



Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Twenty-fourth session
Beirut, 8-11 May 2006

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

ANNOTATED PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Opening of the twenty-fourth session

The twenty-fourth session of the Commission will comprise two segments, namely: the Senior Official's segment, which will be inaugurated at 10 a.m. on Monday 8 May 2006 in the main Conference Hall in the United Nations House, Beirut; and the Ministerial segment, which will be inaugurated at 10 a.m. on Wednesday 10 May 2006 in the same Conference Hall. All other meetings will be held in the United Nations House, Beirut.

2. Election of officers

Pursuant to rule 12 of the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, member countries shall assume the chairmanship of the session of the Commission on a rotating basis, in the Arabic alphabetical order employed by the United Nations. At the beginning of each session, the Commission shall elect from among the representatives of its members a Chairman, two Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur, who shall remain in office until such time as their successors shall be elected and be eligible for re-election. The chairmanship of the twenty-third session was assumed by the Syrian Arab Republic, while the Commission elected the representatives of Palestine and Saudi Arabia as Vice-Chairmen and the representative of the United Arab Emirates as Rapporteur. In view of the fact that the twenty-third session of ESCWA was held away from headquarters and hosted and chaired by the Syrian Arab Republic, it was agreed that, at the twenty-fourth session, the chairmanship would revert to the country which would otherwise have assumed it at the twenty-third session by virtue of the Arabic alphabetical order, namely, Saudi Arabia.

3. Adoption of the agenda

Pursuant to rule 8 of the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Commission shall, at the beginning of each session, after the election of the Chairman, adopt the agenda for that session. The provisional agenda was drawn up by the Executive Secretary of ESCWA in consultation with the Chairman of the twenty-third session of the Commission and with the Advisory Committee of Ambassadors. The Commission is invited to adopt the provisional agenda (E/ESCWA/24/L.1).

4. Proposed organization of work

The Commission has before it E/ESCWA/24/L.2, that contains proposals concerning the organization of the work of the session. The Commission may adopt it in the form in which it was submitted or make amendments thereto.

5. Consideration of requests by States Members of the United Nations and/or its specialized agencies that are not members of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to participate as observers in the twenty-fourth session of the Commission

The Commission has before it E/ESCWA/24/3, concerning requests received from States Members of the United Nations and/or of the specialized agencies not members of the Commission to participate in the capacity of observer in the twenty-fourth session of the Commission, in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1818 (LV), paragraph 4, and rule 36 of the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.

6. Policy issues in the ESCWA region

- (a) *New challenges in the region and their impact on the work of ESCWA*

This sub-item will be considered in view of the outcome of the high-level expert brainstorming meeting on the role of ESCWA in servicing its member States for the next five years, which was held at the United Nations House in Beirut on 24-25 January 2006. Document E/ESCWA/24/4(Part I) takes account of the future role, functions and comparative advantages of ESCWA in the light of the views articulated during the brainstorming meeting; of the emerging social, economic and political challenges in the region; and of the outcome document of the 2005 World Summit.

- (b) *Facing youth unemployment problems in the ESCWA region*

Under this sub-item, the Commission has before it document E/ESCWA/24/4(Part II), which provides an analysis of the structural characteristics of youth unemployment in the ESCWA region and highlights the major challenges and difficulties that exacerbate the problem of youth unemployment. It also proposes concrete policy recommendations aimed at integrating youth into the labour force and at creating decent and productive jobs for all. The Commission will consider the issue of youth unemployment in the light of the theme of the 2006 High-level Dialogue of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on “creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development”.

- (c) *Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the ESCWA region: the Damascus Declaration*

In response to the requests of the Damascus Declaration on the Realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which was adopted by the Commission at its twenty-third session and subsequently endorsed by ECOSOC with some modifications, the Commission has before it document E/ESCWA/24/4(Part III). It contains a report that assesses the progress made towards achieving the MDGs in the Arab region, and provides a comparison between countries in the region as well as between the Arab region and other regions. The report is divided into three parts. The first part summarizes the report, entitled “The Millennium Development Goals in the Arab region, 2005” (E/ESCWA/SCU/2005/3/Rev.1); highlights the progress made towards achieving the MDGs in two conflict-stricken countries and territories, namely, Iraq and Palestine; and concludes with a policy framework geared specifically towards the achievement of the MDGs in the Arab region. The second part of the document reviews the 2005 World Summit Outcome and presents a concise description of issues that are relevant to the development process and the achievement of the MDGs in the ESCWA region. Finally, this document follows up on the Damascus Declaration and examines economic performance in the ESCWA region as well as on the status of regional coordination.

7. Report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Commission

The Commission has before it the report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Commission (E/ESCWA/24/5), which is divided into the following five parts:

(a) *Programme performance report for the biennium 2004-2005*

The document E/ESCWA/24/5(Part I) submitted under this agenda item highlights results achieved in the six subprogrammes and also identifies obstacles encountered and challenges met in implementing the programme of work for the biennium 2004-2005. Additionally, it presents the changes introduced to the programme of work pursuant to the request contained in resolution 267 (XXIII) of 12 May 2005 on adoption of the amendments made to the programme of work for the 2004-2005 biennium. The Commission is invited to review the document and provide guidance on the overall programme performance of the six subprogrammes.

(b) *Follow-up to the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the Commission at its twenty-third session (E/ESCWA/24/5(Part II))*

- (i) The Damascus Declaration on the Realization of the Millennium Development Goals;
- (ii) The establishment of the ESCWA Technology Centre: resolution 254 (XXIII);
- (iii) The establishment of a regional mechanism for building capacities to manage shared water resources: resolution 255 (XXIII);
- (iv) Adoption of the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq: resolution 256 (XXIII);
- (v) Selection of the routes to be given priority in implementation of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq: resolution 257 (XXIII);
- (vi) Strengthening technical cooperation in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia: resolution 258 (XXIII);
- (vii) Social policies: resolution 259 (XXIII);
- (viii) Development and regional cooperation under unstable conditions: resolution 260 (XXIII);
- (ix) Strengthening the cooperation between ESCWA and the League of Arab States in regional economic and social development: resolution 261 (XXIII);
- (x) Support for the capacities of member countries in the field of statistics and the International Comparison Programme (ICP): resolution 262 (XXIII);
- (xi) Promoting partnership and resource mobilization: resolution 263 (XXIII);
- (xii) Implementation of the Beirut Declaration on Arab Women Ten Years after Beijing: Call for Peace: resolution 264 (XXIII);
- (xiii) Regional cooperation in the field of road traffic safety: resolution 265 (XXIII);
- (xiv) Adoption of the draft programme of work for the 2006-2007 biennium: resolution 266 (XXIII);

- (xv) Adoption of the amendments made to the programme of work for the 2004-2005 biennium: resolution 267 (XXIII).

(c) *The technical cooperation programme and regional advisory services*

The Commission has before it document E/ESCWA/24/5(Part III), which provides an overview of the technical cooperation activities carried out by ESCWA and funded from the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation (RPTC) and the United Nations Development Account. All other activities and results achieved, whether funded from regular or extrabudgetary resources, are highlighted in the programme performance report for the 2004-2005 biennium, which is contained in document E/ESCWA/24/5(Part I).

Document E/ESCWA/24/5(Part III) is divided into two parts, namely: part one, which presents an overview of the key results achieved in the 2004-2005 biennium through advisory services rendered and the training provided from regular budget funds made available from the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation (RPTC); and part two, which highlights the results achieved in 2005 in implementing intraregional and interregional projects funded from the Development Account and links progress made thereto to the expected accomplishments of the six subprogrammes of ESCWA.

(d) *Mobilizing financial resources and funding*

Under this sub-item, a proposed multi-year funding plan (E/ESCWA/24/5(Part IV)) will be considered in response to the request made by member countries in resolution 263 (XXIII) on promoting partnership and resource mobilization. The secretariat would like to draw attention to the paucity in voluntary contributions to the ESCWA Trust Fund, which has resulted in the depletion of all its resources, and consequently urges individual countries and donor funds, organizations and institutions to increase their contributions in the light of the emerging global and regional issues and of increasing demands by member States. Countries and individuals are called upon to announce their support for ESCWA activities and projects.

(e) *Report of the seventh session of the Committee on Transport*

Under this sub-item, the Commission will consider the report of the Committee on Transport on its seventh session, which was held in April 2006 (E/ESCWA/24/5(Part V)). The Commission is requested to approve the recommendations made in this report.

8. Management Issues (E/ESCWA/24/6)

(a) *Streamlining the work of the Commission (E/ESCWA/24/6(Part I))*

(i) *Consideration of the Statistics Programme*

Pursuant to the recommendation of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) to re-evaluate the decentralization of the Statistics Programme in ESCWA and to revitalize its functions, capacities and coherence by centralizing its activities and resources, the Commission will consider document E/ESCWA/24/6(Part I)/Add.1. The Commission is invited to provide comments and guidance on the document before it.

(ii) *Consideration of ESCWA intergovernmental machinery*

Under this sub-item, the Commission will consider document E/ESCWA/24/6(Part I)/Add.2 on the outcome of the overall assessment of ESCWA intergovernmental machinery, pursuant to the recommendation of the OIOS that the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions should carry out such an assessment to streamline the processes, avoid

duplication and identify gaps. The Commission is invited to provide comments and guidance, bearing in mind the interlinkages between the intergovernmental structure subsidiary to the Commission and the programme structure of ESCWA, which was determined by the Commission in 2005.

(b) *Proposed programme changes for the biennium 2006-2007*

Under resolution 266 (XXIII) on the adoption of the draft programme of work for the biennium 2006-2007, the Executive Secretary was requested to inform the Commission at its twenty-fourth session of any amendments made thereto. Consequently, the Commission has before it document E/ESCWA/24/6(Part II), which contains the proposed programme changes for the biennium 2006-2007 that have been brought forward in the light of emerging global and regional issues, including the key concerns and priorities underscored in the outcome document of the 2005 World Summit. The Commission is invited to consider the proposed changes with a view to endorsing them for incorporation into the programme of work for the biennium 2006-2007.

(c) *Draft strategic framework for the biennium 2008-2009*

Document E/ESCWA/24/6(Part III) presents the draft strategic framework for the biennium 2008-2009 and contains the programme overview, objectives and expected accomplishments for each of the subprogrammes in ESCWA.

As a result of the mandate review called for by States Members of the United Nations in the outcome document of the 2005 World Summit, the issuance of the global instructions for the preparation of the strategic framework for the biennium 2008-2009 was delayed by United Nations Headquarters, pending the outcome of the mandate review of the General Assembly at its resumed 60th session in mid-March 2006.

Despite this delay, the Commission will consider ESCWA's draft strategic framework for the biennium 2008-2009 (E/ESCWA/24/6(Part III)), which takes into account emerging global priorities and which was prepared through a series of interactive reviews; a high-level expert brainstorming meeting on the role of ESCWA in servicing its member States for the next five years, involving prominent experts in salient development issues of priority to the region; and meetings of the Advisory Committee.

Bearing in mind that member States will be advised of any further adjustments to the 2008-2009 draft strategic framework that may be required following the mandate review by the General Assembly, the Commission is therefore invited to review the document, provide guidance on the overall programme orientation and endorse it.

9. Review of progress made by Yemen in the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the decade 2001-2010

Document E/ESCWA/24/7 presents the progress made by Yemen in the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the decade 2001-2010. The report provides an overview of the major social and economic developments that have taken place in Yemen in the past five years and highlights the development policies adopted by Yemen aimed at implementing the commitments of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries. Additionally, it highlights the support provided by ESCWA to Yemen in this regard. The outcome of discussions held by the Commission will be presented to the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, who in turn will represent it to the Ministerial Meeting on the Mid-Term Review of the Brussels Programme of Action (Cotonou, Benin, 15-16 June 2006).

10. Date and venue of the twenty-fifth session of the Commission

Rule 1, paragraph (a) of the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia provides that sessions of the Commission shall be held normally in April every other year, at a time to be determined by the members of the Commission. In its twenty-third session, the Commission agreed unanimously to change the pattern of its sessions from odd to even years in the light of the new arrangements adopted by the United Nations General Assembly with respect to programme planning. Consequently, in line with the adopted tentative schedule for the convening of Commission sessions and intergovernmental technical committees for the period 2006-2009, and subject to an invitation by a member State of the Commission to host the twenty-fifth session of ESCWA, it is expected that the Commission will decide to hold its twenty-fifth session in Beirut during the month of April 2008.

11. Other business

This item covers any other issue which the members of the Commission may wish to discuss.

12. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its twenty-fourth session

The Commission will consider the draft report on its twenty-fourth session (E/ESCWA/24/L.8) and adopt both the report and the draft resolutions.
