

Regional Commissions Development Update



Twenty-first issue, October 2006

Editorial

Regional Commissions:

The UN arms at the service of the regional dimension of development

The importance of the regional dimension of development is increasingly recognized through the deepening of various regional integration processes and the many forms of inter-country cooperation addressing an ever-growing number of transboundary issues. Within the United Nations system, regional cooperation is also recognized as an essential level for promoting region-wide awareness of the UN global values, norms, standards and commitments in the development field and for backstopping their effective implementation at the country level. This explains why an average of some 30 UN Funds, Programmes and Specialized Agencies, in addition to the Regional Commissions, are present at the regional level. Each region also records a significant number of non-UN regional and subregional organizations of a political/security or economic nature, including the regional development banks. In this overall context, there is an urgent need to increase policy and operational coherence among this large array of regional organizations through both functional rationalization and effective mechanisms of coordination.

As reiterated in ECOSOC Resolution 1998/46, the role of the regional commissions within the United Nations is two-fold: (i) as the regional outposts of the UN under the authority of ECOSOC, they play a team leadership role in promoting the UN development agenda in their respective region; and (ii) as part of their respective regional institutional landscapes, they promote regional cooperation as determined by their intergovernmental bodies and in coordination with the other organizations and institutions active in their region, both UN and non-UN. Further, the regional commissions are the only bodies which have the convening authority of the UN to organize regional intergovernmental meetings and to bring together a wide range of stakeholders, including non-state actors, to build consensus on key development issues. They also combine analytical capacity with normative work at the regional level.

Upon the basis of these institutional strengths, the regional commissions have implemented over the last few years a series of reforms in programme orientation and priority setting, institutional arrangements, governance structures and administrative and managerial improvements, to better support development and regional cooperation in their regions. In pursuing these efforts, the commissions were guided by the demands and emerging needs of their member States, the new realities in and evolution of their respective regional landscape as well as the desire to sharpen their comparative advantages and better harness them in support of the development efforts of their member States, as well as of their regional and subregional partners.

As result, the regional commissions have strengthened their institutional capacities to continue contributing to the system-wide coherence of the UN development efforts at the regional level, through a better articulation of their normative, analytical and operational activities with those of the other UN entities active at the regional level.

Jose Luis Machinea
Executive Secretary of ECLAC
and Current Coordinator of
the Regional Commissions

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The Regional Commissions and the Regions' Institutional Landscape

Since their inception, the regional commissions have played a catalytic role in institution-building in their respective regions. ECA and ESCAP, for example, were instrumental in creating respectively the African and Asian Development Banks (AfDB and ADB). All the commissions have a longstanding history of cooperation and collaboration with their regional and subregional institutional partners, including through a regular exchange of information, active participation in each other's meetings, implementation of joint technical cooperation projects in their areas of expertise, and various efforts to promote regional economic integration.

For example, ECLAC and the Organization of American States (OAS) have furthered their institutional ties by continuing to coordinate efforts in regard to areas of economic and social development, sustainable development, ports infrastructure and maritime transport, and issues relating to the information society. In the context of regional economic integration, ECLAC continues to work with OAS and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) under the aegis of the Hemispheric Cooperation Program to provide technical assistance to countries in relation to trade-related capacity building. ECLAC and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) have strengthened their cooperation within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in 1995. A regional coordinating mechanism for the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy in the Caribbean region is in the process of being established as a multi-stakeholder effort spearheaded by ECLAC, but with the full and active collaboration of the CARICOM.

Similarly, ESCWA and the League of Arab States (LAS) have worked together on a number of development issues and have jointly implemented numerous activities and development projects contributing to the maintenance of peace and stability in the region and addressing the challenges thereto, as well as enhancing sustainable development. They have collaborated on population policy issues, the environmental dimension of sustainable development, water, trade, post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation, information and

communication technologies, and capacity building. Both organizations are currently finalizing a MoU guided by their comparative advantages and areas of complementarities. Similar efforts are being deployed with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), where ESCWA's expertise in the areas of transport and statistics are of particular interest.

Attentive to the capacity needs, development and evolution of their regional and subregional institutional partners, the regional commissions have been largely successful in building synergies and complementarities with other regional institutions, rather than duplicating their work. In many instances, this has required important adaptation so as to better respond to the emerging needs of their institutional partners and to seek points of complementarities.

Hence, and as part of its recent reform and repositioning efforts, ECA has identified the promotion of regional integration in support of the African Union (AU) Vision as one of the two pillars guiding its work (the other is helping to meet Africa's special needs and global challenges in support of the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)). This includes strengthening the capacity of the AU Commission and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Having played a key role in the formulation of the NEPAD programme, ECA has continued to support the AU in the implementation of various aspects of the programme and is one of the AU strategic partners in supporting the peer review missions under the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) currently underway in several countries. In addition, the Chief Executives of the AU, AfDB and ECA agreed early this year to re-launch the Joint Secretariat as an instrument for deepening and institutionalizing the collaboration among the three institutions in support of the continent's development.

The ECE, on its part, has developed firm relationships with a number of Pan-European and sub-regional organizations, building up various types of cooperation and complementarities with them. For instance, the results of the normative work of the ECE are taken up and developed into European Union (EU) directives in a number of areas, such as environmental conventions, transport agreements, commercial quality standards for agricultural products, and statistics. The longstanding relationship between the ECE and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on the economic and environmental aspects of security in Europe was further

strengthened in 2004 with a MoU that outlines in concrete terms the cooperation between the two organizations. Among the several areas of cooperation with OECD, the ECE conducts environmental performance reviews (EPRs) for countries with economies in transition with the same methodology used by OECD, which conducts EPRs for its member States.

The regional commissions have also served as a platform for the exchange of experiences as well as for the promotion of intraregional cooperation. ESCAP, for instance, holds annual joint consultations with several subregional organizations in Asia and the Pacific, namely the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS). ESCAP has strategic partnerships with many of these institutions and a long history of cooperation. Through its Pacific Operations Centre in Suva, ESCAP is working with PIFS to assess the adjustment costs that Pacific countries would have to bear as a result of providing greater market access to EU members as part of ongoing Economic Partnership negotiations. Both organizations are also closely collaborating on projects to enhance the Pacific connectivity through Information and Communication Technology (ICT). ESCAP cooperation with ECO covers areas of poverty reduction, environment, energy, trade and transport.

At their 2005 Summit, world leaders recognized the increased importance of the regional dimension in promoting peace, security, and development cooperation. They called, therefore, for a strengthened relationship between the UN and regional and subregional organizations in those areas. Prior to that, in 1998 ECOSOC had affirmed the dual role of the regional commissions, both as the regional arm of the UN in the economic and social fields and as part of their respective regions. The commissions have been actively fulfilling this role and are committed to do so in the most effective and efficient manner.



The President of the African Development (AfDB) Group, Mr. Donald Kaberuka, the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Mr. Alpha Oumar Konare, and the Executive Secretary of ECA, Mr. Abdoulaye Janneh, met at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa on 24 February 2006 for a brainstorming session on how to jointly work for a more united, integrated and prosperous Africa.

On 10 and 11 April 2006, Mr. Marek Belka, Executive Secretary of ECE, visited the European Commission in Brussels. On this occasion he met with Mr. José Manuel Barroso (left), President of the European Commission. They discussed the major areas of common interest to the two institutions, in particular the EU Neighbourhood Policy, energy security and the role of the ECE in the context of the European architecture.



The President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, H.E. Mr. Kessai H. Note (left) and the President of Kiribati, H.E. Mr. Anote Tong (right) were two of six Pacific leaders who joined ESCAP Executive Secretary Mr. Kim Hak-Su at the Pacific Leaders' United Nations ESCAP Special Session (PLUS) in April 2006. The Session aimed to provide a unique Asian and Pacific inter-governmental platform for Pacific Leaders to articulate their concerns and engage in interactive dialogue with the delegations of the other ESCAP members, in an effort to identify ways of strengthening Pacific-Asia partnership in economic and social development.

ECLAC and the Andean Development Corporation (ADC) on 14 July 2006 signed a cooperation agreement whereby both organizations made a commitment to extend their joint activities in order to help the countries of the region to build stronger linkages with the world economy. The document was signed by Mr. José Luis Machinea (left), Executive Secretary of ECLAC, and Mr. Enrique García, President of ADC, in a ceremony held at the headquarters of ADC in Caracas, Venezuela.



The opening ceremony of the Ministerial segment of ESCWA's 24th Session, held from 8 to 11 May 2006 in Beirut, included remarks by ESCWA Executive Secretary Ms. Mervat Tallawy and Gulf Cooperation Council Secretary-General Abdel-Rahyman bin Hamad Al-Atiyah. Representing Saudi Arabia, which is chairing the Session, was Minister of Economy and Planning Khaled bin Mohammed Al-Kosaibi.

Activities of the Economic Commission for Europe

ECE Energy Security Forum Report for G8 Summit

The Energy Security Forum, under the auspices of ECE submitted the findings of its Study on Emerging Energy Security Risks and Risk Mitigation in a Global Context to the Government of the Russian Federation in preparation for the G8 Summit in St. Petersburg, in response to the request of the Special Envoy of President Vladimir Putin on International Energy Cooperation during the 2005 annual meeting of the Energy Security Forum.

The report concludes that global energy security risks have increased sharply because of steeply rising oil import demand in developing countries; the narrowing margin between oil supply and demand that has driven up prices; the volatility of oil prices arising from international tensions, terrorism and the potential for supply disruptions; the concentration of known hydrocarbon reserves and resources in a limited number of the world's subregions; and the restricted access to oil and gas companies to the development of hydrocarbon reserves in some countries.

It recommends that governments in producing and consuming countries can mitigate these risks significantly by promoting investment in the energy sector to meet future demand by providing the legal frameworks, regulatory environments, tax incentives and fair and transparent processes to foster the public-private partnerships needed to promote and protect investments in new oil and natural gas supplies and enhance the secondary recovery of hydrocarbons.

As a first step, the Energy Security Forum recommends that G-8 governments launch a new multilateral producer-consumer dialogue between representatives of governments, energy industries, the financial community and relevant international organizations. It should be based on the interdependent interests of energy producing and consuming nations and the need for reciprocal relations between them within the framework of the ECE.

The fifteenth session of the Committee on Sustainable Energy (28-30 November) will focus on the confluence between energy security and sustainable energy policies.

Espoo Convention Ruling on Bystroe Canal

On 10 July 2006 an ECE Inquiry Commission – the first ever convened under the ECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (Espoo Convention) – headed by Professor Joos Terwindt, an independent Dutch academic, with two scientific experts, one each from Romania and Ukraine, ruled that a controversial Ukrainian construction project, known as the Bystroe Canal, running along the Ukraine-Romania border will have “significant adverse transboundary effects.”

Under the Espoo Convention, States must notify and consult each other on all planned major projects likely to have a significant negative environmental impact across a national border. The current dispute arose when Ukraine began construction on Phase I of its Bystroe Canal Project without notifying Romania. Disagreeing with the Ukrainian position that the project had no transboundary effects, in August 2004 Romania requested an inquiry under the guidelines of the Espoo Convention.

As a result of the ruling, Ukraine is expected to send a notification about the canal to Romania and, from this point forward, both countries should engage in consultation and cooperation as the project moves ahead. According to the Convention the affected party, Romania in this case, must be allowed to comment on and, when necessary, object to future construction decisions. At the time of the ruling, Ukraine had completed almost all of its Phase I construction plans and had suspended Phase II pending the results of the Commission.

First Meeting of the SPECA Economic Forum in Baku

One of the main objectives of the recent reform of the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), jointly sponsored by ECE and ESCAP, was to more actively involve the business and research community and civil society in its decision-making and programme implementation. The first practical steps in this direction were taken on 25 and 26 June 2006 in Baku, where the SPECA Economic Forum was held back to back with the first meeting of the Governing Council. Members of the SPECA Governing Council took an active part in the discussions of the Economic Forum together with representatives of private business, economic research institutes, women's associations and international and regional organizations. The Governing Council decided that the best ideas and initiatives presented during the Economic Forum should be developed into project proposals, including the Baku Initiative on Energy Efficiency. The SPECA Network of Economic Research Institutes is also expected to underpin the discussions with analytical work, with the aim of producing concrete policy recommendations for the governments concerned.

Master Plan to Meet Main Transport Infrastructure Needs

The ECE Trans-European Motorways (TEM) and Trans-European Rail (TER) Master Plan, reflecting the priority transport infrastructure needs of 21 Central, Eastern, and South-East European countries, has been published. The Master Plan has identified the backbone road and rail networks in those countries and elaborated a realistic investment strategy to gradually develop these networks. Two experts groups, one for road and one for rail, with the support of external consultants, have consolidated and processed transport plans and priority needs of the respective countries. As many as 491 projects with an aggregate estimated cost of EUR 102 billion, have been evaluated and prioritized. The Master Plan provides a useful tool and framework for intergovernmental cooperation towards the coordinated development of coherent international transport infrastructure networks in Central, Eastern and South East European countries, and their integration into the pan-European networks.



ICT – Providing Better Support to Official Statistics

ICT managers and experts discussed the impact of changing statistical processes on the organization of statistical information systems at a Joint ECE/Eurostat/Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Seminar on Management of Statistical Information Systems, held in Sofia, Bulgaria, from 21 to 23 June 2006. Recent years have witnessed new communication patterns, trends toward the greater use of existing information for statistical purposes contained in administrative registers and records, and numerous integration and harmonization initiatives. Consequently, relations among clients/users of statistics as well as respondents are also changing. More and more data are available free of charge to professional users as well as the public on the websites of statistical offices. New navigation tools are being developed based on experiences acquired in the development of computer games and flash technology that help to make statistical websites more attractive and user-friendly. More data on the Internet also means a greater vulnerability to disclosure of confidential microdata on individuals and businesses. The discussion, therefore, also focused on leading practices in implementing ICT tools for statistical disclosure control. On the practical side, ICT managers are also concerned about the efficiency of their operations. Partnerships between National Statistical Offices may also help to increase the efficiency of ICT services for statistics.

Breakthrough in Central Asian Water Relations

The newly created Chu-Talas Rivers Commission was inaugurated in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on 26 July 2006, representing a mutually beneficial way for Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan to share the responsibility for water infrastructure used by both countries. As part of the bilateral agreement, Kazakhstan has agreed to pay part of the operating and maintenance expenses for a number of Kyrgyz dams and reservoirs supplying water to both countries. This represents a significant step towards addressing a contentious issue and achieving a breakthrough in water relations in Central Asia, as the sharing of water resources, in particular between upstream and downstream countries, is often characterized by tension and insecurity.

The establishment of the Chu-Talas Rivers Commission has been supported by a joint project implemented by ECE, ESCAP and OSCE which is part of a coordinated effort by the international community to support the Rivers Commission's formation. The EU has implemented a project on integrated water resources management in the basins of the Chu and Talas rivers. The Asian Development Bank has provided support for setting up the Commission secretariat and renovating some infrastructure on the rivers. Applying the example of Kazakh-Kyrgyz cooperation to resource-sharing in other transboundary river basins in Central Asia would lead to greater all-around capacity to meet the region's water needs.

ECE selected meetings

2006

9-11 October

Thirteenth session of the Committee on Environmental Policy

28-30 November

Fifteenth session of the Committee on Sustainable Energy

2007

6-8 February

Sixty-ninth session of the Inland Transport Committee

23-27 April

Sixty-second Commission Session and Sixtieth Anniversary

23-27 April

World Youth Assembly for Road Safety and Stakeholders

11-13 June

Fifty-fifth plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians

ECE selected publications

Restructured ADR – applicable as from 1 January 2007

European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road, Vols. I & II
(Sales # E.06.VIII.1 - ISBN 92-1-139112-1)

The Millennium Development Goals

- The Way Ahead: A Pan-European Perspective
ECE/INF/2005/15 – June 2006

Guidelines on Social Housing, Principles and Examples

(ECE/HBP/137, April 2006)

Making Data Meaningful – A Guide to Writing Stories about Numbers

(ECE/CES/STAT/NONE/2006/1, February 2006)

Activities of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

ESCAP

Information Society Measurements in Asia-Pacific

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and ESCAP jointly organized a Regional Workshop on Information Society Measurements in Asia-Pacific. The Workshop was held in Bangkok from 26 to 28 July 2006 to share best practices in ICT measurement at the regional level. Representatives of the national statistical system responsible for information society measurements and officials from some ICT ministries and regulatory agencies discussed ICT infrastructure and access; access to, and use of ICT by households and individuals; use of ICT by businesses; and ICT sector and trade in ICT goods.

H.E. Professor Suchai Charoenratanakul, Deputy Prime Minister and Acting Minister of Information and Communication Technology, Royal Thai Government, delivered the keynote speech to the 56 experts from over 20 countries in the region as well as regional partners and UN representatives. The meeting aimed to increase awareness both at the political and technical level of the need to measure information society developments and for linking the national policy agenda with the e-measurement agenda, requiring effective cooperation between policymakers and national statistical systems.

'End-To-End' Tsunami Early Warning Systems Need to be Developed

In the aftermath of the recent Pangandaran tsunami, ESCAP is calling for increased regional and national efforts to ensure effective development of 'end-to-end' tsunami early warning systems in the Asia-Pacific region. Just weeks before Java's southern coast was struck after an undersea quake, ESCAP and its partner organizations had identified decision-making in issuing tsunami warnings and subsequent decisions for evacuation as the top priority issues.



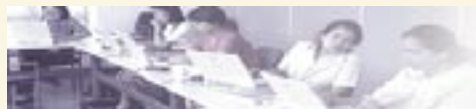
At a Regional Workshop on Mitigation, Preparedness and Development of Tsunami Early Warning Systems in the Indian Ocean Region, held from 14 to 16 June 2006 and jointly organized by the UN/International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) Secretariat, ESCAP, the Intergovernmental Oceanic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO and ISDR Asia Partnership, 144 experts representing 23 Indian Ocean countries and 22 international organizations working on tsunami early warning systems and disaster reduction called for more regional and international efforts to support the development and implementation of effective national-level standard operating procedures for tsunami early warning systems.

In late 2005, ESCAP established the Voluntary Trust Fund on Tsunami Early Warning Arrangements in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia as part of its ongoing efforts to promote regional cooperation for natural disaster prevention and preparedness. Another tsunami-related ESCAP effort focuses on the implementation of a community-based tsunami early warning pilot project in Sri Lanka with funding support from the Republic of Korea.

Statistics Workshop for MDG Monitoring

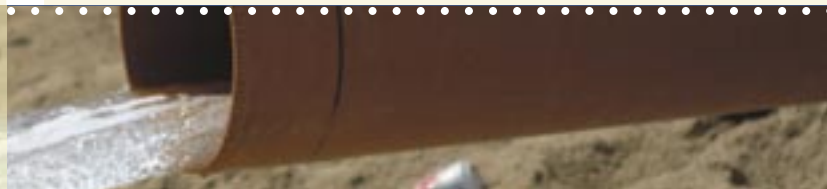
A Workshop on Statistics for Monitoring the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was organized by ESCAP in Bangkok from 31 July to 2 August 2006. Held in partnership with the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the ADB, the Workshop brought together government officials from every ESCAP member country in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as international statistical agencies. Participants examined issues of monitoring data for accurate MDG evaluation, with the aim of developing strategies for data collection, as well as better coordination of national and international agencies.

ESCAP Helps Women Get into E-Business



APEC Women's e-Biz Training 2006

Women in business around the region received intensive training in e-business development thanks to a six-day workshop in Seoul from 3 to 8 July 2006. Female entrepreneurs from 15 Asia-Pacific countries were offered a course in e-business to maximize their exposure to online commercial opportunities. Participants left the workshop with a solid online business plan, including marketing strategies, and stronger professional networks. This "International Workshop on Entrepreneurship and e-Business Development for Women" was organized by ESCAP in partnership with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Women's e-Biz Centre; the ADB Institute and ITU. The workshop also enhanced women's participation in the digital economy in the Asia-Pacific Region.



Online Tools for Rural Family Planning

Doctors, nurses and workers at the front line of family planning in remote areas of the region benefited from a course which delivered online training tools, allowing workers to avoid travelling for training. Family planning for rural populations via the Internet was the goal of a three-day Regional Workshop in Gansu, China from 4 to 6 July 2006. The "E-applications of ICT in Population Related Fields: E-learning and E-health" workshop targeted officials from the region working in reproductive health. It aimed to spread awareness and usage of satellite-based e-learning tools such as online manuals and programmes. The workshop was jointly organized by ESCAP and the Chinese Government.

Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement – Seminar on Philippines Membership

ESCAP organized a national seminar on the prospective benefits of membership by the Philippines in the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA). At the seminar, held on 24 August 2006 in Manila, participants considered the emerging role of APTA in forging Asia-Pacific integration through regional trade agreements and learned about APTA's long-term potential and benefits for the Philippines. The APTA, previously named the Bangkok Agreement, was signed in 1975 as an ESCAP initiative. It is a preferential tariff arrangement that aims at promoting intra-regional trade through exchange of mutually agreed concessions by member countries. Current members include Bangladesh, China, India, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Republic of Korea and Sri Lanka. ESCAP functions as its secretariat.

ESCAP and Korean Water Supply Company Sign Memorandum of Understanding

ESCAP signed a MoU with the Korea Water Resources Corporation (K-water), covering regional water resource management, as well as risk management, to reduce the impact of disasters such as floods, droughts and typhoons in the Asia-Pacific region. The MoU was signed by ESCAP's Executive Secretary, Mr. Kim Hak-Su, and the President of K-water, Mr. Kwak Kyul-ho, and is the first MoU to be signed between ESCAP and a national enterprise from a member country. ESCAP and K-water agreed to work together to promote regional cooperation in water resources, especially in identifying opportunities for direct investment, and training within the region. Risk management will involve building on existing collaborative projects such as those currently implemented under the frameworks of the ESCAP/World Meteorological Organization, Typhoon Committee and the Network of Asian River Basin Organizations.

Monitoring of Human Development in LDCs

A new report this year by ESCAP examines how far the 14 Asia-Pacific Least Developed Countries (LDCs) have to go to achieve the basic standard of human development set out in the Millennium Declaration. While several have made significant progress in their socio-economic development, others have failed to achieve results, says the report. Progress is affected by geography, human resources and economic and environmental vulnerabilities. The Asia-Pacific Review of the Implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 report reviews the implementation of the Programme of Action where regional cooperation can be most effective.

ESCAP selected meetings

2006

6-12 November

Ministerial Conference on Transport (Busan, Republic of Korea)

29 November – 1 December

Committee on Poverty Reduction, third session

12-14 December

Committee on Emerging Social Issues, third session

2007

5-10 February

Third Ministerial Conference on Space Applications for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific (Putrajaya, Malaysia)

March/April

Special Body on Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries

March/April

Sixty-third Commission Session

ESCAP selected publications

Enhancing Regional Cooperation in Infrastructure Development Including that Related to Disaster Management

(Sales No. E.06.II.F.13; ISBN: 92-1-120466-6)

Regional Action Plan towards the Information Society in Asia and the Pacific

(Sales No. E.06.II.F.20; ISBN: 92-1-120474-7)

Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Review, Vol.2, No.1

(Sales No. E.06.II.F.22; ISBN: 92-1-120476-3)

Statistical Indicators for Asia and the Pacific: Vol. XXXV (Compendium)

(Sales No. E.06.II.F.14; ISBN: 92-1-120467-4)

Good Practices on Strategic Planning and Management of Water Resources in Asia and the Pacific, Water Resources

Series No. 85 (Sales No. E.06.II.F.8; ISBN: 92-1-120460-7)

Key Economic Developments and Prospects in the Asia-Pacific Region 2006

(Sales No. E.06.II.F.3; ISBN: 92-1-120453-4)

Activities of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Ibero-American Meeting on Migration and Development

On 18 and 19 July 2006, the Ibero-American Meeting on Migration and Development took place in Madrid, Spain, in preparation for the sixteenth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, to be held in Montevideo, Uruguay, in November 2006. The meeting was formally opened by the Prime Minister of Spain, H.E. Mr. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, the President of Mexico, H.E. Mr. Vicente Fox, and the Secretary-General of the Ibero-American Secretariat, H.E. Mr. Enrique Iglesias. The meeting was organized by the Ibero-American Secretariat, with the support of ECLAC, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Fundación Carolina de España. During the meeting, ECLAC presented to participants the document entitled *International Migration of Latin Americans and Caribbeans in Ibero-America: Characteristics, Challenges and Opportunities*, which served as the basis for discussions.



ECLAC Summer School on Latin American Economies

The seventh session of the ECLAC Summer School on Latin American Economies took place from 11 July to 30 September 2006, with 28 postgraduate students from universities in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Italy, the Netherlands and Mexico taking part. The programme was created in 2000 through an agreement between ECLAC and Latin American and European universities interested in an opportunity for their economics students to take advantage of the analytical experience acquired by ECLAC relating to the region. There is no fee for the programme, which brings the participants into the debate on Latin American development from a critical perspective. It is organized in modules which cover issues of growth, macroeconomic policies, productive development, innovation, trade, sustainable development, income distribution, social development and human rights. So far, 120 students from 30 countries have completed the course, and the School has developed into a learning experience that promotes communication among young researchers.

Brazilian Amazon Virtual Forum on Community Health

On 14 July 2006, a virtual forum on "A concrete experience of community health care in the Amazon region: community health efforts in the Tapajós National Forest" was jointly organized by ECLAC and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), with the support of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The forum was offered through the website of the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Social Institutions, with funding from the Italian Cooperation. The background documents included project analysis and relevant papers by ECLAC and PAHO. The innovative aspects of the work being carried out on the Tapajós River, including its simple and viable solutions, were discussed to promote the creative replication of the project in other isolated regions of Latin America and the Caribbean. Perhaps the most striking aspect of the project is the ambulance boat that, in a region where boats are the only means of transport, has saved the lives of many people who previously would have died due to the lack of timely and good-quality medical care.



International Price Comparison Programme Results from South American Countries

Preliminary figures on household consumption in the region were presented on 28 June 2006 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, as part of the International Comparison Programme (ICP) organized worldwide by the World Bank. In this region, the project was coordinated by ECLAC and Statistics Canada (StatsCan), with ten countries participating: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. The presentation was made in the presence of the directors of the national statistics institutes and central bank presidents from the ten participating countries, along with representatives from ECLAC, StatsCan and the IDB.

The ICP was created in early 2003, with support from ECLAC's Americas Statistics Conference, to estimate purchasing power parity (PPP) and expenditure values for each component included in final demand for goods and services, expressed in domestic currency. This programme covers more than 100 countries in five regions (South America, the republics of the former Soviet Union, Asia, Africa and the Middle East). At the same time the ICP is being carried out with similar methodologies in the countries of the EU and the OECD, including Mexico. The results of the ICP exercise will provide comparable information on PPP and GDP structure using the components of final demand. It is very useful to national and international analysts, as this programme investigates more than 800 goods and services expenditure components included in the GDP.

ECLAC and Spanish Cooperation Agency Sign Collaboration Agreement

ECLAC and the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECI) signed a collaboration agreement on 27 July 2006 to extend the joint work of both organizations. Mr. José Luis Machinea, Executive Secretary of ECLAC, and Mr. Juan Pablo de Laiglesia, Secretary General of AECI, met at ECLAC headquarters to adopt the 2006 Plan of Action for joint collaboration. Under this agreement, ECLAC will conduct diverse activities with AECI financial support, including the following three projects: Ibero-American training course for leadership in governance and development, which will strengthen institutional governance and development by providing training for leaders of public and private institutions in the region; contribution to social protection and the economy of care in order to advance a comprehensive vision of social protection that incorporates the value of women's unpaid labour in their homes and civil society; and the follow-up in Latin America and the Caribbean of the poverty component of the first Millennium Development Goal through the provision to countries of the most effective instruments to track the goal of reducing extreme poverty by half by the year 2015. The cooperation agreement reinforces the Framework Agreement for Technical Cooperation adopted in May 1992 by both institutions.

ECLAC and Andean Development Corporation Sign Agreement to Strengthen Regional Cooperation and Integration Activities

ECLAC and the Andean Development Corporation (ADC) signed a cooperation agreement on 14 July 2006 whereby both organizations made a commitment to extend their joint activities in order to help the countries of the region to build stronger linkages with the world economy. The document was signed by Mr. Machinea as Executive Secretary of ECLAC, and Mr. Enrique García as President of ADC, in a ceremony held at the headquarters of ADC in Caracas, Venezuela. In the agreement, ECLAC and ADC commit to combining their efforts in order to make economic cooperation and integration fundamental tools for generating better conditions for growth and international competitiveness. The cooperation will take the form of research and the provision of technical assistance to the countries in the following main areas: growth and productive development; competitiveness and technological innovation; strategies for building stronger linkages with the world economy and analysis of best practices; trade negotiations; administration of trade agreements; economic and trade institutions for internationalization; export promotion; economic integration, including trade facilitation, infrastructure, energy and tourism.

2006

3-4 October

Fortieth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean

5-6 October

International Seminar on Gender Parity and Political Participation in Latin America and the Caribbean

20 November

Regional Inter-agency Coordination Meeting

21-22 November

Experts meeting on Integration Processes in Latin America and the European Union

2007

22-25 January

Nineteenth Regional Seminar on Fiscal Policy

March

Twelfth Conference of Ministers and Heads of Planning of Latin America and the Caribbean

ECLAC selected publications

Shaping the Future of Social Protection: Access, Financing and Solidarity

(LC/G.2294 (SES.31/3)/I), March 2006)

Trade, Direct Investment and Production Policies

(Sales No.: E.05.II.G.216; ISBN: 92-1-121588-9)

Latin America and the Caribbean: Projections 2006-2007

(Sales No.: S.06.II.G; ISBN: 92-1-322903-8)

CEPAL Review 88, April 2006

(LC/G.2289-P/I; ISBN: 92-1-121594-3)

Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean 2005-2006

(LC/G.2314-P/I, July 2006)

Selected Statistical Indicators of Caribbean Countries, Vol. XVIII, 2005

(LC/CAR/L.74; ISSN: 1014-7799)

Activities of the Economic Commission for Africa

Global Economic Analysis Conference in Addis Ababa

Leading economists and other interested parties met in Addis Ababa on 15 June 2006 for the Ninth Annual Conference on Global Economic Analysis, the first time such a gathering has been held in Africa. The three-day meeting was attended by leading economists and researchers from the Global Trade Analysis Project consortium, which includes ECA's African Trade Policy Centre, the AfDB, UNDP and the World Bank, among others.

ECA Executive Secretary Mr. Abdoulie Janneh called for bold measures aimed at boosting Africa's market access and expressed concern that international trade negotiations since the launch of the Doha Round had not yet resulted in concrete proposals to increase access. Developed countries needed to be bold in adopting liberalization modalities and measures that would lead to a Doha Round consisting of a real development package.

The decision to hold the meeting at ECA headquarters was in recognition of the Commission's work on trade-related issues. The organizers expressed the hope that this would help improve the availability of data on the continent.

Agreement Reached to Speed Up Liberalization of African Air Transport

A high-level meeting of policymakers and Chief Executives representing various African airlines has agreed to develop comprehensive competition rules to speed up the liberalization of Africa's skies. The agreement came at the end of a two-day meeting held in Tunis from 29 to 30 May 2006, organized by the AU Commission, in collaboration with ECA, the AfDB and the African Airlines Association. Participants agreed to establish an Executive Agency to harmonize the rules of competition across the continent and speed up implementation of the Yamoussoukro Decision aimed at liberalizing air transport in Africa. They also called on African countries to adopt a common strategy for negotiating open skies agreements with the EU.

African Ministers of Industry Look at Industrial Challenge Facing Africa in the Global Trading System

The Seventeenth Conference of the African Ministers of Industry (CAMI 17) took place in Cairo from 19 to 21 June 2006, hosted by the Government of Egypt and organized by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), in cooperation with the AU and ECA. The theme of the three-day conference, "Productive Capacity: Africa's Challenge to Global Trade", drew representatives from fifty countries. Among the 250 participants were a number of special guests, and representatives from regional, subregional and intergovernmental organizations.

The Conference issued a Declaration in which inter alia strong support was given to UNIDO and its mandate, demonstrated by the decision that the 2007 African Union Heads of State and Government Summit will be devoted to the question of industrialization of the continent. Among the nine recommendations contained in the CAMI 17 Report is the call to development partners to assist in the strengthening of the productive capacities of the private sector and Africa's standardization and conformity assessment infrastructure.

Training course prepares Africa for UN Internet Governance Forum

A training course on Internet Governance (IG) for African policymakers was offered from 2 to 6 July 2006, organized by ECA in collaboration with the Diplo Foundation, the Global ePolicy resource Network and the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers. The aim of the workshop was to address an evident lack of negotiation capacity on IG issues witnessed during the World Summit on the Information Society among African delegations, as well as those from other developing regions. Developing the required skills base is the most effective response. There is also the need for heightened awareness on securing the Internet, e-security and confronting cybercrime. This training is part of the regional efforts to enable African stakeholders to participate more effectively in the upcoming IG Forum scheduled for 30 October to 2 November 2006 in Athens, Greece.



Tunis Hosts ECA's First Subregional Workshop on Beijing+10 Follow-up Strategy

Over 40 senior government officers from key ministries attended in Tunis, Tunisia, the first "Subregional workshop on implementing the follow-up strategy of the Outcome and Way Forward" after the Beijing+10 Seventh African Regional Conference on Women. This five-day workshop, starting on 24 July 2006, launched a series of five subregional workshops that ECA is planning to conduct to help member countries identify their priority areas and reach a consensus as to the way forward, with regard to achieving gender equality and equity and improving the status of women.

During the workshop, participants were familiarized with the priority areas/sectors selected by their countries for implementation, as well as with the specific measures to be undertaken, the reporting system, the periodicity of the reports and the authority to whom the reports should be submitted. The workshop also assisted participants in identifying how the data collected using the African Gender and Development Index can support the monitoring of the implementation of this follow-up strategy.

ECA and NEPAD Secretariat Agree on a Framework for Collaboration

ECA and the NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) secretariat agreed on 26 July 2006 on a broad framework to guide future collaboration between the two organizations in a more structured and systematic manner. Both organizations said that the framework would be guided by the pursuit of a common African vision through the implementation of the NEPAD agenda; the pursuit of the African agenda on the basis of complementarity and the recognition of each organization's comparative advantage in advancing the NEPAD agenda. The Framework is expected to be developed into a MoU, which would be signed by the Chief Executives of both organizations.

Diversification of African Economies Key to Development

The ATPC of ECA has published a new major study on economic diversification in Africa, entitled *Diversification: Towards a New Paradigm for Africa's Development*. The report seeks to establish economic diversification as a new development paradigm for Africa, in order to tackle the perennial twin problems of low growth and high poverty rates. The report joins a growing body of literature seeking to identify alternative development strategies for the continent, especially since several projections show that benefits from international trade liberalization are likely to be limited.

While some elements of macroeconomic stability were found to be critical to diversification, a clear result was that fiscal space matters significantly. Fiscal conservatism was not good for a country that has diversification as a goal. However, the success of an expansionary fiscal policy assuming an optimal tax regime depends on the financing options of the fiscal deficit. Lastly, on the other determinants of diversification, governance and presence of conflicts were shown to be important at the regional level. Good governance enables economies to diversify. On the other hand, conflict has the negative effect of stifling diversification. Eliminating conflict and investing in human capital emerge as important factors for diversification and for improving economic growth. The relevance of the determinants of diversification in Africa is much more significant than it is currently imagined in that they can be the policy levers that can effectively be utilized to address the growth challenge in the continent. The full report can be downloaded from www.uneca.org/atpc.

ECA selected meetings

2006

October

ICT and Access Workshop: Eastern and Southern Africa (Kigali, Rwanda)

October

Workshop for Senior-level Government Officers and Independent Experts on Promotion of Norms and Standards for Improved Market Access

November

International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing Summer School

December

Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on "Fostering Effective Integration in the Global Economy for Africa through the WTO and EPAs Negotiations"

December

Consultation Workshop with selected countries and the University of Baleares, Spain, around collaboration on a women's health project in Africa

December

Workshop on Youth, in cooperation with UNFPA

ECA selected publications

Assessing Regional Integration in Africa II: Rationalizing Regional Economic Communities

(Sales No. E.06.II.K.2; ISBN: 92-1-125102-8)

African Governance Report 2005

(Sales No. E.05.II.K.7; ISBN: 92-1-125098-6)

National Councils for Sustainable Development in Africa: A Review of Institutions and their Functioning

(ECA/SDD/05/14)

Review of the Application of Environmental Impact Assessment in Selected African Countries

(ECA/SDD/05/13)

Africa's Sustainable Development Bulletin 2005

(ECA/SDD/05/16)



Activities of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Trade Facilitation for National Negotiators

ESCWA organized a regional seminar on “Trade Facilitation for National Negotiators” on 19 and 20 June 2006 at the UN House in Beirut. The seminar was part of ESCWA’s continuous efforts to assist Arab countries in following up the current multilateral negotiations in the World Trade Organization (WTO). The meeting also falls within the framework of the joint project for the five regional commissions to promote trade as an engine for growth through knowledge management and information and telecommunication technologies.

The Seminar assisted national negotiators from Arab countries in recognizing the various aspects of the negotiations in trade facilitation and the basic needs to achieve them within the national and international framework, including the role of trade facilitation in improving trade performance and economic growth. A number of issues were covered relating to trade facilitation in the WTO and the approaches to deal with the needs and priorities of developing countries in general, and the Arab countries in particular. Special attention was given to technical assistance issues in addition to the technical needs to facilitate trade, namely in applying international standards. A case study on trade facilitation audit in Lebanon was presented.

Participants in the meeting were representatives from ministries of trade and finance, customs administrations, and other public administrations involved in trade facilitation in the Arab countries, in addition to representatives from relevant regional and international organizations. Experts from the World Bank, ECE and the World Customs Organization also participated.

Seminar on Population Census in Egypt Calls for More Accurate Data

Participants in the ESCWA seminar on “Population, Housing and Establishment Censuses in the Context of Development”, held in Cairo from 30 to 31 July 2006 under the patronage of the Egyptian Prime Minister, considered that the implementation of the census in Egypt was an important opportunity to be used in indicating the effects of population issues over development. They also emphasized that the census would constitute a great opportunity for trust building between the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics in Egypt and data users from governmental, non-governmental, private sector and civil society institutions.

Participants in the meeting stressed the necessity of developing a comprehensive media strategy to contribute to the census through giving right and accurate data, which would be used for development planning. It was agreed that the Census Directorate should disseminate data electronically as well as through traditional means in order to ensure timely outreach. Participants also praised the efforts of ESCWA in supporting the United Nations 2010 World Programme of Population and Housing Censuses through organizing workshops and contributing to the preparation of recommendations. Participating in the meeting were a number of Egyptian ministers, representatives of concerned ministries and government departments in Egypt, UN agencies in Cairo, scholars and university professors, as well as 110 experts and UN Goodwill Ambassadors. This seminar was held in Cairo as part of the Commission’s annual meetings and conferences previously planned to take place outside Lebanon.

ESCWA and International Organization for Migration Sign Cooperation Agreement

In parallel with the ECOSOC meetings that took place in Geneva, a ceremony was held on 7 July 2006 to sign a cooperation agreement between ESCWA and the IOM. The agreement was signed by Executive Secretary Ms. Mervat Tallawy on behalf of ESCWA, and by Director General Mr. Brunson McKinley on behalf of IOM.

This is the first such agreement to be signed between the two organizations. The Cooperation Agreement promises to set up a framework for the two parties to collaborate and hold consultations. ESCWA and IOM also agree to: invite representatives from each side to attend meetings and conferences to which other intergovernmental organizations have been invited; exchange information and documentation; have administrative and technical cooperation; act jointly to implement projects of common interest and set up commissions, committees or other technical or advisory bodies; and consult regularly on the implementation of this Agreement and means of entering into other such agreements in the future.



Development under Crisis Conditions

ESCWA organized an Expert Group Meeting on “Development Under Crisis Conditions” at the UN House, Beirut, from 27 to 28 June 2006 in which experts from the United States, Europe and the Arab world discussed the causes and effects of conflict and political tensions in the region, documented best practices, and made recommendations for future development efforts in Western Asia. Participants discussed the recommendations to be made to ESCWA and to stakeholders working on development under crisis conditions.

It was suggested that ESCWA help the region by defining terms, issues and standards, and by creating public awareness of the issues involved. Participants also suggested that ESCWA act as a coordinating body for UN agencies, NGOs and think tanks working on these issues. Participants repeatedly articulated the need for flexibility in planning and operation by donors and national agencies, as well as the need for continual project assessment, rather than a single assessment based on old indicators. There was a need to deliberate further on a conceptual framework for development under crisis, which might require the redefinition of development. There was also a need to discuss mechanisms for the integration of humanitarian efforts and long-term development, the disparity between views of people on the ground and donors and decision-makers, the role of NGOs and the private sector during crisis, and mechanisms by which the UN can play an important role in development under crisis.

Workshop on Conference Diplomacy

In the framework of cooperation between the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and ESCWA, a training workshop on Conference Diplomacy was held from 21 to 23 June 2006. Participants in the workshop included diplomats from the Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the embassies of Bahrain, Oman, Brazil, China, Czech Republic, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine (based in Jordan), Romania, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Venezuela. Various topics were covered, including conflict and cooperation in international diplomacy, technical and practical foundations of multilateral conferences and negotiations, and rules of procedure.

Other themes included cross-cultural communication, group decision-making, and the role and duty of secretariats and chairmen. The UN General Assembly asked UNITAR to organize these workshops for diplomats in cooperation with the regional commissions, including ESCWA. To date, 13,000 trainees have made use of similar workshops.

United Nations Regional Coordination Group

ESCWA hosted the Eleventh Meeting of the United Nations Regional Coordination Group on 19 and 20 June 2006, with the attendance of representatives from 16 UN offices operating in the Arab region, including the UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States, as well as the Arab League. The meeting covered means of improved cooperation among the United Nations agencies to assist member countries in facing the challenges and opportunities for peace and security, human rights and development. It concluded with a commitment towards regional coordination and close work with the LAS; the adoption of a regional report for 2007 on Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region that is focused on youth; the formation of a task force to promote awareness on migration and development issues in those countries that send and receive migrants; and completing a pilot project to survey UN regional activities on the basis of which joint projects can be planned.

2006

7-9 November

Seventh Session of the Committee on Statistics

27-29 November

Consultative Meeting for the Arab Parliamentarians on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM)

3 December

Inter-regional linkages and transport facilitation in Kuwait

6 December

Inter-regional linkages and transport facilitation in Iraq

December

Sixth Session of the Committee on Energy

Annual Review of Developments in Globalization and Regional Integration in the Countries of the ESCWA Region, 2005

(Sales No. E.06.II.L.7; ISBN: 92-1-128301-9)

The Demographic Window: An Opportunity for Development in the Arab Countries

(Sales No. E.06.II.L.3; ISBN: 92-1-128298-5)

Towards Integrated Policies in Arab Countries: Framework and Comparative Analysis

(Sales No. E.06.II.L.2; ISBN: 92-1-128297-7)

Compendium of Social Statistics and Indicators, 7th Issue

(Sales No. A/E.05.II.L.13; ISBN: 92-1-128289-6)

External Trade Bulletin of the ESCWA Region, Fourteenth Issue

(E/ESCWA/SCU/2005/5; ISBN: 92-1-128291-8)

ESCWA Water Development Report 1: Vulnerability of the Region to Drought

(Sales No. E.05.II.L.17; ISBN: 92-1-128294-2)

Flagship Publications of the Commissions

Millennium Development Goals – The way ahead: A Pan-European Perspective

In most ECE countries, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) appear to have been reached in terms of the minimum standards. However, in many of the less advanced economies in the region, most still require significant efforts to be fully achieved. And there are some MDG areas, in particular poverty reduction and gender equality, where all ECE countries need to make substantial progress. The MDGs thus constitute a significant policy challenge for the ECE economies. As such they demand careful monitoring and policy analysis, which are the thrust of this report.

The report provides an overview of the major trends of the MDG indicators in the ECE region, highlighting the progress achieved so far and the gaps still needing to be filled. It then develops an integrated policy framework for achieving the MDGs, based on the view that these are interrelated and cannot be reached on a sustainable basis through targeted policies and measures only. This framework therefore defines major policy areas and presents for each of them a range of policy options. Finally, the report makes the case that regional cooperation and the provision of regional public goods matter for the achievement of the MDGs, and outlines the ECE support to this regional dimension through its activities of a transboundary nature.

This publication complements the work on MDGs undertaken by other organizations and institutions in the ECE region; it focuses on the policy options to be considered for an integrated and comprehensive approach to the achievement of the MDGs and on the regional dimension to be taken into consideration to support these national policies.

Enhancing Regional Cooperation in Infrastructure Development Including that Related to Disaster Management

The crucial role of regional cooperation in meeting the future infrastructure requirements of Asian and Pacific countries cannot be overstated. On the financing side, research reveals that the region will need to find at least \$228 billion per year to pay for the infrastructure it plans to build and maintain between 2006 and 2010. Furthermore, assuming a business-as-usual scenario on the availability of assured finances, a gap as large as \$180 billion per year between requirement and availability is within the realm of possibility.

Adequate infrastructure in the four key sectors of transport, telecommunications, energy and water considered in this study is a prerequisite for opening up access to global trade and investment flows, increasing the competitiveness of production and services and thus sustaining the region's economic growth. More investment in infrastructure is also needed to reduce the impact of natural disasters. Asia and the Pacific, the world's most disaster-prone region, accounts for over 90 per cent of all deaths and nearly half of all economic loss from disasters in the past 15 years. Infrastructure can both reduce the losses resulting from natural disasters and facilitate post-disaster recovery, the study concludes.

The ESCAP study notes, however, that the status quo might not be able to generate sufficient funding to meet the region's infrastructure needs. The size of the financing gap requires a collaborative effort to mobilize new sources of capital for infrastructure investment. Regional cooperation could be a vehicle for identifying and operationalizing the appropriate instruments and institutions. Alternative sources of funding include the region's surplus savings, averaging around \$200 billion per year (2000-2003), which are mostly invested outside the region, and possibly the region's \$2.5 trillion in foreign exchange reserves. Asian and Pacific countries need to cooperate in developing mechanisms for accessing these funds through cross-border financial intermediation. The study offers a number of specific options in this regard.



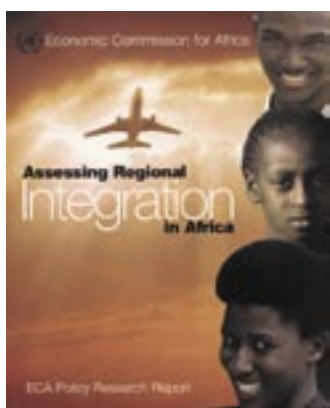
Assessing Regional Integration in Africa II: Rationalizing Regional Economic Communities

A fully functioning African Economic Community will remove all barriers to the movement of people, goods and services across the continent, thereby creating a single economic space. This report, entitled *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa II: Rationalizing Regional Economic Communities*, or ARIA II, examines the effectiveness of Africa's RECs in pushing forward the regional integration agenda towards the objectives of the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community. ARIA II is the second report in a series on regional integration in Africa.

The report examines the critical role that institutions in general can play in achieving policy objectives, and the specific role that African institutions perform. The analysis focuses on the RECs, which have been designated by the AU as the building blocks for achieving the African Economic Community.

In general the RECs have made commendable achievements. However, a substantial resource gap exists between the mandates of the RECs and their capacity to deliver, based on their financial and human resources. Furthermore, many RECs are pursuing similar mandates, and with countries belonging to numerous RECs, limited resources are spread thinly, thereby limiting their effectiveness. There is therefore an urgent need to strengthen the capacity of the RECs and harmonize their programmes.

The report emphasizes the need to rationalize the institutional setting in order to focus clearly on the objective at hand. It draws scenarios for rationalization and makes recommendations on how African countries, regional institutions and international organizations can participate in this exercise. It also recommends the strengthening of the main institutions charged with accelerating regional integration in Africa, including giving them the technical, legal and financial resources necessary to fulfil this important objective.



Annual Review of Developments in Globalization and Regional Integration in the Countries of the ESCWA Region, 2005

The fourth issue of the ESCWA "Annual Review of Developments in Globalization and Regional Integration in the Countries of the ESCWA Region, 2005" analyses the degree to which the Arab economy is integrated into the world economy and the extent of economic integration between Arab countries.

An overview of the status of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) indicates that recent developments should have a positive impact on Arab intraregional trade and investment. Arab intraregional tourism, considered a key indicator for regional integration, increased considerably, according to the Review. Indicators for ICT have shown that some countries exceed world averages, indicating that the integration of Arab countries in the world economy is high in that sector compared to other sectors.

The Review concludes, however, that while some improvements were made in the Arab world in 2004 in terms of certain indicators for globalization and regional integration, the involvement of the Arab world in the global economy remains very limited compared to other developing countries. It reaffirms that oil remains the most significant sector in the Arab world, both in terms of reserves and production. It advocates, therefore, increased efforts for regional integration and enhanced linkages with the global economy.

Shaping the Future of Social Protection: Access, Financing and Solidarity

Barely four of every ten people employed in Latin America and the Caribbean contribute to some form of social security system. ECLAC's document *Shaping the Future of Social Protection: Access, Financing and Solidarity* notes that reforms in the 1990s did not resolve the problems with financing and coverage in social protection systems. This makes improving the coverage of health-care, pension and anti-poverty programmes essential to advance toward more solidarity-based societies.

Per capita spending on health care in Latin America and the Caribbean countries (\$438) is below the world average (\$640) and well behind that of high-income countries (\$2,514). Moreover, these costs are borne significantly by families themselves (37%), creating important inequity in access. ECLAC proposes extending health care coverage to the whole population, through solidarity-based mechanisms that guarantee genuine access to necessary services, regardless of the ability to pay or individual contributions. To do so, ECLAC's reform agenda covers insurance and financing policies; public health care policies and expansion of primary care; and service provision and organization policies.

On the pension systems, ECLAC notes that despite multiple efforts and reforms to those systems in the region's countries, just four out of every 10 people over 70 years of age directly receive some type of income through retirement or other pensions in Latin America and the Caribbean. The ECLAC study therefore proposes that countries find a workable way to combine the distributive component, individual capitalization, guaranteed non-contributory pensions for impoverished older adults, and solidarity-based rules for contributors with insufficient pensions.

In addition, four of every ten people in Latin America and the Caribbean live in poverty, which also results in social exclusion. The study advocates, therefore, social programmes that will both mitigate the immediate effects of poverty and remove its structural causes, by promoting human capital formation to prevent its transmission from one generation to the next. In general, ECLAC proposes establishing a new social protection covenant to ensure that social rights are respected and inequalities and budgetary restrictions treated as limitations that must be recognized and resolved.



Staff Persevere Despite Conflict

The staff members of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) have been joining hands to continue the implementation of the scheduled work programme despite the evacuation of a large number of staff that took place due to the crisis in Lebanon where the regional commission is based.

To ensure continuation of this work programme, a number of staff members were operating from the Vienna temporary office, 38 staff were temporarily in Amman and 22 continued to work from the Beirut-based headquarters.

The Secretary-General, UN senior officials and several departments and agencies have supported and encouraged ESCWA staff's commitment and continued efforts despite adverse conditions. This support has been communicated to the staff directly by the Secretary-General and through ESCWA's Executive Secretary, Ms. Mervat Tallawy.

ESCWA's intergovernmental meetings will be held at their scheduled time, particularly the 7th Session of the Committee on Statistics in November and the 6th Session of the Committee on Energy in December 2006.

Since the conflict began, Executive Secretary Tallawy opened a seminar on "Population, Housing and Establishment Censuses in the Context of Development" on 30 and 31 July in Cairo under the patronage of the Egyptian Prime Minister. Participants in the meeting praised the efforts of ESCWA in supporting the United Nations 2010 World Programme of Population and Housing Censuses through organizing workshops and contributing to the preparation of recommendations.

ESCWA's regional advisors have also continued their advisory missions to Member States as planned. Missions have taken place to Tripoli, Libya, on WTO-related issues, and to Damascus, for a joint project with UNCTAD to support the Syrian government on trade issues.

The Commission's Unit for Conflict Related Issues (ECRI) has been documenting the effects of the military operations on Lebanon in order to serve as a practical reference for any future work for rehabilitation and reconstruction. This daily task, performed by the Beirut team, provided UN headquarters as well as ESCWA evacuated staff with accurate information on the economic and social repercussions of the crisis.

ECRI organized a meeting on 16 August 2006 in Beirut to brainstorm with a select group of national scholars, policymakers, policy analysts and development specialists. The meeting served as an open forum for participants representing different profiles, backgrounds and interests. An informal and free flowing stocktaking discussion on the range of impacts of the recent war on the country took place, aimed at recommending sound reconstruction and rehabilitation priorities and strategies.

The immediate return to Beirut of Executive Secretary Tallawy and other senior officials of ESCWA after the cessation of hostilities is a clear reflection of ESCWA's commitment to resume its Programme of Work and to support and contribute to the reconstruction efforts of Lebanon.



Regional Commissions Home Pages

ECE: www.unece.org

ESCAP: www.unescap.org

ECLAC: www.eclac.cl

ECA: www.uneca.org

ESCWA: www.escwa.org.lb

Regional Commissions Development Update current and archival copies:

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