



**ANNUAL
REPORT**
2016



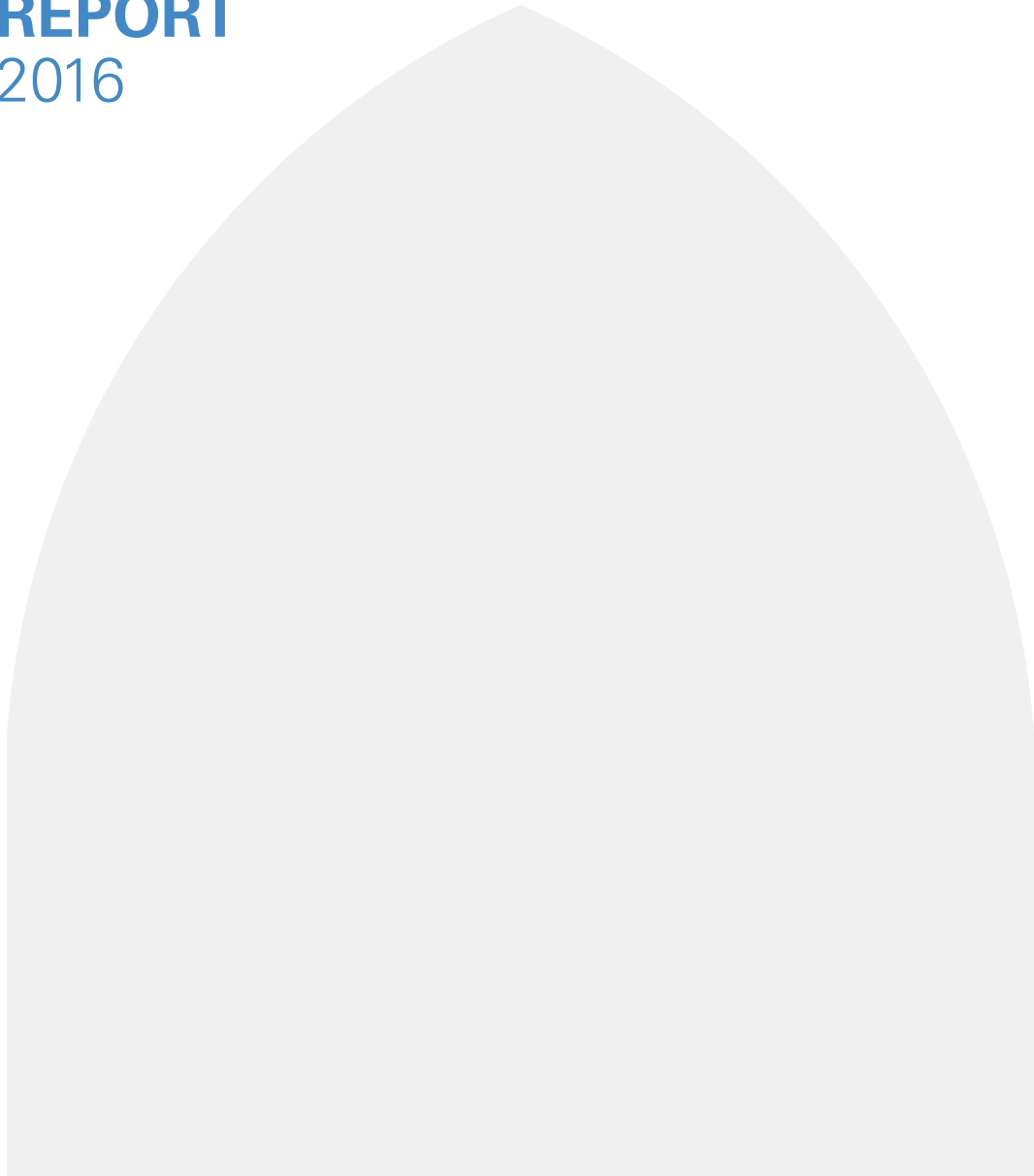
UNITED NATIONS

الاسواق
ESCWA

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
FROM VISION TO ACTION



**ANNUAL
REPORT**
2016



UNITED NATIONS

الاستقيا
ESCWA

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
FROM VISION TO ACTION

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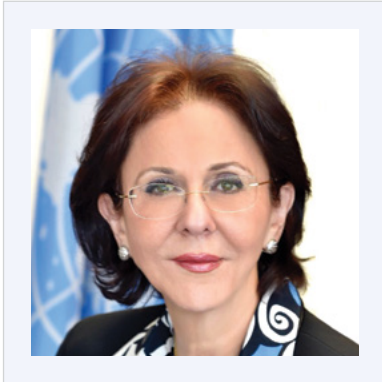
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FOREWORD



// The year 2016 was also the last full year I had the privilege to serve as Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary at ESCWA. I have had the honour to serve a national Government, that of Jordan, including as Deputy Prime Minister, and the United Nations, in various international positions including as Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the Regional Bureau for Arab States at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). None of my international positions presented the breadth of subject matter, the potential for inspiration or the humbling responsibility that I encountered in my time at ESCWA. //

As 2016 drew to a close, turmoil continued to engulf our region, and a sense of normalcy had sadly crept in. The suffering of millions in Iraq, Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen and beyond must never be perceived as tolerable. Nor must the lot of Palestinians enduring occupation and systemic discrimination be seen as normal. Yet the obstinacy of these challenges has led some in the international community to fall prey to “fatigue”: Attention fatigue, empathy fatigue, donor fatigue: whatever form it takes, we must combat it resolutely in order to defend the rights of all peoples to dignity and justice.

This is the *raison d’être* of our United Nations, and our rallying call at ESCWA. Whatever we do, be it promoting regional integration, stronger and fairer economic growth and the empowerment of women to shape their own destinies, assisting policymakers to better measure the impact of their decisions, or examining the social and economic devastation unleashed by corruption, conflict and occupation, our central aim remains the same: to serve our region in building a more just and prosperous future.

The year 2016 was year one for the implementation period of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. ESCWA was instrumental in helping shape the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), harmonizing the regional view and advocating for Arab countries on the global scene. The SDGs have become official policy objectives with specific targets for all Governments. Having developed consensus on what must be done, ESCWA is now leading the way in ensuring that intentions become reality.

We invite you, in these pages, to discover how we have supported the empowerment of women in the region (Goal 5), worked with Governments to gear their economies towards inclusive and sustainable economic growth (Goal 8), helped Governments and civil society better confront inequality in their societies (Goal 10), and continued to call for justice, and for effective, accountable and inclusive institutions (Goal 16).

The year 2016 was also the last full year I had the privilege to serve as Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary at ESCWA. I have had the honour to serve a national Government, that of Jordan, including as Deputy Prime Minister, and the United

Nations, in various international positions including as Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the Regional Bureau for Arab States at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). None of my international positions presented the breadth of subject matter, the potential for inspiration or the humbling responsibility that I encountered in my time at ESCWA. During a period of unprecedented crisis, I am proud of all that we in this regional commission have accomplished. We have worked hand in hand with the region's Governments, an increasingly engaged and vocal civil society, remarkable thinkers and academics, concerned and generous donors, and a network of regional and international organizations espousing the core principles and values of the United Nations.

Those principles and values are today being questioned and challenged as they have rarely been in the history of our Organization. Multilateralism itself is facing opposition from all sides. Large, powerful countries and small, developing nations are voicing concerns about the effectiveness, on the one hand, and fairness, on the other, of multilateral institutions. It is of the utmost importance that Member States and the United Nations heed those concerns, address them and reassert the importance of our mandate. Rather than discard the concept of multilateralism, we must rise to the challenge and demonstrate how, now more than ever, our work is critical, our vision clear and our goals noble. I am confident that the United Nations can reform its structure and reaffirm its values. The United Nations was born of great suffering, and the people who committed to it did so:

To save succeeding generations from the scourge of war... and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom... (Charter of the United Nations)

More than 70 years on, those words could not more clearly reflect the principles that guide our work every day. I invite you to read how, through our work on the conflict/development nexus, and our reconstruction planning for war-ravaged countries in our region, we seek "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war"; to see how our unrelenting advocacy on behalf of the Palestinian people promotes fundamental human rights, "reaffirming the dignity and worth of the human person"; and to discover how our analytical and normative work on macroeconomic issues "promotes social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".

You will find this and more in these pages. I am proud to have steered ESCWA into its fifth decade of work, as the United Nations entered its eighth. I invite you to continue supporting the work of the United Nations as a new Secretary-General begins his mandate and a new Executive Secretary takes the helm of our regional commission.

Delivering dignity, rights and justice is not a choice but an obligation. The consequences of failure are too grave, and the rewards for success too great, for us all not to rise to the challenge. We at ESCWA renew our promise to the peoples of the Arab region that we will continue to work tirelessly for a better, more just future, a tomorrow where the children, women and men of our region are masters of their own destiny. I am confident that now, at the time of greatest need, the United Nations can be its truest self in fulfilling the vision of its founders, and I hope you will join us on the path to real justice and sustainable development.



RIMA KHALAF

Under-Secretary-General
Executive Secretary



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ESCWA IN BRIEF



Sustainable development is at the heart of socioeconomic well-being. ESCWA, one of five such regional commissions, represents the United Nations in the Arab region and is an advocate for Arab development on the global stage. The Commission fosters economic integration at the regional and subregional levels, promoting the implementation of internationally agreed sustainable development policies, in particular the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

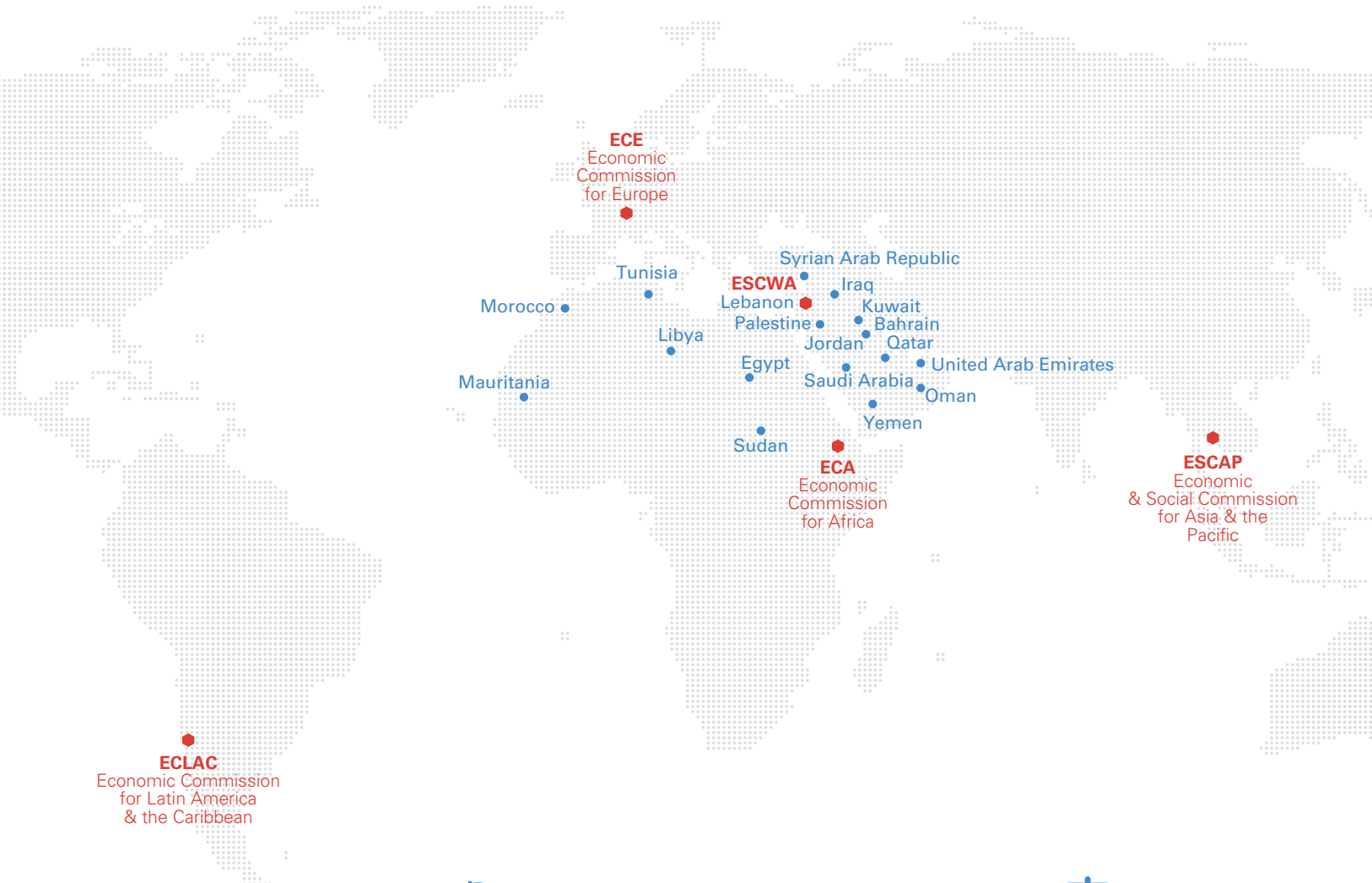
The Commission works to strengthen economic, social and environmental policy in its member States through multilateral dialogue, knowledge-sharing and networking at the regional level, and coordination with the other regional commissions to promote interregional, especially South-South cooperation.

Founded
1973

Headquarters
BEIRUT

Member States
18

Advocates for
341 MILLION PEOPLE



ECLAC
Economic Commission
for Latin America
& the Caribbean

ECE
Economic
Commission
for Europe

Syrian Arab Republic
ESCWA
 Lebanon
 Palestine
 Iraq
 Kuwait
 Bahrain
 Qatar
 Jordan
 Saudi Arabia
 United Arab Emirates
 Oman
 Yemen
 Egypt
 Sudan
ECA
 Economic
 Commission
 for Africa

ESCAP
Economic
& Social Commission
for Asia & the
Pacific



126 events
3,702 participants

Workshops, expert meetings, advisory services and special events



44 nationalities work at ESCWA



371 staff members



208



163



12,303 visitors to the UN House

36% in senior leadership positions (D1 & above)
15% in leadership positions (P5 & above)

The number of female security staff members rose by **250%** between 2013 & 2016

VISION

A stable and prosperous Arab region, in which people enjoy **freedom, equality, social justice and sustainable livelihoods.**



WHO WE ARE

Countries in a given region often face similar challenges that are best addressed through collective action. The United Nations regional commissions are impartial, intergovernmental platforms that foster regional integration, promote regional standards and norms, and facilitate dialogue and international cooperation.

ESCWA has 18 member States in the Arab region. They account for 4.6 per cent of the world’s population and 3.14 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP).

The Future We Want, the outcome document of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, emphasizes that the regional commissions “have a significant role to play in promoting a balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in their respective regions.”

WHAT WE DO

ESCWA is mandated to support the economic and social development of its member States, promote regional integration, and represent the concerns of its member States on the global stage. It analyses socioeconomic conditions, strives to link development knowledge to policy, and advises member States on inclusive and sustainable development. In the process, it brings together policymakers, researchers, experts, and government and intergovernmental bodies to create consensus. On the ground, the Commission provides targeted advisory services to member States. In short, it serves as a:



VOICE OF THE REGION

Creating regional platforms for deliberation, coordination and consensus building among member States to influence global forums.



THINK TANK OF THE REGION

Undertaking innovative research, and supporting quality data collection and analysis for evidence-based policymaking.



ADVISOR TO THE REGION

Providing regional, subregional and national capacity-building and technical advisory services, and supporting national efforts to adopt norms and policies.

PARTNERSHIPS & NETWORKS

ESCWA has strategic partnerships with the League of Arab States and other Arab organizations, regional United Nations bodies and country teams, civil society organizations and networks, and donors. They are essential for mobilizing commitment to achieving the SDGs. The Commission enters into partnerships in order to:

Influence development policy

Translating evidence-based recommendations into policy or initiatives requires decision-making, the ability to influence policy agendas directly, advocacy by pressure groups, the moral force of dignitaries and institutions, and the reach of media.

Facilitate stakeholder dialogue

ESCWA is committed to participatory development and consensus-building in all its activities. It engages with a wide variety of stakeholders, including policymakers and development programme beneficiaries.

Expand the scope of development interventions

Partnerships improve the capacity of all involved to deliver better results, by harmonizing interventions and pooling knowledge and resources.

Mobilize financial resources

Partnerships generate additional financial resources to address emerging issues or intensify ongoing efforts.

Bridge the knowledge-implementation gap

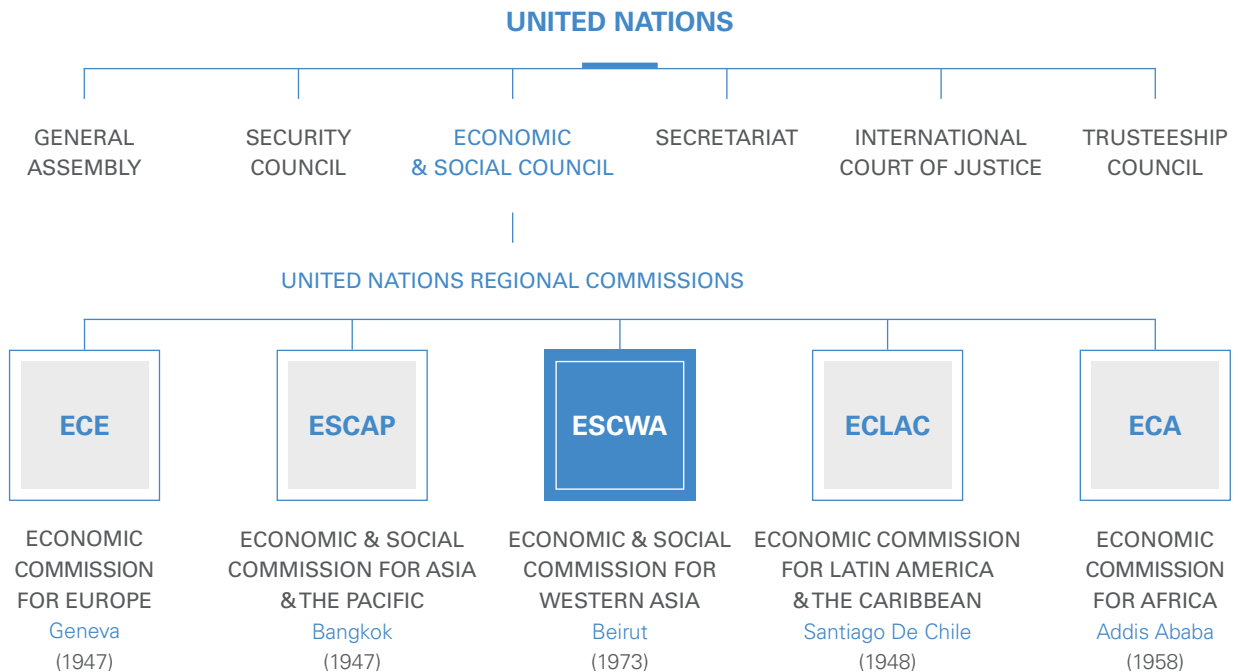
Through its partners, ESCWA translates knowledge and advice into concrete initiatives on the ground. Its partners have a proven record of implementation, enjoy high public credibility, and adhere rigorously to universal norms and values.

Access innovations in theory and practice

Partnerships, especially with the private sector and specialized organizations, expose ESCWA to new products, approaches and disciplines.

Promote values and norms

ESCWA promotes United Nations values and norms at all levels. This requires partnering with a broad range of development actors.





ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

The head of the Commission is an Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations. For one third of its existence, ESCWA has been led by a female Executive Secretary (until March 2017 Ms. Rima Khalaf, from Jordan). Previous heads originated from Egypt, Palestine, Qatar, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.

LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHT: NEW DEPUTY EXECUTIVE SECRETARY KHAWLA MATTAR



In August 2016, Ms. Khawla Mattar was appointed Deputy Executive Secretary for Programme Support. Ms. Mattar, a national of Bahrain, brings a wealth of political and journalistic experience around the region to the Commission. Prior to her appointment, she directed the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria in Damascus and, earlier, the United Nations Information Centre in Cairo.

RIMA KHALAF

Executive
Secretary

KHAWLA MATTAR
Deputy Executive
Secretary, Programme
Support
Programme planning and
technical cooperation

ABDALLAH AL-DARDARI
Deputy Executive
Secretary, Programme
Strategy, evaluation and
partnerships

KARIM KHALIL
Secretary of the
Commission

ROULA MAJDALANI

Sustainable Development Policies
Division (SDPD)

- Energy
- Water
- Food & environment policies

FREDERICO NETO

Social Development Division (SDD)

- Participation & social justice
- Population & social development
- Inclusive social development

MOCTAR MOHAMED EL HACENE
**Economic Development and
Integration Division (EDID)**

- Regional integration
- Economic development & poverty
- Economic governance & planning
- Modelling & forecasting

Haidar Fraihat

**Technology for Development Division
(TDD)**

- Information & communications
technology (ICT) policies
- Innovation
- ESCWA Technology Centre, Jordan

JURAJ RIECAN

Statistics Division (SD)

- Demographic & social statistics
- Economic statistics

MEHRINAZ EL AWADY

ESCWA Centre for Women (ECW)

- Gender equality
- Women's empowerment

TARIK ALAMI

**Emerging and Conflict-related Issues
Division (ECRI)**

- Conflict, occupation & development
- Governance & State-building

PONTUS MOLIN

Administration Services Division (ASD)

- Budget & finance
- Human resources management
- General services
- Information & communications systems
- Conference services
- Joint medical services
- Procurement



YEAR IN REVIEW

	<p>Arab e-Government Directors Meeting Dubai, United Arab Emirates 8 February</p>		<p>Arab Regional Conference on Transformative Agenda for Official Statistics in support of the Post-2015 Development Agenda Ankara, Turkey 5 - 7 April</p>	<p>Climate Change Adaptation in Human Settlements Using Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Tools Amman, Jordan 22 - 24 May</p>	
	<p>Institutional capacity-building for Arab parliaments and other stakeholders to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security Tunis, Tunisia 15 - 18 February</p>		<p>National training of trainers workshop on Academy for ICT Essentials for Government Leaders in the ESCWA Region Khartoum, Sudan 5 - 8 April 2016</p>		<p>Third meeting of the Arab Forum for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ARFREE): Towards a Competitive Sustainable Energy Market Cairo, Egypt 1 - 2 June</p>
<p>Seventh session of the Committee on Women Muscat, Oman 20 - 21 January</p>		<p>Commemoration of 2016 International Women's Day Beirut, Lebanon 10 March</p>		<p>Regional Visions for Implementing the 2030 Agenda and SDGs Nairobi, Kenya 24 May</p>	

JANUARY

Challenges of Peace and Reconstruction in Yemen
Beirut, Lebanon
28 January

FEBRUARY

Consultative Meeting on Reconstruction and rehabilitation in Yemen
Beirut, Lebanon
22 - 23 February

The International Partnership Conference on the Implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics in the Near East Region
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
28 - 29 February

MARCH

Climate change adaptation in the environment sector using integrated water resources management (IWRM) and ecosystem-based management tools
Beirut, Lebanon
22 - 24 March

APRIL

Developing the capacities of the health sector for climate change adaptation to protect health from the climate change effects on freshwater resources
Amman, Jordan
19 - 21 April

Training course on smart grids and the integration of renewable energy projects
Granada, Spain
25 - 30 April

MAY

Climate Change Adaptation in the Economic Development Sector Using Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Tools
Amman, Jordan
25 - 27 May

Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, 2016
Amman, Jordan
29 - 30 May

JUNE

Web-conference on land degradation neutrality to celebrate World Day to Combat Desertification 2016
Web-based
20 June

				Meeting on mechanisms to advance innovation for inclusive sustainable development in the Arab region Beirut, Lebanon 1 - 2 November		Meeting and training session on “Implementing the SDGs in the Arab States: promoting inclusive and sustainable growth and decent work” Turin, Italy 6 - 8 December
				Regional workshop on institutionalizing gender at the organizational level Beirut, Lebanon 14 - 16 November		
High-level Political Forum side event on “Monitoring progress on the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda” New York, United States of America 16 - 19 July	International Conference “Towards Prioritizing Women, Peace, and Security on the Arab Agenda” Beirut, Lebanon 8 - 10 August			Meeting on transport and connectivity to global value chains Beirut, Lebanon 16 November		Twenty-ninth ministerial session of ESCWA Doha, Qatar 13 - 15 December
Reviewing the national statistical strategy of Jordan Beirut, Lebanon 17 - 21 July	Capacity-building workshop on the adoption of the 2030 Development Agenda on gender and SDGs Beirut, Lebanon 17 - 18 August	First meeting of the 2030 Agenda Working Group Cairo, Egypt 25 September	Meeting of the national focal points for the project on promoting food and water security in the Arab region Beirut, Lebanon 5 - 6 October	Meeting on the technology and innovation landscape in the Sudan Khartoum, Sudan 23 November		Twenty-second meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism Doha, Qatar 14 December

JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Technology and innovation landscape in Mauritania Nouakchott, Mauritania 19 July	Informing the SDGs through the Arab MDG+ Initiative Stockholm, Sweden 31 August	Seventh regional training workshop on capacity development for climate change negotiations for the Arab countries Rabat, Morocco 25 - 29 September	Forum on post-2015 challenges and opportunities for a transformational role of governance, particularly in conflict-affected countries Paris, France 12 - 14 October	Meeting on regional financial integration Beirut, Lebanon 24 November	Meeting on “Beyond parliamentary representation: women’s participation in public life in selected Arab countries” Beirut, Lebanon 15 - 16 December
Conditional cash transfer programmes in the Arab region Beirut, Lebanon 19 - 20 July				High-level meeting on challenges for the reconstruction process and development in Yemen Cairo, Egypt 24 - 25 November	Meeting on “Civil registration in refugee settings: advancing assessment and improvement in unsettled environments” Beirut, Lebanon 19 - 20 December
				Forum on competitive sustainability opportunities and challenges for Arab States in the next decade Doha, Qatar 27 - 29 November	Workshop on “Rules of origin in international trade: techniques and applications for the Arab region” Marrakesh, Morocco 22 - 23 December
				International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People Beirut, Lebanon 29 November	



ESCWA IN NUMBERS



AUDIENCE OF ESCWA



READERSHIP

23,600
library & information resources consulted

38,267
downloads of our publications via the new website



WEB PAGE VIEWS

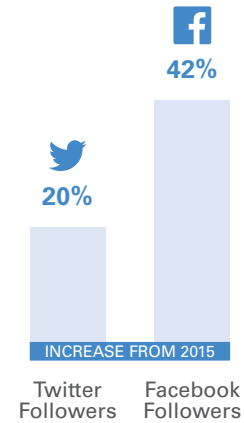
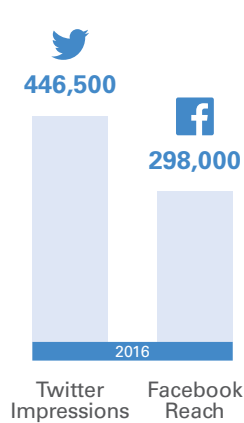
74,740
users visited our new website

553,321
ESCWA web page views in 2016



MEDIA

Traditional media remains a pillar for communication and outreach, and ESCWA was mentioned over 500 times in the written and audiovisual media.



SPECIAL EVENTS

ESCWA & the International Organization for Migration (IOM) launch *Migration, Displacement and Development in a Changing Arab Region* (January)

Reach on social media: **60,000**

International Women's Day 2016, with participation of Lebanese celebrities (March)

Reach on social media: **335,000**

Launch of the National Agenda for the Future of Syria report *Syria at War: Five Years On* (May)

Reach on social media: **23,000**

First Model ESCWA with American University of Beirut (AUB) students (November)

Reach on social media: **17,000**

Launch of the *Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the Arab Region 2015-2016* (November)

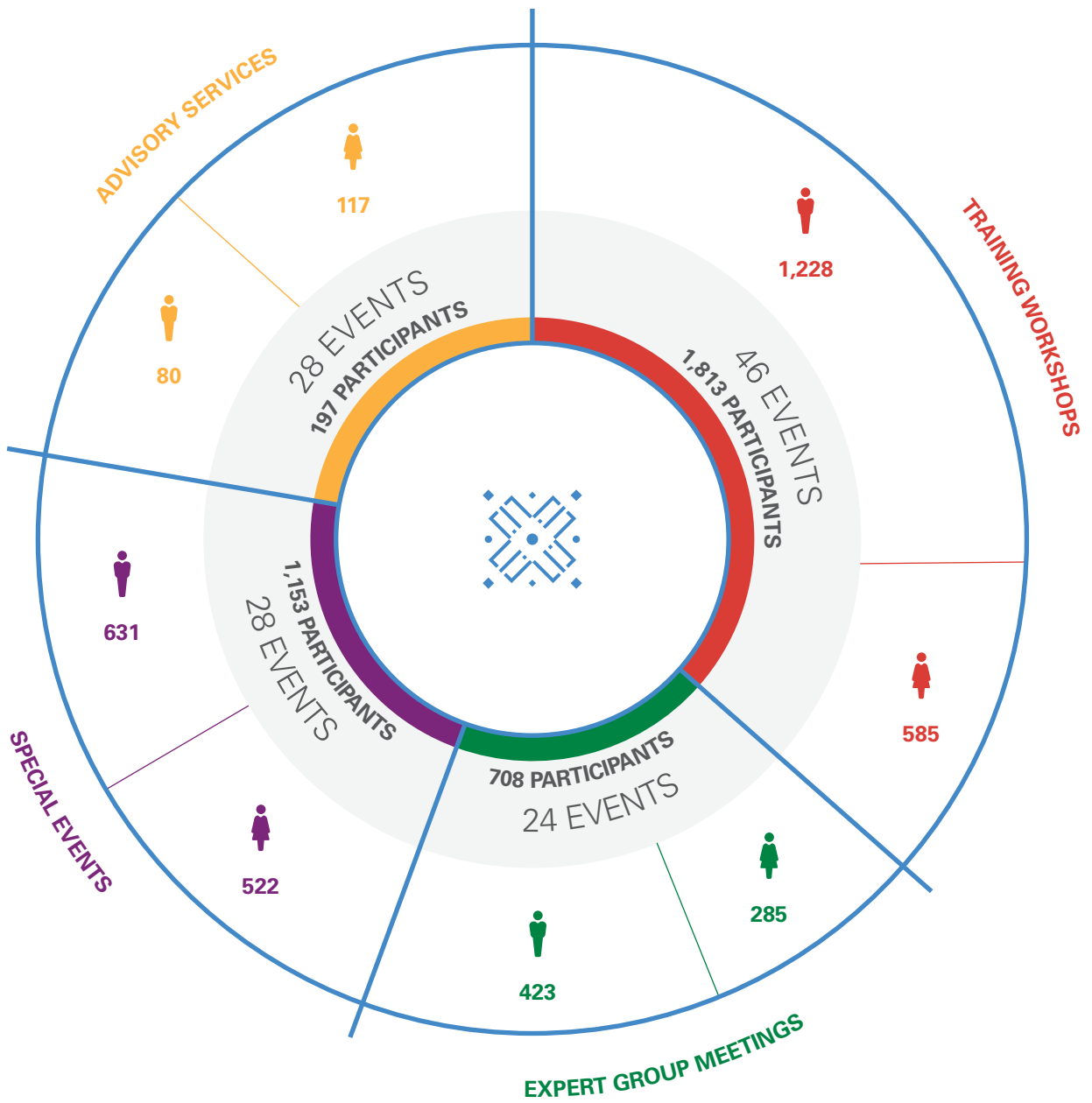
Reach on social media: **9,000**

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People 2016 (November)

Reach on social media: **10,000**

Twenty-ninth ministerial session of ESCWA (December)

Reach on social media: **19,000**





FINANCIAL INFORMATION

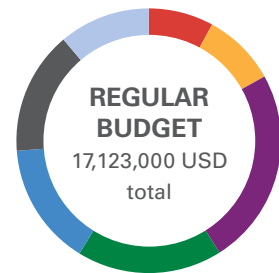
ESCWA is funded through the Regular Budget, the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation (RPTC), the Development Account (DA), as well as voluntary contributions.

REGULAR BUDGET

Approved every two years by the General Assembly, the Regular Budget provides ESCWA with resources to fulfill its mandate as set out in the Strategic Framework. All other sources of funding support and complement the overall orientation laid out in the Strategic Framework.

Figure 1. Regular budget per substantive area of work (US dollars)

1,361,000	2,566,000
1,540,000	2,581,000
4,125,000	1,909,000
3,041,000	

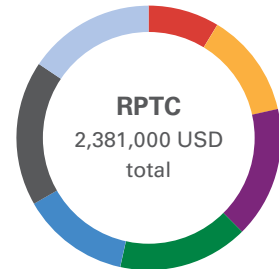


REGULAR PROGRAMME OF TECHNICAL COOPERATION

The RPTC helps member States to build sustainable socioeconomic development policies. It fosters cooperation, creates knowledge networks and promotes the sharing of experience between countries. The programme aims to bridge gaps between the needs of member States and the Commission's regular budget resources. Through RPTC activities, ESCWA has mainstreamed cross-cutting issues such as gender, human rights and environmental sustainability.

Figure 2. RPTC per substantive area of work (US dollars)

207,000	315,000
305,000	422,000
382,000	371,000
379,000	



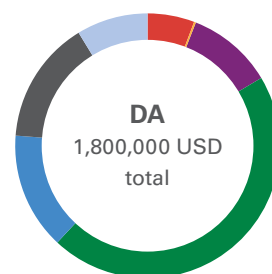
- Advancement for Women
- Conflict Mitigation & Development
- Economic Development & Integration
- Sustainable Development
- Social Development
- Statistics
- Technology

DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT

The DA funds capacity development projects, the impact of which results from cooperation on economic and social issues at all levels, from national to interregional.

Figure 3. DA per substantive area of work (US dollars)

103,000	257,000
4,000	271,000
189,000	157,000
819,000	

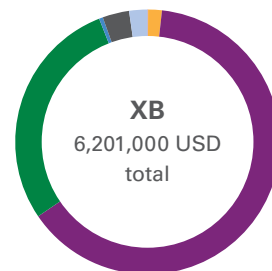


VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS

In 2016, ESCWA received \$6.5 million to support economic and social development initiatives under its seven subprogrammes, with new programmes dedicated to supporting ESCWA member States in transition. In 2016, key donors included Germany, Jordan, Norway, Qatar, Sweden and the Carnegie Corporation.

Figure 4. Voluntary contribution per substantive area of work (US dollars)

4,000	29,000
104,000	202,000
3,953,000	139,000
1,770,000	

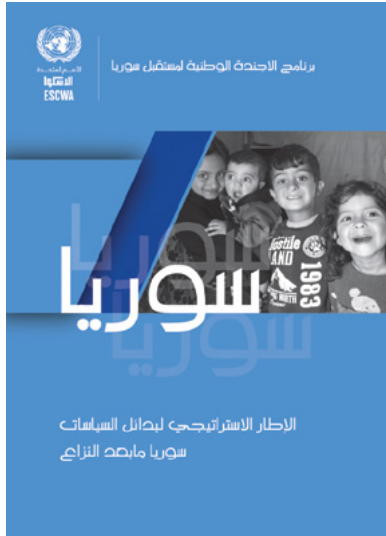


The above financial information provides commitments, by source of funding, incurred from within the programme of work of ESCWA (its seven substantive programmes). It does not include commitments in respect to other budgets managed by ESCWA: programme support, executive direction and management, policymaking organs, the security and safety budget, building maintenance, indirect support cost and cost recovery.

Detailed financial information on ESCWA may be found in the audited financial statements of the United Nations for the financial year ending 31 December 2016 (vol. 1). Financial information may also be found in the Report of the Executive Secretary on the Activities of the Commission - Financial Status of the Commission, which, for the biennium 2014-2015 (see www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/events/files/5-f_financial_status_of_the_commission.pdf), was released in 2016. The 2016-2017 report will be presented at the thirtieth session of ESCWA in 2018.



HIGHLIGHTS



NATIONAL AGENDA FOR THE FUTURE OF SYRIA: PHASE II

The National Agenda for the Future of Syria (NAFS) Programme was established in 2012 to create a platform for Syrians to discuss and develop policy options for the post-war Syrian Arab Republic. Five years, 30,000 pages of research and thousands of hours of technical discussions later, NAFS launched its Strategic Policy Alternatives Framework. The 300-page document lays out a vision for Syria 2030, the fruit of contributions by a broad range of Syrian experts, including representatives from civil society, the private sector, and national and international institutions. In its second phase, NAFS aims to further develop the framework and translate its theory into practice. NAFS will develop guidance notes to steer initiatives to be implemented by partners on the ground, paving the way for peace, reconciliation and a sustainable recovery in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The NAFS Strategic Policy Alternatives Framework points the way to post-war scenarios in the Syrian Arab Republic.

ESCWA TAKES THE LEAD ON CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUES AT COP 22 IN MOROCCO



MARRAKECH COP22 | CMP12 | CMA1
UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE 2016
مؤتمر الأمم المتحدة لتغير المناخ

ESCWA Member State Morocco hosted COP 22 in November 2016. ESCWA actively participated, organizing a number of side-events in Marrakech.

In partnership with member States and regional and international organizations, ESCWA organized side events at the twenty-second Conference of the Parties (COP 22), the decision-making body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which was held in Marrakech in November 2016. The

events focused on the economic impact of climate change, hydro-climate services, and women advancing climate change science.

ESCWA and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to work together towards the common objectives set forth in international environmental commitments. The Commission drew attention to the commitment of the State of Palestine to those objectives in implementing its nationally determined contributions (NDCs), and set out ambitious plans for combating climate change, including a readiness programme submitted to the Green Climate Fund.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



“Did you know?” posters prepared by ESCWA for the International Women Day

ESCWA marked International Women’s Day on 10 March 2016 with an event held in cooperation with the Institute of Women’s Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW) at the UN House in Beirut. Diplomats, film and music celebrities and civil society representatives heard addresses by the Executive Secretary, Ms. Khalaf, the Vice-President of the Lebanese American University (LAU), Ms. Elise Salem, the UNEP Goodwill Ambassador, singer Ragheb Alama, and actress Nadine Al-Rassi. Highlights included a student performance calling attention to domestic violence, a documentary on women’s rights and a musical performance dedicated to Arab women by Syrian singer Faya Younan. Other highlights included a photo exhibition by renowned photographer Najad Abdulmaseeh on violence against women, and a Palestinian needlework exhibition by designer Suaad Amin Jarar. In an awareness-raising campaign entitled “Did you know?,” short messages on gender equality and the challenges faced by women and girls in the region were shared ahead of the event.

FIRST MODEL ESCWA: PARTNERING WITH YOUTH TO PROMOTE THE 2030 AGENDA



Thirty students from different backgrounds and nationalities participated in the first ever Model ESCWA.

Together with the American University of Beirut (AUB), ESCWA organized a simulation of its main governing body (the ministerial session) with university students on 19 November 2016. Participants assumed the roles of member State ministers and civil society representatives, and discussed the theme of the twenty-ninth session of ESCWA (held in December 2016): “Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab States.” Participants discussed development issues and experienced conference diplomacy firsthand as they grappled with implementation of the SDGs in a region mired in conflict and instability. The model ministerial session was a first in the region.

The wrap-up video is available from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=geOOSX1Uico>.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE



Palestinian dancers take solidarity commemorations to Downtown Beirut.

ESCWA marked the annual International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November 2016. Diplomats, ministers and other governmental officials, civil society representatives and media gathered at the UN House for an official ceremony and were invited to the vernissage of a cultural exhibition, “Palestinian Moments,” aimed at raising awareness of the situation of the Palestinian people. ESCWA partnered with the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee, UNRWA, the Arab Union of Photographers, Visualizing Palestine, the AUB Conflict Medicine Program and Palestinian Cultural Club at AUB.



DOHA HOSTS THE TWENTY-NINTH MINISTERIAL SESSION OF ESCWA

ESCWA held its twenty-ninth session from 13 to 15 December 2016 in Doha, Qatar. The theme was “Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab States”. Discussions focused on the internal and external challenges involved and tools and resources provided by ESCWA to help member States to achieve the SDGs. Participants also discussed the impact of conflict on sustainable development in occupied Palestine, the rise of extremist non-State actors in the region, and the effectiveness of current peace-building approaches in resolving today’s conflicts.



The session adopted the Doha Declaration for Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which reasserts the principles outlined in the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development.



Participants called on ESCWA to keep supporting member States by developing the statistical capacity and analytical tools required to monitor implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to continue producing research and policy recommendations on the links between the economic, social, environmental, political and cultural aspects of the SDGs. For more information, see https://www.unescwa.org/events/ministerial-session-29th.



Dignitaries and official representatives at the ministerial session discussed how to make the 2030 Agenda a reality in the Arab region.

video link: goo.gl/1GsjS9



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The ESCWA Strategic Framework shapes the work of the Commission. It is composed of three pillars: regional integration; inclusive development; and good governance and resilience. They are the subject of the following three chapters, throughout which the cross-cutting issues of statistics, gender and partnerships are also highlighted.

STATISTICS GENDER PARTNERSHIPS



INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT
SOCIAL JUSTICE
KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY & EMPLOYMENT
SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCES



REGIONAL INTEGRATION
POLICY COHERENCE
AGREEMENTS & STRATEGIES



GOOD GOVERNANCE & RESILIENCE
INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT
PARTICIPATION & CITIZENSHIP
RESILIENCE TO CRISES & OCCUPATION





INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT



The work of ESCWA in inclusive development concentrates on three priority areas: social justice, the knowledge economy and employment, and sustainable natural resources.



SOCIAL JUSTICE

ESCWA develops strategies for the reduction of poverty and inequality in the Arab region, and studies money-metric and multidimensional poverty. It advocates for social inclusion and protection, participation in decision-making and equal access to information and knowledge. Least developed countries (LDCs) and the impact of demographic shifts are the object of particular focus.

In 2016, the Commission carried out a series of normative and capacity-building activities, including three Development Account projects on inequality, institutional development and social justice. They were designed to enhance the capacity of member States to formulate policy promoting participation, decent employment and access to basic services.

Participants at an annual training workshop on poverty organized by the Commission in conjunction with the League of Arab States and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Amman (between 31 October and 3 November 2016), who included representatives from 12 Arab countries, United Nations agencies and civil society, agreed to establish a common, region-wide methodology for measuring multidimensional poverty. That tool will be available in the forthcoming 2017 Arab Poverty Report.

Across the region, Governments are engaged in reform of their social protection systems and increasingly eschewing blanket subsidies in favour of targeted social assistance. In that context, the Commission has set up a regional community of practice on cash transfer programmes.

FOCUS ON DISABILITY

Policies to address disability are fundamental to social justice. The Group of Experts on Disability, which was set up at the request of member States and held its first meeting on 20 and 21 September 2016 in Beirut, brings together officials from around the region to work on implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the disability-related indicators under the 2030 Agenda. ESCWA also intensified its bilateral technical cooperation in 2016, with two workshops on disability policy in Morocco and a preparatory study for a review of the disability assessment process in the Sudan.

Population and housing census information is essential for development policy. In 2015, the Commission joined the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and regional organizations to set up a regional task force on the subject. It has also created an online knowledge platform (see <https://www.unescwa.org/sub-site/arab-population-housing-censuses>). In July 2016, it contributed to a workshop on demographic analysis and population projections held in Amman by the United States Census Bureau and Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (AITRS). In the course of the year, it also conducted workshops in Libya and the Sudan on the use of technology in censuses, and provided advisory services to the United Arab Emirates on the same subject.





KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY & EMPLOYMENT

There are enormous disparities in the distribution of natural resource wealth in the Arab region, where vulnerability to swings in commodity prices fuels economic fragility. Moving towards a knowledge economy stands to open the way to diversification, increased competitiveness and productivity, and the creation of new jobs, particularly for young people.

A staggering 62.5 per cent of young Arabs are unemployed or “economically inactive”. The figure is higher still for women, at 71 per cent. The opportunity cost to the region, where youth unemployment ranges from just 1 per cent in Qatar to between 45 and 50 per cent in Libya and Mauritania, is estimated at \$50 billion a year. Moreover, the region is lagging behind the rest of the world in innovation, which is essential for developing the knowledge economy. According to the 2016 Global Innovation Index (GII), Arab countries were entirely absent from the top 40 list. The average index value for the region, 31.26, was below the world average of 36.73 and represented a 6 per cent drop from its average for 2015. Some Arab countries are working to promote innovation, including through science, technology and innovation (STI) policies, but much remains to be done.

THE GLOBAL INNOVATION INDEX



WORLD AVERAGE
36.73

ARAB REGION
31.26

6% DROP FROM 2015

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER ECOSYSTEM

ESCWA is a member of the United Nations Interagency Task Team on STI for SDGs (IATT). In partnership with governmental scientific research organizations in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman and Tunisia, ESCWA conducted STI mapping and analyses in 2016 that laid the foundations for national stakeholder workshops. In addition, ESCWA partners conducted national legislation gap analyses for STI policy. Recommendations are being adopted to bring national legal and commercial frameworks up to date in order to facilitate technology transfer and development. Similar initiatives will be funded in Mauritania (by the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and the Sudan.

In 2016, the Commission analysed national STI landscapes and gaps in legislation, and successfully proposed amendments to the law with regard to technology development and transfer systems in Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia. Joined by the Jordanian Royal Scientific Society and the Islamic World Academy of Sciences, ESCWA also conducted an international seminar on “Islamic perspectives on science’s big questions”, which highlighted values in Islam supporting scientific research and innovation.

An expert group meeting was held on 1 and 2 November 2016 in Beirut to discuss “Mechanisms to advance innovation for inclusive sustainable development in the Arab region: promoting collaboration and bridging gaps”. More than 70 public and private sector experts, researchers and academics, and representatives of international and regional organizations looked at policy options to foster sustainable economic growth, an environment conducive to innovation, and improved employment prospects. Young entrepreneurs presented their success stories and discussed challenges they face.

In December 2016, ESCWA joined the International Labour Organization Regional Office for Arab States (ILO-ROAS) and the ILO International Training Centre (ITCILO) in holding a preliminary awareness-raising event, “Implementing the SDGs: promoting inclusive sustainable growth and decent work”, between 6 and 8 December 2016 in Turin, Italy. Participants from the Governments of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and the State of Palestine, and worker and employer organizations discussed the means of linking the creation of decent jobs with inclusive growth and poverty reduction.



SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCES

ESCWA works to optimize the efficiency of resource consumption through new technologies and innovation, thereby maximizing their impact on income generation and job creation.



ESCWA is contributing to the Global Tracking Framework (GTF) of the Sustainable Energy For All (SE4ALL) initiative by developing an Arab regional profile for the 2017 GTF report focusing on energy efficiency and renewable energy applications.

Projects funded by the Development Account in 2016 included: “Green technologies to improve livelihoods in rural communities” and “Renewable energy (RE) investments for climate change mitigation and sustainable development”. ESCWA finalized a manual on using integrated water resource management (IWRM) tools (to be published in 2017), which focuses on five modules: environment, health, agriculture, human settlements and economic development. The Commission continues to support assessment of the impact of climate change through: the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources and Socio-economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR); the Adaptation to Climate Change in the Water Sector in the MENA region (ACCWaM) programme; and the Development Account project on Developing the Capacities of the Arab Countries for Climate Change Adaptation by Applying Integrated Water Resource Management Tools. The Commission also reviewed the Climate Change Integrated Vulnerability Assessment, which evaluates the impact of climate change on freshwater resources and socioeconomic vulnerability using regional climate modelling, hydrological modelling and vulnerability assessment tools.

In the course of the year, the Commission and the League of Arab States jointly organized the third Arab Forum for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ARFREE), with sessions on RE and EE manufacturing capacities and local content, and untapped technologies, services and applications in RE and EE. At the Middle East and North Africa Renewable Energy Conference (MENAREC 6), held in Kuwait between 4 and 6 April 2016, the Commission presented preliminary findings of a joint study with the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) on the “potential of manufacturing renewable energy equipment in the Arab region”, with a focus on regional integration. At a workshop (held in two sessions from 15 to 17 February and 22 to 24 March 2016 in Beirut) on climate change adaptation in the agricultural sector using IWRM and ecosystem-based management tools, government officials from around the region gained insight not only into the impact of climate change on the farming sector, but also into IWRM tools for use in agriculture, economic development, health and human settlements.







REGIONAL INTEGRATION



The profound changes taking place in the Arab region and the expansion of global trade have underlined the potential that regional integration has to boost production and income, while tackling unemployment and poverty. The Arab region lags behind others in terms of economic integration. ESCWA is helping regional partners and member States to formulate intraregional, interregional and international trade policies and agreements to increase the competitiveness of domestic and regional markets. The Commission also supports the implementation of resolutions adopted at high-level regional forums, in particular the Arab Economic and Social Development summits. Ultimate objectives include: the implementation of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA); establishment of an Arab customs union; and the creation of an Arab common market. The work of ESCWA on regional integration falls under two priority areas: policy coherence, and agreements and strategies.



POLICY COHERENCE

The Commission works with member States to improve cross-border infrastructure, implement regional projects in line with global initiatives, and foster regional data comparability and conformity to international standards.

Considerable effort has been put into national and regional projects designed to improve the comparability of price statistics by harmonizing price indices and national methodologies, thereby contributing to more accurate economic indicators of growth, welfare and sustainable development.

In 2016, the Commission focused on implementing the System of National Accounts 2008, with the development of short-term economic indicators, industrial statistics, and energy and environmental statistics. It also worked towards the use of internationally recommended economic classifications. Those efforts should set the stage for an integrated socioeconomic statistics platform, which lies at the heart of the development agenda of the United Nations.

The Regional Coordination Mechanism for Arab States, which is chaired by ESCWA and coordinates the work of United Nations bodies in the region, focused on the 2030 Agenda at its 22nd meeting in December 2016. The Mechanism's four standing working groups (on the 2030 Agenda, SDG data, food security and international migration) also mapped out their upcoming activities, among them the forthcoming Situation Report on International Migration and an inter-agency action plan on SDG data collection.

PURCHASING POWER PARITY ESTIMATES

ESCWA is conducting a regional round of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) estimates for 2016, complementing the regional PPP time series produced since 2011. PPP estimates allow for enhanced measurement of the relative size of economies in support of evidence-based policymaking. In August, the United Arab Emirates became the first country in the region to compute subnational PPPs (in the seven emirates) for each aggregation level up to GDP.

FOOD, WATER & ENERGY

The Commission continues to support the technical, scientific and advisory committees of the Arab Ministerial Councils on water, energy and the environment. Focus areas include: the water-energy-food nexus and water diplomacy; regional energy integration; shared water resource management; improved energy access in rural areas; policies, regulations and innovative financing mechanisms in support of energy sustainability; climate change assessments; and support for climate change negotiations. The MDG+ Initiative was launched under the auspices of the Arab Ministerial Water Council to improve monitoring of access to water and sanitation services, and facilitate action on the water-related SDGs (Goals 6, 13 and 14).

In the course of the year, the Commission held meetings and workshops with statisticians and water experts to examine how to improve the collection of data on water-related issues. It also signed a contribution agreement with the Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO-RNE), which will serve to enhance the Commission's project on Promoting Food and Water Security through Cooperation and Capacity Development in the Arab Region.



CLIMATE CHANGE

The Commission helped the Arab States to prepare for COP 22 of the UNFCCC, which was held from 7 to 18 November 2016 in Marrakesh, Morocco. Activities in the run-up to the conference included a workshop in September on efficiency in generation, transmission and distribution of electricity. Participants looked at cogeneration and desalination; how to reduce technical losses on grids; energy management and audit; and tariffs and financing mechanisms.

At the conference, the Commission drew attention to the impact of occupation, war and displacement on natural resources, especially water. It also staged the sixth and seventh regional workshops on capacity development for climate change negotiations for the Arab countries in conjunction with the League of Arab States, UNEP and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).



WOMEN

War and instability in the Arab region have a disproportionate impact on women. At the request of member States, ESCWA helped to develop national action plans to implement the Women, Peace and Security Agenda that emerged from Security Council resolution 1325 of 31 October 2000.

In partnership with the League of Arab States and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), it also set up the Subcommittee on Gender Equality in the Sustainable Development Goals (2030 Agenda) with the specific task of implementing Goal 5 of the SDGs. A guide on gender-related tasks for member States was produced and a network for exchanging best practices was set up. Workshops were held in August (Beirut) and October (Amman) on Goal 5 and monitoring progress on implementation of the goal and monitoring the status of women in member countries. Participants at the first meeting adopted the 2016-2017 work plan of the Subcommittee.

In 2016, the Commission launched a project on estimating the economic cost of violence against women in the Arab region. Work started with a technical study, to be followed by a policy change tool that will be tested in two Arab States.



ESCWA SHOWS THE WAY ON GENDER EQUALITY IN THE UN-SWAP

In 2016, ESCWA led the way in implementing the System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP). The Commission outperformed other United Nations entities, meeting or exceeding requirements in 73 per cent of indicators in 2016. As a whole, the United Nations met or exceeded only 17 per cent of requirements. The Secretariat came in at 15 per cent, while the average for all the regional commissions was 33 per cent. The year's achievements at ESCWA included training for senior managers on gender mainstreaming, training for members of the gender focal points network on "gender mainstreaming in humanitarian settings", and the second Award for Advancing Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. The award went to four staff members for activities that included: participation in the gender audit exercise; staff assessments of gender equality; an organizational culture survey; the development of gender markers; a review of the evaluation policy to ensure the integration of gender and human rights perspectives; the development of hands-on tools for gender equality evaluators; and the development of a computer-based system to manage and track flexible working arrangements at ESCWA.



The Executive Secretary of ESCWA, Ms. Khalaf (centre), presented the awards.





SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Through its Transport and Logistics Committee and in coordination with the International Road Transport Union (IRU), ESCWA is helping member States to achieve greater policy coordination in order to foster safer, more efficient transportation.

On 28 June 2016, the Commission signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with IRU on cooperation in transport and trade-related issues in the Arab region. The aim is to improve transport logistics; facilitate trade and international road transport; promote road safety; and contribute to development in line with the 2030 Agenda (in particular Goal 9). Improved transport in the Arab region would strengthen its position in global value chains.



IRU Secretary-General Umberto de Pretto with the Director of the Economic Development and Integration Division of ESCWA, Moctar Mohamed El Hacene, at the signature of the MoU on Transport Facilitation.



AGREEMENTS & STRATEGIES

TRADE

The 2030 Agenda lies at the heart the Commission's regional integration strategy. It believes that GAFTA, which has been in force since 2005, should be reinforced as a means of promoting deeper integration.

Some countries maintain reservations with regard to certain products, while Palestine, the Sudan and Yemen have been given additional time to implement their commitments. The services agreement between Arab countries, which may be concluded in 2017, stands to enhance regional trade.

ESCWA continues to work with the League of Arab States and other regional organizations in negotiating an Arab Customs Union (ACU). Workshops and technical assistance to member States focus on a variety of scenarios for implementing the Union, its fiscal implications and the issue of a common external tariff.

ESCWA PAVES THE WAY ON RULES OF ORIGIN

ESCWA and the International Trade Centre (ITC) held a workshop on "Rules of origin in international trade: techniques and applications for the Arab region" in Marrakesh, Morocco (on 22 and 23 December 2016). Experts and representatives discussed key issues related to the application of rules of origin in free trade agreements in the region.

THE 2030 AGENDA

In 2016, ESCWA established its Unit on the 2030 Agenda to guide member States on implementing the SDGs. Its mandate is to coordinate the Commission's 2030 Agenda initiatives, conduct research and capacity-building activities, and organize the annual Arab Forum on Sustainable Development.

The 2016 Forum, held in May 2016 in Amman, attracted some 150 participants from Governments and non-governmental sectors. Pledges were made to bring national development strategies in line with the 2030 Agenda and to introduce policy reforms conducive to implementing the SDGs. Participants endorsed the Forum as a key platform for supporting national SDG initiatives and strengthening regional coordination on the Agenda.

The Commission's activities in this area in 2016 included: a workshop for Palestine attended by officials from 16 ministries and civil society representatives; consultations with RCM members and United Nations country teams; and awareness-raising campaigns in conjunction with Lebanon's public television network, Télé Liban, and the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC-Lebanon). The Commission also publishes a regular newsletter on sustainable development.



DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE AND THE MADRID INTERNATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION

Demographic change is a key issue in the region. Together with the League of Arab States and UNFPA, and in coordination with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), ESCWA initiated the third review process of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in 2015. National reviews and appraisal got underway in 2016 and the process is expected to culminate by the end of 2017 in a regional review to serve as a policy tool and input into the report of the Secretary-General.

SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND HABITAT III

The rate of urbanization in the Arab region is one of the highest in the world. Since 1970, it has increased 400 per cent, and it is set to rise further in the coming decades. It is predicted that, by 2050, 68 per cent of the region's projected 646 million inhabitants will live in cities. With that in mind, ESCWA published a regional report, "Towards inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable Arab cities", ahead of the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), which was held in Ecuador in October 2016. The report was the product of wide ranging consultations with urban planning experts, United Nations bodies, member States and the League of Arab States.

INTERNET GOVERNANCE

The second mandate of the Arab Internet Governance Forum (AIGF) will run from 2017 to 2020. It is based on the AIGF2020 Initiative, which was launched in December 2015 and is a multi-stakeholder platform for assessing the impact of the Forum on Internet governance policy in the Arab region. In 2016, ESCWA held three meetings of the technical cooperation working group on Internet governance in the Arab region, aimed at aligning national Internet governance policies.



GOOD GOVERNANCE & RESILIENCE



Promoting practices of good governance, accountability and transparency in public institutions, and helping those institutions withstand crises, constitute the third pillar of the Strategic Framework of ESCWA. Key areas of work include institutional development, participation and citizenship, and fostering resilience to natural and man-made crises.



INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Strong institutions are needed to quell political tension and conflict in some countries and to support democratic transitions in others. The Commission strives to help member States to strengthen their institutions and to encourage citizen-based practices.

In 2016, the Commission redoubled its efforts to enhance the capacity of member States to produce and disseminate high quality, comparable and reliable socioeconomic statistics. It improved the compilation and dissemination of its own data for national accounts, prices, trade, industry, energy and the environment, and social and demographic indicators in areas such as health, education, employment and population.

In the context of its implementation of the 2008 System of National Accounts, the Commission refined its short-term economic indicators and industrial, energy and environment statistics in line with international classifications.

The Commission also helped to launch two technical advisory groups in 2016: one on economic statistics (TAGES) and the other on demographic and social statistics (TAG-DSS). They will facilitate more systematic follow-up on the needs of national statistical systems in the Arab region. The recommendations of

the groups translate into specific initiatives, particularly in the areas of civil registration, vital statistics, refugees and international migration, national accounts, short-term economic indicators and business registers. The groups also reviewed proposed lists of demographic and social indicators of particular relevance to the SDGs. They reflect more accurately sociodemographic trends in the region than the global set of indicators. The TAG-DSS also assessed current data availability and made recommendations on priority indicators.

ESCWA further partnered with the Prime Minister's Office of the United Arab Emirates to develop a government electronic and mobile services (GEMS) maturity index, a policymakers' tool for measuring the level of digitization and sophistication in the delivery of e-government and m-government services to the public. Whereas earlier methods generally focused on high-level assessments, GEMS combines key performance indicators (KPIs) measuring service availability and sophistication, service usage and public reach. It also looks at actual usage by individuals and their satisfaction. GEMS was rolled out as a pilot in Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, the Sudan, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates. It is hoped that its deployment will encourage policymakers to improve digital services.

SPREADING THE ESSENTIALS OF ICT IN THE SUDAN

National roll-out activities for the Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders in the ESCWA Region (AIGLE) continued in 2016 with 11 workshops (five of them co-organized by ESCWA) for public sector officials held in the Sudan. Some 380 officials, 22 per cent of them women, attended. ESCWA also joined the National Information Center (NIC), the AIGLE national partner in the Sudan, in organizing two training-of-trainers workshops for 117 new AIGLE experts.



PARTICIPATION & CITIZENSHIP

ESCWA promotes good governance, respect for human rights, the rule of law, accountability and transparency. It works to enhance the engagement and empowerment of civil society, and supports inclusive participation and gender equality.

Open government, a concept that engages the expertise of citizens in decision-making and leverages new technologies to enhance governance, has the potential to increase trust in public institutions and fight corruption. By involving citizens in decision-making, it can also lead to more tailored policies and services. Open government initiatives in the Arab region have focused mainly on public data. By 2016, 10 member States of ESCWA (all the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, plus Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia) had implemented open data initiatives.

In the area of public policy, the Commission completed a three-year project in 2016 to operationalize its participatory approach to public policy processes in member States. The project has enabled skills acquisition in areas such as leadership, transparency and accountability, reform strategies, consensus-building, local development, and communication strategies. The four training workshops and policy discussions held during the life cycle of the project led to the creation of national committees of practice (NCP) in Iraq and Yemen. The NCPs help to raise public awareness of the importance of mainstreaming participatory approaches in national development processes as well as of the tools provided by ESCWA to institutionalize them. A number of seminars, workshops and development initiatives were undertaken by the Iraqi NCP members with technical assistance from ESCWA.

Building on its long-term research and advocacy efforts to empower youth, ESCWA is implementing an interregional project to help member States engage with youth and promote their participation in policymaking.

ESCWA PARTICIPATES IN THE WORK OF GIFT-MENA

At the request of the Lebanese Institut des Finances Basil Fuleihan, ESCWA joined other institutions in organizing the annual conference of the Governance Institutes Forum for Training in the Middle East and North Africa (GIFT-MENA), a network of civil service training schools and institutes, on 13 and 14 October 2016 in Paris. The theme of the conference, which was attended by more than 150 participants from 16 Arab countries, 7 European partner institutions and 11 regional and international organizations, was Governance, Fragility and Sustainable Development. The Commission also helped to organize the network's annual general assembly on 12 October. Its input centred on recommendations for action by States to guide the work of GIFT-MENA in the coming decade, with a view to achieving the governance, peace and security targets under Goal 16 of the SDGs.



RESILIENCE TO CRISES & OCCUPATION

Conflict and occupation rack the Arab region. With more than 25 million forcibly displaced individuals, it has the highest displacement ratio in the world. ESCWA works with member States to mitigate the impact of conflict, occupation and other crises. It works on peacebuilding, particularly in Arab least developed countries (LDCs), and supports member States in developing disaster risk reduction strategies.

In the course of its research and analysis, the Commission has found that decentralization is a central reform priority for policymakers seeking to strengthen institutional responsiveness, deepen citizen participation, and improve public service delivery.

CONFLICT IN ARAB LDCs

ESCWA contributed to efforts to raise international awareness of the need for more support for LDCs affected by conflict in a multi-stage process leading to the 2016 Comprehensive High-level Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (IPoA). Ministers from countries including Egypt, Mauritania, Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen attended. Attention was drawn to the Commission's support for the progress report of Yemen. Moreover, ESCWA advocated for acknowledgement of the unique vulnerabilities of conflict-affected LDCs in the final report of the review (A/CONF.228/3). The event was organized in conjunction with the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS), the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA), the African Union, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Government of Turkey.



In that vein, the Commission is carrying out a study on decentralization in Iraq, which looks at the dynamics shaping reform to date and exploring conditions under which deepening administrative, fiscal and political decentralization can stabilize the country. Along similar lines, the Commission's project on institutional strengthening for recovery and reconciliation in Yemen aims to build the capacity of government actors and other stakeholders for recovery, reconstruction and transition.

The Commission and UNDP also organized a capacity development workshop on good governance and the SDGs in Iraq, which took place in Istanbul from 31 January to 5 February. It was directed at the Iraqi Higher Committee for Sustainable Development (HCSD), which is working to implement the SDGs in Iraq, and the National Centre for Management Development and Information Technology (Ministry of Planning). Iraqi participants credited the workshop for the Government's decision to broaden the composition of the HCSD to include local civil society and private sector representatives. The Government took the opportunity to request further technical assistance to address the matter of displacement in the country.

The Commission is heavily invested in conflict research. In 2016, it produced a study on the "Impact of the fragile States on stability and development of the Arab region: the channels of conflict contagion". On the basis of circumstances inside a given country and the security situation in surrounding countries (the "neighbourhood"), the model estimates the likelihood of conflict breaking out in that country and serves to quantify the vulnerability of the region to violence and conflict spillover.

Another paper, "Political transformation and conflict: post-war risks in the Arab region", focuses on post-civil war peacebuilding, recovery and transition. Examining post-war situations around the world since 1970, it looks at the risks of a relapse into war and factors driving patterns of war and instability in the region, including authoritarianism, youth unemployment and oil rents. It also pinpoints reforms for inclusion in post-war strategies in conflict-affected Arab countries, notably improved political and security sector governance.

The Commission plays a leading role in documenting the consequences of occupation and conflict on social and economic development. In 2016, it made significant progress in its normative work on Palestine.

Research focused on the effects of the 2014 Israeli offensive on the provision of health care in Gaza. The Commission drafted and presented the Note by the Secretary-General on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/71/86) to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social

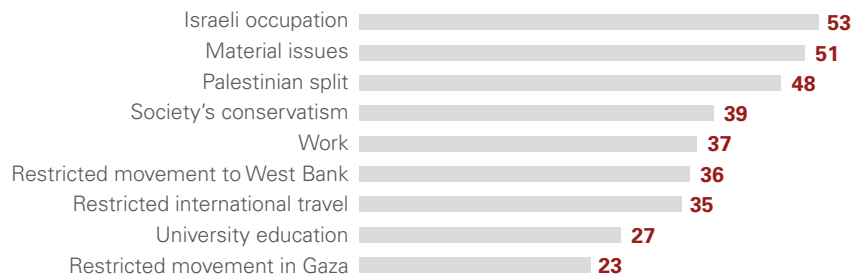
Council. Both bodies subsequently adopted resolutions on matters raised in the Note (A/RES/71/247 and E/RES/2016/14). The Note highlights excessive use of force, arbitrary detention, destruction and confiscation of property, Israeli settlements and settler attacks, mobility restrictions, and the depletion of natural resources. It concludes that the attainment of peace hinges on compliance by Israel with international law.

The Commission, in collaboration with UNCTAD, has initiated work on a project aimed at developing an in-depth methodology for measuring the cost of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory since 1967. The tool will make it possible, for the first time, to capture the cumulative and comprehensive cost of decades of occupation, rather than simply looking at the direct and time-bound impact of specific events. It will thus shed light on the sum, not only of physical damage, but also of lost human development opportunities.

SURVEYING THE IMPACT OF THE 2014 ISRAELI OFFENSIVE ON LIVING CONDITIONS IN GAZA

In 2016, ESCWA and the Institute of Community and Public Health (ICPH) at Birzeit University published a joint working paper on the impact of the 2014 Israeli offensive on living conditions in the Gaza Strip. The paper benefits from data collated in a survey by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), which was conducted between March and May 2015, on the long-term consequences of occupation and violence on the health and well-being of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. The paper, entitled “A people in danger: effects on health of the 2014 Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip”, looks at key socioeconomic indicators and compares the impact of the 2014 offensive with that of previous incursions and of the protracted blockade.

Sample survey result: Cause of deprivation (percentage) as reported by respondents



Source: E/ESCWA/ECRI/2015/WP.5.

