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Ten Years after Beijing

CALL FOR PEACE

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Item 7 on the provisional agenda

## REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CENTRE FOR WOMEN SINCE THE FIRST SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON WOMEN

### Summary

The present report is in two chapters. The first chapter reviews the activities of the Centre for Women since the first session of the Committee on Women. The second chapter includes a summary in tabular form of follow-up to the recommendations adopted by the Committee on Women at its first session, held in Beirut from 4 to 5 December 2003, progress achieved in the implementation of these recommendations and the activities undertaken by ESCWA during this period.



- (ii) Based on a comprehensive analytical survey, ESCWA published a report in two parts on the situation of Arab women. The first part of this report contains a financial analysis of developments in the situation of Arab women based on available information and data to the year 2000 and proposes a new indicator for measurement of the situation of women, based on a basket of economic, social, cultural and legal indicators. The second part of the study includes an historical analysis of the social and political aspect of various women's movements in selected Arab countries, namely, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Palestine, Sudan, Yemen and the countries of the Arab Maghreb (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia). Work is currently under way on the preparation of the second volume of the series, forthcoming in 2005, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Beijing Conference;
- (iii) ESCWA continues to update and revise country profiles on the situation of women in ESCWA member countries based on information and data provided directly by those countries. By 3 July 2004, Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestine, Qatar, Syrian Arab Republic and United Arab Emirates had provided this information. The framework of the country profiles was designed to correlate with the priorities for implementation of the Arab Plan of Action and the twelve critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action, namely, women and poverty, education and training of women, women and health, women and the economy, women in power and decision-making, human rights of women, institutional mechanism for the advancement of women, violence against women, women and armed conflict, women and the environment, women and the media and the girl-child. These profiles will be issued by ESCWA in the form of brochures for distribution and dissemination and will also be placed on the ESCWA web site;
- (iv) With regard to the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), ESCWA prepared a study entitled "Studies on the role of non-governmental organizations in the implementation of and follow-up to the recommendations of global conferences during the 1990s: towards a code of conduct" (E/ESCWA/SDD/2003/13) (in Arabic). This is a compilation of earlier studies on the role of NGOs in the implementation of and five-year follow-up to the recommendations of global conferences convened by the United Nations during the 1990s. The code of conduct identifies guidelines for the work of NGOs and their work with one another, based on a clear ethical code that strengthens their credibility;
- (v) The Commission launched a series of short broadcasts on Arab satellite stations. These broadcasts focused on the application of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and covered education, health, employment, redefinition of roles within the family, violence against women, political participation and personal status laws, including laws on nationality. The Commission also prepared, directed and produced a 30-minute documentary film jointly with the Lebanese National Broadcasting Network (NBN) on the history of women's social movements in the Arab world, entitled "Waves in the history of Arab women".

(b) Gender mainstreaming in policies and programmes. The Commission published a number of studies on mainstreaming at the regional and national level that deal with the concept of gender equality in policies related to the different needs, concerns and priorities of men and women. The activities implemented in this regard include the following:

- (i) The Commission prepared a comprehensive regional study on the concept of gender in the Arab world, in addition to national studies on Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Morocco and Yemen that highlight their experiences in gender mainstreaming at the governmental, institutional, non-governmental and voluntary levels;

(c) Monitoring gender gaps and taking action to curb discrimination against women. In this regard, ESCWA carried out the following activities:

- (i) The Commission prepared a study entitled “The role of women in agriculture and the production of foodstuffs in the Syrian Arab Republic” (E/ESCWA/SDD/2003/20) (in Arabic). The objective of this study was to make a comparative appraisal of the participation of women and men in agricultural activity and foodstuffs manufacture. The study includes a survey of agricultural production and hand-made foodstuffs in the formal and informal sectors and is based on field studies conducted in the Syrian Arab Republic on the participation of women in the production of selected crops and livestock husbandry;
- (ii) Among various studies on the situation of the Arab family, including the role of women in the family and society, ESCWA prepared studies on personal status laws in the Arab region, legislative frameworks and national systems for the protection of the family and the distribution of roles and functions within the Arab family. Studies were also published by ESCWA on the impact of occupation, wars and armed conflicts on the situation of the Arab family in Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestine, Sudan and Yemen;
- (iii) The Commission organized the Arab Meeting for the Ten-Year Review of the International Year of the Family (IYF + 10) in Beirut from 7 to 9 October 2003, in collaboration with the League of Arab States, the Arab Family Organization (AFO) and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in New York. The objective of this meeting was to provide a forum in which, ten years after the proclamation in 1994 of the International Year of the Family, Arab experts could share experiences, review and appraise accomplishments, analyse obstacles to the objectives set out in 1994 and propose practical solutions to overcoming these obstacles and formulate future plans and measures that would achieve the desired objectives and empower the family. Participants in the meeting included a number of government experts from the Arab States, in addition to representatives from the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States, AFO, national commissions on the family, regional and international governmental and NGOs and a number of advisers and Arab experts on the family. The discussions concluded with recommendations on support for the cohesion and protection of the family in addition to the revision of labour laws and social guarantees and assurances, as set out in document E/ESCWA/SDD/2003/WG.1/19.

(d) Institutional and human capacity-building. In response to requests from a number of member countries, ESCWA undertook to provide technical assistance through the Centre for Women in the following spheres:

- (i) Organization of a capacity-building workshop for the preparation of national reports on implementation of CEDAW (Ayn al-Sukhnah, Egypt, December 2003), in which some 12 ministries participated. This training workshop was held in collaboration with the National Council for Women in Egypt with the participation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Arab States Regional Office. A capacity-building workshop on tools and mechanisms for poverty reduction (Al-Minya, Egypt, December 2003) was also organized by ESCWA, with a focus on start-up for small enterprises and networking between associations and lending institutions. Moreover, a workshop on the preparation of gender-disaggregated statistics and data was held by ESCWA in collaboration with the National Council for Women in Egypt and the concerned statistical bodies (Cairo, December 2003);
- (ii) At the request of the Syrian Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, ESCWA provided technical support to the Ministry through the organization and administration of a training session on drafting the national report based on the general guidelines of the Committee on

**II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FIRST SESSION  
OF THE COMMITTEE ON WOMEN (4-5 DECEMBER 2004)**

<b>Recommendations to governments</b>	<b>Progress achieved</b>
(a) Call on member States to adhere to the time frame set for the submission of their responses to the questionnaire sent to governments by a date not later than April 2004;	By 3 July 2004, 18 of 22 Arab States had responded to the questionnaire, namely, Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Yemen. This is a good response and is a measure of the seriousness of the Arab States in this regard.
(b) Encourage Arab States to present their needs for technical assistance and research for the advancement of women at the national level to the Centre for Women in order for ESCWA to consider them during consolidation of the medium-term plan and programme of work for the biennium 2006-2007.	Some ESCWA member countries including Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Syrian Arab Republic presented requests to ESCWA for technical assistance, training and human and institutional capacity-building. At present, ESCWA is taking the necessary measures to provide technical assistance as requested. The door remains open to present requests for inclusion in the ESCWA programme of work during consolidation of the programme of work for the biennium 2006-2007.

<b>Recommendations to governments</b>	<b>Progress achieved</b>
(a) Formulate a comprehensive preparatory programme for Beijing + 10, including the provision of technical assistance to the Arab States in the preparation of their national reports and organize national, sub-regional and regional workshops for discussion of national reports in preparation for drafting the regional report;	<p>The Centre for Women has formulated a complete preparatory programme for Beijing + 10, including the following programme of activities:</p> <p>(a) During the first session of the Committee on Women (4-5 December 2003), a special meeting was dedicated to explanation of items on the questionnaire directed to governments on implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing + 10). The questionnaire was distributed to official delegations during the meeting;</p> <p>(b) A letter dated 24 February 2004 was sent by ESCWA to the ministries concerned with women's affairs and national committees on women in order to remind them of the necessity of responding to the questionnaire by the deadline of 30 April 2004 in order to allow ESCWA sufficient time to prepare the Arab Ten-Year Regional Review and Appraisal of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and present it during the preparatory meeting for Beijing + 10;</p> <p>(c) Technical assistance was provided by ESCWA to the concerned bodies in Bahrain and Palestine, at their request, with regard to the preparation of national reports on implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing + 10). The door remains open to receive any other requests from Arab States in this regard;</p>

Recommendations to governments	Progress achieved
	<p>(e) Preparations are being made to hold a regional forum to celebrate IYF + 10 in Amman during September 2004. The forum is being organized in collaboration with the League of Arab States, AFO and a number of national councils on family affairs in the region. The National Council on Family Affairs in Jordan will host this regional forum.</p> <p>Also in connection with IYF + 10, preparations are under way for the participation of ESCWA in the international celebration that will be held during November 2004, generously hosted by the Supreme Council for the Family in Qatar.</p>
<p>(e) Construct a gender-disaggregated database at the regional level and provide technical assistance in this regard for the construction of databases in all Arab States;</p>	<p>(a) ESCWA is preparing and designing an information system for social statistics and indicators for the 22 Arab States, including a set of gender-disaggregated databases. This system will be available on the Internet to users within and outside ESCWA and during 2004. It is anticipated that CAWTAR will participate in this work;</p> <p>(b) ESCWA continues to prepare, revise and update country profiles on the situation of women in the Arab States, distribute them and make them available on the Internet;</p> <p>(c) ESCWA is also providing technical assistance to the National Council on Family Affairs in Jordan in order to build capacities for the establishment of a database on the family and is prepared to respond to any other requests in this regard.</p>
<p>(f) Convene sessions of the Committee on Women on an annual, rather than biennial, basis and award an annual prize for the best pioneering activity with regard to women and honour men and women pioneers in consultation with Committee members.</p>	<p>(a) ESCWA will raise the recommendation on the convening of the session of the Committee on Women on an annual, rather than a biennial basis to the Ministerial Committee at its twenty-third session scheduled for April 2005. Until that time, ESCWA will adhere to the resolution;</p> <p>(b) Awards for outstanding works for the advancement of Arab women will be distributed at the opening ceremony of the Arab Regional Conference Ten Years after Beijing: Call for Peace.</p>

