on technical cooperation to meet the needs and priorities of member States was issued at the ministerial session, to which the meeting outcomes were submitted. The resolution called for revitalizing the Technical Cooperation Network in accordance with its updated terms of reference. It was also decided that the Technical Cooperation Network should convene annually and as appropriate, provided that it holds its meetings prior to those of the Executive Committee to which it will submit its recommendations.

Recommendation (o)

To carry out an independent assessment of the ESCWA Technical Cooperation Programme in 2017.

Implementation

The independent assessment of the Technical Cooperation Programme is expected to begin in the third quarter of 2017, owing to the delays in the collection of financial resources needed for the assessment, which was not included in action plans.
