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**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION**

**IMPLEMENTATION OF 2004-2005 BIENNIUM
REGULAR BUDGET ACTIVITIES**

Progress made during 2004

Summary

Pursuant to resolution 251 (XXII) of 17 April 2003, the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) hereby submits to the Commission a performance report on the programme of work during 2004 of the biennium 2004-2005 and proposed changes to the programme.

This report comprises the following: (a) an overview of the programme of work, including major factors that have influenced modifications to the programme of work; (b) the results achieved by six subprogrammes; and (c) the changes introduced to the approved programme of work for 2004-2005.

The Commission is invited to provide comments and recommendations on any aspect of the document, programme achievements and programme changes, with a view of endorsing the changes introduced to the programme of work, and bearing in mind that the request for any additional outputs would require the provision/availability of extrabudgetary resources.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Executive Secretary hereby submits to the Commission a performance report on the programme of work during 2004 of the biennium 2004-2005 in line with resolution 251 (XXII) of 17 April 2003. In addition to highlighting the results achieved by six subprogrammes, this report tracks the changes introduced to the approved programme of work for the same period. The Commission is invited to provide comments and recommendations on any aspect of the report, including achievements and modifications to the programme, with a view to endorsing such changes. Within that context, it is understood that additional outputs require the provision and availability of extrabudgetary resources.
2. Rather than provide a mere listing of implemented activities, this report underscores the programme results achieved during 2004.¹ Within the framework of the results-based budgeting, which was approved by the Commission,² subprogramme objectives, strategy and outputs were developed with a clear focus on expected accomplishments and with specific indicators of achievement aimed at measuring results.
3. Specifically and at the level of individual subprogrammes, this translates as a firm commitment to identify set objectives at the earliest design stage, to measure the extent of accomplishment and to define the end-users and, where applicable, the main partners of all outputs and services. The format of this report has consequently been altered to reflect this change in focus whereby every expected accomplishment is accompanied with a set of actual results. Moreover, for ease of reference, all the changes introduced to the approved programme of work for 2004-2005 are provided in the annex.

OVERVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF WORK

4. The overall objective of the programme of work for the biennium is to accelerate the pace of economic, social and technological development in the ESCWA region and to halt the unsustainable exploitation of its natural resources. Within that context, the programme focuses on the regional management in four priority areas, namely: (a) water and energy resources; (b) social policies; (c) globalization issues; and (d) information and communication technologies. Additionally, the programme seeks to promote the empowerment and advancement of women, to enhance national statistical systems and to meet the special needs of countries and territories emerging from conflict.
5. During 2004, the programme of work was modified to respond to the following emerging global and regional needs:
 - (a) To prepare regional inputs to global conferences and high-level meetings on issues relating to the following: the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD); Review and Appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing + 10); the ten-year review of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD at 10); and the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS-2);
 - (b) To initiate and monitor the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the Arab region;
 - (c) To provide active support and assistance in the area of socio-economic development to countries and territories affected by conflict, particularly Iraq and Palestine.
6. Moreover, as part of its commitment to member countries, the secretariat undertook a number of in-depth analyses of macroeconomic developments in the region and disseminated them through flagship

¹ This focus reflects the results-based budgeting as set out in General Assembly resolution 55/231 of 23 December 2000.

² The Commission endorsed the programme of work for 2004-2005, which was developed on the results-based budgeting concept, during its twenty-second session (Beirut, 14-17 April 2003). See *Draft programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2004-2005*. E/ESCWA/22/7.

publications. Most prominent among these were the *Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region 2003-2004* (E/ESCWA/EAD/2004/4); and the *Annual Review of Developments in Globalization and Regional Integration in the Countries of the ESCWA Region 2003* (E/ESCWA/GRID/2003/41). Furthermore, with an eye on extrabudgetary resources, a number of outputs and services were either added or deleted in order to harmonize the work of the secretariat with that of other United Nations entities.

7. The major findings arising from the monitoring of the implementation of the programme of work for the period under review revealed the following:

(a) Policy analyses focusing on issues identified by the Commission as issues of critical importance in the areas of integrated water resource management, development of social policies, on-going reform of the international financial system and the integration of member countries into the international trading system;

(b) Advocacy work focusing on major economic and social challenges in the region, including youth and development, the accessible environment for people with disabilities, and the empowerment and advancement of women;

(c) Training activities targeting the areas of sustainable development and energy and water resources, empowerment of women in Iraq, statistical capacity-building and negotiations relating to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and assistance in terms of implementing WTO agreements;

(d) Improved dissemination and availability of technical publications on the ESCWA web site;

(e) Increased coordination and collaboration with other United Nations entities in terms of planning and implementing projects and activities, and in line with the reform plan of action for the United Nations that was initiated by the Secretary-General;³

(f) Close collaboration with intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).⁴

SUBPROGRAMME 1. INTEGRATED POLICIES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF REGIONAL RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

8. This subprogramme is implemented by the Sustainable Development and Productivity Division (SDPD) and aims to promote regional integration and cooperation among ESCWA member countries based on a concerted approach in the areas of sustainable management of water and energy and the production sectors. The subprogramme identified four expected accomplishments to achieve this objective. These are reviewed below.

Expected accomplishment 1: Increased ability of member countries to formulate integrated policies for the efficient and sustainable management of water and energy sectors, with due consideration to the needs and role of women.

³ Examples of such cooperation between the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and other United Nations entities include joint preparations for the special session on the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); active collaboration on training activities with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in the fields of statistics, people with disabilities and empowerment of women; joint activities with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on water resource management and energy issues; and co-organizing national capacity-building workshops in the areas of foreign direct investment and debt management with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

⁴ This collaboration between ESCWA and regional partners was particularly evident within the framework of the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR), which was established with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the League of Arab States (LAS) to follow up on the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD); active cooperation with LAS on the development of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM); and training activities for trade negotiations with the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Results

9. Focusing on measures that improve the sustainability of the water and energy sectors, this subprogramme is directing its efforts at increasing the number of institutions that have adopted or are in the process of adopting such sustainable strategies. Within that context, a number of activities were undertaken, including studies, meetings and workshops, in addition to fostering direct communication with national and regional stakeholders, and with training and research institutes aimed at increasing and developing national sustainable policies in member countries.
10. The main partners in undertaking these activities included the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for West Asia (UNEP/ROWA), the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) and other entities within LAS, and the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources of Germany (BGR). During the course of these activities, ESCWA targeted Government officials in the ministries of water resources, energy and electricity, environment, industry and agriculture in order to expound the underlying issues and to increase national capacities in terms of formulating integrated and sustainable policies.
11. The fifth session of the Committee on Energy (Beirut, 11-12 October 2004) and the sixth session of the Committee on Water Resources (Beirut, 2-4 December 2004) adopted a number of recommendations aimed at improving the efficiency in the use of energy and water resources and at promoting an approach for the sustainable management of these sectors. Equally, ESCWA organized a number of meetings, seminars and workshops to improve the capacity of stakeholders. These were as follow: Seminar on Clean Fuels and Vehicles in Western Asia and North Africa (Beirut, 17-19 March 2004); Capacity-building Workshop on Sectoral Energy Efficiency and Conservation (Cairo, 27 March - 1 April 2004); Regional Workshop on National Sustainable Development Strategies and Indicators of Sustainable Development (Cairo, 12-14 December 2004); and High Level Briefing Session on the Application of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) in the ESCWA Region (Beirut, 13 September 2004). Additionally, ESCWA prepared an extensive training manual on the application of IWRM, which was reviewed by regional and international experts in March 2004.
12. Participants in the meetings, seminars and workshops held during 2004 indicated that the topics covered the critical issues in the region and were of direct relevance to their own work in that such forums introduced innovative and beneficial concepts. In the field of IWRM, the participants provided valuable feedback and expressed a general concern that, while there is a consensus on the importance of IWRM, the application of IWRM remains a significant challenge due to financial and political constraints.
13. As a direct result of these activities, the number of regional institutions, universities and research centres concerned with water management that have joined the Arab Integrated Water Resources Management Network (AWRENET) tripled from 15 at the end of 2003 to 45 by the end of 2004. This development increases the means of regional cooperation and exchange of experience on the application of IWRM at local, national and regional levels.
14. Similarly, ESCWA increased national awareness in the areas of clean fuels and energy efficiency. This improved awareness has translated into requests made by several member countries for more analytical workshops geared towards energy conservation applications in different economic sectors. In 2004, two member countries undertook measures aimed at improving the sustainable management of energy, namely: (a) Yemen, which developed a renewable energy strategy for rural areas that was initiated with the assistance of ESCWA and with the cooperation and support of the Global Environment Facilities (GEF) and the World Bank; and (b) the United Arab Emirates, which established its first operational wind farm power plant as a pilot project for future wind farms. Other member countries are in the process of taking similar measures in the areas of alternative energy and fuels, including Qatar, which is developing an energy efficiency programme for the electricity sector; and the Syrian Arab Republic, which is discussing a plan to introduce

Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) into land transport. Additionally, since the end of 2003, a further two institutions have adopted policies and measures to improve the sustainability of the energy sector, namely, the Ministry of Electricity and Water in Yemen, and the Abu Dhabi Water and Electricity Authority (ADWEA) in the United Arab Emirates. This raises the number of such institutions to six at the end of 2004.

Expected accomplishment 2: Increased regional cooperation in the management of shared surface and groundwater and energy networks.

Results

15. Given the aridity of the region and the scarcity of water resources, water remains one of the top priorities of ESCWA member countries. There is therefore a vital need to stimulate regional cooperation in the management of shared surface and groundwater and energy networks, and to evoke partnership initiatives and cooperation agreements among member countries.

16. With the overall objective of fostering direct communication with and among regional stakeholders, this subprogramme undertook a number of activities in 2004, which were aimed at improving negotiation skills and dispute resolution in the contexts of international water resources and of different fields of sustainable energy; and at encouraging the exchange of experiences among member countries.

17. Among these activities were two publications, which were presented at the sixth session of the Committee on Water Resources (Beirut, 2-4 December 2004), namely: a study on "Enhancing negotiation skills on international water issues in the ESCWA region"; and a training manual, entitled "Dispute resolution of international water resources". Additionally, ESCWA conducted a series of capacity-building workshops on dispute management and conflict resolution on shared water resources for delegates from Lebanon, Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic, and a further workshop to enhance the management of Al-Kabeer Al-Janoubi Basin shared by Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Within the context of the latter, an agreement was signed between those two countries on the management of Al-Kabeer Al-Janoubi Basin.

18. Moreover, ESCWA and BGR identified areas of cooperation and made important progress in a number of shared water resources across the region. These include the basalt aquifer shared by Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, which has led to an agreed mechanism to manage that aquifer;⁵ the Paleogene aquifer between Oman and the United Arab Emirates; the Wajid aquifer between Oman and Yemen; and shared groundwater aquifers between Iraq and its neighbouring countries.

19. A wider scope of cooperation was equally evident during 2004 in the area of management of energy networks. Saudi Arabia joined the Regional Promotional Mechanism for Sustainable Energy Systems (RPMSES), which now encompasses all ESCWA member countries. Furthermore, aiming to reflect this wider scope and in preparation for the forthcoming fourteenth and fifteenth sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-14 and CSD-15, respectively), RPMSES was renamed Regional Mechanism on the Development of Energy Uses for Sustainable Development (RMDEUSD).

Expected accomplishment 3: Increased capacity of member countries in the formulation and implementation of policies and policy measures for sustainable development.

Results

20. ESCWA made considerable efforts to increase the capacity of member countries with regard to formulating and implementing policies and policy measures for sustainable development by integrating social, economic and environmental dimensions to such national strategies.

⁵ However, this agreement has not yet translated into a formal memorandum of understanding between those two countries.

21. During 2004, this was accomplished through several activities, including as follows: (a) the Seminar on Rural Development – Policies, Strategies and Institutions (Beirut, 20-22 December 2004); (b) the Expert Group Meeting on Upgrading Environmental Monitoring Systems in the ESCWA Region (Beirut, 29 November - 1 December 2004), which provided a valuable forum for national environmental experts and high-ranking officials to exchange views and experiences and to recommend proper means for improving the quality, accessibility and use of environmental information; and (c) the Regional Workshop on National Sustainable Development Strategies and Indicators of Sustainable Development for the Arab Region (Cairo, 12-14 December 2004), which was co-organized with the Division for Sustainable Development of DESA (DSD/DESA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and which aimed at building inter-regional and national capacities for managing progress towards sustainable development through cooperation, networking and exchange of experiences and lessons learned.

22. Moreover, in its capacity as one of the three entities involved in the joint secretariat of the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR), ESCWA plays a leading role in following up on the recommendations of WSSD. Within that context, ESCWA participated in a number of meetings of JCEDAR and CAMRE, in addition to presenting several working papers and studies on sustainable development in preparation for the twelfth and thirteenth sessions of CSD (CSD-12 and CSD-13, respectively). These studies covered the themes of water, sanitation, human settlements, trade and environment, and energy for sustainable development.

23. Additionally, ESCWA and its regional partners actively advocated and raised awareness of the need to integrate social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, thereby promoting a holistic approach to sustainable development. Within that context, ESCWA prepared a study, entitled “Governance for sustainable development in the Arab region: institutions and instruments for moving beyond an environmental management culture”, which was adopted by the League of Arab States. Subsequently, a total of 13 ESCWA member countries initiated institutional reforms to move beyond traditional environmental management.

Expected accomplishment 4: Enhanced national capacities for improving productivity and competitiveness and in improving the performance of SMEs with a view to poverty reduction.
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Results

24. Progress has been made to enhance national capacities for improving productivity and competitiveness and to increase the performance of SMEs with the aim of reducing poverty. Steps were taken to initiate projects that target local community development and increase SME productivity in three member countries, namely, Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Additionally, ESCWA presented a plan to Bahrain aimed at supporting the establishment of a technology park. Moreover, activities undertaken during 2004 sought to develop networks in a number of areas, including agro-food, water and electronics. Within that context, the ESCWA Research and Development Portal (ERDP), which was created in an effort to promote research cooperation and coordination, is set to nurture those planned networks. Similarly, other innovative institutional forms and networking arrangements were initiated as a result of the Forum on Capacity-Building Through Technology Transfer and Networking (Beirut, 11-12 March 2004).

25. The activities of ESCWA have led to a greater awareness with regard to innovative management techniques aimed at improving regional productivity and competitiveness. To that end, a valuable tool is the sustainability impact assessment (SIA) study of the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area (EMFTA), which provides a reliable and widely accepted analysis and understanding of the impact of trade measures on sustainable development. During 2004, a total of four meetings and regional consultations were held under the umbrella of SIA.

26. In the area of SMEs, ESCWA sought to increase awareness among public and private sector institutions on the role of clusters and networks in enhancing competitiveness. A key activity was the Regional Workshop on the Development of Manufacturing SME Clusters/Networks and Capacity-Building

in Selected Countries of the ESCWA Region (Beirut, 15-19 March 2004), which was co-organized with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). As a result of the Workshop, three member countries, namely, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, began to formulate relevant plans of action and subsequently requested ESCWA to carry out national studies on this issue. In the case of Lebanon and Jordan, where ESCWA was called upon to initiate diagnostic cluster assessments, this technical assistance is encouraging those member countries to include clusters and networks as part of their national policies.

27. Furthermore, field projects implemented by ESCWA in South Lebanon and Morocco are contributing to local cluster initiatives aimed at supporting SME competitiveness in the agro-food and textile/garment sectors, respectively.

SUBPROGRAMME 2. INTEGRATED SOCIAL POLICIES

28. This subprogramme is implemented by the Social Development Division (SDD) and the ESCWA Centre for Women (ECW) and aims to achieve regional cooperation in the advocacy and promotion of comprehensive and integrated social policies that are specific to the ESCWA region, culturally sensitive and have a practical orientation. The subprogramme identified five expected accomplishments to achieve this objective. These are reviewed below.

Expected accomplishment 1: Enhanced ability of member countries to formulate integrated social policies and programmes that incorporate advantageous cultural values.

Results

29. The lack of coordination of social policies and the resulting loss of human and financial resources compounded with rising unemployment and poverty in some countries of the region induced ESCWA to concentrate on formulating a comprehensive socio-economic framework that is set to form the basis for integrated social policies.

30. Paving the way for a comprehensive and periodic report on integrated social policies, ESCWA is in the process of establishing country profiles on the social situation of each country in the region. A total of nine country profiles were prepared during 2004, and the remaining profiles are to be issued in 2005. These profiles provide an overview of each member country and include information on the system of Government and the relevant ministries that deal with such social issues as education, health, employment, housing, and social safety nets and poverty. The first draft of the report on integrated social policies, which was reviewed by a panel of experts, is expected to be finalized in 2005.

31. Additionally, this subprogramme issued a study under the Social Policies Series, entitled "Central issues related to social policies: comparative study and guidelines for the formulation of social policies in the ESCWA region". The postponement of the meeting of the Committee on Social Development due to unforeseen external factors contributed to the delay in garnering concrete results.

Expected accomplishment 2: Increased networking mechanisms for social development among partners and actors in the development process at the regional, national and local levels.

32. During 2004, ESCWA, the Palestinian Authority and LAS jointly organized the Arab-International Forum on Rehabilitation and Development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Towards an Independent State" (Beirut, 11-14 October 2004). The Forum provided the Palestinian Authority and the civil society and private sector in Palestine a valuable opportunity to present a coordinated socio-economic development vision, outlining relevant needs and priorities.

33. A number of preparatory activities aimed at fostering partnerships were organized prior to the Forum, including the following: (a) the Inter-Palestinian Consultation Meeting (Ramallah, Palestine, 21-22 April

2004); the Second Inter-Palestinian Consultative Meeting (Ramallah, Palestine, 19 September 2004); (c) the Workshop on Palestinian-Arab Civil Society Partnership (Beirut, 9-10 June 2004); (d) the Expert Group Meeting on the Role of the Palestinian Diaspora in the Rehabilitation and Development Process in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (Amman, 29-30 July); (e) the Arab-Palestinian Private Sector Partnership Forum (Dead Sea, Jordan, 4-5 September 2004); and (f) the Meeting of Arab Economic Organizations and Funds (Cairo, 7-8 September 2004).

34. The Forum helped to forge networking arrangements between Palestinian representatives and their Arab and international counterparts and, moreover, provided the platform to focus on vital assistance aimed at mitigating the socio-economic repercussions of the occupation.

35. Additionally, this subprogramme undertook a number of activities to foster policy dialogue between Governments and NGOs. Within that context, the Arab Regional Conference Ten Years After Beijing: Call for Peace (Beirut, 8-10 July 2004) provided the opportunity for Governments and NGOs to discuss policy options and gender issues.

Expected accomplishment 3: Increased capacity of policy makers for mainstreaming gender and reducing gender imbalances.

Results

36. Despite improvements during the past decades, the ESCWA region still suffers from low participation rates of women in the economic, political and social aspects of life. Consequently, this subprogramme undertook a number of activities aimed at reducing gender imbalances and mainstreaming gender by targeting policy makers, civil society institutions, research centres and NGOs dealing with gender issues.

37. During 2004, greater focus was placed on advocacy meetings and capacity-building workshops. Within that context, the Arab Regional Conference Ten Years After Beijing: Call for Peace (Beirut, 8-10 July 2004) addressed the following priority issues: (a) the role of women in parliaments; (b) the role of women in executive authority and decision-making; (c) the role of women in civil society; and (d) the role of women in the cultural and media sectors. The Conference attracted more than 500 participants and resulted in the Beirut Declaration, which calls upon Governments, NGOs and ESCWA to take appropriate action with regard to gender issues. Equally, ESCWA continued its media campaign on gender aimed at reaching wider audiences and raising awareness of that issue.

38. Moreover, ESCWA provided technical assistance to member countries through its advisory services and training activities, including as follows: (a) assisting the Ministry of Planning in the Syrian Arab Republic in drafting a national report based on the general guidelines of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); (b) assisting the Ministry of Women Affairs in Palestine on institutional-building and on formulating a plan of action and strategy for the advancement of women; (c) organizing two workshops that focused on women in Iraq, namely, Building a New Iraq: Women's Role in the Political Process (Beirut, 11-13 July 2004), and Iraqi Women and the Electoral Process (Beirut, 13-16 December 2004).

39. During 2004, an additional two countries, namely, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Arab Emirates, joined CEDAW, thereby raising the number of participating ESCWA member countries to 10. Furthermore, updated country profiles on the situation of women in Arab countries were disseminated and made available through the ESCWA web site and in printed format.

Expected accomplishment 4: Improved capacity of policy makers in formulating poverty reduction policies, measures, mechanisms and programmes to implement projects aimed at providing the population with opportunities for productive employment.

Results

40. This subprogramme focused on advocacy to empower the youth and disabled persons, thereby providing these disadvantaged populations with opportunities for employment while maintaining the gender component within such activities.

41. Within that context, ESCWA convened the Expert Group Meeting on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for Persons with Disabilities (Beirut, 25-26 May 2004). Additionally, ESCWA launched two web sites targeting the youth and disabled persons, entitled, respectively, "Arab youth directory", launched in December 2004, and "Net forum for the blind", launched in May 2004. Since their launch and by February 2005, the two web sites recorded 4,100 and 2,000 electronic hits, respectively, and registered positive feedback from end-users.

42. Similarly, the Braille Computer Centre, which was established under the programme of work of the previous biennium, became self-sustained; and a total of 110 blind and visually impaired persons have benefited from the training activities over a period of three years.

Expected accomplishment 5: Improved ability of policy makers to address, in their strategies, population issues and critical issues with regard to good urban governance and security of tenure.

Results

43. Despite the increasing awareness of member countries with regard to the dynamics of population, national actions have not been sufficiently in line with the framework established by ICPD in 1994. Consequently, there is an urgent need to strengthen national capacities in terms of formulating and monitoring integrated population policies and of integrating population issues in development planning. Only by focusing on such priority issues can member countries and other stakeholders address the challenges posed by rapid population growth in the ESCWA region.

44. Within the framework of the ten-year review of the implementation of the Programme of Action of ICPD (ICPD at 10), ESCWA, UNFPA and LAS jointly organized the Regional Arab Population Forum (Beirut, 19-21 November 2004). The participants, which included ministers, members of parliament and civil society institutions from across the region, renewed their commitments to exert greater efforts towards fulfilling the Programme of Action of ICPD, including the formulation of population policies and the integration of population issues and goals in national plans.

45. During 2004 and as a direct result of ESCWA activities, a total of five member countries, representing an increase from three countries in 2002-2003, declared specific population policies and redefined their national strategies to incorporate the population dimension. The five countries, namely, Egypt, Jordan, Oman, Qatar and Yemen, are expected to be joined by the Syrian Arab Republic by the end of the current biennium, thereby raising the total number to the set target of six member countries.

46. Additionally, activities implemented under the project on Regional Campaign on Secure Housing and Land Tenure and Good Urban Governance provided a forum for discussions on various issues, including the right to housing and land tenure, citizenship and empowerment of local governance, and combating urban poverty. As part of the urban development initiative, ESCWA played an instrumental role in establishing local urban observatories in the following cities: Amman, Beirut, Sana'a and, in the Syrian Arab Republic, Homs, Hama and Aleppo. Moreover, the local authority in Baghdad has requested assistance from ESCWA to establish an observatory in that city.

47. Furthermore, this subprogramme plans to embark on a new online project on social development community network in the ESCWA region, which is aimed at promoting the exchange of knowledge, best practices and expertise related to population and social development in every country of the region. Such a network is set to raise the awareness of the vital links between population and development.

SUBPROGRAMME 3. ECONOMIC ANALYSIS AND FORECASTING FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

48. This subprogramme is implemented by the Economic Analysis Division (EAD) and aims to increase the capacity of member countries to coordinate their economic policies, and to achieve economic development by providing a quantitative assessment of economic and financial data and trends. The subprogramme identified three expected accomplishments to achieve this objective. These are reviewed below.

Expected accomplishment 1: Utilization of macroeconomic variables and trends, and main trends in the production sectors of the economy by decision makers in achieving development goals.

Results

49. The achievement of this objective requires the following: (a) providing in-depth analyses with macroeconomic variables and trends to serve end-users in the region; (b) conducting workshops in a timely fashion; (c) disseminating studies with appropriate macroeconomic variables; and (d) engaging in dialogue with regional stakeholders. To that end, ESCWA has actively collaborated with other United Nations entities, regional organizations, regional academics and Government officials. Moreover, ESCWA has sought to disseminate relevant information in the media and through the ESCWA web site where the full text of all the main studies have been posted.

50. During 2004, ESCWA organized the Workshop on the Role of Indebtedness in Regional Economic Development (Beirut, 6-7 December 2004) and presented a study on the impact of economic variables on the social dimension of development.

Expected accomplishment 2: Improved availability, accessibility and analysis of economic and financial data and indicators including on regional integration.

Results

51. Outputs that were implemented during 2004 received more feedback and had a greater impact compared to those implemented during the previous biennium. Specifically, the *Survey of Economic and Social Developments of the ESCWA Region 2003-2004*, along with the previous 2002-2003 edition, received good media coverage and encouraging reviews by several media outlets of the region, including the following: (a) the Middle East Economic Survey (MEES), which quoted the results of the Survey 2002-2003 edition following coverage by the Emirates News Agency (WAM) in the United Arab Emirates; (b) such newspapers as the Daily Star, Asharq Al-Awsat, As-Safir, Al-Hayat, An-Nahar and Al-Ahram, which quoted the results and analyses of the Survey 2003-2004; and (c) television stations, including Al-Arabiya and the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC) that covered some of the salient features of the Survey.

52. Equally, the Survey was made available online and was disseminated electronically to the mailing list. Within that context, the number of downloads of the summary of the Survey 2003-2004 edition reached 2,788 in the first eight months, and the subprogramme is currently conducting a readership survey to evaluate the impact. Furthermore, the Survey made a significant contribution to the *Trade and Development Report 2004* by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

53. Additionally, four major economic indicators were rendered and disseminated, namely, growth of gross domestic product (GDP), gross oil export revenues, international trade and intraregional trade. Efforts are being made to share these indicators with regional stakeholders.

Expected accomplishment 3: Improved capacity of member countries to assess their comparative economic situation at the regional and international level, and improved capacity of decision makers in member countries for timely intervention.

Results

54. This subprogramme strives to assist regional stakeholders, particularly Government officials, by drawing and disseminating economic scenarios and models, thereby providing timely advice to decision makers on matters of policy intervention. To that end, the subprogramme conducts and issues such forecasts, scenarios and models to Government officials and other partners, including other United Nations entities, regional organizations, regional academics and influential media.

55. During 2004, four outputs were produced that underscored two scenarios, including "Economic trends and impacts in the ESCWA region, No. 2" and "Global forecasts and predictions for the ESCWA region: the roles of investment and public expenditure in economic growth, No. 2". Additionally, two technical papers were made available online, namely: "Exploring potential of south-south agreements including global system of trade preferences (GSTP)", which formed a major input to UNCTAD XI; and "World economic situation and prospects 2005: analysis and forecast for Western Asia", which was presented to the Project LINK Meeting by the Economic Commission for Western Asia (New York, 22-24 November 2004).

56. On the supply side, the subprogramme reached its set target of disseminating two scenarios by the end of 2004, and efforts are being made to share these scenarios with regional stakeholders. Additionally, 2004 was marked by an increase in the number of requests for technical cooperation, particularly advisory services. Within that context, advisory services were provided to the State Planning Commission and the Bureau of Statistics in the Syrian Arab Republic in May 2004, and to the Ministry of Planning in Iraq and the Central Bank of Iraq.

SUBPROGRAMME 4. REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND RESPONDING TO GLOBALIZATION

57. This subprogramme is implemented by the Globalization and Regional Integration Division (GRID) and aims to facilitate transboundary flows of goods, information, services, persons and capital in order to meet the challenges posed by and the opportunities offered by globalization. The subprogramme identified four expected accomplishments to achieve this objective. These are reviewed below.

Expected accomplishment 1: Increased facilitation of transboundary flows of goods, services, persons and capital among member countries.

Results

58. A number of countries in the ESCWA region have restrictive trade and transport systems and policies, which hinder economic development and prevent them from benefiting fully from globalization. The primary means of facilitating transboundary flows is through international transport agreements and by establishing national trade and transport facilitation committees in member countries.

59. The integrated transport system in the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM) and the related facilitation of transboundary flow of goods greatly benefits the economies of all member countries. Such a system benefits Governments by providing greater tax revenues and higher foreign investments, provides an intraregional and international trading environment that is conducive to traders and transportation stakeholders, and benefits consumers by lowering prices for goods and services.

60. During 2004, Egypt and Saudi Arabia ratified the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq, which entered into force in 2003, thereby raising the total number of member countries that have ratified the Agreement to seven. Moreover a plan of action to implement the Agreement was adopted during the fifth session of the Committee on Transport (Beirut, 2-4 March 2004) and several countries have started to fulfill its provisions, particularly with regard to the installation of international road signs.

61. In the area of railways, the Syrian Arab Republic ratified the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq, which is set to enter into force in 2005, thereby joining Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon that ratified the Agreement during the previous biennium. Consequently, the total number of member countries that have ratified transport facilitation schemes increased to 11, representing a rise of three countries since December 2003.
62. In the area of maritime transport, member countries are expected to approve a memorandum of understanding during 2005, which, subsequently, is set to lead to a formal agreement on maritime transport in the Arab Mashreq.
63. Moreover, the following six countries and territories have initiated steps to establish trade and transport facilitation committees: Egypt, Jordan, Oman, Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Within that context, ESCWA received recognition and acknowledgment from high-level officials for its pivotal role in advocating for the establishment of these committees, providing relevant technical assistance and following up on their activities.
64. Furthermore, the subprogramme is expecting to reach its set target of six member countries that have prepared preliminary reports on national transport linkages before the end of the current biennium. Such preliminary reports exist in four countries, namely, Kuwait, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syrian Arab Republic.

Expected accomplishment 2: Increased awareness among member countries of the challenges to their economies and opportunities created by the new regional and international trading system.

Results

65. Member countries are facing considerable challenges in terms of coping with the new requirements of the multilateral trading system. There is an urgent need to raise the awareness of member countries of the new developments in the multilateral trading system, particularly with regard to WTO negotiations and agreements, thereby avoiding marginalization and benefiting from the opportunities created by that system. Consequently, the efforts of this subprogramme have largely focused on increasing awareness, disseminating knowledge and promoting capacity-building through expert group meetings, seminars and workshops.
66. During 2004, ESCWA organized the following meetings, seminars and workshops: (a) Follow up on Results of the 5th WTO Ministerial Conference (Beirut, 11-12 May 2004); (b) the Second Forum of Arab Business Community and WTO Agreements (Beirut, 28-29 April 2004); (c) the Regional Seminar on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (Beirut, 4-6 May 2004); (d) the Training Workshop on Intellectual Property Rights for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises in the Arab Region (Beirut, 20-24 September 2004); (e) the Regional Seminar on Trade Facilitation (Beirut, 1-3 June 2004); and (f) the Regional Seminar on Trade in Services for the Arab Countries (Beirut, 7-9 December 2004).
67. Additionally, ESCWA prepared briefing notes on the recent developments concerning the Doha Round negotiations along with an Arabic translation of the July 2004 Framework Agreement, which were submitted to member countries and posted on the Arabic portal of the ESCWA web site.
68. Through these activities, ESCWA increased the capacity and understanding in various aspects of WTO requirements and developments. In the area of judicial reform in line with WTO agreements, a total of nine laws were promulgated by December 2004, representing a rise of three such laws since the end of 2003. These were as follows: (a) Bahrain issued two laws on protecting patents and utility models and on protecting geographical indicators; (b) Egypt acceded in August 2004 to the WTO treaty on international registration of industrial design in compliance with Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights Agreement (TRIPS); (c) Jordan amended its Trade Remedies Law Number 21 to conform to WTO agreements on anti-dumping and subsidies, and acceded in May 2004 to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Performance and Phonograms Treaty in compliance with TRIPS; (d) Oman issued Ministerial Decision Number 35 in May 2004 for the protection of new varieties of plants in line with TRIPS; (e) Qatar

introduced Law Number 17 regulating the ownership of estate and residential units by foreign nationals in Qatar; and (f) the United Arab Emirates issued Ministerial Decisions numbers 131-134 in 2004 that serve to regulate the registration, import, distribution and mandatory licences of copyrights, and acceded to the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Work.

Expected accomplishment 3: Increased attractiveness of member countries for domestic, intraregional and foreign investment.

Results

69. The ESCWA region is one of the lowest recipients of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the world. Moreover, the region lags behind in terms of mobilizing internal financial resources for development. Consequently, the activities of this subprogramme are aimed at enhancing the opportunities in member countries for domestic, intraregional and foreign investment.

70. During 2004, ESCWA continued to advocate for and increase the awareness of member countries with regard to the recommendations of the International Conference on Financing for Development (Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002), and provided technical assistance aimed at implementing the respective obligations of member countries under the umbrella of the Monterrey Consensus. Within that framework, ESCWA conducted several analytical studies on the developments taking place in member countries, particularly on such issues as FDI, stock markets and debt management.

71. Moreover, these activities contributed to the adoption by member countries of a number of measures that are commensurate with the Monterrey Consensus, including the following: (a) Egypt passed a new investment law and, in a separate development, established the Qualified Industrial Zones (QIZ); (b) Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic opened up certain sectors of their respective economies to foreign investment; and (c) Jordan and the United Arab Emirates expanded their respective free trade areas.

72. Equally, financial markets, which are complementary to foreign investment, were deepened whereby securities markets played a bigger role in sustainable economic development and therefore further enhanced the national capacities for attracting FDI in a more sustainable manner. Furthermore, ESCWA and UNCTAD are in the final stages of establishing national databases of FDI in five member countries, which has prompted an additional three member countries, namely, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen, to request assistance in establishing similar databases in their respective countries. Improved availability of data on FDI and better accounting of FDI activities assist decision-makers in formulating adequate policies and increase the transparency that is essential to attract FDI.

73. Political instability remained the biggest constraint in the Arab region. The adverse security situation, particularly in Iraq and Palestine, has discouraged the inflow of FDI in the region. These strains on FDI have been further compounded in several member countries by protracted reforms aimed at liberalizing their respective markets and economies.

Expected accomplishment 4: Increased export capacity of ESCWA member countries.

Results

74. Since February 1997 and the Declaration on Pan-Arab Free Trade Area, a strong political will has existed aimed at removing tariff barriers between member countries, thereby increasing intraregional trade and improving exports. Within that context, ESCWA continued to advocate and increase the awareness of member countries with regard to the benefits that can be reaped from regional economic integration under the Greater Arab Free Trade Agreement (GAFTA) and from WTO agreements.

75. During 2004, this subprogramme monitored the actions taken by member countries towards the implementation of GAFTA requirements and continued to raise awareness through such flagship

publications as the *Annual Review of Developments in Globalization and Regional Integration in the Countries of the ESCWA Region*. In addition to covering issues of regional and subregional integration, and a sectoral approach to Arab regional integration, the Review underscored the developments from the Doha to Cancun Rounds. Moreover, ESCWA is currently preparing an expert group meeting to assess the progress made in regional integration and interregional cooperation, and is preparing a study to investigate the impact of regional integration on certain sectors in selected member countries.

76. Given the important role played by trade facilitation in enhancing the export capacity of member countries, ESCWA assisted five member countries in establishing national committees on trade and transport facilitation. Similarly in the area of transport, the agreements on international roads and railways in the Arab Mashreq are expected to boost the export capacity of member countries. This subprogramme has prepared a plan of action to implement the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq, which entered into force in 2003, and is in the process of preparing a plan of action for the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq, which is set to enter into force in 2005.

SUBPROGRAMME 5. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY FOR REGIONAL INTEGRATION

77. This subprogramme is implemented by the Information and Communication Technology Division (ICTD) and aims to increase the national capacities in terms of harnessing ICTs for development. The subprogramme identified five expected accomplishments to achieve this objective. These are reviewed below.

<p>Expected accomplishment 1: Increased response of member countries to integrated information and communication technology policies, strengthened institutional capacities and regulatory framework in the development process, including the implementation of the relevant WSIS-1 recommendations and their effective participation in its second phase.</p>
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Results

78. The response of member countries to formulate integrated ICT policies is reflected in their adoption of relevant recommendations that emanated from the first phase of WSIS, which was held in Geneva in 2003 (WSIS-1), and in their active preparations for and participation in the second phase in Tunis in 2005 (WSIS-2).

79. During 2004 and as a direct result of the activities undertaken by this subprogramme, member countries became more actively involved in implementing relevant WSIS-1 recommendations and responded favourably in terms of integrating ICT policies and strengthening institutional capacities and regulatory frameworks in the development process. Within the context of WSIS-1 recommendations, ESCWA organized the following three meetings: (a) Roundtable on ICT as an Enabler for Economic Development (Beirut, 29-30 April 2004); (b) Roundtable on Information Society Indicators and Profiles in Western Asia (Beirut, 4-5 October 2004); and (c) Roundtable on Strategies and Plans of Action for Building the Information Society in Western Asia (Beirut, 21-22 June 2004).

80. Moreover, a survey carried out by ESCWA in January 2004 revealed that five member countries, namely, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syrian Arab Republic, were committed to the WSIS-1 recommendations. Additionally, 11 member countries adopted a list of core ICT indicators, which was submitted to the WSIS Thematic Meeting on Measuring the Information Society (Geneva, 7-9 February 2005).

81. Within the context of WSIS-2, all the member countries have been involved in preparing for that second phase. ESCWA formulated the Regional Plan of Action (RPoA) for Building the Information Society, which was discussed and refined during the Second Regional Preparatory Conference for WSIS (Damascus, 22-23 November 2004).

82. ESCWA is currently coordinating with LAS, other United Nations entities and Government officials to develop a number of projects for Arab countries aimed at encouraging public private partnership (PPP) and multi-sectoral partnership (MSP). This coordination is aimed at specifying a number of prospects of particular significance to the region that can attract the necessary funding to build positive outputs.

Expected accomplishment 2: Improved connectivity in and between member States.

Results

83. There is a continuing need to adopt common positions on issues relating to connectivity policies and standards. To that end, ESCWA collaborates with the main regional stakeholders and partners, including Government departments in charge of telecommunications and related standards, academic and research institutions and the private sector. Moreover, such collaboration and exchanges of information raise awareness among stakeholders with regard to such issues as connectivity in and between member countries, affordability unifying standards and regional peering. This knowledge has translated into explicit action in the formulated ICT policies of some member countries.

84. During 2004, ESCWA assisted Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic in formulating their respective ICT policies, and provided these two member countries with relevant information, advisory services and recommendations. A total of five member countries have formulated ICT policies to improve telecommunications infrastructure, networks and services, representing a rise from three countries at the end of 2003 and which exceeds the target of four countries set for the end of the current biennium.

85. Similarly, the subprogramme target of three regional initiatives in the area of ICT standards related to regional specificities was reached in December 2004, namely: (a) the Arabic Content Initiative; (b) the Arabic Domain Names System (ADNS); and (c) the Information Society Measurement.

86. ESCWA formed the Arabic Domain Names Task Force (ADNTF), which specified the guidelines and standards needed to develop ADNS, thereby improving regional access to ICT and promoting digital content in Arabic.

87. The Regional Plan of Action (RPoA) for Building the Information Society, which was discussed and refined during the Second Regional Preparatory Conference for WSIS (Damascus, 22 -23 November 2004), included projects aimed at the following: (a) implementing ADNS; (b) establishing a telecommunications backbone in the region; and (c) building capacities of national statistical offices, thereby assisting their programmes in terms of introducing, measuring and collecting data on information society indicators.

Expected accomplishment 3: Increased positive impact on selected fields of development through wider utilization of promising information and communication technology applications and success stories.

Results

88. The reports, advisory services and meetings of this subprogramme were aimed at increasing awareness among policy makers of the wide range of ICT applications in socio-economic development. Within that context, ESCWA conducted the Roundtable on ICT as an Enabler for Economic Development (Beirut, 29-30 April 2004), which resulted in the formulation of an initiative aimed at harnessing ICTs for economic development in the region by fostering partnerships with the private sector.

89. The Regional Plan of Action (RPoA) for Building the Information Society contains five programmes aimed at promoting ICT applications, namely: economic development applications, e-government services, digital Arabic content, education and scientific research, and community access. Moreover, during the Second Regional Preparatory Conference for WSIS (Damascus, 22 -23 November 2004), discussions centred on the following: (a) exploring possibilities for coordinated approaches in capacity-building; (b) paving the

way towards future partnerships by involving stakeholders in the public and private sectors; and (c) obtaining feedback on proposals contained in the RPoA. Additionally, a number of case studies and success stories were presented at the Conference.

90. With the assistance of ESCWA, the number of initiatives aimed at promoting ICT applications in member countries reached a total of five in December 2004, compared to four such initiatives in December 2003. These cover digital Arabic content, cyber-hub initiative, e-government services, education and scientific research and community access. Equally, four member countries, namely, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon and Syrian Arab Republic are in the process of implementing promising ICT applications. In the case of the Syrian Arab Republic, ESCWA provided technical assistance that focused on five top-priority ICT applications as follows: (a) e-government; (b) technology parks; (c) sectoral centres of excellence; (d) ICTs for education and training; and (e) programmes to increase ICT knowledge among the population.

Expected accomplishment 4: Improved promotion of the role of ICT in increasing the competitiveness of enterprises, and improved access to information and communication technology of the poor strata of the population in the region in order to reduce the digital divide.

Results

91. There is a need to bridge the digital divide in Western Asia by harnessing ICTs for socio-economic development, particularly in terms of increasing the competitiveness of enterprises and of improving ICT access for impoverished communities. To that end, ESCWA is in the process of executing a project that targets rural and remote areas in Western Asia with an emphasis on such disadvantaged groups as youth, women, and small and micro enterprises.

92. This activity builds on the pilot project, initiated at the end of 2003, to launch three multipurpose technology community centres (MTCCs) that aimed at providing training for the population in Akkar, North Lebanon in computer skills, ranging from basic competence to the internationally-accredited Computer Driving License. In less than one year, a total of 170 persons were trained in those centers and, based upon this success, this subprogramme is seeking to replicate this project in other areas and localities. Within that context, ESCWA and the Syrian Arab Republic concluded a memorandum of understanding to implement the Smart Community Project that is set to target three rural and impoverished communities in that member country.

93. Additionally, ESCWA conducted a survey that identified existing initiatives in eight member countries, including programmes and projects, aimed at creating employment and reducing poverty. The findings of this survey are to be used to develop an online database, thereby providing vital relevant information to stakeholders and Governments.

Expected accomplishment 5: Improved availability, accessibility and usage of national and regional data and information in socio-economic fields.

Results

94. During 2004, participants in the Roundtable on Information Society Indicators and Profiles in Western Asia (Beirut, 4-5 October 2004) agreed on a set of core Information Society (IS) indicators relevant to the region, which are to be included in a global set of IS indicators. Moreover, the ESCWA Statistical Information System (ESIS), initiated in 2004, was established to support analysts, researchers and decision makers by providing facilities for the collection and dissemination of valuable socio-economic information. This System has necessitated extensive collaboration between ESCWA substantive divisions aimed at reaching a common framework and at identifying relevant indicators.

95. A prototype, which is currently under development, consists of the following three major components: (a) a database comprising 12 modules, namely, energy resources and use, water resources and use,

population, social indicators, gender, trade, national accounts, labour, health and vital statistics, transport, finance and ICT; (b) a desktop user interface; and (c) a web-enabled interface. The first two components of the module became operational in 2004 and was demonstrated to national and international representatives who expressed an interest in accessing the ESIS from the Internet once the third component is completed in 2005. This ICT module of ESIS has proved very useful to ESCWA researchers and consultants in providing statistical information needed to support and complete their analyses and studies.

96. The regional set of IS indicators, which are to be included in a global set of IS indicators for the purpose of international comparisons, is now a major objective of the global partnership and was submitted to the WSIS Thematic Meeting on Measuring the Information Society (Geneva, 7-9 February 2005). The database on IS indicators is expected to incorporate the global IS indicators and a regional supplement for Western Asia.

SUBPROGRAMME 6. COMPARABLE STATISTICS FOR IMPROVED PLANNING AND DECISION-MAKING

97. This subprogramme is implemented by the Statistical Team and aims to improve the statistical capabilities of the countries in the region, thereby encouraging informed decision-making and improving the timely availability of comparable statistical information. The subprogramme identified four expected accomplishments to achieve this objective. These are reviewed below.

Expected accomplishment 1: Improved national capacity for the production and dissemination of quality statistics.
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Results

98. This subprogramme provides a forum for officials from national statistical offices to discuss and agree on certain measures aimed at improving the timely availability and comparability of their statistics. Moreover, it pursues advocacy and policy advice on the adoption of international standards, and conducts meetings and workshops and issues publications.

99. The sixth session of the Statistical Committee (Beirut, 6-8 October 2004) recommended measures to harmonize statistics and improve their quality in the following ways: (a) by applying international statistical systems, criteria and classifications comprehensively, including the 1993 SNA; (b) by issuing comparable statistics and using these criteria for the purpose of the International Comparison Programme (ICP); (c) by adopting harmonized trade systems for the purpose of issuing statistics on international trade in goods; (d) by adopting the list of IS indicators issued by the Roundtable on Information Society Indicators and Profiles in Western Asia (Beirut, 4-5 October 2004); and (e) by harmonizing census topics and results within the framework of the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses.

100. Moreover, the Expert Group Meeting on Data and Indicators to Monitor Progress Towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in the ESCWA Region (Beirut, 9-13 February 2004) underscored the following priorities: (a) to produce timely, accurate, reliable, valid and comparable MDG statistics and indicators; and (b) to revise the number of measures aimed at harmonizing statistics and improving their quality to five relevant measures, which represents a rise from the three measures in 2003.

101. Additionally, ESCWA organized four workshops and seminars aimed at enhancing the capacity of member countries in the areas of harmonization and production of statistics, namely: (a) the Workshop on Energy Statistics in ESCWA Member Countries and Seminar on Application of the United Nations Framework Classification (UNFC) for Energy Reserves/Resources in ESCWA/OPEC Member Countries (Beirut, 31 May-2 June 2004); (b) the Workshop on Environment Statistics in the Countries of the ESCWA Region (Damascus, 4-8 April 2004); (c) the Seminar on Statistics of International Trade in Services (Beirut, 14-17 December 2004); and (d) the United Nations Workshop on International Economic and Social Classifications (Beirut, 19-23 July 2004). Furthermore and at the request of Qatar, ESCWA organized the

Symposium on Statistics for Development: Dialogue between Users and Producers (Doha, 17-19 May 2004), during which a draft five-year plan for strengthening statistical work in that country was formulated.

102. During 2004, ESCWA continued its efforts to strengthen the statistical capacity of member countries the member countries under the umbrella project of Development Account. Within that framework, a number of activities undertaken by this subprogramme aimed at enhancing national capacities in terms of producing environment statistics and MDG indicators, and at raising awareness with regard to modern techniques of data processing used in population censuses, particularly the Optical Character Recognition (OCR) and Human Device Interface (HDI).

Expected accomplishment 2: Improved capacity of member countries for the implementation of comparable national accounts.

Results

103. Information on the comparability and standing of countries requires harmonized as well as comparable statistics. This calls for strengthening the national capacities in producing comparable national account statistics and indicators based on the System of National Accounts 1993 (SNA 93). Consequently, there is a need to focus on ICP, which was initiated during the previous biennium, since that Programme evaluates purchasing power parities (PPPs) that in turn can be used to measure and compare GDP statistics and other national account indicators. Currently, a total of 12 member countries are benefiting from the 2003-2006 round (sometimes referred to as ICP 2004) through training provided to statisticians and officials in statistics departments and related governmental bodies.

104. Equally, in the course of two workshops and two national coordinator meetings during 2004, training was provided to more than 60 national statisticians specialized in price statistics and national accounts on ICP concepts, which are based on SNA 93, and on using an integrated software system called ICP Tool Pack. ESCWA followed up these activities with visits to member countries in order to provide the ICP national teams with technical assistance. Additionally, ESCWA provided all participating countries with the necessary hardware and equipped them with the ICP Tool Pack and Structured Product Specifications (SPD) software with the following aims: (a) to design the framework for the price survey, which is set to be undertaken in 2005; (b) to verify and maintain the collected data in a comprehensive database; (c) to calculate the average price indices and PPPs; and (d) to analyse the collected data and produce customized reports.

105. ESCWA translated the ICP catalogues and manuals into Arabic and submitted these translations to national statisticians. Furthermore, the participation of ESCWA in the 2003-2006 round enhanced the statistical capacity of the region given that such participation encouraged hundreds of regional statisticians and data collectors to work towards implementing the project, particularly with regard to the price survey. Such renewed and concerted focus is expected to encourage more member countries to adopt SNA 93.

Expected accomplishment 3: Improved capacity of member countries for the production and utilization of sectoral statistics and indicators to measure productivity and efficiency and monitor development policies in these sectors and, in particular, sustainable development indicators and statistics in new areas such as gender and poverty.

Results

106. This subprogramme attempted to reach its main objective by conducting relevant meetings and workshops aimed at improving the national capacities in the area of sectoral statistics and indicators. These meetings, which were complemented by a number of appropriated publications issued by the subprogramme, provided a valuable forum for officers from national statistical departments to discuss and agree on certain measures to improve the timely availability and comparability of statistics and to adopt international standards.

107. Moreover, these meetings sought to underscore the principal challenge posed by gaps in sectoral statistics and international trade, particularly in the areas of environment and water, and services and goods. Within that context, ESCWA organized the following workshops and seminars: (a) the Workshop on Energy Statistics in ESCWA Member Countries and Seminar on Application of the United Nations Framework Classification (UNFC) for Energy Reserves/Resources in ESCWA/OPEC Member Countries (Beirut, 31 May-2 June 2004); (b) the Workshop on Environment Statistics in the Countries of the ESCWA Region (Damascus, 4-8 April 2004); (c) the Seminar on Statistics of International Trade in Services (Beirut, 14-17 December 2004); and (d) the United Nations Workshop on International Economic and Social Classifications (Beirut, 19-23 July 2004). A total of 169 officials were trained during the four workshops, including 49 women. Equally, ESCWA intensified its interactions with national statistics offices by exchanging information using the Internet, by submitting and receiving relevant questionnaires, and by performing validity tests on figures and data.

108. In the area of publications, ESCWA issued the flagship *External Trade Bulletin of the ESCWA Region, 13th Issue* in January 2005, which provides data on overall trade trends and intraregional trade. Furthermore, ESCWA provided assistance to member countries with regard to training on Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (popularly known as Harmonized System or HS), in line with recommendations by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD). Similarly, this subprogramme sought to raise the awareness and knowledge of new methodologies and systems used in measuring and compiling statistics on international trade in services.

Expected accomplishment 4: Increased production and utilization by member countries of a core of social indicators for monitoring social development.
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Results

109. An increase in the production and dissemination of social indicators are prerequisites for monitoring social development and for reporting on the achievements made by member countries with regard to MDGs. This subprogramme focuses on the development of gender statistics and social indicators pertaining to the MDGs, in addition to encouraging national statistics offices to adopt such indicators. Within that context, there is a vital need to strengthen the statistical capacities of member countries in producing and disseminating timely, accurate and comparable social statistics, while taking into account the gender dimension. This is achieved through capacity-building initiatives aimed at the following: (a) developing social statistical data and indicators; (b) maintaining statistical social datasets; and (c) issuing publications containing gender-disaggregated statistics.

110. During 2004, a total of 10 member countries increased their national capacities in terms of producing and using a core set of 27 social indicators related to MDGs, representing a rise from 10 such indicators in 2003. These core indicators allowed ESCWA to prepare a regional report on MDGs comprising indicators collected from member countries and with the objective of monitoring the progress made in achieving the Millennium Goals. Additionally, a module on these indicators was developed and made accessible on the ESCWA web site. Moreover, ESCWA published the *Bulletin on Vital Statistics in the ESCWA Region, 7th Issue*, and released a wall chart on selected labour indicators to highlight the current status of health and work-related indicators in member countries.

111. Additionally, ESCWA continued its support of member countries within the framework of the Development of National Gender Statistics Programmes in the Arab Countries (GSP). Particular attention was given to Bahrain and Qatar to enhance the statistical capabilities of these two countries in terms of producing and using gender-disaggregated statistics. This resulted in two meetings organized by ESCWA, namely: the Second National Workshop for Users and Producers of Gender Statistics in Bahrain (Manama, 13-14 December 2004), which reviewed a national publication on gender issues; and the Symposium on Statistics for Development: Dialogue between Users and Producers (Doha, 17-19 May 2004), which resulted in the formulation of a draft five-year plan for strengthening statistical work.

112. Moreover, ESCWA contributed towards increasing the capabilities of Iraq in terms of developing statistics on economic activity under the project on National Household Survey Capability Programme.

Annex

**DEPARTURES FROM PROGRAMMED ACTIVITIES IN 2004
 AND UP TO FEBRUARY 2005**

Activity	Status				Justification
	Terminated	Added	Reformulated	Postponed	
Subprogramme 1.					
Integrated policies for the management of regional resources for sustainable development					
<i>Ad hoc expert group meetings</i>					
Expert Group Meeting on prospects for achieving energy sector sustainability in the ESCWA region			1		Reformulated at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes. The title has been changed to Arab Regional Conference on Energy for Sustainable Development: Progress Achieved and Environmental Issues.
Expert Group Meeting on national and sectoral policies for knowledge societies in the Arab countries			1		Reformulated at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes. The title has been changed to Modern Biotechnologies, Technical and Policy Implications in the Near East and North Africa region.
<i>Assistance to intergovernmental bodies and/or United Nations representatives/rapporteurs under their established mandates</i>					
Substantive servicing of the intergovernmental meetings of the executive bureau of CAMRE and JECEDAR and joint technical secretariat of ESCWA CAMRE and UNEP/ROWA to follow-up on the Arab initiative for implementing WSSD		2			Added by legislation pursuant to general assembly resolution 57/46 of 21 November 2002 on Cooperation between the United Nations and LAS (operative paras 5, 6(d), 7 and 9); and LAS Resolution 176 of 24 October 2002 on the Follow-up on the Implementation of the WSSD Initiative in the Arab Region.
<i>Non-recurrent publications</i>					
The environment in the transboundary context in the ESCWA region: situation and recommendations		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes.
Follow-up on the activities of the regional mechanism on sustainable energy systems			1		Reformulated at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes. The title has been changed to Regional Progress Achieved on Energy for Sustainable Development.
Knowledge mapping and needs assessment in international water resources management in the ESCWA region			1		Reformulated at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes. The title has been changed to Development of a Framework for National strategies for IWRM Applications.
<i>Seminars organized by the secretariat for outside users under specific mandates</i>					
Development of sustainable development indicators and country profiles in selected sectors	1				Terminated at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes and reinstated as booklets to ensure wider dissemination.

Activity	Status				Justification
	Terminated	Added	Reformulated	Postponed	
<i>Seminars organized by the secretariat for outside users under specific mandates</i>					
Regional mechanism on sustainable development			1		Reformulated at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes. The title has been changed to Seminar on Clean Fuels and Vehicles in Western Asia and North Africa.
<i>Booklets, pamphlets, fact sheets, wall charts, information kits</i>					
Development of sustainable development indicators and country profiles in selected sectors		1			Added by legislation pursuant to general assembly resolution 58/218 on the Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.
<i>Technical material for outside users (databases, software, etc.)</i>					
Capacity-building guide for Arab journalists on how to tackle environmental issues in order to achieve sustainable development		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes.
<i>Group training (seminars, workshops, symposia)</i>					
Joint ESCWA/UNIDO Regional Workshop on the Development of Manufacturing SME Clusters/Networks and Capacity-building in Selected Countries of the ESCWA Region		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat owing to the availability of extrabudgetary funds from UNIDO.
Regional Workshop on National Sustainable Development Strategies and Indicators of Sustainable Development for the ESCWA Region		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes; undertaken in cooperation with DESA.
<i>Field projects</i>					
Arab Integrated Water Resources Management Network (AWARENET)		1			Added by legislation pursuant to ESCWA resolution 244 (XXII) of 17 April 2003 on cooperation between ESCWA member countries with respect to shared water resources and AWARENET; and owing to the availability of extrabudgetary funds from UNESCO.
Sustainability Impact Assessment of the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes. This is a project developed by the European Union and the University of Manchester, and subcontracted to ESCWA by the University of Manchester.
Employment Creation and Income Generation through the Development of Micro and Small Agro-industries in South Lebanon		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes; undertaken in cooperation with ILO.
Disseminating Renewable Energy for Poverty Alleviation in ESCWA Member Countries		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes; undertaken in cooperation with UNESCO.

Activity	Status				Justification
	Terminated	Added	Reformulated	Postponed	
<i>Field projects</i>					
Trade and Environment Capacity-building for SMEs		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes and owing to the availability of extrabudgetary funds from the World Bank.
Advisory services to ESCWA member countries in the field of water resources		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes; undertaken in cooperation with BGR.
Total for Subprogramme 1:	1	13	5	0	
Subprogramme 2.					
Integrated Social Policies					
<i>Intergovernmental meetings</i>					
Substantive Servicing of the Second Session of the Committee on Women		1	1		Added by legislation pursuant to ESCWA resolution 240 (XXII) of 17 April 2003 on the establishment within the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia of a Committee on Women. Reformulated by legislation pursuant to general assembly resolution 58/148 of 22 December 2003 on Follow-up to the 4 th World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action and the Outcome of the twenty-third special session of the general assembly. The title has been changed to Arab Regional Conference Ten Years after Beijing: Call for Peace.
<i>Reports to be prepared in response to approved mandates</i>					
Report to the Commission on the Second Session of the Committee on Women		1	1		Added by legislation pursuant to ESCWA resolution 240 (XXII) of 17 April 2003, cited above. Reformulated by legislation pursuant to general assembly resolution 58/148 of 22 December 2003, cited above. The title has been changed to Report of the Arab Regional Conference Ten Years after Beijing: Call for Peace.
<i>Ad hoc expert group meetings</i>					
Arab Population Forum		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes, and owing to the availability of extrabudgetary funds from UNFPA.
Expert Group Meeting on globalization and employment			1		Reformulated at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes. The title has been changed to Expert Group Meeting on the Impact of Globalization on Social Cohesion in the ESCWA Region.

Activity	Status				Justification
	Terminated	Added	Reformulated	Postponed	
<i>Ad hoc expert group meetings</i>					
The second meeting of the ESCWA consultative committee on non-governmental organizations and sustainable development			1		Reformulated by legislation pursuant to general assembly resolution 58/148 of 22 December 2003, cited above. The title has been changed to Seminar with Civil Society Organizations, including Syndicates, Unions and Political Parties.
Follow-up on the Fourth World Conference on Women and its outcome in the ESCWA region			1		Reformulated by legislation pursuant to general assembly resolution 58/148 of 22 December 2003, cited above. The title has been changed to Arab Regional Conference Ten Years after Beijing: Call for Peace.
Expert Group Meeting on formulation of integrated population policies			1		Reformulated at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes. The title has been changed to Expert Group Meeting on Population Policies in the Arab Countries Within the Framework of Good Governance.
<i>Booklets, pamphlets, fact sheets, wall charts, information kits</i>					
Population policy portfolio: reproductive health and reproductive rights		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes.
<i>Technical material for outside users (databases, software, etc.)</i>					
Thirteen national reports on social policies		13			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes.
The Arab family		1			Added by legislation pursuant to general assembly resolution 58/15 of 3 December 2003 on preparations for and Observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004.
Maintenance of the POPIN		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes.
<i>Group training (seminars, workshops, symposia)</i>					
Three workshops on building a new Iraq, namely: the role of women in the political process; the electoral process; and drafting the constitution		3			Added at the initiative of the secretariat owing to the availability of extrabudgetary funds from the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars in Washington DC.
<i>Field projects</i>					
Socio-economic Rehabilitation and Development in the Occupied Palestinian Territories		1			Added by legislation pursuant to ESCWA resolution 241 (XXII) of 17 April 2003 on the impact of the lack of stability in the Arab region on economic and social development.
Iraq Networking Academy Project		1			Added by legislation pursuant to ESCWA resolution 241 (XXII) of 17 April 2003, cited above.

Activity	Status				Justification
	Terminated	Added	Reformulated	Postponed	
<i>Field projects</i>					
Post-conflict reconstruction in Southern Lebanon and Palestine			1		Reformulated by legislation pursuant to ESCWA resolution 241 (XXII) of 17 April 2003, cited above. The title has been changed to Post-conflict Reconstruction with Emphasis on Southern Lebanon and Iraq.
Total for Subprogramme 2:	0	24	7	0	
Subprogramme 3					
Economic Analysis and Forecasting for Regional Development					
<i>Recurrent publications</i>					
Annual Indices of Production, Nos. 1 and 2	2				Terminated by the secretariat for programmatic purposes due to un-availability of national data.
<i>Non-recurrent publications</i>					
Development and institutional reform of financial markets: issues and policy options for the ESCWA region		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes.
<i>Technical material for outside users (databases, software, etc.)</i>					
Exploring potential of south-south agreements including global system of trade preferences		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes. The paper was presented to UNCTAD XI.
World economic situation and prospects 2005: analysis and forecasts for Western Asia		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes. The paper was prepared at the request of DESA.
<i>Group training (seminars, workshops, symposia)</i>					
Workshop on debt analysis and management in the ESCWA member countries			1		Reformulated at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes and co-organized with OIC/SESRTIC. The title has been changed to Workshop on the Role of Indebtedness in Development.
Total for Subprogramme 3:	2	3	1	0	
Subprogramme 4.					
Regional Integration and Responding to Globalization					
<i>Ad hoc expert group meetings</i>					
Regional Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus: Financing for Development		1			Added by legislation pursuant to general assembly resolution 58/230 of 23 December 2003 on follow-up to and implementation of the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development.
Expert Group Meeting on Maritime Transport in the ESCWA Region: Prospects for Cooperation		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes. Funding was provided by IPIC.
<i>Non-recurrent publications</i>					
External debt management and debt situation in the ESCWA region: case studies of Jordan and Lebanon		1			Added by legislation pursuant to general assembly resolution 58/230 of 23 December 2003, cited above.

Activity	Status				Justification
	Terminated	Added	Reformulated	Postponed	
<i>Non-recurrent publications</i>					
Study on road safety		1			Added by legislation pursuant to general assembly resolution 58/9 of 5 November 2003 on global road safety crisis.
Trade and investment in the Arab countries			1		Reformulated by legislation pursuant to the WTO decision (WT.L.579) adopted by the General Council on 1 August 2004. The title has been changed to Progress in Doha Round Negotiations in Agriculture and Impact on Market Access for Agricultural Exports of Arab Countries.
<i>Technical material for outside users (databases, software, etc.)</i>					
Bilateralism and regionalism in the aftermath of Cancun: re-establishing the primacy of multilateralism		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes. The paper was presented to UNCTAD XI.
Training and rehabilitation of seamen for leisure, diving and fishing boats and establishment of training centres in the ESCWA region: case study on Egypt		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes.
<i>Group training (seminars, workshops, symposia)</i>					
Seven capacity-building meetings in WTO issues under the following themes: Arab business community and WTO agreements; the application of sanitary and phytosanitary measures; trade facilitation for Arab countries; intellectual property rights for SMEs in the Arab region; trade in services for Arab countries; market access for non-agricultural products; and trade remedies		7			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes and owing to the availability of extrabudgetary funds. Co-organized with WTO, funds were provided by the Banque de la Méditerranée, the Japanese Government, and HITECH-FZE.
Workshop on Debt Analysis and Management in ESCWA Member Countries		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat owing to the availability of extrabudgetary funds; co-organized with UNCTAD.
Total for Subprogramme 4:	0	14	1	0	
Subprogramme 5.					
Information and Communication Technology for Regional Integration					
<i>Ad hoc expert group meetings</i>					
Roundtable on Strategies and Plan of Action for Building the Information Society in Western Asia		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes to facilitate follow-up on recommendations of WSIS-1 of relevance to the region.
Enterprise incubation schemes in information and communication technologies			1		Reformulated at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes to facilitate follow-up on recommendations of WSIS-1 of relevance to the region. The title has been changed to Roundtable on ICT as an Enabler for Economic Development.

Activity	Status				Justification
	Terminated	Added	Reformulated	Postponed	
<i>Ad hoc expert group meetings</i>					
Legal and regulatory frameworks for e-business in ESCWA member countries			1		Reformulated at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes to facilitate follow-up on recommendations of WSIS-1 of relevance to the region. The title has been changed to Roundtable on Information Society Indicators and Profiles in Western Asia.
<i>Non-recurrent publications</i>					
Needs and requirements for disseminating system and process integration technologies in the ESCWA region	1				Terminated at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes to facilitate follow-up on recommendations of WSIS-1 of relevance to the region.
Regional profile on the information society in Western Asia		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes to facilitate follow-up on recommendations of WSIS-1 of relevance to the region.
Data centres and Internet hosts: opportunities for regional integration			1		Reformulated at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes to facilitate follow-up on recommendations of WSIS-1 of relevance to the region. The title has been changed to Regional Plan of Action for Building the Information Society.
Information knowledge management in the public sector			1		Reformulated at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes to facilitate follow-up on recommendations of WSIS-1 of relevance to the region. The title has been changed to Information Society Indicators.
<i>Technical material for outside users (databases, software, etc.)</i>					
Development of integrated databases for ESCWA Statistical Information System (ESIS): ICT		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes.
Development of the Arabic Domain Name System		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes to facilitate follow-up on recommendations of WSIS-1 of relevance to the region.
<i>Field projects</i>					
Pilot projects on new technology for poverty reduction in selected ESCWA member countries			1		Reformulated at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes. The title has been changed to Pilot Projects on ICT for Poverty Reduction in Selected ESCWA Member Countries.
Total for Subprogramme 5:	1	4	5	0	
Subprogramme 6.					
Comparable Statistics for Improved Planning and Decision-Making					
<i>Ad hoc expert group meetings</i>					
Expert Group Meeting on the compilation of trade in services statistics			1		Reformulated at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes. The title has been changed to Seminar on Statistics of International Trade in Services.

Activity	Status				Justification
	Terminated	Added	Reformulated	Postponed	
<i>Non-recurrent publications</i>					
Progress report on MDGs in the ESCWA region		1			Added by legislation pursuant to general assembly resolution 58/291 of 6 May 2004 on follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit and integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields.
<i>Group training (seminars, workshops, symposia)</i>					
Workshop on Disability Statistics in the ESCWA Region		1			Added by legislation pursuant to general assembly resolution 58/132 of 22 December 2003 on the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning disabled persons.
Workshop on Energy Statistics in ESCWA Member Countries		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes and owing to the availability of extrabudgetary funds; co-organized with UNSD.
Symposium on Statistics for Development: A Dialogue between Users and Producers in Qatar		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes and owing to the availability of extrabudgetary from the Planning Council of Qatar.
<i>Field projects</i>					
Regional Household Survey Project		1			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic purposes and owing to the availability of extrabudgetary funds from AGFUND.
Total for Subprogramme 6:	0	5	1	0	
TOTAL FOR ESCWA:	4	63	20	0	
