Weekly News 2013

ESCWA

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

RENEWABLE ENERGY APPLICATIONS IN RURAL AREAS

ESCWA organized a meeting in Beirut on 2 and 3 September 2013 to select the best proposal to equip a training and educational facility with models for renewable energy applications, in collaboration with one of the regional commission's member countries. The meeting was held in the context of the project on "Capacity Building in the area of Climate Change Mitigation to alleviate poverty in Western Asia".

The first day of the meeting was devoted to reviewing proposals from Tunisia, Lebanon and Libya, whereby the representative of each country delivered a presentation detailing the offer of his country to host the training and educational facility.

The project seeks to encourage the use of renewable energy applications in poor rural areas in certain ESCWA member countries, as a large percentage of the population lives in isolated and rural communities, where they depend mainly on biomass to meet their energy needs. Towards this end, the project focuses on raising awareness and building the capacities of concerned stakeholders in ESCWA member countries, i.e. policymakers, the civil society and the private sector, to improve access to renewable energy services and the benefit from renewable energy applications for the socio-economic development of these rural areas.

THE ROLE OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN ARAB WORLD

ESCWA Regional Advisor on Governance and National Dialogue Adib Nehme took part in the 23rd edition of "Anabtawi", the regional training session on human rights organized annually in Tunisia by the Institute for Human Rights (AIHR).

"Anabtawi" is the summer school for Arab human rights defenders, and traditionally consists of a two-week intensive training workshop. This year, 35 participants hailing from 13 Arab countries took part in Anabtawi 23, which was held from 31 August until 8 September under the slogan of "The Role of Human Rights Defenders in a Changing Arab Reality".

Addressing participants in the roundtable on "The Reality of Human Rights through Regional Shifts", Nehme spoke of the challenges posed by these shifts and the Arab Spring, saying that while some things did progress during this period, others in fact deteriorated. He mentioned as well that there was a new model of democracies emerging, as opposed to old democracies, like those in Europe. The required reforms, according to Nehme, would be found through the modern civil democratic State.

To view the lecture in full, please visit: http://www.livestream.com/aihriadh

Arab Institute for Human Rights

PROJECTS RESPONDING TO MEMBER STATES NEEDS (2)

In its quest to advance regional integration prompting an equal and sustainable socio-economic development throughout all its member countries and specifically Least Developed Countries among them (LDCs), ESCWA is undertaking projects that cover all aspects of its work mandate and respond to the needs of its members.

In this day and age, cyber legislation impacts the lives of a diverse range of stakeholders, not only legislators, lawyers, public officials and ICT specialists, but also and mainly users within the wider civil society. Still, and mainly due to a lack of capacity, many Arab countries have yet to endorse the necessary cyber legislation to enable growth in the ICT sector and aid promotion of the knowledge society. The non-enactment of cyber legislation has prevented these countries from realizing the full potential of ICT regarding economic diversifications, job creation and poverty alleviation.
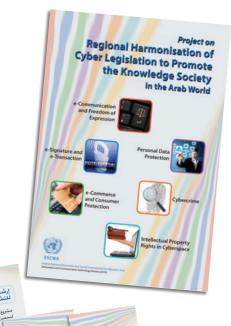
To remedy the situation, ESCWA implemented between 2009 and 2012 a project for the Regional Harmonization of Cyber Legislation to Promote the Knowledge Society in the Arab World. Within the framework of this project, ESCWA developed and published a comprehensive package of cyber legislation directives covering six main themes: electronic communications, e-signature and e-transactions, e-commerce and consumer protection, cyber crime, personal data protection and intellectual property in the cyber space.

Each directive includes a research paper showing the background and justification for the directive, an introduction including explanatory notes, and a cyber law model that may be used by governments to draft their national laws. The directives thus target government and decision makers in the Arab countries, legal experts including lawyers and judges, and academic and research personnel. The directives are available in print, online, and as an iPad app.

The project's activities succeeded in making noticeable advances for raising the awareness of decision and policymakers in the region on cyber legislation through regional and national capacity workshops on the formulation and harmonization of cyber laws as well as customized country-specific advisory services. The project's final seminar provided the basis for the harmonization of legal and regulatory frameworks in Arab countries by setting the regional framework for the application of the ESCWA Cyber Legislation Directives in the Arab region.

The project capitalized on partnership with various stakeholders such as UN agencies involved in the field of cyber legislation and cyber crime in addition to the League of Arab States. ESCWA is targeting the adoption of the ESCWA Cyber Legislation Directives on the regional level by the Arab Council of Ministers of Justice and/or the Arab Council of Ministers of Communication and Information Technology.