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Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda

Follow-up issues

**Implementation of the Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda
for Sustainable Development in the Arab States, and the resolutions issued at the
twenty-ninth ESCWA session**

Summary

The present document sets out the actions taken by the secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to implement the Doha Declaration (Doha, 13-15 December 2016) and the recommendations adopted by ESCWA at its twenty-ninth session on various areas of work and issues concerning member States.

ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE SECRETARIAT

A. Doha Declaration

SUMMARY OF THE DOHA DECLARATION

1. In this Declaration, member States requested the ESCWA secretariat to undertake the following:

(a) Continue to produce informative material on the implementation of the Agenda at the national level, and to focus on local development requirements in rural and urban areas;

ESCWA is working on implementing, following up and reviewing the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. This project includes preparing manuals, guidelines and training material on implementing the 2030 Agenda, and organizing workshops to adapt the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and incorporate them into national plans.

ESCWA has taken the necessary steps to hold a workshop on social protection in rural areas to support capacity-building for SDGs 3.1 and 5.1. It is developing online interactive tools, including a database containing knowledge and expertise to provide decision-makers with a resource-rich platform on youth development. It will also prepare tools for decision-makers on incorporating population policies in development planning and on involving civil society in development.

With regard to reducing gender disparities, ESCWA is contributing to the preparation of guidance material, such as preparing policy briefs on women, peace and security and the role of national institutions (SDG 16), gender justice (SDG 16), combating violence against women in the Arab region by estimating its economic cost (Goal 5.2), and drafting a training manual on the global gender equality goals (SDG 5).

ESCWA has prepared reports on the SDGs related to energy, water and food, and technical material on a methodology to measure indicators for these SDGs.

(b) Prepare a concept paper on establishing an Arab forum for financing sustainable development in the region, which complements the role of the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development;

ESCWA is currently preparing the references for the concept paper, setting out the role, objective, membership and *modus operandi* of the forum, and the frequency of its meetings: simultaneously or consecutively with the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development or with an intergovernmental meeting on financing for development, or on the sidelines of the High-level Forum on Financing for Development. The concept paper will also include the proposed scenarios for potential institutional links with Arab development banks and funds and international financing institutions, and ways to ensure financing to guarantee the regularity of forum sessions, its sustainability, and the implementation of its recommendations to drive financing for development at the regional level.

The concept paper is expected to be completed before the thirtieth ESCWA session to be held in 2018. The paper's key elements or initial findings will be presented at an intergovernmental meeting on financing for development, to be held in October 2017, for amendment following comments and suggestions by member States.

(c) Prepare working papers on the interlinkages between the Agenda's economic, social, environmental, political/institutional and cultural dimensions and its 17 goals, and on the role of the various actors in its implementation, including Governments, civil society and the private sector;

ESCWA is taking the necessary steps to hold a workshop on social protection in emergency situations. A document prepared for the workshop focuses on the interconnections between SDGs 3.1 and 4.

The Sustainable Development Policies Division is broadening the scope of its reports to tackle the SDGs by focusing on links between economic, social, environmental and institutional dimensions.

ESCWA has prepared working papers on the 2030 Agenda, including the following:

- Outcomes of a roundtable discussion on women, social transformations and decision-making (SDGs 5 and 16);
- Outcomes of a regional meeting on women's participation in peace building processes, including the Beirut appeal on prioritizing women's issues, peace and security on the Arab agenda (SDGs 15 and 16);
- A study on violence against women in the Arab region (SDG 5.2);
- A study on an economic model to calculate the economic cost of violence against women in the Arab region (SDG 5.2);
- A study on gender justice in the Arab region (SDG 15);
- A study on women's political participation in the Arab region (SDG 5.5);
- A study on development plans and strategies for Arab women with regard to the Millennium Development Goals (SDG 5).

A report was reviewed and discussed at the twelfth session of the Statistical Committee (Beirut, 4-5 April 2017) on data from national sources and on tackling the various dimensions and interconnections.

ESCWA is preparing a policy framework on open government towards increased public sector transparency and accountability in Arab countries. The framework focuses on the importance of openness and participation of citizens and non-governmental organizations in government decision-making processes. This framework is linked to SDGs 16 and 17.

ESCWA will hold the High-level Arab Forum on the World Summit on the Information Society and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the United Nations House in Beirut, from 8 to 12 May 2017. A document is being prepared on joint issues between the information society and the SDGs, notably information society infrastructure, information society Horizon 2030, and Internet governance in the Arab region.

ESCWA has held expert group meetings on methodologies to achieve the SDGs in the water and energy sectors at the global, regional and national levels, and an expert group meeting on interactions between science and policies to promote green technologies.

(d) Develop approaches that facilitate incorporating and adapting the Agenda and its Goals and targets nationally and regionally, including an approach to identify sets of interlinked goals drawn from national priorities, so as to ensure effectiveness and efficiency; and implement programmes to build national capacity and transfer knowledge to benefit from regional and international initiatives;

An overview of a regional workplan on SDG-related statistics and data was presented to the Statistical Committee. The workplan focused on coordination between policymaking institutions and statistical systems, and on adapting the SDG indicator framework to assimilate national specificities and tackle shortfalls, in line with specified priorities.

The project on implementing, following up and reviewing the 2030 Agenda comprises activities such as a training workshop at the regional level on implementing the Agenda, implementing the United Nations

Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030, and providing advisory services to member States on incorporating the SDGs in national development plans and strategies, upon request.

ESCWA had prepared a study on a policy framework on innovation for inclusive sustainable development in Arab countries. The study sets out a comprehensive framework for formulating innovation policies that support economic growth and achieve the 2030 Agenda. The study reviews best practices and innovation experiences in developed countries and emerging economies, and considers innovation in Arab countries and its direct link to most SDGs.

ESCWA is also preparing guidelines on open government in Arab countries, based on a proposed policy framework to increase public sector transparency and accountability in Arab countries. These guidelines will assist decision-makers in implementing national, local and institutional strategies on open data to achieve optimal interaction between decision-makers, citizens and civil society for inclusive development. ESCWA will also prepare a study on innovation in the public sector.

In the period between Executive Committee meetings, ESCWA completed the following two online training sessions:

- Energy statistics: on energy production and consumption, focusing on international statistical recommendations and the linkages between the environment (climate change) and sustainable energy;
- Gender statistics: a multi-unit training session, which begins with basic concepts and tackles numerous techniques and approaches related to gender statistics. The training session is interactive, complemented by a training manual to hone skills.

(e) Continue to develop analysis tools that assist in determining interlinkages between goals, in accordance with country specificities and national plans, including network analysis, modelling and forecasting; and work with member States to build capacity in this field;

ESCWA has provided assistance to member States on modelling activities, especially in Mauritania and the Sudan.

(f) Build national capacity to prepare reports on progress achieved in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, and disseminate existing approaches to drafting such reports;

ESCWA follows the efforts of member States in this field at the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development, and other specialized activities. In the field of statistics, interventions were identified to build capacity based on an ESCWA evaluation of statistics and data availability.

ESCWA is implementing a United Nations Development Account programme on statistics and data. The programme comprises the following four pillars to build statistical capacity for the SDGs: statistical infrastructure and official statistics governance; natural resources and environmental statistics; population, demographic and social statistics, including on peace and security; and economic statistics. In April 2017, ESCWA organized a workshop to implement the SDG indicator framework.

ESCWA has participated in the initial stages of long-term bilateral projects on building statistical capacity in the following areas:

- Registering the civil status and vital statistics of Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon (extrabudgetary);

- Strengthening cooperation between the United Nations Population Fund and ESCWA to provide technical assistance to the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics. Following a fact-finding mission, an analysis was completed on priority areas to be tackled;
- Operationalizing a working group under the United Nations country team in Lebanon to provide data on the SDGs and offer assistance to the Central Administration of Statistics.

A committee on gender equality and the SDGs was established, and undertook two training sessions on mainstreaming gender equality in national strategies and on developing national indicators. Mauritania has received technical support on incorporating SDG 5 in its national strategies. The Lebanese Council for Women has received technical support to apply the SDGs, achieve social justice, and strengthen the role of civil society in achieving these targets, and of the Lebanese Ministry of Women's Affairs in developing a national strategy on women (SDG 5). The Syrian Arab Republic has received technical assistance to incorporate SDG 5 into its national strategies.

(g) Assist Arab countries in developing appropriate institutional arrangements and coordination mechanisms between entities in national statistical offices, so as to improve efficiency in monitoring and evaluating progress in implementing the SDGs and their targets;

ESCWA is cooperating with the Government of Morocco to continue developing and improving institutional arrangements and statistical monitoring systems for the implementation of disability-related SDGs. It is also providing advice on development planning and the establishment of national committees to follow up on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

ESCWA guidance has focused on the need to establish links between statistical offices and policymaking institutions by holding workshops and expert group meetings attended by energy experts and persons with special needs, and to develop statistics on water and climate change.

(h) Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the availability of good quality statistics for use in preparing indicators to measure progress in achieving the SDGs, in collaboration and coordination with the secretariat of the Arab Working Group on Environment and Sustainable Development Indicators and national statistical offices;

ESCWA has conducted a preliminary evaluation on the availability of data for monitoring progress towards achieving SDGs, with a focus on data from national sources. The evaluation's outcomes were discussed at the twelfth session of the ESCWA Statistical Committee and a subsequent, providing guidance to member States on actions to be taken at the national level. The evaluation also identified capacity-building intervention areas.

(i) Identify a narrow set of indicators, based on national and regional priorities while taking into account the capacity of Arab countries to provide the necessary indicators in line with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and international standards, so as to periodically monitor the achievement of SDGs.

ESCWA is organizing regional workshops to identify regional priorities and issues where further knowledge and consultation are needed. It has addressed SDG indicators in the following subgroups:

- Task force on key indicators of the International Conference on Population and Development, in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund;
- The League of Arab States task group on sustainable development indicators in the Arab region;
- ESCWA technical advisory group on demographic and social statistics.

B. Resolutions adopted by the Commission at its twenty-ninth session

323 (XXIX) Adoption of the strategic framework for the biennium 2018-2019

Summary of the resolution

2. In this resolution, the Commission endorsed the draft strategic framework for the biennium 2018-2019, and noted comments by member States for inclusion in the programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019; and requested the secretariat to propagate the strategic framework as adopted by member States.

Implementation

The strategic framework for the biennium 2018-2019 was distributed as adopted by member States at the twenty-ninth session of the Commission.

324 (XXIX) Adoption of the reports of the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Summary of the resolution

3. In this resolution, the Commission considered the recommendations set out in the reports of the subsidiary bodies on their sessions held in the period between the second meeting of the Executive Committee and the twenty-ninth ESCWA session, namely the report of the tenth session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development, the report on the sixteenth session of the Committee on Transport, and the report on the seventh session of the Committee on Women; adopted the recommendations set out in the above-mentioned reports of the subsidiary bodies; and requested the secretariat to continue following up on their implementation.

Implementation

The Secretariat has followed up on the implementation of recommendations made by the subsidiary bodies and has presented to member States reports on their implementation progress.

325 (XXIX) Adoption of the proposed amendments to the ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017

Summary of the resolution

4. In this resolution, the Commission adopted the proposed amendments to the programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017, and noted comments made by member States at the session. It also requested the secretariat to follow up on the implementation of the programme of work, and include therein the necessary activities to address any challenges that may emerge in the Arab region.

Implementation

On 31 March 2017, ESCWA had already implemented 51 per cent of the programme of work, including outputs added in 2017 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/272 on the 2030 Agenda. The Secretariat expects to meet all indicators of achievement for the biennium 2016-2017.

326 (XXIX) Justice for the Palestinian people: fifty years of Israeli occupation

Summary of the resolution

5. In this resolution, the Commission welcomed the accession of the State of Palestine to international treaties; strongly condemned continuing Israeli violations of the Charter of the United Nations, international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and Security Council and General Assembly resolutions; and considered 2017 the year to intensify efforts to achieve justice in Palestine and the Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967. It also commended the efforts of the secretariat in calculating and estimating the cumulative cost of the Israeli occupation using a comprehensive scientific methodology, and requested the secretariat to continue supporting the Palestinian people and its institutions, and to increase support in 2017 through the following:

(a) Increase activities on Palestine and organize special activities to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the 1967 Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory and the seventieth anniversary of the partition resolution (181), so as to raise awareness of the Palestinian people's rights and suffering and of Israeli violations of international law, and to ensure the widest media coverage possible for those activities;

(b) Publish widely the results of the study on (b) considering Israeli policies towards the Palestinian people as apartheid, by disseminating it to member States, national, regional and international organizations and media institutions, and by organizing activities and producing media material in that regard;

(c) Provide support to the Government of Palestine in implementing the National Policy Agenda 2017-2022, and support Palestinian endeavours to implement the 2030 Agenda;

(d) Build partnerships with international, regional and national bodies, especially with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and strengthen research and technical activities aimed at supporting Palestinian refugees;

(e) Coordinate and collaborate with relevant Palestinian entities to develop an ESCWA media and communications strategy aimed at increasing global awareness of the Palestinian cause and of development challenges in view of the occupation and Israeli violations of Palestinian rights and international law;

(f) Continue to monitor and evaluate the repercussions of the Israeli occupation for the Palestinian people and their society, economy and infrastructure, and for the economic and social development of current and future generations;

(g) Strengthen efforts to calculate the cumulative impact of the Israeli occupation and its practices on the Palestinian people and, in this context, build partnerships with all relevant actors;

(h) Strive to establish a specialized unit on issues related to Palestine and its people, including monitoring Israeli violations of the Palestinian people's rights and of international law, documenting the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation, supporting Palestinian institutions in their development efforts, and continue lobbying to support the Palestinian people to realize all its rights guaranteed by United Nations resolutions and international treaties and charters.

Implementation

- ESCWA has implemented a consultative process with more than 60 experts from different backgrounds and disciplines on the benefits, uses, and possible approaches, to prepare a report on the cumulative and comprehensive cost of occupation;

- ESCWA hosted a tripartite coordination meeting between ESCWA, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and the Government of Palestine to determine cooperation and partnership in the calculation of occupation costs (Beirut, 24 March 2017);
- ESCWA has commissioned experts to prepare a report titled “Israeli practices towards the Palestinian people and the issue of apartheid”, based on apartheid definitions in international law and an analysis of Israeli law, policies and practices towards the Palestinian people. The twenty-eighth Arab Summit has endorsed the key findings of the report, and the Council of Arab Foreign Ministers has affirmed the importance of the report and requested its adoption as a reference for debates on the Israeli occupation in international forums;
- A workshop on the theme “Partnerships for empowering a future State of Palestine: Sustainable Development Goal 17 and South-South and Triangular Cooperation” was held in Beirut on 27 and 28 April 2017, in cooperation with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights;
- ESCWA has prepared the note by 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. This note will be presented to the Economic and Social Council in July 2017 and to the General Assembly in September 2017;
- ESCWA observed the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November, and has organized a series of activities aimed at raising awareness about the Palestinian cause and mobilizing support.

The secretariat is currently establishing a Palestinian affairs unit in the Emerging and Conflict-Related Issues Division, using internal resources. This unit will tackle issues related to Palestine and its people, including the implementation of resolutions of ministerial sessions and Executive Committee recommendations on the Palestinian people and institutions; monitor Israeli violations of the rights of Palestinian people; document the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation; support Palestinian institutions in achieving sustainable development in Palestine despite occupation; and mitigate the occupation impact on the Palestinian people and on economic and social development. The unit also aims to coordinate ESCWA activities in support of Palestine.

327 (XXIX) Working mechanisms of the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development

Summary of the resolution

6. In this resolution, the Commission affirmed the important role of the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development as a regional platform where stakeholders can address sustainable development issues from an integrated perspective, consider formulations, frameworks and follow-up and review mechanisms for the 2030 Agenda, and contribute to building a unified position on the opportunities and challenges of achieving sustainable development in the Arab region; invite presentations of national and regional experiences in implementing the 2030 Agenda, including voluntary national reports on progress in this regard; and endorse the terms of reference, which organize the working mechanisms of the Forum in a manner that guarantees its effectiveness and success in strengthening regional cooperation and coordination to implement the 2030 Agenda.

Implementation

The 2017 Arab Forum outcomes are presented to member States under agenda item 4 (e).
