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**PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT IN THE FIELD
OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT****ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT SINCE THE
FIFTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT****Summary**

The overall orientation of programme 18, Economic and social development in Western Asia, of the United Nations proposed strategic framework for the period 2005-2007, is to foster comprehensive, integrated and sustainable development and economic and social cooperation in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) region, and strengthen economic relations between ESCWA member countries and other countries of the world.

The aim of programme 18, subprogramme 2, Integrated social policies, is to strengthen coherent and integrated national social policies that take into consideration the characteristics and cultural values of the region, and promote community development measures to reduce social inequity and enhance social stability in the region. Those aims could be reached through two achievements, the first of which is to increase the capacity of member countries, at their request, to formulate integrated social policies and programmes that take into consideration the characteristics and culture of the region, while the second is to increase the capacity of civil society institutions to implement local development mechanisms.

This document includes a review of the progress achieved in the implementation of activities undertaken by ESCWA in the field of social development since the fifth session of the Committee on Social Development, which was held in Beirut from 29 to 31 March 2005.

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Introduction

1. The Social Development Division comprises four main programmatic thrusts, namely, Social Policy Formulation and Instrumentation, Social Policy and Participatory Development, Population and Social Policy and Social Policy Concerns in the City. The Division is responsible for implementing programme 18, subprogramme 2, Integrated social policies, Economic and social development in Western Asia, of the United Nations proposed strategic framework for the period 2006-2007, which was submitted to the Committee on Social Development at its fifth session, that was held from 29 to 31 March 2005, and adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) at its twenty-third session in May 2005 and twenty-fourth session in May 2006 after the introduction of some amendments. The major activities undertaken by the Division between the fifth and the sixth sessions of the Committee are detailed below.

I. ACTIVITIES OF THE TEAM FOR SOCIAL POLICY FORMULATION AND INSTRUMENTATION

2. The objective of the team for social policy formulation and instrumentation (PFI) is to reach out to policymakers and planners concerned with social policy in ESCWA member countries, in order to promote the concept of integrated social policy. The PFI programme is based on ensuring the means necessary for providing dialogue opportunities, urging concerned countries to adopt the social policy approach and facilitating that action by convening national and regional symposiums and conferences, and providing advisory and technical support to member countries in order to equip them with the appropriate means for social policy formulation, implementation and follow-up. In that context, a series of activities which made a useful contribution were implemented as set forth below.

A. CONFERENCES AND EXPERT MEETINGS

3. In cooperation with the regional office of the International Labour Organization, ESCWA organized a regional expert group meeting on the Impact of Globalization on the Social Situation in the Arab Region, which was held in Beirut from 19 to 21 December 2005. The meeting was held in the context of the ESCWA work programme on integrated social policies and in conjunction with the efforts of the international community aimed at mitigating the negative impacts of globalization and taking measures that encourage globalization with human content. The objectives of the meeting included providing a platform for experts to interchange information and opinions on the impact of globalization on the social situation in the region, with a view to identifying the major factors of that impact and the relevant primary issues and challenges, and assisting member countries in maximizing the benefits and minimizing the costs of globalization. A number of Government officials, representatives of non-governmental and civil society organizations, experts, researchers, academics, journalists and representatives of the League of Arab States and United Nations organizations participated in the meeting. A report was issued detailing the work of the meeting, including working papers, discussions and recommendations.

4. In order to urge policymakers in ESCWA member countries to adopt an integrated social policy approach based on social justice and equity for all citizens, and in the context of follow-up to the third phase of the ESCWA programme of integrated social policies and the special interest expressed in the programme by Bahrain, ESCWA and the Ministry of Social Development of Bahrain signed a memorandum of understanding concerning cooperation and coordination in social policy-related fields. Pursuant to the Memorandum, on 24 and 25 April 2006, ESCWA and the Ministry of Social Development of Bahrain held in Manama the National Conference on Social Policies in Bahrain. The objective of the Conference was to conduct dialogue between experts and officials from Government and civil sectors in order to reach national agreement on the social development policy which the Government of Bahrain could adopt and devise a vision of the process of formulating, implementing and monitoring an integrated social policy in Bahrain through the participation of the Government, civil society and private sector. Representatives of various ministries, Government institutions, civil society, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations

organizations and agencies, experts and journalists participated in the Conference. A report was issued detailing the activities of the Conference, including working papers, discussions and recommendations.

5. In the context of implementing the recommendations made by the National Conference on Social Policies in Bahrain and completing implementation of the Memorandum plan of action, whereby, in its third phase, the capacities of institutions concerned with implementing social policy should be built as a major factor in the success of formulating and implementing social policy, ESCWA conducted, in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Development in Bahrain, a training workshop entitled Orientation to Social Policy, which was held in Bahrain on 20 and 21 December 2006. Several topics were reviewed, including all dimensions of the social policy concept, the various social relations, categories and objectives that are closely connected to political and economic policies, and their impact on social welfare in general and on certain social categories in particular. The review also covered the procedures for developing methodologies for scientific research and social surveys recognizing the different systems of follow-up to and evaluation of social policies, programmes and projects, including the bases used in compiling databases on social policies. Representatives from all ministries concerned with social policy and, in particular, staff from the Social Policy Unit at the Ministry of Social Development, participated in the workshop.

6. A National Conference on Integrated Social Policy in Egypt was organized by ESCWA in collaboration with the Egyptian Ministry of Social Solidarity, and held in Cairo on 7 and 8 February 2007. The Conference sought to present a model for formulating integrated social policies, based on a number of successful experiences that bore fruit in several countries with different development circumstances; describe the case of Egypt and identify which facilitating and constraining factors should be discussed, regulated and organized in order to help ensure equal opportunities for all and provide basic social services to all citizens equally; and compare successful experiences in Canada, Korea, Malaysia, Norway and Tunisia with the case of Egypt, in order to identify factors that assist in the formulation of integrated social policy, all of which will help to determine such social policies and programmes as social safety nets, education policies, health services and employment, which could be subsequently adopted by the Government. Participants in the Conference included representatives from various ministries, Government institutions, civil society, NGOs, United Nations organizations and agencies, as well as experts and journalists. A report was issued detailing working papers, discussions and recommendations. It is worth noting that such other member countries as Oman, Palestine and Saudi Arabia were interested in the integrated social policy project. ESCWA is exerting efforts with all member countries and, in particular, those which showed special interest in the current ESCWA programme of work on integrated social policies, with the objective of elaborating a country-specific implementation formula.

B. REPORTS, STUDIES AND RESEARCH

7. In the context of enhancing the capacities of member countries to formulate integrated social policies and determine the relevant conceptual and practical frameworks, ESCWA completed the publication of national reports on member country social policies by commissioning an expert from each country to prepare the respective report. Those reports were sent to Governments for their consideration and approval before revision and updating by the ESCWA secretariat on the basis of national comments. The reports show the status of basic social services in such sectors as health and education, safety nets, unemployment and poverty and requirements for improvement, in addition to mechanisms for formulating social policies, the financial and human resources available, and requirements for improvement.

8. The first regional report on integrated social policies was entitled Towards integrated social policies in Arab countries: framework and comparative analysis. The specific objectives of the report were to clarify the concept of social policy and the parameters within which it can be formulated; identify "organized actors"; outline the functions and assess the results of social policies and place them within the context of social problems and societal development; and identify and discuss enabling and inhibiting conditions that affect policy formulation and implementation.

9. ESCWA also prepared a report for presentation to the Committee on Social Development at its sixth session on questions related to the formulation and implementation of social policies. The report focuses on clarifying the concept of social policy, which is based on ensuring equal opportunities and basic services to all citizens equally. It comprises a review of the practical means of formulating social policy within a national strategy for development and the activities of ESCWA in that field, including experiences and acquired expertise.

10. As part of its strategy for clarifying and standardizing the concept of integrated social policy, which is based on ensuring equal opportunities and basic services to all citizens equally, ESCWA published a brochure on that concept which comprises a description of existing social policy in Arab countries and the attendant difficulties, in addition to the role of ESCWA in providing technical assistance and consultancy to member countries in that regard. ESCWA also published a review of social justice and comprehensive development programmes, in which it stressed the need to incorporate social justice in the development process and design a framework for planning social policy that is based on justice and human rights. The review also highlighted a series of resolutions and recommendations adopted by United Nations conferences on the issue.

11. In the context of activities related to the Arab Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012, ESCWA prepared a progress report on the implementation of the Decade in the region, to be presented for discussion to the Committee on Social Development at its sixth session. ESCWA also monitored the progress achieved in implementing the International Plan of Action on Ageing and the Arab Plan of Action on Ageing to the year 2012, for the purpose of preparing the first review of the International Plan of Action on Ageing and monitoring activities implemented in preparing plans, strategies and programmes for ageing persons at the national level in ESCWA member countries. ESCWA is also pursuing the development of the Arab Youth Directory, a website for youth, and has developed a website for blind persons in the Arab region, which enables them to access news about information and communications technology that are of interest.

II. ACTIVITIES OF THE TEAM FOR SOCIAL POLICY AND PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT

12. For the purpose of building the capacities of Governments and civil society organizations concerned with local development, and enabling them to participate in the development policy and the management of change and modernization of related concepts, trends and achievements, the Team for Social Policy and Participatory Development works to achieve the following objectives: a) develop an integrated approach for participatory local development and publish practical guides to initiatives and organize activities after amendment in the light of user comments; b) disseminate those guides through training programmes and models that respond to the needs of such participants as Government institutions, civil organizations and local leaders, and comply with the requirements for technical consultancy; c) organize workshops at the national and regional levels to promote knowledge frameworks, support coordination mechanisms/work networks, activate dynamic participation at all levels and launch a serious interactive dialogue; d) publish studies, reports and other publications that assist the interchange of experiences, in order to support the integration of development levels, follow up capacities and possibilities for participation in development policy and programmes and assess achievements in that regard; and e) provide technical consultancy services to support local development programmes, strengthen participation in those programmes and expand their contribution to integrated social development policy. Team activities are detailed below.

A. PRACTICAL GUIDES TO THE PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

13. After publication of the *Manual for local community development*, a technical guide to implementing the participatory development approach and managing related actors, and of the *Manual for training trainers in local community development*, a technical guide to training concepts, interventions, work methods, bases and procedures, ESCWA published the *Manual for participatory research in local community development*. That *Manual* provides significant supplements for completion of the capacity-building of individuals and

institutions concerned with development, and a knowledge base that helps in making the appropriate development decisions. The importance of the *Manual* lies in its focus on the role of participation and the distribution of responsibilities between the research team and the concerned community, by clarifying details of the proposed methodology, the tasks required and implementation measures in the context of the research project. It is also important because of its review of research tools, data compilation instruments, data analysis methods and technical standards for all phases of research, namely, the preliminary, planning, implementation and assessment phases. The *Manual* was published in cooperation with the League of Arab States, the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND) and the Safadi Foundation, after a series of thorough revisions in which the remarks of participants in the training programmes were taken into account.

14. ESCWA also published a *Trainer's manual for the local community development staff workshop*, for use as a technical reference in preparing and organizing workshops efficiently. That reference, which was the outcome of a series of national and regional workshops, provides tried and tested methodology that was revised in the light of user feedback, on the management of and implementation procedures for workshops on local community development. It also provides basic information on distributing responsibilities, training roles, typical activities, session management procedures, training tools, and technical and organizational standards for training evaluation. A compact disc was enclosed with the *Manual*, containing an electronic programme presentation aimed at facilitating the implementation of training programmes and widening their participatory usage. The *Manual* was published with the cooperation of AGFUND and Safadi Foundation.

15. ESCWA is currently revising its literature on the participatory development approach with a view to putting in place an integrated model for providing consultation in that regard to member countries, in order to ensure the strengthening of institutional capacities and activating contributions to the formulation of and follow-up to social policy implementation. The model will focus on promoting partnership between civil society and Governments, enabling civil society institutions to follow up progress achieved in attaining social policy goals and measure their outcome, and means of evaluating the capacities of civil society in respect of feasible social policy and projects.

B. CAPACITY-BUILDING PROGRAMMES

16. In completion of its capacity-building programmes for staff and trainers in local community development, ESCWA prepared a special capacity-building programme for researchers. The feasibility of that programme was tested by presenting it to users who participated in a subregional workshop on training for researchers, details of which are given below. Its technical articles were revised on the basis of participant feedback before it was published as *Participatory research programme for local community development*. The first part of the programme contained design elements, including technical foundations, goals, distribution of units, training methods, participants, support training material and duration. The second part included details of the training units described in the *Manual for participatory research in local community development*. The third part contained a number of annexes, including the programme schedule, estimated budget, a list of organizational measures and registration and evaluation forms.

C. WORKSHOPS AND SYMPOSIUMS

17. Under the second phase of implementation of the regional project for capacity-building in local community development and pursuant to the agreements signed with concerned countries, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and civil organizations, ESCWA organized the following workshops and symposiums in cooperation with AGFUND and the League of Arab States:

(a) Subregional workshop for researchers in the field of local community development, which was held in Beirut from 11 to 15 July 2005, in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs of Lebanon, UNDP and the Azm and Saade Association. The aim of the workshop was to test the *Manual on participatory research* and its training programme. Participants included a number of participants selected from the

ESCWA programme for training personnel and trainers, with a view to continuing their capacity-building to include participatory research tasks. Participants represented Government institutions, civil organizations, local leaders and regional and international organizations;

(b) National capacity-building workshop for Yemeni personnel working in the field of local community development, which was held in Sana'a from 8 to 12 April 2006, in cooperation with the Yemeni ministries of Planning and International Cooperation and Local Administration and UNDP. Workshop participants included senior officials from Government institutions and civil society organizations and representatives of joint institutions, committees and United Nations organizations. The workshop programme was a good opportunity to improve the performance of participants and refine their knowledge of development issues and participation conditions and rules, and was an additional opportunity to test the feasibility of the *Manual for local community development* and promote the adoption of its integrated method as a reference for development initiatives at the local level;

(c) National capacity-building workshop for personnel working in the field of local community development, which was held in Aden, Yemen, from 9 to 13 December 2006, in cooperation with the Yemeni Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation and UNDP. Workshop participants included Government officials and representatives of civil society organizations concerned with local community development. The workshop provided a forum for interchanging information, consolidating knowledge and expertise, promoting positive trends in development issues and mechanisms of participation in development operations, activating development networks and coordinating their roles with the national strategy. In follow-up, ESCWA is currently organizing a national workshop for participants from the previous two workshops in order to enable them to carry on the task of launching programmes and promoting capacity-building on the basis of their acquired expertise and with the help of material distributed to them as a complete training portfolio.

18. In the same context, ESCWA cooperated with the League of Arab States and AGFUND in the implementation of capacity-building programmes for local community development in Palestine in 2007-2008. ESCWA is currently coordinating cooperation measures for implementing those programmes at the national level with the ministry of Planning and International Cooperation and Local Administration of Palestine, UNDP, the Regional Centre on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development for the Near East and the Palestinian NGO Network.

19. As part of the second and final phase of its national capacity-building programme, ESCWA pursued implementation in Saudi Arabia of the following two projects, which were financed by the Abdullatif Jamil Company with the focus on promoting the status of women:

(a) Activating the Work of Women's Charitable Organizations in Saudi Arabia: in its second implementation phase, the aim of the project was to increase the number of women's organizations benefiting from the training programme and spread its benefits to the various geographical regions within Saudi Arabia. The project focused on managing organizations, planning their activities, improving their services and bolstering their impact on family and community, and drew upon the *Manual for administrators and trainers of women's charitable organizations in Saudi Arabia* in organizing the following workshops, which were attended by 99 female participants: (i) Workshop on the basics and principles of managing charitable organizations, Medina, 26-30 March 2005, aimed at providing trainees with information on elements of sound management, including planning, organizing, orienting, assessing, supervising, improving communication skills and working within an efficient team for the management of organizations; (ii) Workshop on the basics and principles of managing charitable organizations: developing leadership capacities and skills in small businesses and projects, Abha, 21-31 May 2005, aimed at providing female participants with theoretical and practical experiences to enable them to establish and develop their own projects upon completion of the training; and (iii) Workshop on developing leadership capacities and skills in small businesses and projects, Riyadh, 17-28 December 2005, aimed at providing female participants with

theoretical and practical experiences to enable them to establish and develop their own projects upon completion of the training;

(b) Enabling Saudi Women to Access the Labour Market Through Training Professional Trainers: the project aimed to prepare professional trainers in rural and disadvantaged regions who represented various organizations covering all the geographical territory of Saudi Arabia, and to provide vocational training for women in the fields of cooking and small food industries, decoration, cosmetics, styling and tailoring, health awareness and textiles.

D. STUDIES, REPORTS AND PUBLICATIONS

20. In order to promote the interchange of expertise, disseminate successful experiences, encourage dialogue initiatives and participate in development policy, programmes and projects, ESCWA published the following: (a) a study entitled "The community development approach as a tool for formulating social policy at the local level", which compares community development and social policy concepts and obstacles to their implementation; addresses the way the community development approach contributes to the formulation of social policy on the basis of the experiences of ESCWA in implementing that approach; and analyses factors of ESCWA success in respect of community development policy by focusing on the appropriate environment, civil society-Government partnerships and human resource capacities; (b) a report on the ESCWA approach to community development programmes and projects, which reviews community development areas of concern to ESCWA, referring to the approach to programme and project implementation and the resultant practical experiences that were documented in a comprehensive set of references, guides and technical material. The objective of the report is to be realistic in building capacities, promoting mechanisms for partnership in policymaking, programme planning and project implementation at the local level; (c) a comprehensive evaluation report on the two national capacity-building workshops for Yemeni local community development personnel, which were held in Aden and Sana'a. Those reports, which were distributed to participants in and beneficiaries of the programmes, provided detailed information on participant profiles, programme units and training sessions, training methods and tools, an assessment of participants' answers to the comprehensive survey and remarks/recommendations useful for harnessing experiences and capacities gained from the programmes; (d) a report on donors, their conditions for supporting local development projects and their procedural measures, which was issued in an attempt to eliminate obstacles preventing participants in ESCWA programmes from harnessing their acquired expertise in initiatives for implementing local development projects, namely, ignorance of donor stipulations and procedural rules for financing and support; and (e) an extended report on the outcome of field research on traditional artisanal production in Lebanon, prepared in cooperation with Azm and Saad Foundation and the Lebanese University. The objective of the report, which focused on the practical aspects of such work, was to provide the information necessary for designing programmes to teach artisanal work and develop the relevant skills, thereby contributing to the creation of opportunities for productive work and preserving heritage.

E. TECHNICAL ADVISORY SERVICES

21. In response to a request by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation of Yemen, ESCWA is currently providing technical assistance in the implementation of a local development approach that ensures concerted efforts by Government institutions and civil organizations, and meets conditions for building capacities and promoting networks to link the central and local levels. Furthermore, ESCWA continued implementation of its capacity-building programmes by providing technical advisory services to various civil organizations and academic institutions in order to help them in their local community development work.

III. ACTIVITIES OF THE TEAM FOR POPULATION AND SOCIAL POLICY

22. In 2005-2006, ESCWA continued its work in the following areas: (a) widening knowledge of the correlation between population and development at the local and regional levels; (b) raising awareness of the challenges and opportunities imposed by demographic changes on social and economic development; (c) monitoring the progress achieved by Arab countries in implementing the programme of work of the International Conference on Population and Development, which was held in Cairo in 1994, the outcome of the twenty-first special session of the General Assembly, which was held in 1999, and the United Nations Millennium Declaration of 2000; (d) strengthening national capacities to design social policies and integrate them with social and economic development; (e) urging Arab countries to address the challenges imposed by international migration and benefit from the opportunities it affords; and (f) disseminating knowledge and interchanging information on population and development.

A. CONFERENCES AND EXPERT GROUP MEETINGS

23. In line with its efforts to strengthen national capacities in formulating national policies and approaches for their integration with social and economic development, ESCWA, in cooperation with the Supreme Population Council of Jordan, convened the Expert Group Meeting on the Formulation of Integrated Population Policies within the Framework of Good Governance, which was held in Amman from 6 to 8 September 2005. The Meeting included a discussion of the various institutional factors that prevent the formulation of integrated population policies and negatively affect the development process, in view of the fact that the formulation and implementation of those policies require the intervention of many sectors and concerted efforts at the institutional, administrative and financial levels; an interchange of opinions and experiences on how to use the basics and principles of good governance in order to achieve the essential goals of the Millennium Declaration and international conferences; a review of demographic change in the region and the role of good governance in harnessing that change and transforming it into development opportunities; the presentation and discussion of a model framework for good governance in Arab countries; and a review of a set of recommendations, of which the most important was the need for good measuring indicators of good governance and their effectiveness in the formulation of population policies.

24. Conscious of the role of migration and its impact at the regional and international levels, and the importance of the correlation between migration and development, ESCWA, in cooperation with the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, organized an expert group meeting on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region: Challenges and Opportunities, which was held in Beirut from 15 to 17 May 2006. The meeting was pursuant to General Assembly resolution concerning a High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, which was held in New York on 14 and 15 September 2006. The discussions addressed the challenges and opportunities of international migration and the possibility of a regional dialogue aimed at organizing and managing migration in the context of regionally and internationally balanced social and economic development. Participants focused on the contradictions and weaknesses of migration policies adopted by Arab countries, and the challenges which each country must overcome in order to achieve internationally-agreed development goals. They also tackled the correlation between worker migration and youth unemployment in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, in view of the fact that national capacities are unable to formulate and implement migration and development integration policies, at a time when those countries are expected to experience demographic changes favorable to development, namely, the demographic window of opportunity. Participants concluded the meeting with a set of recommendations on the measures required for improving data quality, supporting research on international migration, developing the capacities of national and regional migration offices, encouraging communication with skilled Arab migrants, optimizing the impact of worker remittances on development, updating migration policies of receiving and source countries in the region and enhancing regional cooperation with regards to migration.

25. In the same context, ESCWA organized a panel discussion on the principal issues related to international migration and the relevant social and economic impacts on the Arab region at the International

Symposium on International Migration and Development, which was held in Italy from 28 to 30 June 2006, in preparation for the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, which was held in New York on 14 and 15 September 2006 during the sixty-second session of the General Assembly. The panel addressed two major issues, the first being the issue of migrant workers in general and migrant workers in the GCC countries in particular, which was discussed in the context of the unprecedented impact which migration has had on the population structure in those countries that has coincided with extensive youth unemployment. The second issue concerned international migration, which was discussed as a development approach conducive to reducing social and economic gaps at the local and regional levels, with particular emphasis on the benefits of worker remittances and investment in their home countries. Participants in the panel included, in addition to ESCWA, experts from Bahrain and Jordan.

B. STUDIES, REPORTS AND PUBLICATIONS

26. The population variable plays a decisive role in the preparation of development programmes and plans. Given the close correlation between population growth and social and economic development, and in view of the structural changes associated with the population age structure, ESCWA has endeavoured to raise awareness of the challenges emanating from population dynamics and the importance of early planning. The changes in population age structure represent pressing challenges and it is incumbent on the Arab countries to face them by working towards reducing their negative impact and harnessing the opportunities manifested by what is called the demographic window. That window is defined as the period during which demographic transition occurs in a given country, when the working age population is at its highest level and dependency ratios at their lowest. That period can last two generations, namely, between 30 and 40 years. The demographic window, if manifested simultaneously with appropriate development conditions and policies, would ensure an increase of economic growth rates and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Given the importance of that opportunity at the national and regional levels, ESCWA published the second issue of the *Population and Development Report* entitled *The demographic window: an opportunity for development in the Arab countries* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2005/5). The report focused on one of the basic means of access to the demographic window, namely, to study the indicators of demographic transition in conjunction with a study of Arab labour markets and their capacity to absorb the economically active population, with a view to urge decision makers to adopt reasonable social and economic policies that combine the creation of new employment opportunities with improving investment in human resources. In the same context, and in order to raise awareness of the importance of the demographic window, ESCWA published a poster entitled *Population and Development: Window of Opportunity in the Arab Countries*, which contained an analysis of the trends in a number of major demographic indicators and a comparative analysis of those indicators, in addition to the manner and time of appearance of the demographic window in the Arab region.

27. ESCWA has monitored population policies and programmes adopted by Arab countries in order to achieve the goals and targets related to reproduction rights and reproduction health, and has prepared a file on reproductive health policies and indicators in Arab countries (E/ESCWA/SDD/2005/Booklet.1), with a view to determining the capacity of those countries to adopt the reproductive health approach in accelerating the process of demographic transition and achieve national goals, the programme of work of the International Conference on Development and MDGs by 2015.

C. CAPACITY-BUILDING PROGRAMMES

28. In line with its efforts to enhance national capacities, ESCWA is cooperating with the United Nations Population Fund in implementing a project to integrate demographic change with the development process. The project aims to develop technical capacities in the field of demographic analysis and mobilize the efforts exerted by decision makers in order to integrate population issues, including, inter alia, the population age structure and reproductive health, with the planning process, in an attempt to assist the Arab countries to prepare for the demographic window of opportunity and face its challenges.

29. In the area of knowledge dissemination, and pursuant to the recommendations of the International Conference on Population and Development, which underlined the importance of disseminating population data supportive of the issue of integrating the population variable with the development process, ESCWA continues to update websites pertaining to demographic profiles of Arab countries and their inherent social and economic aspects. Those websites provide information on current and future trends in population size, age structure, infant mortality rates, life expectancy at birth, fertility rates, and use of family planning methods, in addition to such basic economic indicators as gross national product. The Western Asia Population Information Network, which is being connected to other electronic network websites and sources on population and development issues, is available at: <http://www.escwa.un.org/popin/>.

30. In supporting the efforts exerted with regard to the interchange of knowledge and information, and pursuant to the Beirut Declaration issued at the Regional Arab Population Forum, which was held in Beirut from 19 to 21 November 2004, in commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the 1994 Conference on Population and Development and its call to enhance current implementation mechanisms and establish new mechanisms enabling the region to implement the Conference Programme of Action and the Forum's recommendations, ESCWA set up the Social Development Network (<http://www.escwa.un.org/popin/>). That Network is intended as a link for the interchange of information and successful experiences and dialogue between experts in various areas related to social development, namely, policy and decision makers, academics, civil society, NGOs and national and regional research centres, and as a gateway to news on local, regional and international events in the field of population and development. In its initial phase, the Network deals with the issues of demographic transition in Arab countries, the correlation between population and development, education, women's empowerment, infant and child mortality, reproductive health and partnership. ESCWA will use the Network to gradually open discussions on possible ways of achieving MDGs and interchanging opinions and successful experiences between member countries and United Nations and non-United Nations regional organizations concerned with social development in the Arab world.

IV. ACTIVITIES OF THE TEAM FOR SOCIAL POLICY IN THE CITY

31. In the context of the regional follow-up to global United Nations conferences, namely, the implementation of the Habitat Agenda adopted at the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), which was held in Turkey in 1996, and the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium, ESCWA adopted priority issues for the Western Asia region under the Global Plan of Action of the Habitat Agenda, with a view to promoting sound urban governance practices, achieving urban and population development, responding to issues relating to secure tenure, sustainable urban environment and complete social integration. In that regard, the focus of the ESCWA strategy in respect of urban and population development policies is to disseminate the concepts of the Regional Campaign on Secure Housing and Land Tenure and Good Urban Governance and launch the Campaign in Western Asia countries by organizing expert meetings and conferences, publishing case studies and country profiles and preparing press material, in addition to linking the concept of urban observatories to the tasks of Arab municipalities, including technical cooperation with the Arab Cities Organization, and publishing studies and research on urban governance.

A. REGIONAL CAMPAIGN ON SECURE HOUSING AND LAND TENURE AND GOOD URBAN GOVERNANCE

32. The activities and programmes of ESCWA in the field of urban and population development focus on three basic elements: promoting partnership, building capacities and eradicating poverty. In that regard, ESCWA launched the Regional Campaign on Secure Housing and Land Tenure and Good Urban Governance, which constitutes the regional part of the two global Habitat campaigns, namely, the Global Campaign on Secure Tenure and the Global Campaign on Urban Governance. In its report on its fifth session, paragraph 3, subparagraphs *f*, *g* and *h* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2004 IG.1/12), the Committee on Social Development recommended that member countries should be urged to use the Regional Campaign on Secure

Housing and Land Tenure and Good Urban Governance as a guide and work to achieve its goals; that member countries should cooperate with ESCWA in the formulation of a draft national initiative for the launching of the Campaign; and that the League of Arab States Department of the Environment, Housing and Sustainable Development and the technical secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers of Housing and Reconstruction should coordinate the launch of the Campaign in ESCWA member countries.

33. The objective of the Campaign is to raise awareness and stimulate the mechanism of dialogue and partnership between Governments and local authorities and between civil society and the private sector, with regard to the five basic components of the Campaign, namely, urban governance, the right to housing and land tenure, citizenship and promoting urban governance, reducing urban poverty and strengthening civil society. The secure tenure component represents a new and creative approach to implementation of the Habitat Agenda and, in particular, the issue of providing adequate shelter for all on the basis of two major factors, namely, the right to housing and an end to forced evacuation, as a contribution to reducing poverty in urban regions. The good urban governance component calls for the adoption of a new approach based on the role of local authorities as partner in and contributor to good urban governance mechanisms. It aims to improve living conditions in cities, especially for poor and marginalized persons, and prepare standards appropriate for the city on bases that strengthen the concepts of integration, participation and decentralization, support local authorities, achieve sustainable development and preserve the environment.

1. Cairo Declaration and adoption of the Regional Campaign

34. The Cairo Declaration on Sustainable Arab Cities, Security of Tenure and Good Governance was issued by the High-Level Arab Meeting on Sustainable Arab Cities, Security of Tenure and Good Urban Governance, which was organized by ESCWA and held in Cairo from 15 to 18 December 2005. The Declaration represents an unprecedented commitment by the Governments of the Western Asia and Arab region and local authorities and municipalities to ensure adequate national development strategies that are consistent with the rapid evolution of such essential issues as enshrining the principle of putting the human being first in development, reducing poverty and generating employment opportunities, reinforcing the basics of conscious citizenship, social participation and good governance, and appreciating that those issues have a direct impact on the opportunity to achieve sustainable Arab cities and urban-rural equilibrium. The Declaration includes the adoption of the Regional Campaign by Egypt, Jordan, Palestine and the Sudan and their commitment to advance the ESCWA Regional Campaign project and follow up on its implementation at the national level as a common regional responsibility. Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Arab Emirates welcomed the Regional Campaign and made a commitment to continue coordination with ESCWA with a view to adopting the Campaign in a timely manner.

2. Regional framework for the preparation of national initiatives and proposed plan of action for implementation of the Regional Campaign

35. As part of its assistance to the Governments of the countries in the region in developing the national initiative for launching the National Campaign on Secure Housing and Land Tenure and Good Urban Governance, ESCWA prepared a study on the proposed general framework for the Regional Campaign at the regional level, addressing the three components of the National Campaign and the proposed plan of action for implementation of the Regional Campaign in ESCWA member countries: (a) the institutional role of Government sectors; (b) the role of local authorities; and (c) the participation of civil society authorities. The study included an assessment of the current status of the proposed tenure, a number of choices related to methodology and appropriate implementation techniques, the necessary inputs in terms of human and financial resources, and standard techniques and indicators needed for implementation and evaluation, with particular focus on the priority of combating urban poverty and improving the living conditions of slum dwellers.

3. Media strategy

36. In order to provide a comprehensive framework for the media message on issues related to the Regional Campaign, ESCWA conducted a study on the media strategy for supporting the plan of action of the national initiative. The media strategy is a tool for the promotion of the components of the Regional Campaign; it contributes to the implementation of the national component of the Campaign according to local and national characteristics. It is also a communication instrument that provides a large number of concerned people with the opportunity to be introduced to the Regional Campaign, contribute to the development of local and national initiatives, integrate new developments in the plan of action in a simple and transparent way, and disseminate information on achievements and challenges. ESCWA also launched the website of the Regional Campaign and a poster listing achievement and future prospects.

4. Reports on the status of the Arab City

37. In cooperation with the Arab Cities Organization, ESCWA published a report on the issues of secure tenure and good urban governance in selected Arab cities, and a study on the comparative analysis of housing and land tenure and good governance policies in selected countries of the ESCWA region, on the basis of national reports presented by member countries.

B. SUPPORTING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF LOCAL URBAN OBSERVATORIES AND COORDINATION WITH NATIONAL URBAN OBSERVATORIES

38. Under the Regional Campaign for Secure Housing and Land Tenure and Good Urban Governance and in cooperation with the Arab Cities Organization and the Global Urban Observatory of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), ESCWA continues its support for and development of the plan of action and programme of the local urban observatory in capitals and cities of ESCWA member countries, with a view to mainstreaming local urban observatories in the region and coordinating with national urban observatories.

39. Decrees for the establishment of local urban observatories were issued in 12 cities of the ESCWA region. Those cities and capitals are Damascus, Aleppo, Homs and Hama in the Syrian Arab Republic; Greater Amman, Sahab and Maadaba in Jordan; Sana'a in Yemen; Sin-el-Fil, Beirut and Tripoli in Lebanon; Baghdad in Iraq; Jeddah in Saudi Arabia; in addition to the pioneering experience of the Medina observatory in Saudi Arabia.

40. ESCWA pursued its contribution to the promotion of Arab local urban observatories by organizing, in cooperation with the Arab Cities Organization and Khatib and Alami Engineering Company, a symposium on the Applications of the Geographical Information System in Municipalities and their Urban Observatories, which was held on the International Day for the Geographical Information System at the municipality of Sin-el-Fil, Lebanon, on 24 November 2005. The symposium also addressed the setting up of a regional work mechanism for training in the use of technology in compiling databases, and the formulation of development indicators for the urban situation at the municipality level.

1. Regional and international cooperation and global evaluation of the first local urban observatory in the Arab region

41. In the context of ESCWA efforts to promote regional and international cooperation, the municipality of Sin-el-Fil, Lebanon, obtained the first grant offered by the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) for a local urban observatory in the Arab region. The municipality also received the award of distinguished achievement in geographical information systems for 2006, which is granted annually to organizations and bodies in appreciation of their efforts and exceptional contributions to the global community. The urban observatory of the municipality of Sin-el-Fil was the first observatory launched as

part of the cooperation between ESCWA, the Arab Cities Organization and Khatib and Alami Engineering Company.

2. Workshop on National and Local Urban Observatories in the Arab Countries

42. In the context of the Third World Urban Forum, which has held in Vancouver, Canada, from 19 to 23 June 2006, ESCWA organized a workshop on National and Local Urban Observatories in the Arab Countries. Participants in the workshop included representatives of the national urban observatories in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia and the Global Urban Observatory of UN-HABITAT, in addition to representatives of national and local institutions in the Arab region and the world and a number of NGOs, the private sector and the media. At the conclusion of the workshop, the participants and organizers agreed to launch the Arab Observatories Network with the collaboration of ESCWA, the Arab Cities Organization, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia.

C. CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

43. In cooperation with the League of Arab States, the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities in Egypt, the UN-HABITAT and the Arab Cities Organization, ESCWA organized the High-Level Arab Meeting on Sustainable Arab Cities, Security of Tenure and Good Urban Governance, which was held in Cairo from 15 to 18 December 2005. The Meeting was held in tandem with the Regional Arab Conference on Interlinkages between Urban and Rural Communities, which was organized by the General Organization for Physical Planning at the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities of Egypt. Participants at the joint opening session included ministers of Housing, Construction, Municipalities and Local Administration from Arab countries, and 600 other participants. Those taking part in the work of the High-Level Arab Meeting included representatives of public and private sectors, local authorities, regional and international organizations, specialized NGOs, prominent consultants, academics and experts in scientific research concerned with the issues of housing and urban development, in addition to a number of activists for the issues of secure tenure and good urban governance.

1. National initiatives for launching the Regional Campaign

44. The High-Level Arab Meeting sought to urge the Governments of ESCWA member countries to adopt and participate in the national initiatives for launching the Regional Campaign at the national level. A number of reports were presented at the meeting in support of the national and local Regional Campaign-related initiatives which are expected to be launched in the period 2006-2007 in ESCWA member countries. Each delegation presented two national reports, one on the state of housing and land tenure and the other on mechanisms for good governance.

2. Cairo Declaration on the Regional Campaign

45. Participants at the High-Level Arab Meeting issued the Cairo Declaration on Sustainable Arab Cities, Security of Tenure and Good Governance. During the Meeting, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine and the Sudan adopted the Regional Campaign, while it was welcomed by Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Arab Emirates, who gave a commitment to continue working and coordinating with ESCWA, with a view to adopting the campaign as soon as possible.

3. Intensifying regional efforts to support Arab Governments in launching the Regional Campaign

46. Participants at the High-Level Arab Meeting made a set of recommendations addressed to Governments, local authorities, NGOs and ESCWA, in addition to recommendations on the current crisis situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. They called upon ESCWA to intensify its regional efforts to support Arab Governments in the fields of sustainable cities, improving the performance of municipalities, interlinkage between the urban and rural, community empowerment, sound governance and good urban

governance, in addition to mobilizing the human and financial resources necessary for optimizing support to ESCWA and the Arab countries in those fields.

4. *The Arab Regional Conference for the Ten Year Review
And Appraisal of the Outcome of HABITAT-II
"Ten Years after Istanbul: Call for Equity"*

47. From 11 to 13 April 2006, ESCWA convened at United Nations House, Beirut, the Arab Regional Conference for the Ten Year Review and Appraisal of the Outcome of HABITAT-II, "Ten Years after Istanbul: Call for Equity". Conference participants included ministers and senior officials concerned with the issues of housing, municipalities and local governance in the Arab region, governors, municipality directors and representatives of local authorities, NGOs, business and private sector institutions, regional and United Nations organizations, Arab, regional and international funds and donors, in addition to consultants, academics and activists for the issues of tenure and good urban governance.

(a) Six Arab countries adopt the Regional Campaign. The objective of the Conference was to urge Governments of ESCWA member countries to conduct a 10-year review and appraisal of implementation of the Habitat Agenda and invite them to improve the balance between urban and rural communities in respect of sustainable development; continue work on follow-up to implementation of the Habitat Agenda at the regional, national and local levels; participate actively in the achievement of MDGs, especially Goals 7 and 8; pursue the mechanism for launching the Regional Campaign; and continue the adoption of national initiatives for launching the Campaign in accordance with the national particularities of each participating country. At the conclusion of the conference, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen announced their adoption of the Regional Campaign, bringing the number of countries that joined the Campaign to six, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine and the Sudan having done so already;

(b) National reports: in order to shed light on the methodological correlation between UN-HABITAT II and MDGs, the Conference reviewed the initiatives of member countries to improve the living conditions of slum dwellers and good urban governance, and also reviewed one of the leading achievements in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda by concerned countries in the period 1996-2006, namely, providing adequate shelter, developing sustainable urban settlements and securing housing and land tenure;

(c) City reports: for the first time, the Conference included a comprehensive review of the experiences of national and local urban observatories in the ESCWA region, which was entitled Partnership for Development. That review is part of the effort to promote partnership with local authorities and improve their performance, pursuant to commitments to continue the implementation of the Habitat Agenda in the Arab region;

(d) Regional exhibition on best practices: as a side event to the Conference, ESCWA organized a regional exhibition entitled Ten Years after Istanbul: Call for Equity, which featured, as best practices, the major achievements of Arab countries in ensuring equity in development from 1996 to 2006, and included posters, plans, films and publications on four themes: the Luxor project to upgrade slums in Egypt; the 2002 Dubai Prize for best practices in improving conditions of life, that went to the Deir El Ahmar Women's League in North Bekaa, Lebanon; the prize on the reconstruction of Lebanon given to the late Prime Minister of Lebanon, Rafic Hariri; and the pioneering housing development achievements of the Foundation of His High Eminence Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz in memory of his parents.

D. STUDIES AND RESEARCH ON URBAN AND HOUSING DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

48. In the area of urban and housing development policies, ESCWA published a number of studies and pieces of research, the latest of which was on urbanization and the changing character of the Arab city and addressed the changes which have occurred and continue to occur in the Arab city under pressure resulting

from migration to the cities, population growth and general aspects of social and economic development, taking into consideration the history of the city and its community.

49. Periodically, ESCWA publishes a series of studies on national population profiles and urban policies in countries of the Western Asia region, with a view to monitoring developments in the housing and urbanization sectors in those countries. The series deals with the issues of housing and urban policies, including the various roles played by the public and private sectors, housing finance mechanisms and systems, slums and the lack of demand for housing. The series covers Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon and Yemen. Further studies are underway on Oman and Qatar.