



**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COUNCIL**

Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/EC.6/2019/15
24 May 2019
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ARABIC

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Executive Committee
Sixth meeting
Marrakech, Morocco, 15-16 June 2019

Item 16 of the provisional agenda



Preparations for the thirty-first ESCWA session

Summary

The secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has begun preparations for the thirty-first ESCWA session, to be held in Tunis in April 2020. The present document sets out the work of the session; a proposal on its main theme, in view of emerging priorities in the Arab region and globally and key development issues, especially the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and its provisional agenda.

The Executive Committee is invited to take note of the preparations for the thirty-first ESCWA session, and endorse the proposal presented by the secretariat on its main theme.

CONTENTS

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. DATE AND VENUE OF THE THIRTY-FIRST ESCWA SESSION..	1	3
II. PROPOSED ORGANIZATION OF WORK.....	2	3
III. MAIN THEME OF THE SESSION	7-3	3
IV. DISCUSSION GOALS AND DESIRED OUTCOMES.....	10-8	4
V. PROVISIONAL AGENDA OF THE THIRTY-FIRST ESCWA SESSION	11	4
A. Senior officials segment		4
B. Ministerial segment		5
VI. MEETING DOCUMENTS.....	12	5

I. DATE AND VENUE OF THE THIRTY-FIRST ESCWA SESSION

1. Paragraph (a) of rule 1 of the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) states that sessions of the Commission shall be held every other year at a time to be determined by its members. The secretariat therefore proposes to the Executive Committee that the thirty-first ESCWA session be held in April 2020. Tunisia has expressed its wish to host the thirty-first session in Tunis, and the secretariat is communicating with Tunisia regarding arrangements.

II. PROPOSED ORGANIZATION OF WORK

2. As part of ESCWA efforts to develop its sessions in line with global trends, the secretariat will organize the session's work in accordance with the following:

(a) Focusing on one key theme at the ministerial segment, thus allowing member States and the secretariat to discuss all its aspects in detail, so that discussions conclude with one thematic outcome;

(b) Focusing discussions at the ministerial segment on thematic aspects, and considering most administrative and programmatic issues at the senior officials segment, especially since the Executive Committee is currently fulfilling that role;

(c) Limiting presentations on documents prepared by the secretariat to give more time for member States to interact amongst themselves, and to present their experiences and challenges through interactive round-table discussions;

(d) Operationalizing the participation of civil society, academia and the private sector in plenary sessions, in accordance with the rules and procedures governing their participation in United Nations meetings;

(e) Expanding the media coverage of the session and increasing reliance on social networks to disseminate the session's work to broader segments of society.

III. MAIN THEME OF THE SESSION

3. The secretariat proposes that the thirty-first session focus on youth issues in the Arab region, and that discussions revolve around the challenges they face and their latent potential in achieving sustainable development in the Arab region, by analysing and discussing the various approaches to youth empowerment, especially those who are most vulnerable to marginalization, such as girls, persons with disabilities, displaced persons and refugees.

4. In the Arab region, there is a high number of children, teenagers and young people under the age of 30 (around 60 per cent of the population), representing substantial demographic wealth. However, the alarming reality of large groups of young people, and their need for health care, social protection, quality education and decent work, demand rapid efforts to train and empower young people to participate in the sustainable development process and contribute to its design.

5. Nonetheless, many obstacles impede full investment in this latent potential. Despite progress in providing education for all, many young people are not receiving formal education or training. Countries are also facing difficulties in improving education quality and its response to changing labour market needs in an era of globalization and technology. The region is witnessing a sharp increase in youth unemployment, reaching around 30 per cent, the highest rate globally, especially among young women. Young people regularly express their feelings of marginalization, thus reducing their participation rate. They also face significant difficulties caused by occupation, war and conflict in the region, which diminish their capacity and limit decent living opportunities.

6. Security Council resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security and the 2018 [United Nations Strategy on Youth](#) stress that countries must commit themselves to empowering young people and to ensuring their effective participation in formulating and implementing policies that reflect their needs, aspirations and ambitions to guarantee a safe and bright present and future.

7. Given the significant importance of youth issues in the Arab region and the efforts of several countries to formulate youth policies and ensure their effective participation, and in view of countries' commitments under related global frameworks, the secretariat proposes the following theme for the next ESCWA session: "Young people in the Arab region: latent potential for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

IV. DISCUSSION GOALS AND DESIRED OUTCOMES

8. In accordance with the above, the main aim of the thirty-first ESCWA session is to identify rapid interventions and medium and long-term policies to provide opportunities for economic and social participation. The session will consider the issue's various aspects through three round-table discussions.

9. The round-table discussions will be attended by ministers participating in the session, in addition to youth representatives, civil society organizations and the private sector, in their capacity as development partners.

10. The discussions are expected to result in a political consensus on key policies and measures required to support young people, in view of the unprecedented challenges facing the region. This consensus will be set out in a ministerial declaration, reflecting Arab countries' comprehensive vision on youth issues in the context of implementing the 2030 Agenda at the national level. The vision will outline a national methodology to tackle challenges and benefit from opportunities. The declaration will be submitted to the United Nations Economic and Social Council and to Arab political bodies concerned with development issues, such as the Economic and Social Council of the League of Arab States and specialized ministerial councils.

V. PROVISIONAL AGENDA OF THE THIRTY-FIRST ESCWA SESSION

11. The session's agenda will comprise two parts: the first will cover administrative and programmatic issues for consideration by senior officials, and the second will focus on the session's main theme to be discussed at the ministerial level.

A. SENIOR OFFICIALS SEGMENT

- (a) Opening.
- (b) Election of officers.
- (c) Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
- (d) Consideration of requests by States Members of the United Nations and/or its specialized agencies that are not members of ESCWA to participate as observers in the thirtieth session of the Commission.
- (e) **Global and regional developments:** this section covers all thematic issues beyond the session's main theme.
- (f) **Work of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies:** this section covers issues such as implementation of the recommendations adopted by the Commission at its thirtieth session; implementation

of the Beirut Consensus on Technology for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region; reports of the Executive Committee and ESCWA subsidiary bodies; and technical cooperation activities.

(g) **Management issues:** this section covers programme performance in the biennium 2018-2019; the financial status of the Commission; and proposed amendments to the programme of work.

B. MINISTERIAL SEGMENT

(a) Opening.

(b) Plenary sessions on the main theme (Young people in the Arab region: latent potential for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development).

(c) Date and venue of the thirty-second session of the Commission.

(d) Other matters.

(e) Adoption of the report of the thirty-first session of the Commission.

VI. MEETING DOCUMENTS

12. The ESCWA secretariat will prepare a detailed background paper on the session's main theme, which sets out a general framework for discussions and specific recommendations to member States and the secretariat in that regard.
