

**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

Committee on Women
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Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda

Progress made in the advancement of women in the Arab region**Activities related to women advancement in the ESCWA programme of work,
the Muscat Declaration on the Achievement of Gender Justice,
and recommendations of the Committee on Women****Summary**

This report reviews the main activities undertaken by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in the field of advancement of women pursuant to the recommendations made by the Committee on Women at its seventh session, held in Muscat on 20 and 21 January 2016. It also addresses the implementation of the Muscat Declaration: Towards the Achievement of Gender Justice in the Arab Region, adopted by member States at that session.

The report covers the studies and research carried out by ESCWA under its programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017, and the expert group meetings and key events organized to advocate for gender equality. It lists the information kits and various technical materials issued to enhance communication with national and regional stakeholders, and facilitate the exchange of information and expertise towards greater gender equality and women's empowerment in the Arab region. The report also reviews field projects and extrabudgetary activities implemented in cooperation with international and regional organizations that support women's rights and gender equality, and highlights the partnerships developed by ESCWA to undertake its research and field projects.

Participants to the eighth session of the Committee on Women are invited to take note of these activities, and to make comments and suggestions on follow-up actions.



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Introduction

1. The present report provides an overview of the activities undertaken by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) pursuant to the recommendations made by the Committee on Women at its seventh session, held in Muscat, on 20 and 21 January 2016. It also reports on the implementation of activities related to the advancement of women under the ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017, including studies and research, conferences, expert group meetings, training sessions, information kits and electronic materials. Technical cooperation and advisory services, and activities of the Subcommittee on Gender Equality and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be presented to the Committee on Women in separate reports under agenda items 4 (b) and 5 (b), respectively.
2. Since the seventh session of the Committee on Women, ESCWA has engaged in various regional and international cooperation initiatives, reaffirming its leading role in all areas related to gender equality and women's empowerment in the Arab region. Partnerships have been established with national women's machineries to implement specific activities, including the Ministry of Women's Affairs in the State of Palestine, the Jordanian National Commission for Women, and the Egyptian National Council for Women. Cooperation was also enhanced with United Nations agencies and regional organizations, such as the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the League of Arab States and the Swedish Institute Alexandria. ESCWA has also undertaken work with civil society organizations and academic institutes, including ABAAD-Resource Center for Gender Equality, the Blessing Foundation, the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World at the Lebanese American University (LAU), and the Danish Centre for Gender, Equality and Diversity (KVINFO).
3. At its seventh session, the Committee on Women adopted the Muscat Declaration: Towards the Achievement of Gender Justice in the Arab Region. It also issued two sets of recommendations, one addressed to member States and another addressed to the ESCWA secretariat. This document reports on the implementation of the Muscat Declaration and the recommendations addressed to the secretariat. Actions taken by member States pursuant to the recommendations of the Committee will be presented by their representatives under agenda item 4 (c).

I. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MUSCAT DECLARATION: TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF GENDER JUSTICE IN THE ARAB REGION

4. In the Muscat Declaration: Towards the Achievement of Gender Justice in the Arab Region, ESCWA member States affirmed their will to jointly work towards achieving gender justice as a foundation for ensuring sustainable development and security in the Arab region. They reaffirmed their commitment to implementing international treaties on women's rights, and acknowledged the need to adopt a comprehensive approach to gender justice with two principal components: ensuring accountability by determining effective national accountability mechanisms, and achieving equality by eliminating all forms of discrimination between men and women. Member States also underlined their responsibility in implementing the SDGs, especially Goal 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls and its related targets, as a key regional and national priority. The text of the Muscat Declaration is annexed to this report.
5. In 2016-2017, ESCWA undertook a number of activities to support the efforts of member States in implementing the Declaration, particularly to strengthen national institutions that are crucial to achieving gender justice and realizing the SDGs. These included a study entitled "The State of Gender Justice in the Arab Region: Challenges and Opportunities", which examines institutional barriers to gender equality in the region, and another entitled "Women, Peace and Security: The Role of Institutions in Times of Peace and War in the Arab Region", which analyses the role played by national institutions in advancing the women, peace and security agenda (WPSA). ESCWA also designed a project to enhance institutional capacities in mainstreaming a gender perspective on the national level, and is currently implementing another project aimed at estimating the economic cost of violence against women in the Arab region. Finally, the Subcommittee on Gender

Equality and the SDGs was established to build capacities, promote regional integration, enhance coordination and generate knowledge in the field of gender equality, and address gaps with a view to realizing SDG 5.

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE ESCWA SECRETARIAT

6. Pursuant to recommendation 4 (a) issued by the Committee on Women at its seventh session, the ESCWA programme of work in the field of the advancement of women for the biennium 2016-2017 was revised. Some of the activities were reformulated to ensure a swift response to emerging issues in the region. Focus was placed on three main thematic areas: violence against women, gender justice, and women, peace and security. Implementing the SDGs, especially Goal 5, at the national and regional levels, and mainstreaming gender in public institutions were also identified as priorities.

A. STUDIES AND RESEARCH

1. *Violence against women*

Recommendation (g)

Continue evaluating the effects of conflict on gender; study the status of women in conflict situations; measure the economic impact of gender-based violence on all social groups; and prepare a model on methods to measure this impact to be adopted as a national reference.

Actions taken

7. In 2017, ESCWA issued a study entitled “Status of Arab Women Report: Violence against Women—What is at Stake”, in partnership with the Regional Office for the Arab States (ROAS) of UN-Women and the LAU Institute for Women’s Studies in the Arab World. The report reviews evidence-based knowledge on violence against women in the Arab region, and provides in-depth understanding of the human rights of women and socioeconomic consequences of violence against them. It also highlights the importance of estimating the cost of such violence as an advocacy and policy reform tool. The report concludes with policy recommendations addressed to three key stakeholders, namely the State, United Nations agencies and international organizations, and civil society organizations and research institutions. The preliminary findings of the study were discussed at an expert group meeting held in Beirut on 25 and 26 January 2017. The study was carried out in the framework of a regional project led by ESCWA and implemented in partnership with UN-Women on estimating the cost of violence.

8. ESCWA issued a report entitled “Estimating Costs of Intimate Partner Violence in the Arab Region: Operational Model” in the framework of the above-mentioned project, in partnership with UN-Women ROAS. The report proposes a costing model relevant for the Arab region, identifies the needed data to populate the model and discusses its operationalization. It also determines key operational steps to undertake the costing exercise on the country level. The proposed costing model and available data sets were reviewed during a round-table discussion held in Beirut on 7 October 2016.

2. *Gender justice*

Recommendation (h)

Continue studying mechanisms and methods for achieving social justice in general, and gender justice in particular; and work with member States to propagate knowledge on gender issues at the national and regional levels.

Actions taken

9. ESCWA issued a study entitled “The State of Gender Justice in the Arab Region: Challenges and Opportunities”. It reviews the progress made in the Arab region in addressing and eliminating discrimination against women, and examines the instatement of accountability mechanisms to combat discriminatory measures, and of institutional mechanisms that allow victims of gender-based discrimination to seek redress. The study looks at gender-based discrimination in the political, economic and social fields, highlighting enacted legislations and the importance of translating these into policies, institutions and measures. It also identifies the institutional gaps that hinder the realization of gender justice in the region. The preliminary findings of the study were discussed at an expert group meeting held in Beirut on 16 and 17 May 2017.

10. The study was complemented by a policy brief entitled “Institutional mechanisms for gender accountability in the Arab world”, issued in 2017. The brief examines States’ obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of women. It reviews the roles of four key institutions in that regard, namely national women’s machineries, parliamentary committees, ombudsman offices and national human rights institutions. It concludes by highlighting the importance of strengthening these institutions to close the gender gap and enhance gender justice in the region.

*3. Women, peace and security***Recommendation (f)**

Continue working with national women’s machineries, parliaments and all other stakeholders to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000); and prepare studies, provide training and build capacities to assist member States in developing the necessary national plans and programmes for its implementation.

Actions taken

11. The above-mentioned report on Women, Peace and Security: The Role of Institutions in Times of Peace and War in the Arab Region, which discusses the roles of national women’s machineries, national human rights institutions, security sector institutions and civil society organizations in advancing the WPSA in the Arab region, was issued in 2017 for the implementation of the above recommendation. It sheds light on how the mandates and operations of these institutions change in times of peace and war, and offers recommendations to strengthen them through the identification and establishment of such mandates and through inter-agency cooperation. Its preliminary findings were discussed at an expert group meeting held in Beirut on 3 and 4 November 2016.

12. Two policy briefs were also produced in 2016-2017 on the theme of women, peace and security. The first, entitled “Peacebuilders: role of women in peacebuilding processes” explores women’s participation in peacebuilding processes in Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. It affirms that increased participation of women in these processes contributes to the quality and durability of peace agreements. It also provides recommendations for action in the three countries and the rest of the Arab region. The second policy brief, entitled “Conflict, climate change and their mutually reinforcing impact on gender imbalances in the Arab region”, analyses the cumulative repercussions of conflict and climate change that aggravate women’s pre-existing vulnerability gaps, and proposes recommendations addressed to policymakers in the environment field on the integration of a gender perspective in all stages of the policy cycle.

*4. Sustainable Development Goals***Recommendation (b)**

Work with national women’s machineries on developing national plans to implement the 2030 Agenda and to unify national and regional approaches aimed at implementing those plans; ensure that gender equality goals

are consistent with all international commitments, especially the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; provide the necessary technical support; and prepare studies on this issue.

Actions taken

13. In 2017, ESCWA issued a technical paper entitled “Women: Arab horizon 2030”, which provides an analysis of approaches and good practices to mainstream gender in public policy and decision-making processes. It reviews progress achieved in Arab countries during the past decades, and concludes with recommendations to the international community, women’s groups and policymakers in that regard.

14. In April 2016, ESCWA issued a policy brief entitled “Leveraging multi-stakeholder partnerships to promote gender justice and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. The brief examines the characteristics of effective partnerships and outlines the role of various stakeholders, including governmental institutions, civil society organizations, the private sector and the United Nations, in supporting the achievement of the gender-related targets of 2030 Agenda.

15. Another policy brief entitled “Arab women and economic participation” highlighted the role of international frameworks, particularly the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, in enhancing women’s economic participation. The brief suggested a comprehensive approach to address the barriers to women’s participation in the Arab region and provided policy recommendations to that effect.

16. In 2016, ESCWA also reviewed the causes and consequences of young women’s unemployment in the region in a policy brief entitled “Unemployment of young women in the Arab region: causes and interventions”. The brief draws examples from selected Arab countries on the poor transition from school to work, and urges policymakers to base their interventions on a strategic framework aimed at empowering young women and achieving gender equality.

17. Also in 2016, ESCWA issued a last policy brief on “Equality in the new global Agenda: integrating a gender perspective in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 2”. This brief analyses Goals 1 and 2 on poverty and hunger from a gender perspective, and proposes an adaptation of these Goals to the context of the Arab region. It concludes with concrete policy recommendations on gender equality and the empowerment of women in the context of these specific Goals.

18. In 2016, ESCWA produced the Country Profile–Gender Lens Pocket Book. This new publication provides readers with a statistical portrait of Western Asia through sex-disaggregated data and gender indicators in the areas of population, education, inequality, health and the labour market. Data are taken from national sources and United Nations databases.

19. ESCWA published the Ensaf Newsletter on Gender Statistics, in collaboration with national statistical offices. It contains the latest national and regional activities and outputs that promote equity through the production of gender statistics.

5. Political representation of women

Recommendation (b)

(Reproduced above)

Recommendation (d)

Continue strengthening the capabilities of national machineries to mainstream gender in national policies, plans and programmes and in the justice chain; and prepare reports and provide technical assistance and guidance in this area.

Action taken

20. In 2017, ESCWA issued a study entitled “Women’s Political Representation in the Arab Region”, which examines women’s representation in the legislative, executive and judiciary branches and in local councils. It showcases new forms of representation, such as participation of women in peace talks, national dialogues and constitutional committees. The study concludes with evidence-based policy recommendations aimed at assisting Arab States in scaling up their efforts to meet their commitments on gender equality, particularly on target 5.5 of SDG 5: “Ensure full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life”. The preliminary findings of the study were discussed at an expert group meeting held in Beirut on 15 and 16 December 2016.

6. Economic and social situation of Palestinian women

21. Pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2003/42 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, ESCWA has included the preparation of a technical paper on the status of Palestinian women and girls in its programmes of work since 2003. The paper is submitted to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and feeds into the Secretary-General’s report on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women. In 2017, ESCWA thus issued its recurrent report under the title “Social and Economic Situation of Palestinian Women and Girls: July 2014-June 2016”, which reviews the main social, economic and political developments in that period and sheds light on achievements in gender equality in occupied territory and ongoing challenges in that regard. It concludes with recommendations for decision makers aimed at promoting the realization of Palestinian women’s social, economic and political rights.

B. MEETINGS AND TRAINING WORKSHOPS

Recommendation (g)

(Reproduced above)

Actions taken

22. On 7 October 2016, ESCWA held a round-table discussion under the theme “Estimating costs of intimate partner violence in the Arab region: operational model” in partnership with UN-Women in Beirut. Experts, economists, statisticians and gender specialists who participated in the meeting discussed available data sets on Arab countries and the scope of the costing exercise.

23. On 25 and 26 January 2017, ESCWA held an expert group meeting under the theme “Violence against women: what is at stake”, in partnership with UN-Women ROAS and the LAU Institute for Women’s Studies in the Arab World, in Beirut. Participants represented a vast array of expertise and specializations. They reviewed the draft report on the topic, provided insights on its key findings and proposed policy recommendations.

24. On 4 May 2017, ESCWA led a special session of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development under the theme “Gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda: gender dimensions of poverty and prosperity” in Rabat. The session featured interventions on SDG 5 by representatives of the Moroccan Ministry of Solidarity, Women, Family and Social Development; the Arab Women’s Organization; the Jordanian National Commission for Women; and ESCWA. An expert also provided a regional perspective on the topic.

25. On 31 July and 1 August 2017, ESCWA held a national consultation meeting in partnership with the Ministry of Women’s Affairs in the State of Palestine, the Swedish Institute Alexandria and UN-Women ROAS on costing intimate partner violence in Palestine. Held in Amman, the consultation was aimed at advocating the use of costing as a trigger of policy reform. Participants discussed the costing model and identified means to test it in the Palestinian context.

Recommendation (h)

(Reproduced above)

Action taken

26. On 16 and 17 May 2017, ESCWA held an expert group meeting on the theme “The state of gender justice in the Arab region” in Beirut. The meeting brought together renowned regional experts to peer review a draft study on the topic, and assess its key findings and the proposed policy recommendations. It also served as a platform to exchange knowledge and best practices on gender justice.

Recommendation (f)

(Reproduced above)

Actions taken

27. ESCWA partnered with LAU and KVINFO on the organization of an international conference entitled “Towards Prioritizing Women, Peace, and Security on the Arab Agenda”. The event was held in Beirut from 8 to 10 August 2016. The goal was to enrich the debate on issues relating to women, peace and security in the Arab region. Participants discussed the roles and mandates of national institutions in responding to the WPSA; the role of women in current peace processes in several Arab countries; and successes, limitations, lessons learned and the way forward. The conference resulted in “The Beirut Call for Action: Prioritizing Women, Peace and Security on the Arab Agenda”, which called for a new paradigm to engage women in peace and security initiatives in the region. This included localizing the WPSA, promoting women’s activism in times of peace and of war, and institutionalizing partnerships on women, peace and security.

28. On 3 and 4 November 2016, ESCWA held an expert group meeting on the theme “Women, peace and security: the role of institutions in times of peace and war in the Arab region” in Beirut. Participants reviewed a draft study on the topic, discussed its key findings and proposed policy recommendations aimed at improving the role of institutions in furthering the WPSA in the Arab region.

Recommendations (b) and (d)

(Reproduced above)

Action taken

29. ESCWA held an expert group meeting on the theme of political representation of women in the Arab region in Beirut, on 15 and 16 December 2016. Gender experts, practitioners and academics who participated in the meeting reviewed a draft study on that topic. They discussed the approach, analytical framework and methodology adopted in the study. They also provided input to the analysis and findings, and proposed policy recommendations.

Recommendation (j)

Promote partnerships between United Nations agencies and other regional organizations, especially the League of Arab States, the Arab Women’s Organization, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and civil society institutions, and strengthen coordination between them.

Actions taken

30. ESCWA held a regional meeting in Beirut, on 2 and 3 March 2016, in partnership with UN-Women ROAS and the League of Arab States, in preparation for the sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Representatives of national women’s machineries gathered for two days to identify regional

priorities and harmonize positions concerning the agenda of that session. They prepared an Arab position document in that regard.

31. ESCWA held a gender marker workshop for United Nations regional commissions in Beirut, on 24 and 25 May 2017, in partnership with UN-Women. The workshop was aimed at exchanging experiences on the implementation of a four-category gender marker that allows tracking the proportion of funds devoted to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in the budget of the Organization. Resource tracking is one of the indicators of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on gender equality.

C. INFORMATION KITS, ELECTRONIC PUBLICATIONS, NEWSLETTERS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

32. ESCWA produced communication tools and organized events with the aim of raising awareness about regional gender-related priorities in implementation of the Muscat Declaration and Committee recommendations, as follows.

1. *Observance of and awareness-raising campaigns for 2016 and 2017 International Women's Day*

33. The 2016 observance of International Women's Day was held in cooperation with the LAU Institute of Women's Studies in the Arab World under the theme "Planet 50-50 by 2030: step it up for gender equality". Statements were delivered by the Executive Secretary of ESCWA, the LAU Vice-President for Student Development and Enrolment Management, the United Nations Environment Programme Goodwill Ambassador in the Arab Region and two artists. The event also included a performance on domestic violence, a documentary on women's rights, a musical performance dedicated to Arab women and a photo exhibit on violence against women. A needlework exhibit and a display of organic food products were also organized by refugee women. An awareness-raising campaign entitled "Did you know...", sharing short messages on gender equality and showcasing successful Arab women preceded the celebration.

34. The 2017 observance was held under the theme "Empower a woman, empower a nation: be bold for change". A statement was delivered on behalf of the United Nations Secretary-General, and other statements were made by the Executive Secretary of ESCWA, the first-ever Lebanese State Minister for Women's Affairs and a prominent Lebanese celebrity. The event also featured musical and theatre performances, and an Arabic movie on violence against women. A handicrafts trade fair was organized in collaboration with the Blessing Foundation, as well as an artwork exhibition. A round-table discussion on the inspirational stories of several pioneer women from the region, moderated by a renowned TV anchor, was organized in cooperation with UN-Women, closed the event.

2. *The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence*

35. The 2016 campaign for the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence was held in partnership with UN-Women, ROAS, ABAAD-Resource Center for Gender Equality and the LAU Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, with the aim of raising public awareness on gender-based violence. The campaign comprised three events: (a) a video competition entitled "How Would You Stop Violence Against Women?" targeting youth in the Arab region was launched from 10 to 25 November; (b) a panel discussion on "Estimating the cost of violence against women in the Arab region" was held on 9 December, with the aim of raising awareness of the public at large and galvanizing action to ensure safe spaces for all women; and (c) a campaign under the slogan "A White Dress Does not Cover Rape", aimed at abolishing article 522 of the Lebanese Penal Code, was launched on 10 December.

3. *Side event at the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women*

36. A side event on “Estimating the economic cost of violence against women in the Arab region” was held during the sixty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2017 in New York, in partnership with UN-Women ROAS, the Jordanian National Commission for Women, the Egyptian National Council for Women and the UNFPA Egypt office. Representatives of civil society organizations, United Nations agencies and ESCWA member States discussed the importance of costing violence as a policy reform mechanism.

4. *Guide to the gender targets in the SDGs*

37. A guide to the gender targets in the SDGs was developed to match the newly adopted 2030 Agenda with existing targets in the Beijing Platform for Action. This practical guide, which should reduce reporting fatigue, can serve as a basis for the preparation and review of national development plans and gender-sensitive strategies in the Arab region.

5. *E-learning networks*

38. Two e-learning networks were created to disseminate information among stakeholders in the field of women’s empowerment and gender equality. These platforms allow government representatives, experts and civil society organizations access to resources, databases, and information on gender-related issues and events.

6. *Information kit for the eighth session of the ESCWA Committee on Women*

39. An information kit for participants to the eighth session of the Committee on Women was produced. It consisted of a poster and a parliamentary document that provided statistics on key indicators of the status of women in Arab countries, including education, health, and economic and political participation indicators.

D. FIELD PROJECTS AND EXTRABUDGETARY ACTIVITIES

1. *Estimating the economic cost of violence against women in the Arab region*

Recommendation (c)

Cooperate with national machineries to amend discriminatory laws, policies and systems in all areas and at all levels, and coordinate with those machineries in monitoring and following-up on reports.

Recommendations (g) and (j)

(Reproduced above)

Actions taken

40. To support the Arab States in meeting their obligations with regard to implementation of SDG 5, in particular targets 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3, ESCWA devised and implemented a regional project in partnership with UN-Women ROAS, entitled “Estimating the economic cost of violence against women in the Arab region”. The project, consisting of two phases, is aimed at building the capacity of Arab States on the importance of estimating the cost of violence as a tool for policy change. Its first phase was launched on 4 October 2017, on the sidelines of the eighth session of the Committee on Women.

41. During that first phase, two studies (mentioned previously) were developed: (a) the “Status of Arab Women Report: Violence against Women—What is At Stake?”, which showed that violence against women was a growing phenomenon in the Arab region despite unprecedented progress in terms of gender-sensitive legislation; and (b) “Estimating Costs of Intimate Partner Violence in the Arab Region: Operational Model”, which proposed a model to measure the economic costs of such violence.

42. The second phase of the project, which consisted of piloting the economic model in the State of Palestine, was initiated in April 2017 through fieldwork in close coordination with the Palestinian Ministry of Women's Affairs and the UN-Women Palestine Office. Several meetings were conducted with stakeholders from the Government, non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies and academia to review sets of data available in different ministries and national surveys that can be capitalized on for the costing exercise. The findings of the fieldwork were validated during a national consultation, also held in partnership with the Ministry of Women's Affairs and UN-Women (ROAS and Palestine Office) in Amman, on 31 July and 1 August 2017. It concluded with the identification of a road map for the costing exercise in the country, which was adopted in a national report on the subject.

43. Lessons learned from this national consultation and international best practices will be shared with all ESCWA member States, with a view to replicating the Palestinian experience in other Arab countries. ESCWA has partnered with the Swedish Institute Alexandria to that effect. A high-level regional consultation meeting will be held in November 2017 in Alexandria to engage member States in the costing exercise. Representatives of Peru and Sweden will share the experiences of their countries in that regard.

2. Gender mainstreaming in public institutions

Recommendation (e)

Pursue efforts to mainstream gender in all the administrative activities and structures of the secretariat and to strengthen its role in that regard within the United Nations system; work with national women's machineries on implementing the project to mainstream gender in public institutions; develop an Arab framework to measure progress towards achieving gender equality in public institutions; and work on mainstreaming gender in government institutions.

Actions taken

44. ESCWA is currently implementing a project on gender mainstreaming in public institutions, aimed at designing the first accountability framework to measure progress in achieving gender equality in public institutions in the Arab region. The framework will build on the experience of ESCWA, best performer in the implementation of the UN-SWAP on gender equality within the United Nations system. The project will enable national women's machineries to support governmental institutions in mainstreaming gender in their work by adapting the framework to their national contexts and applying it in compliance with their national laws.

45. The project adopts a participatory approach. ESCWA translated the UN-SWAP technical notes into Arabic in partnership with the Supreme Council for Women in Bahrain. A regional workshop entitled "Institutionalizing gender at the organizational level" was then held in partnership with UN-Women in Beirut, in November 2016, to review the translation and adapt it to the needs of Arab States. The unified Arab framework for measuring progress in gender equality in public institutions was thus produced. During the following project phase, ESCWA collaborated with UN-Women ROAS to provide financial and technical support to pilot the roll-out of the framework at the Jordanian National Commission for Women (JNCW). The first participatory gender audit started in May 2017 at the JNCW. The final report included the main findings of the evaluation, highlighted good practices, and suggested recommendations and concrete actions for improving performance. The JNCW developed remedial implementation plans for the period 2017-2020. Financial support was also granted to the JNCW to fill some of the identified gaps in capacities. Several follow-up missions will be organized by ESCWA and UN-Women to provide additional technical assistance and advice.

46. Upcoming project activities include three regional workshops to build the capacity of member States in implementing some indicators of the framework. Technical assistance will also be provided upon request from member States to support the adaptation of the framework to their national contexts and the implementation of its indicators.

3. *Promoting social justice in selected countries in the Arab region*

Recommendation (d)

(Reproduced above)

Action taken

47. ESCWA is implementing a project entitled “Promoting social justice in selected countries in the Arab region”, funded through the United Nations Development Account. The objective of this project is to strengthen the capacity of member States to operationalize social justice and gender equality principles and integrate them into their development strategies and programmes. Participatory tools will be produced and applied to that effect, particularly for the formulation of social protection policies and for gender mainstreaming in public institutions. The project will also serve to enhance cooperation between local actors and central governments, and civil society and external actors.

Annex**THE MUSCAT DECLARATION: TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT
OF GENDER JUSTICE IN THE ARAB REGION**

We, the ministers, leaders and representatives of national machineries for the advancement of women in the Arab region, participating in the seventh session of the Committee on Women of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), held in Muscat on 20 and 21 January 2016, affirm our commitment to jointly work towards achieving gender justice as a foundation for ensuring sustainable development and security in the Arab region;

Recognize that the full participation of women in economic, social, cultural, civil and political affairs at all levels demands equality in the distribution of roles between men and women in the family and society as a whole;

Reaffirm our commitment to implementing international treaties on women's rights, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), and other resolutions on women, peace and security;

Welcome the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its related goals, endorsed by world leaders in September 2015, as an integrated development plan driving progress, development, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the Arab region; also welcome the adoption of the Tunis Declaration on Social Justice in the Arab Region at the twenty-eighth ESCWA ministerial session as a political commitment that promotes policies aimed at achieving justice as a primary goal of development policy;

Affirm our responsibility and that of all stakeholders to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, especially the goal on gender equality and its related targets as a key regional and national priority;

Note that, despite significant progress towards achieving gender equality, there remains a considerable degree of discrimination against women because of fragmented approaches to achieving gender justice that overlook many elements of this broad concept;

Also note that the Arab region requires a more modern religious discourse, especially regarding gender equality;

Condemn all forms of terrorism, armed conflict and the Israeli occupation that negatively affect the status of women in general, and impede the achievement of gender justice in the Arab region;

Acknowledge the need to adopt a comprehensive approach to gender justice, with two principal components: ensuring accountability by determining effective national accountability mechanisms that limit discriminatory measures, and achieving equality by eliminating all forms of discrimination between men and women;

Confirm our commitment to implement the following measures and procedures to achieve gender justice in its broadest form, including ensuring gender equality and accountability:

1. Take appropriate measures to implement international treaties on equality and eliminating discrimination that member States have ratified, especially CEDAW;
2. Harmonize national legislation with international and regional commitments ratified by member States, so as to ensure the repeal of all discriminatory laws;

3. Bridge the gap between laws and procedures for the protection of women and girls, and implement them in practice;
4. Mainstream the principles of gender equality and women's empowerment in all national strategies, policies, plans, programmes and budgets;
5. Include the concept of gender equality in the justice chain to ensure women's access to justice;
6. Develop national action plans and concrete procedures to strengthen peace and support the effective participation of Arab women in identifying frameworks to protect them from violence and conflict;
7. Provide statistics, data and indicators disaggregated by sex to support monitoring and evaluation processes, and offer the necessary financial and human resources in that regard;
8. Support cooperation between Arab countries to promote enlightened religious interpretations, in order to ensure gender justice by harmonizing the concepts of justice and gender in religious discourse;

Request ESCWA, on the basis of a comprehensive approach to gender justice, to continue providing support to member States, with special focus on awareness-raising, capacity-building and preparing analytical studies;

Applaud the vital role of ESCWA in achieving gender justice, and urge the Centre for Women to continue cooperating with international and regional organizations working in the Arab region to achieve this goal.
