

**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

Executive Committee
Sixth meeting
Marrakech, Morocco, 15-16 June 2019



Item 2 of the provisional agenda

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ANNOTATIONS

1. Opening of the meeting

The opening session of the sixth meeting of the Executive Committee will convene in Marrakech, Morocco, on Saturday 15 June 2019. Given that the chair of the ESCWA ministerial session also chairs the meetings of the Executive Committee, the sixth meeting of the Committee will be chaired by Tunisia, which is currently chairing the thirtieth session of the Commission. The representative of Tunisia will deliver the inaugural speech, the Executive Secretary of ESCWA will deliver a speech on behalf of the ESCWA secretariat and the representative of Morocco will deliver the welcome speech.

2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Rule 8 of the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, which apply to subsidiary bodies, states: "At the beginning of each session, once the Chair has assumed his/her duties in accordance with rule 12, the Commission shall adopt the agenda for that session on the basis of the provisional agenda."

Pursuant to that rule, the Committee shall adopt the agenda and the organization of work as submitted in documents E/ESCWA/EC.6/2019/L.1 and E/ESCWA/EC.6/2019/L.2, respectively, or in amended forms.

Follow-up issues

3. Implementation of recommendations made by the Executive Committee at its fifth meeting (E/ESCWA/EC.6/2019/3)

The Committee will review action undertaken by the ESCWA secretariat pursuant to the recommendations made at its fifth meeting, which was held in Beirut on 18 and 19 December 2018.

The Committee is invited to take note of implemented activities, provide comments and review actions taken at the national level in that regard.

4. Implementation of the Beirut Consensus on Technology for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region

(a) Activities undertaken by the ESCWA secretariat (E/ESCWA/EC.6/2019/4)

The Committee will be briefed on activities undertaken by the ESCWA secretariat, since its fifth meeting, in implementation of the Beirut Consensus on Technology for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region, which was adopted by member States at the close of the thirtieth ESCWA session (Beirut, 25-28 June 2018).

(b) Activities undertaken by member States (Briefings by State representatives)

Member State representatives are kindly invited to present progress made in the implementation of the Beirut Consensus at the national level. A guiding questionnaire was developed by the ESCWA secretariat to that effect, pursuant to the recommendation by the Executive Committee at its fifth meeting on developing a mechanism to follow up on the implementation of the Beirut Consensus at the national level. It was addressed to focal points in member States in early May 2019.

Regional and global issues

5. Summary of the Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the Arab Region 2018-2019 (E/ESCWA/EC.6/2019/5)

The Committee will have before it the Summary of the Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the Arab Region 2018-2019. The Survey is an annual publication that presents an overview of global and regional economic trends, then places focus on a different economic or social theme every year. It offers a basis for policy discussions, peer learning and tackling regional development challenges.

The Committee is invited to take note of the summary and comment thereon.

6. Assessing Arab economic integration: trade in services as a driver of growth and development (E/ESCWA/EC.6/2019/6)

The Committee will consider economic integration in the area of trade in services. Focus on services is motivated by the fact that services trade liberalization is a major avenue for extending the scope of regional economic integration, and driving growth and development. The services sector accounts for large and growing shares of output, employment and foreign direct investment. Services do not only satisfy domestic consumption and investment demands but are also exported and used as intermediate inputs. The services sector in the Arab region could benefit from further liberalization, integration and reform in the context of regional and international trade agreements.

The Committee is invited to discuss the role of trade in services as a driver of growth and development and propose a way forward for ESCWA work in that area.

7. Monitoring and evaluating Arab economic integration (E/ESCWA/EC.6/2019/7)

The Committee will consider a system of composite indices and scoreboards proposed by the ESCWA secretariat to monitor and assess economic integration in the Arab region. The tool is meant to understand whether Arab regional trade agreements help their members to perform better as a group than each on their own, and encourage pulling together resources for higher connectivity to regional and global value chains.

The Committee is invited to review the proposed monitoring and evaluation system and make comments thereon.

8. Social expenditure monitor for Arab States (E/ESCWA/EC.6/2019/8)

The Committee will consider a social expenditure monitor proposed by the ESCWA secretariat to help Governments to track public expenditure in accord with social development priorities. Macroeconomic sustainability remains a challenge for most Arab countries. Budget allocations that support multiple and overlapping social programmes or policies may prove to be inefficient. They are often mismatched or inadequate to the realization of sustainable development. The proposed monitor is aimed at improving the efficiency of allocations and effectiveness of budgeting. It is being tested in a number of member States.

The Committee is invited to provide comments to improve the social expenditure monitor and to express interest, if any, in implementing the tool in additional national contexts.

9. Multidimensional poverty in the Arab region: regional and national reduction efforts (E/ESCWA/EC.6/2019/9)

The Committee will be presented with a brief assessment of the region's progress in eradicating poverty. It will also take note of the advisory services provided by the ESCWA secretariat to support the League of Arab States in the formulation of the Arab Strategic Framework for the Eradication of Multidimensional Poverty 2020-2030, and to assist member States with in-depth national analysis of the prevalence and characteristics of multidimensional poverty.

The Committee is invited to take note of the ESCWA approach to the provision of support towards the eradication of multidimensional poverty in the Arab region, provide comments thereon, and express interest, if any, in engaging with ESCWA to implement its approach in national contexts.

10. Social and economic situation of Palestinian women and girls (E/ESCWA/EC.6/2019/10)

At its fifth meeting, the Committee had requested that the ESCWA secretariat continue preparing the periodic report on the social and economic situation of Palestinian women and highlight the impact of occupation on their right to access basic services, economic resources and social justice, and on their empowerment to participate in the development process. Under this item, the Committee will review the summary of the findings of that report for the period from July 2016 to June 2018.

The Committee is invited to take note of the summary and make comments thereon.

11. Rethinking barriers to women's economic participation in the Arab region (E/ESCWA/EC.6/2019/11)

The Committee will consider a proposal by ESCWA to include the assessment of women's unpaid care work and of violence against them in the analysis of the drivers of their low economic participation. Such analysis is generally conducted in isolation from broader challenges relating to gender inequalities and dynamics in Arab societies. Proposed solutions have failed, to date, to increase the rate of women's participation in the labour force, which hovered around 20.9 per cent in 2017 in the Arab region, compared with a global rate of 48.7 per cent, and with regional and global rates above 70 per cent for men, according to World Bank data.

The Committee is invited to review the proposal and make comments thereon.

12. Supporting institutions in tackling weaknesses and fragilities: methodology for institutional capacity assessment (E/ESCWA/EC.6/2019/12)

The Committee will consider a methodology proposed by ESCWA to assess the capacity of government institutions, particularly in contexts of fragility. The methodology is designed to be applied by government officials themselves, as a prerequisite to determining the required development and training programmes to build institutional capacity. It is aimed at providing objective assessment, which can be operationalized through the formulation of the needed support measures and experience-sharing with institutions that have undergone similar assessments.

The Committee is invited to review the methodology and provide comments with a view to its development and application in the Arab region.

Programmatic issues

13. Follow-up on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab region (E/ESCWA/EC.6/2019/13)

The Committee will review activities undertaken by the Unit on the 2030 Agenda and outcomes of the 2019 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development, noting that the work of ESCWA in supporting member States to implement the 2030 Agenda comprises a large set of activities carried out by all ESCWA divisions and reviewed in various thematic reports.

(a) Activities of the Unit on the 2030 Agenda (E/ESCWA/EC.6/2019/13(Part I))

The Committee will review activities undertaken by the Unit on the 2030 Agenda under the programme of work of ESCWA for the biennium 2018-2019. Those activities focused on building knowledge and capacity, exchanging experiences and involving development stakeholders in following up on and reviewing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the region.

The Committee is invited to review the activities and make proposals on follow up in that regard.

(b) Outcomes of the 2019 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development (E/ESCWA/EC.6/2019/13(Part II))

The Committee will consider the outcomes of the 2019 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development, which was held in Beirut, from 9 to 11 April 2019, on the theme "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality in the Arab region". ESCWA organized the Forum in collaboration with the League of Arab States and United Nations organizations operating in the Arab region. Its theme was chosen in line with that of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, to be held in New York, United States of America, from 9 to 18 July 2019. The outcomes of the Arab Forum and other regional forums are presented to the High-level Political Forum.

The Committee is invited to take note of the Forum's outcomes.

14. Reports of ESCWA subsidiary bodies (E/ESCWA/EC.6/2019/14)

The Committee will have before it the reports of the three subsidiary bodies that held their sessions in the period between the thirtieth ESCWA session and the sixth meeting of the Executive Committee, namely:

- (a) The report of the Committee on Transport and Logistics on its nineteenth session;
- (b) The report of the Statistical Committee on its thirteenth session;
- (c) The report of the Committee on Technology for Development on its second session.

The reports contain the recommendations made at those sessions, a summary of discussions, and information on the organization, documentation and participants. The Executive Committee is invited to adopt those reports.

15. Evaluation of Executive Committee meetings (Presentation)

The Committee will review the results of member State representatives' evaluations of its work since its third meeting, which was held in Rabat on 6 and 7 May 2017.

The Committee is invited to take note of the results of those evaluations and discuss ways to improve its working methods

16. Preparations for the thirty-first ESCWA session (E/ESCWA/EC.6/2019/15)

The Committee will review the steps taken by the ESCWA secretariat in preparation for the thirty-first ESCWA session, to be held in April 2020. It will notably consider a proposal for the main theme of the session.

The Committee is invited to discuss preparations and the proposed session theme.

17. United Nations reform: regional dimension and ESCWA vision (Presentation)

The Committee will be presented with key developments in the United Nations reform process, particularly those relating to the work of its Development System at the regional level. The ESCWA secretariat will also present its vision on reforms that it will implement response to System reforms and to regional and global priorities.

The Committee is invited to take note of agreed reforms and make proposals on ways to develop the work of the ESCWA secretariat.

18. Date and venue of the seventh meeting of the Executive Committee

The Committee will decide on the date and venue of its seventh meeting.

19. Other matters

This item shall cover any other matters that the members of the Committee may decide to discuss.

20. Adoption of the recommendations made by the Executive Committee at its sixth meeting

The Committee will consider the draft recommendations made at its sixth meeting for adoption.
