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**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION****IMPLEMENTATION OF 2004-2005 BIENNIUM  
REGULAR BUDGET ACTIVITIES**

*Follow-up action at regional level to United Nations international conferences*

**Summary**

Over the past two decades, the United Nations has held a series of conferences and summits in order to address a wide range of general, economic, social and development subjects of universal importance, which have issued policy declarations, programmes and plans of action that include specific objectives and aims and measures for implementation and follow-up.

The United Nations emphasizes, both in the resolutions which constitute the legislative basis for convening those conferences and in conference final documents, the importance of the role of the regional commissions in preparing for conferences and following them up at the regional level. The objective was to incorporate the regional dimension of each area in the preparatory action which preceded the conferences, the discussions held during them, the programmes and plans issued by them and the comprehensive follow-up of their implementation.

Committed to that course of action, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) included in its programme of work for the biennium 2004-2005 activities which are part of the follow-up at the regional level to United Nations international conferences, and has assumed an effective role in follow-up action in the region of Western Asia. Activities on that level include the preparation of specialist studies, the holding of expert group meetings, regional preparatory and follow-up conferences, participation in global conferences and coordination with United Nations organizations and other regional international organizations.

Against that background, the ESCWA secretariat presents this report, which includes a brief review of the activities that ESCWA has undertaken in preparation for and follow-up to the following international conferences, listed in chronological order: the Eleventh Session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (Sao Paulo, Brazil, June 2004); the World Summit on the Information Society (December 2003); the Fifth World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference, (Cancun, Mexico, September 2003); the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, August – September 2002); the International Conference on Financing for Development (Monterrey, Mexico 2002); the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, September 1995); the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, March 1995); the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994) and the International Year of the Family (1994).

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## **Introduction**

1. ESCWA assumes an effective role in regional preparatory or follow-up action for United Nations international conferences. Its work in that field focuses on the preparation and distribution of brief papers to introduce and raise awareness of the most important issues considered at those international conferences; the formulation of a shared vision and concepts; the coordination of the positions of Arab countries on those subjects; providing the opportunity for those countries to adopt declarations of principle or regional plans of action, to be presented at the international conferences; building the capacities of member countries to negotiate on the issues being considered; review and appraisal of the area's regional situation vis-à-vis those issues; and submission of practical and detailed proposals for action which discuss the role of ESCWA countries and all other Arab countries in following up those issues.

### **I. THE ELEVENTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD XI) (SAO PAULO, BRAZIL, JUNE 2004)**

#### **A. OVERVIEW**

2. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was, in effect, a forum for the discussion of issues which affect the majority of the world's population that live in the developing and least-developed countries. Foremost among those issues are economic development, the eradication of poverty and the vital role played by international trade, all of which have acquired further importance since the unsuccessful Fifth World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference, held in Cancun, Mexico, from 10 to 14 September 2003.

#### **B. THE PARTICIPATION OF ESCWA IN PREPARATION AND FOLLOW-UP**

3. Because the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) was well aware of the importance of that session and the need to take part in it on an equal footing with the other regional commissions, a working paper was prepared on post-Cancun bilateral and regional trading agreements and the importance of reforming the multilateral trading system. That paper was presented at the Round Table of Executive Secretaries of the United Nations Regional Commissions at UNCTAD XI, which was held on 15 June 2004 in Sao Paulo.

4. The secretariat is currently preparing a comparative study of the undertakings of ESCWA member countries with respect to each of the WTO Agreements, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership agreements, free trade agreements with the United States of America, the Agadir Agreement and the Greater Arab Free Trade Area project. The aim of the study is to ascertain the extent to which those agreements coincide. The secretariat hopes that the study will answer important questions regarding the impact of those agreements in the light of the multilateral trading system and the effect of bilateral agreements on regional and multilateral agreements. The study is expected to be ready by the end of May 2005.

### **II. WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY (GENEVA, DECEMBER 2003)**

#### **A. OVERVIEW**

5. Pursuant to United Nations General Assembly resolution 56/183, dated 21 December 2001, relating to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the first phase of WSIS took place in Geneva from 10 to 12 December 2003. The aim was to form a common vision and understanding of the information society (IS) at the global level. The first phase ended with a Declaration of principles, entitled "Building the Information Society: a Global Challenge in the New Millennium". A Plan of Action for building the Information Society was adopted by the 175 States that took part in the event. ESCWA input in the summit focused on activities that had carried out in preparation for the phase at the regional level and, in particular, the WSIS Western Asia Preparatory Conference and the Beirut Declaration which was its outcome; the

identification of IS characteristics and priorities in the region; and the Digital Arabic Content (DAC) Initiative. It also affirmed ESCWA's commitment to devise a regional plan of action for IS building after the first phase of the Summit and to continue cooperation with all the parties concerned.

6. The United Nations regional commissions cooperated in affirming the importance of the regional dimension in IS building within the Declaration of Principles and the global Plan of Action. Five high-level round-table discussions were therefore organized as a side event to the Geneva Summit meetings. ESCWA took charge of organizing the fifth round-table on building a partnership between IS stakeholders, with the focus on best practices in involving the private sector and civil society.

#### B. THE PARTICIPATION OF ESCWA IN PREPARATION AND FOLLOW-UP

7. As part of the preparations for the first phase of the summit, from 3 to 5 June 2003, ESCWA held in Beirut an expert group meeting on strengthening DAC, which reached a set of recommendations for promoting DAC. The aim was to identify best practices for empowering Arab countries in general and the countries of Western Asia in particular, to develop Arabic content on the Internet and detail the most effective strategies and mechanisms in that respect.<sup>1</sup> Pursuant to those recommendations, in October 2003 ESCWA launched the Arab Content Initiative<sup>2</sup> at the GITEX conference held in Dubai. That initiative focuses on creating modern content based on information and communication technologies (ICT) with a view to moving towards a knowledge-based economy.

8. Also in preparation for the first phase of the Summit, ESCWA issued a document on the regional profile of IS in Western Asia,<sup>3</sup> in which it surveyed the situation of each member country in primary IS fields, including policies, strategies, the basic and empowerment infrastructure and capacity building, development of the ICT sector, the main applications in Government, education, trade and health, and DAC. The profile includes an analysis of the regional situation and comparisons with the global situation, and suggestions for effecting progress towards IS. The document was sent to member countries before publication and was widely distributed at the Geneva Summit.

9. At the end of the first phase of WSIS, ESCWA immediately set about preparing for the second phase which will take place in Tunis from 16 to 18 November 2005. It organized the following three round tables in 2004 on topics directly connected to the resolutions of the first phase:

(a) The round table on ICT as an Enabler for Economic Development, which took place in Beirut on 29 and 30 April 2004. Its goal was to formulate a regional initiative involving partnerships between stakeholders leading to projects that fall within the framework of WSIS-2. The round table resulted in the formulation of a preliminary initiative concerning the regional cyber hub for economic development;<sup>4</sup>

(b) The round table on Strategies and Plans of Action for Building the Information Society in Western Asia, which took place in Beirut on 21 and 22 June 2004. During that round table, consideration was given to the general profile of a regional plan of action for IS building in Western Asia, based on a document which ESCWA had prepared in late 2003.<sup>5</sup> It concluded by defining the regional plans of action, programmes and projects, implementation of which will lead towards IS in the region. It also formulated the basic principles for partnership mechanisms;<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ESCWA, *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Digital Arab Content*, (E/ESCWA/ICTD/2003/WG.2/21).

<sup>2</sup> ESCWA, *Arab Content Initiative*, (E/ESCWA/ICTD/2003/10).

<sup>3</sup> ESCWA, *Regional Profile of the Information Society in Western Asia*, (E/ESCWA/ICTD/2003/11).

<sup>4</sup> ESCWA, *Report of the Round table on ICT as an Enabler for Economic Development*, (E/ESCWA/ICTD/2004/WG.1/20).

<sup>5</sup> ESCWA, *Regional Preliminary Plan of Action for Building the Information Society in Western Asia*, (E/ESCWA/ICTD/2003/12).

<sup>6</sup> ESCWA, *Report of the Round table on Strategies and Plans of Action for Building the Information Society in Western Asia*, (E/ESCWA/ICTD/2004/2).

(c) The round table on Information Society Indicators and Profiles in Western Asia, which was held in Beirut on 4 and 5 October 2004. Participants drew up a list of proposed core ICT indicators which highlighted the particularities of the ESCWA region and the Arab world and were consistent with global trends as one of the outcomes of the round table.<sup>7</sup> They affirmed the need to build the capacities of national statistical bodies to adopt a common strategy and appropriate methodologies for identifying indicators and gathering data; and to set up a regional working group on IS indicators.

10. The outcomes of the three round tables and, in particular, the second, formed a basis for the preparation of a proposed regional plan of action for IS building consistent with the resolutions of the first phase of WSIS. ESCWA cooperated in drafting the plan with a number of regional governmental and non-governmental bodies, the private sector, and regional and international organizations, taking into consideration the particularities of the Arab region. The plan includes major activities and projects which it is proposed to implement on the regional and national levels, within a strategic framework which focuses on 10 core IS areas. It touches on a set of issues for developing IS and for contributing to the building of appropriate local capacities for using information and knowledge in development. It also contains the mechanisms for establishing high-level partnerships in order to implement the projects.

11. The proposed regional plan of action constituted a core input to the Second Regional Preparatory Conference for WSIS, organized by ESCWA which took place in Damascus on 22 and 23 November 2004 with the motto, "Towards a Partnership for Building the Arab Information Society". It was held under the generous auspices of the Syrian Arab Republic in cooperation with the Regional Office of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Syrian Ministry of Communications and Technology. Immediately before the Conference, on 21 November 2005, ESCWA organized a Partners' Forum, which brought together technical expertise, beneficiaries, regional financing institutions and international organizations, in order to consider and adopt the projects and programmes of the regional plan of action and establish partnerships to carry them out.

12. The conference objective was to follow up implementation of WSIS first phase resolutions and prepare at the regional level for the second phase, which will take place in Tunis; review the steps taken by member countries to close digital divide in the light of the outcome of the Geneva Summit phase; discuss the proposed regional plan of action prepared by ESCWA; effectively promote partnerships between the various stakeholders in IS in order to implement the regional plan of action.

13. The Conference concluded by issuing the "Damascus Call: Towards Partnership for Building the Arab Information Society", which calls for strengthening participation in building the Arab IS through regional cooperation between the relevant bodies and stakeholders, with a view to guaranteeing the successful implementation of the regional plan of action for IS projects and establishing firm foundations for the Arab IS. It also called for greater efforts to be made to coordinate progress and assistance in establishing funds to finance projects that contribute to the development of the ICT sector.

14. Coordinating with the League of Arab States, ESCWA took part in two meetings of the Arab working group charged with preparing for WSIS which followed the Regional Conference. The first was in Damascus, on 24 and 25 November 2004, and the second in Cairo, on 17 and 18 January 2005. The outcomes of the Conference were discussed and, in particular, the proposed regional plan of action submitted by ESCWA and ways of benefiting from it at the Arab level. At the second meeting, ESCWA submitted to that group a number of working papers connected to the second phase of the Summit. The most important concerned the Arab Content Initiative, Internet administration and Arabic Internet domain names. It was decided to study these papers and use them in building a unified Arab position.

15. As part of its cooperation with the United Nations regional commissions, ESCWA took part in the WSIS Regional Preparatory Conference in Africa, which was organized by the Economic Commission for

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<sup>7</sup> ESCWA, *Report of the Round table on Information Society Indicators and Profiles in Western Asia*, (E/ESCWA/ICTD/2004/5).

Africa and held in Accra, from 2 to 4 February 2005. It also took part in workshops which preceded the conference and were part of the preparations for the second phase of the Summit. ESCWA contributed to two working papers on statistical indicators for IS management in the ESCWA region and the regional plan of action to build the IS in Western Asia, with aim of coordinating cooperation with the Economic Commission for Africa.

16. ESCWA also took part in the coordination meeting held in Geneva on 18 February 2005 for the United Nations regional commissions as part of WSIS. It was decided that the importance of the regional dimension should be stressed in the Tunis document, particularly in the follow-up of Summit outcomes and the implementation of the pilot projects for building IS at the global level. It was also decided to prepare joint activities as a side event of the Summit, including a round table on the regional view of developing IS and another on the role of women in that society.

17. As part of its international cooperation, ESCWA contributed to the International Partnership for Measuring ICT for Development, which was launched at UNCTAD XI in June 2004. Its objective is to adopt a set of core indicators at the international level, and build the capacities of developing countries in collection of data for use formulating national policies and strategies for developing IS. In this context, ESCWA took part in the international preparatory meetings on IS indicators, the last of which was the technical meeting that was held in Geneva from 8 to 10 February 2005 and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) meeting which was held on 11 and 12 February 2005. Those two successive meetings concluded by drawing up a semi-final list on international indicators.

18. ESCWA took part in the second meeting of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom-2) of the Tunis phase of WSIS, which was held in Geneva from 17 to 25 February 2005, and submitted a report on the WSIS PrepCom-2 of that took place in Damascus. ESCWA also took part in meetings of the Arab working group charged with preparing for WSIS which were held in Geneva from 15 to 25 February 2005 with the aim of coordinating the Arab positions, and contributed to the discussion of the articles of the document which is being prepared for adoption at the Tunis phase at the end of 2005.

19. ESCWA followed up its efforts to unify the Arab position in cooperation with the League of Arab States and regional organization operating in the area. It will take part in organizing the high-level Arab conference which will be held in Cairo from 8 to 10 May 2005 in order to adopt a joint plan of action at the Arab level. ESCWA will take part in the forthcoming activities and preparatory meetings for the second phase of WSIS at the regional and international level, and in the Tunis phase, with its concomitant activities. It will prepare to implement the outcomes of both phases of WSIS with the human resources and potential at its disposal.

20. Aiming to carry out those decisions regionally, ESCWA is cooperating with some of the United Nations organizations directly involved in IS, namely, the Regional Office of UNESCO in Cairo, the Regional Office of ITU and the Programme of Information and Communication Technology for Development in the Arab Region (ICTDAR), which is part of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). With those bodies, it can coordinate and cooperate in implementing the best of the projects of the regional Plan of Action and review the outcomes of the Tunis phase. Those organizations have agreed to coordinate with the League of Arab States and to support its plans for IS building, giving priority to activities relating to DAC and its uses and extending the use of Arabic on the Internet.

21. ESCWA hopes that member countries will decide to form national IS committees that will formulate strategies and national plans of action and follow up their implementation; and coordinate with the basic sectors in developing IS and moving towards a knowledge-based economy. ESCWA also hopes that those committees will cooperate with it in activating the regional plan for IS building and in following up and carrying out the activities detailed in it and the projects put forward, in accordance with national priorities, including by endeavoring to finance those activities and projects and creating national, regional and international partnerships to achieve the best results through regional integration.

### III. THE FIFTH WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE (CANCÚN, MEXICO, SEPTEMBER 2003)

#### A. OVERVIEW

22. The WTO Ministerial Conference is regarded as the sole and supreme decision-making authority. It is held every two years. The First WTO Ministerial Conference was held in Singapore immediately after WTO was established. The Second Conference took place in Geneva in 1998 and marked the 50th anniversary of the multilateral trading system. The Third Conference was held in Seattle, United States of America, at the end of 1999, while the Fourth was held in Doha in 2001. All the issues included in the Doha Development Agenda were opened for negotiation. A deadline of 1 January 2005 was set for the conclusion of negotiations. The Fifth Ministerial Conference was held in Cancún, Mexico, from 10 to 14 September 2003. That Conference failed because of lack of consensus on agriculture issues, Singapore issues and cotton. The Sixth WTO Ministerial Conference to will be convened in Hong Kong in December 2005.

23. The WTO Ministerial Conferences have become significant international events. The declarations they issued are incorporated into the commercial policy of every developing and developed country, and all WTO member states are obliged to honour their commitments in that regard.

#### B. THE PARTICIPATION OF ESCWA IN PREPARATION AND FOLLOW-UP

##### 1. *Preparation*

24. Realizing the importance of the WTO Ministerial Conferences and the need for Arab countries to be fully aware of what takes place at these conferences, especially with regard to issues that concern their foreign trade, ESCWA has included in its programmes of work an activity intended to prepare Arab countries for the Conferences. That activity comprises following:

(a) Preparation of 26 Arabic language working papers that discuss all Doha Programme of Action issues and subjects. That Programme was issued at the Fourth Ministerial Conference, which was held in Doha, in November 2001. Those subjects are being negotiated by WTO;

(b) An Expert Group Meeting which was held in Beirut on 22 and 23 July 2003, at which most of the papers referred to in paragraph (a) above were presented. Intensive discussions were held that covered the negotiation position and the role of developing countries in negotiations on world trade issues;

(c) An Arab Ministerial Meeting, which was held in Beirut on 24 and 25 July 2003 and attended by Arab ministers of trade. The aim of the meeting was to coordinate Arab positions on the issues considered at the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference. The most important issues under negotiation were discussed and recommendations were made and submitted to WTO by Bahrain which was Chairman of the Arab Group at that time. They were acknowledged as a WTO document. ESCWA also prepared a report on the proceedings of the Arab Ministerial Meeting in preparation for the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference;

(d) An Arab ministerial consultative meeting, which was held on 9 September 2003 in Cancún, Mexico, the venue of the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference. Discussion there centred on new developments in WTO negotiations between July and September 2003. The importance of coordinating Arab positions was reiterated at that meeting, where ministers expressed their sincere gratitude to ESCWA for the efforts exerted in Beirut and Cancún in order to prepare Arab countries.

## 2. Follow-up

25. As part of the follow-up to the outcomes of the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference in Cancún, an expert group meeting<sup>8</sup> was held on 11 and 12 May 2004, and was attended by the representatives of Arab countries. Experts from regional and international organizations and the private sector took part. The meeting explored the reason for the failure of the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference and requirements for the next phase.

26. With effect from June 2005, and until the third week of September 2005, ESCWA will make preparations for the Sixth WTO Ministerial Conference. That will include the preparation of working papers on a variety of issues and the holding on 20 and 21 September 2005 of an expert group meeting at ESCWA headquarters, followed by an Arab ministerial meeting on 22 and 23 September 2005, also at ESCWA headquarters, to agree a coordinated position for the Arab Group. Working papers will be published on the WTO Internet site, as was the practice in respect of the Fifth Ministerial Conference.

27. Because of the importance of preparations for those meetings, ESCWA, as is clear from its programmes of work, spares no effort in supporting the capacities of the Arab countries through training programmes and the various meetings that discuss WTO agreements and issues.

## IV. WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA, AUGUST TO SEPTEMBER 2002)

### A. OVERVIEW

28. The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) took place in Johannesburg in 2002 and resulted in a plan of action for implementation of WSSD outcomes entitled: The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation,<sup>9</sup> the aim of which was to accelerate completion and implementation of Agenda 21 objectives<sup>10</sup> by taking action at all levels, within a framework of international cooperation in order to integrate the social, economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development.

29. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation focused on reducing poverty, changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production and protecting natural resources, which are the primary objective of sustainable development. The Plan also affirms the importance of serving everyone and, in particular, vulnerable groups and women, and of partnership between all the parties. In the light of the foregoing, ESCWA was concerned to follow-up implementation of the Johannesburg Plan at the regional level and to cooperate and coordinate with member countries, the League of Arab States and the relevant United Nations organizations.

### B. THE PARTICIPATION OF ESCWA IN PREPARATION AND FOLLOW-UP

30. ESCWA concentrated its efforts in this context on the Plan's main objectives, which appear in Part II, concerned with poverty eradication; Part III relating to the changing of unsustainable consumer and production patterns; Part IV, concerning the protection and management of the natural resources needed for social and economic development; Part IX on means of implementation; and Part X, concerning the institutional framework for sustainable development. Set forth below is a review of the activities undertaken by ESCWA in the areas referred to, from the 22<sup>nd</sup> ESCWA session in 2003 to the end of March 2005.

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<sup>8</sup> ESCWA, *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on the follow-up on the Results of the Fifth WTO Ministerial Meeting*, (E/ESCWA/GRID/2004/3).

<sup>9</sup> Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August to 4 September 2002. (United Nations Publications, sales number A.03.II.A.1), Chapter One, Resolution 1, Appendix II.

<sup>10</sup> Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 13-14 June 1992. First Edition. Reports adopted by the Conference (United Nations Publications, sales number E.93.I.8), Resolution 1, Appendix II.



### *1. Eradication of poverty*

31. The Johannesburg Plan affirmed that the eradication of poverty requires action to strengthen provision of water and power services to poor areas, and the creation of employment and income opportunities through small or micro enterprises, the development of the appropriate technology and the improvement of living conditions in human settlements.

32. Within that framework ESCWA completed a number of activities relating to the increased provision of water to poor areas. One of those activities was a survey in August 2002 of available water sources and sewage systems in the Marj'uyun area in South Lebanon. Another involved a study of the recycling of wastewater in agriculture, methods of treating such water, and related irrigation techniques. ESCWA is also currently conducting a study on the role of women in the management of water resources, energy saving and environmental protection in rural areas. That activity will end in late June 2005.

33. ESCWA, in cooperation with the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Fund for International Development, is committed to implementing a project that aims to improve power services to rural and poor areas using renewable energy techniques. The project includes running two training sessions in cooperation with the UNESCO Regional Office in Cairo. The first, on building national capacities in the field of solar power, took place in Aleppo, Syrian Arab Republic, from 11 to 16 October 2003. The second, on optimal energy consumption and improved efficiency took place in Cairo from 27 March to 1 April 2004. Throughout that project it is also providing technical assistance to Yemen formulating a national strategy for renewable energy, and has initiated a programme for rural electricity using solar power.

34. In the second half of 2004, ESCWA, in cooperation with both the International Labour Organization and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, began to implement a project to create employment opportunities and income security through developing small and micro agri-businesses in South Lebanon. The project, which is worth US\$ 42,375, aims to encourage agricultural projects and small and micro agri-businesses to develop in the liberated area of South Lebanon, through increasing productivity and the competitive capacities of those projects.

35. ESCWA arranged the Briefing Session on Rural Development: Policies, Strategies and Organizations, which took place in Beirut from 20 to 22 December 2004. The course reviewed the integral rural development alternatives and, in particular, support for productivity as a means of eradicating poverty. A report has been prepared on that session, which is expected to be published in late May 2005.

36. In respect of improving the living standards of human communities, ESCWA has taken certain action to mainstream social and natural considerations in the development and improvement of cities and villages, particularly in the conflict zones of the countries of the region: ESCWA activities in that regard included a project to study the social considerations of developing central Beirut and the market in Aley; and the initiation of a regional gathering on developed urban governance. In that regard, ESCWA convened a number of meetings and media initiatives. It also issued a study on housing policies and security of tenure for residential property and real estate in the ESCWA region.

### *2. Changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production*

37. ESCWA has completed several activities that investigate the appropriate policies, frameworks and techniques for improving production and consumption patterns in the fields of water, energy and agriculture and has assisted member countries in building their capacities in related fields.

38. ESCWA had prepared two studies on changing water consumption and distribution patterns. The first was on sectoral water allocation policies in selected ESCWA member countries and evaluated the social and economic effects and drought.<sup>11</sup> The second was on enhancing agricultural productivity by achieving water-

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<sup>11</sup> ESCWA, *Sectoral Water Allocation in Selected ESCWA Member Countries: Economic, Social and Drought-Related Impact*, (E/ESCWA/SDPD/2003/13).

use efficiency.<sup>12</sup> In cooperation with various international bodies, ESCWA also organized a regional conference on water demand management and pollution control which took place in Sharm al-Shaikh, Egypt, from 14 to 17 September 2003.

39. ESCWA prepared a set of studies and organized a series of workshops and meetings dealing with optimal energy consumption in various sectors and limiting the environmental impact of energy use in those sectors. In 2003 it issued a guide to improving efficient energy management in the tourism sector.<sup>13</sup> In 2005, a study on improving energy efficiency and the use of cleaner fossil fuels in selected sectors in ESCWA countries will be issued. The study is in two parts, the first of which deals with improving energy efficiency in high power-consumption industries, while the second discusses the use of clean fossil fuels. Also relevant in this context is the session which ESCWA organized in cooperation with the UNESCO Regional Office in Cairo on national capacity-building in optimal energy consumption and efficient energy management in the Arab countries. It was held in Cairo from 27 March to 1 April 2004 and dealt with the issue of optimal energy consumption in industrial, residential and electricity generation sectors.

### *3. Protection and management of the natural resources needed for social and economic development*

40. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation confirmed the importance of action to protect and manage natural resources in a sustainable manner, in order to end their decline. It identified several targets for action in that field, on three of which ESCWA have focused, namely, integrated water resource management (IWRM), the phenomenon of climate change and genetic modification and agriculture.

41. ESCWA has accorded great importance to assisting member countries in building their capacities in the IWRM field. To that end, ESCWA, in cooperation with the German Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources, prepared a training course on IWRM that includes the preparation of a training guide to the application of IWRM techniques in the ESCWA region. That guide comprises 16 sections that deal with the various aspects of the issue. The guide was the focus of a high-level meeting on the methods and tools needed to apply IWRM in the ESCWA region that was held in Beirut on 13 September 2004 and brought together those involved in decision-making in the countries of the region. It has been decided to organize, in cooperation with the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research and other international bodies involved in the field, a teacher-training session in May 2005 on the details and training methods of the guide.

42. In relation to the management of shared surface and ground water resources, ESCWA, in cooperation with the German Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR), has expended tremendous efforts on member country capacity-building in respect of negotiations on resources and strengthening related cooperation. Activities that have been implemented include the following:

(a) The holding of a number of workshops on the resolution of disputes and negotiations over shared water resources, including a workshop on the legal framework for shared groundwater development and management in the ESCWA region (Beirut, 10-13 June 2003); a training session for decision-makers in Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic (Beirut 22-24 October 2003); similar seminar for delegates from Palestine (Amman, 14-16 September 2004); a workshop for the relevant parties in Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic on the joint management of the Al-Kabeer Al-Janoubi and Al-Assi aquifers (21 September 2004);

(b) The preparation of an instruction manual on the resolution of disputes over internationally shared water resources, which includes many international examples and the publication in 2004 of a study on the improvement of negotiation skills on water-related issues in the ESCWA region. The two activities were financed by extra budgetary resources and were issued by BGR and the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ).

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<sup>12</sup> ESCWA, *Enhancing Agricultural Productivity Through On-Farm Water-Use Efficiency: an Empirical Case Study of Wheat Production in Iraq*, (E/ESCWA/SDPD/2003/18).

<sup>13</sup> ESCWA, *A Guide to Efficient Energy Management in the Tourism Sector*, (E/ESCWA/SDPD/2003/20).

43. In the field of climate change, earlier ESCWA studies relating to optimal energy consumption included an analysis of the environmental impacts of energy use in various sectors and ways of limiting those impacts.<sup>14</sup> ESCWA is currently preparing two studies to be issued in the third quarter of 2005. The first is on clean fossil fuels and the second is on enhancing energy consumption efficiency in a number of heavy-consumption industries.

44. In the field of genetic modification and agriculture, ESCWA will issue in 2005 a study on genetically modified crops and the extent of popular awareness in that field. ESCWA is also preparing an expert group meeting on modern bio-technology and related policies in the Middle East and Africa, which will take place in September 2005.

#### *4. Means of implementation, and international and regional cooperation*

45. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementations Part IX, concerning means of implementation, stresses the importance of regional and international cooperation in following up implementation. It is especially important in assisting developing countries to build the capacities needed to achieve sustainable development and transferring the necessary technology.

46. ESCWA has accorded great importance in supporting regional cooperation efforts in the sustainable development field through the aforementioned activities, and its membership of the joint secretariat which was set up with the technical secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) and the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for Western Asia for follow-up of implementation of WSSD outcomes at the regional level. In that context, ESCWA has completed the following activities:

(a) As part of the preparations for the twelfth session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, ESCWA organized the Regional Implementation Forum in the Arab Region, which was held in League of Arab States headquarters in Cairo from 19 to 21 October 2003. It also contributed to the preparation of reports reviewing implementation in Arab countries, which were presented at the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development that was held from 19 to 21 October 2003;

(b) ESCWA prepared a brief report on the policies and options most suitable for confronting challenges in the fields of water, environmental reform and human settlements, based on the contents of thematic reports that reviewed implementation which were presented to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its twelfth session and included in the Secretary-General of the report of the United Nations to the thirteenth session of the Commission. ESCWA also took part in the thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which was held from 11 to 22 April 2005;

(c) With reference to the preparations for the fourteenth and fifteenth sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development in 2006 and 2007 respectively, which will concern energy for the purposes of sustainable development, air pollution, climate change and industrial development, ESCWA is coordinating efforts with the League of Arab States, UNDP and the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries, with a view to organizing an Arab regional conference on energy for the purposes of sustainable development, of which the objective will be to evaluate the progress achieved and investigate environmental issues. It will be held in League of Arab States headquarters, from 10 to 12 September 2005, in preparation for the holding of a meeting in November 2005 on regional coordination for the Arab region, to be coordinated with CAMRE.

47. ESCWA carried out and implemented numerous activities relating to the enhancement of cooperation between member countries in capacity-building in the various fields of sustainable development.

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<sup>14</sup> ESCWA, Options and Opportunities for Greenhouse Gas Abatement (GHG) in the Energy Sector of ESCWA Region, Vol. I: Transport Sector (E/ESCWA/ENR/2001/15(Vol. I)) and Vol. II: The Power Sector, (E/ESCWA/ENR/2001/15(Vol. II)).

### *5. The Institutional framework for the realization of sustainable development*

48. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation made the regional commissions responsible for providing support to countries in enhancing institutional arrangements for the purpose of achieving regional-level sustainable development. To that end, ESCWA, produced a study on sustainable development management in the Arab region, the institutions and tools for progressing beyond a culture of environment management. Its objective was to supply culturally and politically appropriate mechanism to go beyond the current environmental management culture, which uses a sector-based procedure, and to change to sustainable development management which would be integrated and multi-sectoral, adopt a practical approach and include partnership. The study presents a series of recommendations to strengthen sustainable development management in the Arab region at the national and regional levels.

49. In the same context, ESCWA assisted countries in taking immediate steps towards the formulations of national sustainable development strategies and beginning to apply them in early 2005. In cooperation with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNDP, ESCWA organized a workshop on sustainable development strategies for the Arab region, which was held in Cairo from 12 to 14 December 2004. The aim of the workshop was to review current changes in the development process and implementation of the national strategy for environmental action. The focus was on the importance of building national and regional capacities in sustainable development management, the development of a labour network, the exchange of expertise and lessons learnt in formulating and developing national strategies for environmental action.

50. With respect to strengthening the role of the Arab media in creating a supportive, credible and sustainable system capable of adopting more transparent environmental resolutions, a comprehensive training manual was prepared in order to build the capacity of Arab journalists to deal with environmental issues, with the objective of achieving sustainable development and in order to provide the tools and techniques necessary to improve environment-related media performance suited to carrying out the objectives of sustainable development.

## **V. THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT (MONTERREY, MEXICO, MARCH 2002)**

### **A. OVERVIEW**

51. The International Conference on Financing for Development was held from 18 to 22 March in Monterrey, Mexico. It was attended by 50 heads of State and more than 200 ministers, representatives from most Government, economic, trade and financial institutions and monetary institutions, the private sector and civil society. The objective of the conference was to identify alternative sources of finance in order to carry out the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. Statistics indicate that there is an annual shortfall in financing for development and MDGs of some \$50 billion. The Conference reached a set of recommendations known as the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development. Six activities capable of creating additional sources for financing development were outlined namely, (a) the mobilization of domestic financial resources for development; (b) the mobilization of international resources for development, including foreign direct investment (FDI) and other private flows; (c) international trade as an engine for development; (d) increased international financial and technical cooperation for the purposes of development; (e) foreign debt; and (f) addressing systemic issues: enhancing the coherence and consistency of the monetary, financial and trading systems in support of development.

### **B. THE PARTICIPATION OF ESCWA IN PREPARATION AND FOLLOW-UP**

52. ESCWA carried out a number of activities in follow-up of implementation of the recommendations of the Monterrey Consensus, including the following:

(a) A study on policies to attract FDI and interregional investment in the ESCWA region; an improvement of the FDI climate and the activation of local savings, with case studies on Bahrain, Jordan and

Yemen.<sup>15</sup> One of the studies most important conclusions is the fact that ESCWA member countries have achieved success in their policies to attract FDI and, in particular, with respect to the stability of the overall economic policy and the promulgation of appropriate legislation. However, many obstacles to increased FDI flows to the region remained. The most serious of these obstacles relate to institutional issues or administrative complications. There is also a lack of appropriate infrastructure in some countries and a multiplicity of bodies with which the foreign investor has to deal;

(b) A report on follow-up in the ESCWA region to implementation of the recommendations of the Monterrey Consensus.<sup>16</sup> That report covers the progress achieved by ESCWA member countries in the six activities that were included in the Monterrey framework of recommendations. The report indicated that ESCWA countries had made some progress, particularly in the area of monetary reform. However, there remained a need to expend greater effort in the area of financial reform and debt management;

(c) A study on the response to globalization and linkages between international stock markets for regional integration in the ESCWA region.<sup>17</sup> One of the most important conclusions of the study was the need to apply international accounting standards and legislative transparency in the Arab financial markets, and to harmonize the rules and procedures relating to financial markets in order to facilitate transactions between countries or markets and strengthen the access of individual and family companies to the money markets;

(d) A study (at press) on foreign debt management and the debt situation in ESCWA member countries with special case studies on Jordan and Lebanon. The most important recommendations of the study include the training of debt management officers, increasing official development assistance for indebted countries and continuing financial reforms to support economic growth and lower poverty levels in ESCWA member countries;

(e) The ESCWA secretariat will organize an expert group meeting that will follow a ministerial meeting to prepare ESCWA member countries for the meeting which the United Nations will hold in New York in September 2005 on the recommendations of the Monterrey Consensus. The ESCWA meeting will be held in June 2005, in the presence of the relevant ministers, and delegates from Governments, Government organizations and the private sector.

53. The task of following up implementation of the Monterrey Consensus was assigned to the regional commissions. As part of that follow-up, ESCWA is undertaking an important role in the following fields:

(a) Formulating decisions on the progress made by ESCWA member countries in the six activities included in the Monterrey Consensus;

(b) Undertaking studies on issues identified in the financing framework for development in the ESCWA region;

(c) Holding workshops to support capacities relevant to the six Monterrey Consensus activities;

(d) Taking part in global and regional conferences on financing for development-related issues.

54. ESCWA identifies focal points in member countries to assist in follow-up of implementation of Monterrey Consensus recommendations. For that purpose, ESCWA needs sustained support and

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<sup>15</sup> ESCWA, Policies to attract FDI and structuring in the ESCWA region: enhancement of the FDI climate and the establishment of local savings institutions with studies in the case of Jordan, Bahrain and Yemen, (E/ESCWA/GRID/2003/28).

<sup>16</sup> ESCWA, *Report on the Follow-up on the Implementation of the International Conference on Financing for Development in the ESCWA region*, (E/ESCWA/GRID/2003/38).

<sup>17</sup> ESCWA, *Responding to Globalization: Stock Market Networking for Regional Integration in the ESCWA region*, (E/ESCWA/GRID/2003/37).

participation from member countries in order to strengthen the projects relating to financing for development.

*Enhancing technical cooperation and providing expertise in the field of FDI statistics*

55. In cooperation with UNCTAD, ESCWA is implementing a project to establish a network of FDI experts in ESCWA member countries. The project aims to provide member countries with technical expertise in applying international standards in the preparation of FDI statistics and to establish databanks in five countries. In its first phase, the project covered five Arab countries, namely, Bahrain, Jordan, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic.

56. The project is divided into three phases. The first phase included a regional workshop which was organized in Beirut in October 2002. It was attended by representatives from all the participating countries. The second phase included national workshops that took into consideration the special needs of each country taking part in the project. Workshops took place in the following countries:

(a) Bahrain (30 September-2 October 2003) in Manama. A team composed of 15 people took part from the Ministry of Finance and National Economy, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Bahrain Monetary Agency and the Central Information Agency;

(b) Jordan (5-7 October 2003) in Amman. A team composed of 26 people took part from the Jordan Investment Board, the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Department of Statistics and the Central Bank of Jordan;

(c) Oman (19-21 April 2004) in Muscat. A team composed of 36 people took part from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Ministry of the National Economy and the Central Bank of Oman;

(d) Saudi Arabia (3-7 July 2004) in Riyadh. A team composed of 43 people took part from the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority and the Saudi Investment Group;

(e) The Syrian Arab Republic (11-15 July 2004) in Damascus. A team composed of 30 individuals took part from the State Planning Commission, the Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade, the Ministry of Local Government, the Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank of Syria and the Central Bureau of Statistics.

57. The objective of the workshops was to introduce FDI and ways of calculating it, and increase the capacities of the Government bodies of participating countries to collate, publish and analyse data on FDI on the basis of a methodology and international standards.

58. The third phase includes the design of databases. A database using the information provided in the balance sheets of companies and projects which receive FDI in each country, will enable ESCWA member countries to take decisions and formulate development policies based on precise statistics from national sources. This phase also covers the preparation of studies on the FDI policies of each country, with the aim of analysing those policies and presenting recommendations to support FDI flows in those countries.

## **VI. FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN (BEIJING, SEPTEMBER 1995)**

### **A. OVERVIEW**

59. The Fourth World Conference on Women took place in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995. Since then, in designing its general strategic framework for the empowerment and advancement of women, ESCWA has endeavoured to embody more frameworks in a programme of work, priorities and activities for

follow-up to implementation of Conference outcomes and, in particular, the Beijing Declaration,<sup>18</sup> the Platform for Action,<sup>19</sup> and the outcome document issued at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (Beijing +5) entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty first century". ESCWA also endeavoured to observe the regional dimension represented in the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the year 2005.

60. As part of action aimed at the empowerment of women; reducing gender discrimination in various arenas; the inclusion of those issues in general policies; assisting countries in expediting implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the year 2005 and the Arab Programme of Work, which deals with three dimensions of that Plan, namely, poverty, political participation and partnership within the family, ESCWA adopted resolution 240 (XXII), dated 17 April 2003, concerning the establishment within ESCWA of a Committee on Women. Pursuant to that resolution in October 2003, the ESCWA Executive Secretary set up a Centre for Women within its organizational framework. That Centre acts as the secretariat of the Committee on Women and is responsible for follow-up to implementation of the Beijing recommendations, with the aim of empowering women and improving their status in the region.

#### B. THE PARTICIPATION OF ESCWA IN PREPARATION AND FOLLOW-UP

61. The ESCWA Centre for Women organized a regional preparatory meeting at the expert level, in order to review what has been implemented in the 10 years since the Beijing Conference. That meeting was held in Beirut in December 2003, with the objective of determining the definitive steps that must be adopted in order to accelerate implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action 10 years after its adoption. It included monitoring the progress made in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women, through a review study and appraisal of achievements; identification of the obstacles to reaching the goals which were set in 1995; the proposal of practical solutions to those problems; and the formulation of the necessary future measures and initiatives for reaching goals in respect of the advancement of Arab women. That summary of the progress achieved was based on responses to a brief questionnaire that ESCWA sent to national women's associations in Arab countries in February 2003.

62. In preparation for the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, devoted to a review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the final document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, which took place from 28 February to 11 March 2005, ESCWA, in coordination with a Division for the Advancement of Women in New York and the United Nations regional commissions, took part on formulating the unified comprehensive questionnaire sent to Governments by the United Nations on implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the final document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000). ESCWA translated that unified questionnaire into Arabic and distributed it to the Arab countries. It was reviewed during the first session of the Committee on Women. ESCWA devised a detailed schedule for member countries to adhere to in their responses to the questionnaire, in order to enable it to prepare, on the basis of those responses, the Arab Regional Report of the Ten Year Review of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, which was submitted to the Division for the Advancement of Women in New York and taken into consideration in the preparation of the world report.

63. The Committee on Women held its inaugural session immediately after the meeting of experts on 4 and 5 December 2003. The outcomes and recommendations of the expert group meeting were presented, to be mentioned in the report.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (United Nations publications, sales number 93.VI.13), Chapter I, Report I, Appendix I.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. Appendix II.

<sup>20</sup> ESCWA, *Report of the Committee on Women at its first Session*, (E/ESCWA/WOM/2003/IG.1/9).

64. In order to formulate a comprehensive programme in preparation for Beijing +10, which includes the provision to Arab countries of technical assistance in preparing their national reports and the organization of national, regional and sub-regional workshops to discuss those reports in preparation for the drafting of the Arab regional report, ESCWA, through the Centre for Women, formulated and implemented a comprehensive programme in preparation for the review and evaluation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the final document, of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. It includes the following activities:

(a) Distribution of the unified comprehensive questionnaire sent to Governments by the United Nations on implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the final document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000) in Arabic, after it was translated by ESCWA. That questionnaire was distributed to official delegations at the first session of the Committee on Women, where one session was devoted to clarifying its articles, in order to facilitate its completion by member countries;

(b) The sending of a letter, dated 24 February 2004, to ministries concerned with women's affairs and national committees on women which included a note on the need to reply to the questionnaire by the date specified, namely, 30 April 2004, in order to allow sufficient time for the preparation of the Arab regional report for the Ten Year Review and Appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and to present it at the Arab Regional Conference Ten Years After Beijing: Call for Peace, which was held in Beirut from 8 to 10 July 2004;

(c) Preparation of a regional report containing a critical analysis of the status of Arab women based on core indicators and the data available to ESCWA at the time, for issuance in the last quarter of 2003;<sup>21</sup>

(d) Provision of technical assistance to a number of member countries, as requested, in preparing national reports on implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

(e) The holding of a training session on the way to prepare responses to the questionnaire that was sent to Governments, at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States in Cairo from 28 March to 1 April 2004. The session was organized in cooperation with the League of Arab States, the United Nations Development Fund for Women-Regional Office for Arab Countries, and the Arab Training and Research Centre for Women. Most Arab countries took part;

(f) The holding in Beirut on 6 and 7 December 2003 of a regional workshop on mainstreaming the gender perspective in policies, plans and programmes. Its objective was to raise the awareness of decision makers of the importance of mainstreaming the gender perspective in policies and programmes, in order to achieve equality, enhance skills and build capacities. It focused on national and regional achievements; the exchange of information and successful experiences; and the need to create a climate suitable for the process of mainstreaming gender issues in policies, plans and programmes, thereby leading to the establishment of democracy. A further focus was the need to mainstream the concept of gender in educational programmes and policies to eradicate poverty and enhance human rights. The workshop was organized in cooperation with the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women in New York. Partial funding was provided by UNESCO regional office in Beirut;<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> ESCWA, *Report of the Centre for Arab Women 2003*, (E/ESCWA/SDD/2003/28).

<sup>22</sup> ESCWA, *Report of the workshop on gender mainstreaming in policies, plans and programmes*, (E/ESCWA/SDD/2003/WG.6/3).



- (g) Preparation of the Arab regional report of the Ten-Year Review and Appraisal of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>23</sup> which was entirely based on country responses to the questionnaire sent to Governments; review of the report at the expert group meeting to follow up the Fourth World Conference on Women, which took place at the same time as the second session of the Conference on Women. When the world appraisal report on implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Division for the Advancement of Women took into account the regional dimension for the Arab and other regions;
- (h) The Second Session of the Committee on Women was held in Beirut in July 2004. It focused on monitoring and appraising implementation of the Platform for Action ten years after the holding of the conference Beijing. On that basis, it issued the Beirut Declaration on Arab Women Ten Years after Beijing: Call for Peace, which explained the steps that Arab countries must take in order to overcome the obstacles and face the challenges that hinder the rapid implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action for the advancement and empowerment of Arab women. It represents a road map to be pursued and gives an insight into the national mechanisms relating to women which, when drafting general policies on gender issues, assist in achieving equality. ESCWA will thereby have helped member countries to outline future steps to advance the Beijing Platform for Action;
- (i) Translation of the Arab Regional Report and the Beirut Declaration into English and, with financing from the International Government Agency for Francophonía, into French;
- (j) Creating a special website on the Centre for Women domain to include the Arab regional report, all the documents of the expert group meeting, the report of the Second Session of the Committee on Women, the Beirut Declaration and the country responses to the questionnaire sent to Governments;
- (k) Participation in the high-level discussion of regional dimensions for implementation of the recommendations of the Beijing conference and in the high-level discussion on activating national mechanisms relating to women, both of which were held during the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York in March 2005. Participation was effected by reviewing the most important achievements of the Arab countries in the past decade, the obstacles they faced in implementing first the Beijing Platform for Action and then the regional Platform, the challenges to be faced in the forthcoming decade and future action on the basis of the Beirut Declaration;
- (l) Distribution of the Arab regional report and the report of the Committee on Women on its second session, together with the Beirut Declaration, as one of the documents of the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women;
- (m) The organization, in cooperation with the League of Arab States, of an expert-level meeting of the Arab Group, which is participating in the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York, in order to unify positions on the controversial issues included in the final document proposed by the session Chairman, which has yet to be issued;
- (n) The release in Cairo in March 2005 and Beirut in April 2005, of the ESCWA report entitled, Arab Women: Beijing +10, in the Arabic and English languages (French edition at the press);
- (o) The issuance of national profiles on the status of women in selected Arab countries, which are based on the most important indicators and gender-disaggregated data, and review the Arab Plan of Action priorities implemented (poverty, political participation and partnership in the family), which are among the 12 definitive fields set out in the Beijing Platform for Action.

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<sup>23</sup> ESCWA. *Arab Regional Ten-Year Review and Appraisal of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action*, (E/ESCWA/WOM/2004/IG.1/3).

## VII. WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (COPENHAGEN, MARCH 1995)

### A. OVERVIEW

65. In 1995, pursuant to one of the recommendations of WSSD, the United Nations General Assembly decided to convene a special session in 2000 in order to review and appraise implementation of the Summit outcome, and to adopt a resolution concerning further initiatives for social development. The twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, entitled "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world", was held in Geneva from 26 to 30 June 2000.

66. The General Assembly adopted a final document entitled "Further initiatives for social development", a policy declaration that reaffirms the Copenhagen Declaration<sup>24</sup> and Programme of Action,<sup>25</sup> and reviews and assesses implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. It also contains proposals for further initiatives for social development.

67. Since the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action were issued in 1995, ESCWA has followed a development course that is based on respect for all human rights, including the right to development and well-being, takes into consideration the culture, history and particularities of the Arab region and aims to assist ESCWA member countries in formulating integrated social policies to promote steady and well-balanced social and economic development that will help poor persons and improve quality of life.

### B. THE PARTICIPATION OF ESCWA IN PREPARATION AND FOLLOW-UP

68. ESCWA takes action to support Government capacities to formulate integrated social policy based on strengthened popular participation in decision-making processes and, as part of such integrated social policies, the implementation and evaluation of decisions.

69. Currently, ESCWA member countries suffer from a wide variety of social problems caused by, inter alia, lack of political stability, poor economic performance, excessive dependence on oil revenue, lack of equality, inadequate education and health systems, poor administrative systems and lack of transparency, compounded by war, foreign intervention and the impact of globalization.

70. All those problems, and others, have made unemployment and poverty more widespread and exacerbated social divisions and unequal resource distribution. As a result, development in the Arab region is constrained while, at the same time, rates of population growth continue to rise.

71. With a view to alleviating those social ills and the resultant negative challenges, ESCWA has chosen to focus on identifying strategic social goals, some of the most important of which are support for human development policies, the eradication of poverty, the reduction of unemployment, the building of national capacities, the development of the local community and the achievement of equality. Since 2001, with the Millennium Development Goals in mind, one of the main priorities of ESCWA has been to incorporate those goals into a framework for the implementation of a comprehensive project to support integrated social policies in the Arab region.

72. Set forth below is a brief summary of the progress made by ESCWA in the past 10 years in carrying out the Copenhagen Programme of Action.

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<sup>24</sup> *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995, A/CONF.166/9, chap. I, resolution I, annex I.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid, annex II.*

1. *The creation of an economic, political, social and cultural environment that will enable people to achieve social development*

73. ESCWA is using an integrated approach based on the right of the Arab people to development. As part of that approach, ESCWA works on the principle of using an early-warning system to bring attention to social problems. That system is based on expert studies and meetings and seminars that are held in member countries with Governments and non-governmental institutions. As part of the integrated social policies project, ESCWA provides member countries with technical support, in order to identify needs and support policies that will help to create an integrated and cohesive economic, social, political and cultural framework to facilitate social development processes.

2. *The eradication of poverty within a specific time frame*

74. ESCWA has been working to eradicate poverty in the Arab region since 1995. To that end, it has adopted a multi-dimensional programme of work that includes the strengthening of regional cooperation, the building of local capacities and the exchange of expertise between the countries of the region. The programme for the eradication of poverty is being carried out in the following three phases:

(a) The first phase began with the conducting of a number of studies aimed at identifying means of measuring poverty indicators and their causes in the Arab region;

(b) The second phase includes the evaluation of national poverty eradication policies;

(c) The third phase requires support for mechanisms that further the eradication of poverty, including micro-credit facilities, the development of the local community and social funds.

3. *The provision of employment opportunities for all those who are willing and able to work*

75. ESCWA has carried out a number of technical studies with a view to directing the attention of decision makers in the Arab region to the impact of globalization on the social and economic situation in the region and, in particular, on the future of the workforce. Those studies have contained recommendations for an integrated set of measures for dealing with unemployment and underemployment, particularly among youth. Many countries have begun to introduce policies and programmes at the national level with a view to training and employing unemployed persons, while other countries have adopted ESCWA initiatives relating to local community development and the training of trainers.

4. *The promotion of social integration based on the protection of all human rights*

76. ESCWA is implementing several programmes that support youth and women and promote their integration into the social framework, avoid their marginalization and empower them to take part in the decision-making process. It is also implementing projects in support of disabled persons and those with special needs, which include training and providing such persons with information, the holding of seminars, and the provision of suitable employment opportunities.

5. *The promotion of equality and equity between women and men*

77. ESCWA has established a centre for Arab women as part of its programme to support social development policies and with a view to creating awareness among decision makers of the role of Arab women in achieving social and economic development and the importance of the equal rights of women and men and, in particular, with respect to political rights. ESCWA has provided the countries of the region with technical support with respect to gender statistics, the provision to women of credit facilities and policies that promote the interests of poor persons and women, and has assisted voluntary organizations in extending their health, education, training and employment services to women.

*6. The provision of basic education and primary health care to all members of society*

78. Given the inability of the basic education systems in the Arab region to respond to the need to develop the skills and capacities required to eradicate poverty and globalization-related unemployment, ESCWA has carried out a study on globalization and labour markets in the region; and a further study on the response to globalization and policies to promote skills attainment and reduce unemployment, in which the focus was on making more generally available opportunities for education, training, employment and health care.

*7. The acceleration of development in the least developed countries*

79. ESCWA has devoted a great deal of attention to the least developed countries of the region, including Yemen, and countries with special needs, including Palestine. It systematically provides technical assistance and holds working sessions in the fields of support for local community development, building capacities and skills, the eradication of poverty and the provision of education and training to ensure appropriate employment opportunities.

*8. The inclusion of social development goals in structural adjustment programmes*

80. Between 1996 and 1999, ESCWA completed a set of studies which stressed the importance of including social development goals in structural adjustment programmes, with the aim of alerting decision makers to the negative impact of such programmes when they are based solely on economic considerations and pay insufficient attention to social impacts and factors. As a result, several countries in the region, including Egypt, Jordan and Yemen, which have implemented economic structural adjustment programmes, have begun to establish social funds to reduce the negative economic effect of those programmes.

*9. The increase of resources allocated to social development*

81. The attention paid by ESCWA to social policies, local community development and the eradication of poverty and unemployment has helped to increase the awareness of decision makers of the need for increased funding for related activities. It has also encouraged the voluntary and private sectors to fund a number of ESCWA training and local community development projects.

*10. The increase of cooperation for social development through United Nations activities and programmes*

82. In 1997, ESCWA established the Committee on Social Development, which includes Government-level representatives from all ESCWA member countries. It meets at regular sessions held once every two years, in order to adopt the ESCWA programme of work in the field of social development and to evaluate the achievements of the previous programme. To date, five sessions of the Committee have been held.

83. ESCWA also established the regional consultative committee for non-governmental organizations, with a view to supporting and strengthening cooperation between Governments, non-governmental institutions and international organizations, including United Nations bodies, in order to achieve social development goals in the Arab region.

84. The commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development follow a strategic trend towards integrated social policies. That is the trend that has been adopted by ESCWA in those of its programmes that are aimed at achieving a balance between economic and social policies, with the purpose of realizing integrated development in the countries of the region.

**VIII. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION  
AND DEVELOPMENT (ICPD)  
(CAIRO, 1994)**

**A. OVERVIEW**

85. The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) was held in Cairo from 5 to 13 September 1994. It represented a turn towards a new method, that affirms the numerous links between population and development while focusing on meeting the needs of individual men and women as a right. In accordance with those principals, human beings have become both the beneficiary and the agent of development. As a result, population policies have become part of a new ideological framework that consecrates the principles of human rights and establishes that the quality rather than the size of population is the basis for determining population policies. On the basis of those principles, ICPD adopted a Programme of Action<sup>26</sup> which includes policies aimed at enhancing the quality of human life and measures to encourage countries to adopt and include such policies in their cultural and social frameworks. The Conference stressed that the current concept of population policies did not in any way involve reducing of population by achieving demographic objectives. They should, rather, be considered as an inalienable part of the overall development issue.

86. In keeping with the principles mentioned above, population activity began to extend its theoretical and structural premises beyond the premises and principles adopted by ICPD, which affirmed the importance of mainstreaming population issues in the development process by formulating and adopting comprehensive national policies with the principal aim of achieving objectives at the individual and family level. Development has become an integrated process that is balanced with economic growth and aims to improve the quality of human life. Those policies are based on making no differentiation between population issues and development issues, on the basis that the population factor is part of the development process and can not only be included on the basis of per capita income. Population issues are an integral part of the process, affecting and being affected by it.

**B. THE PARTICIPATION OF ESCWA IN PREPARATION AND FOLLOW-UP**

87. On the basis of ICPD core principles, ESCWA increased its efforts to promote the importance of adopting integrated and appropriate policies that will transcend previous strategies, which relied on a division of the constituents of development. In accordance with the Amman and Beirut Declarations, ESCWA considered that the question of mainstreaming population issues in development, and the formulation of integrated policies aimed at improving human life is a strategic question necessitated by the current status of development.

88. As part of its review of the achievements realized at Arab country level, and in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund and the League of Arab States, ESCWA organized the Regional Arab Population Forum, which was held in Beirut from 19 to 21 November 2004, marking the tenth anniversary of ICPD. In the light of the principles, objectives and strategic frameworks of ICPD, which have comprised the general framework for population policies in the past 10 years, the Forum focused on a number of important issues, including the structural changes in population in the Arab world, the basic challenges in the relationship between population and development, and the response to those changes at the policy level. Against that background, the aims of the Forum were the following: (a) to assess Arab region achievements in the first 10 years since the Cairo Conference with regard to the implementation of regional and global agreements, by countries pursuant to the ICPD Programme of Action; (b) to review lessons learned and best practices that can be replicated in other countries in the region; (c) to accelerate the implementation of agreements and honour financial undertakings, ensuring compliance with the principles of the Conference, and presenting an integrated vision of the relationship between population, poverty, development and youth.

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<sup>26</sup> Report of the International Conference on Population and Development. Cairo, 5-13 September 1994 (United Nations publications, sale number A.95.XIII.18) Chapter One, Resolution I, attachment.

The Forum was also concerned with addressing and analysing the prevailing challenges of the region, the most important of which are the high levels of maternal mortality and illnesses caused by reproductive health, barriers to the enforcement of reproductive rights and gender equality. The Forum also covered potential sources of support and partnership, the mobilization of financial resources, and the transfer and use of knowledge and ICT.

89. The Forum brought together prominent experts and representatives from the executive and legislative branches of Government agencies, academic and research centres, regional and international organizations, NGOs and the private sector. In addition to the opening and closing presentations, the Forum comprised five thematic sessions, namely, (a) a review of population and development issues in the past decade and future trends; (b) population, poverty and gender; (c) reproductive health and reproductive rights; (d) Arab youth: opportunities and challenges; (e) demographic transition: process and implications.

90. ESCWA prepared for the Forum a background paper on the links between population, development and poverty at the macroeconomic level, which discussed the relationship between the changes that have taken place in the age structure of the population and economic growth and future trends in that relationship.

91. The following background papers were presented at the Forum:

- (a) Progress made towards the achievement of ICPD objectives in the Arab region;
- (b) Partnerships and resource flows in population, reproductive health and developments;
- (c) Population, reproductive health and poverty;
- (d) The links between population, development and poverty at the macroeconomic level;
- (e) Poverty and gender inequality eradication policies in the Arab region;
- (f) Reproductive health and reproductive rights in the Arab region;
- (g) Confronting maternal morbidity and mortality in the Arab countries;
- (h) Youth and adolescence: social, economic and cultural dimensions;
- (i) Youth: reproductive health and reproductive rights in the Arab region;
- (j) The process of demographic transition and its impact in the Arab region;

(k) Population policies and demographic transition in the Arab region with special reference to Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

92. As a side event to the Conference, a group of youth from 11 Arab countries, namely, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Tunisia, took part in discussion groups aimed at producing a set of outcomes and recommendations that will serve to enhance their status. A group of youth took part in a special session which was a side event to the main Forum, entitled Arab Youth: Opportunities and Challenges, where they discussed their interest in submitting a paper summarizing their deliberations. They collectively presented their aspirations and recommendations at the political, social, economic and health levels and affirmed their willingness to participate in assuming responsibility for the process of change.

93. The Arab Population Forum concluded by issuing the Beirut Declaration 2004, in which participants declared their approval of the international community's agreement to adopt the principles, goals and objectives of the 1994 ICPD Programme of Action, and their renewed unswerving commitment to those principles, goals and objectives. Participants renewed their commitment to Principle (5) of the Programme

which states that population-related goals and policies are integral parts of cultural, economic and social development, the principal aim of which is to improve the quality of life of all people. Participants also expressed their satisfaction that the relationship between the ICPD Programme of Action objectives and MDGs was an integrated and interlocking relationship and that the continued achievement of the objectives of the ICPD Programme of Action is, essentially, expressed in achievement of MDGs.

94. The Declaration included a call to Arab Governments to activate population policies and human development strategies as part of the ICPD Programme of Action and develop independent sources of finance. The Declaration also called on civil society and Governments to cooperate more closely in creating a climate conducive to partnership in the field of population and development in a climate of transparency and democracy. It includes an affirmation on the importance of according youth every priority and care and of supporting programmes that aim at meeting their needs, enhance their quality of life and create opportunities for their effective participation. The Declaration referred to the importance of all the partners involved with population and development translating the Forum's recommendations into undertakings and commitments through new programmes and projects. It affirmed the importance of varying financing sources to include national, regional and international sources and the importance of donor countries and institutions honouring the financial commitments which they had given at ICPD.

95. In addition to the Beirut Declaration 2004, which stressed follow-up action in implementing the ICPD Programme of Action, participants adopted a set of recommendations which outlined the general framework for future orientations to ensure achievement of MDGs. Some of the most significant recommendations made at the Arab Population Forum are the following:

(a) The principle of integrating population issues, including reproductive health, poverty, gender, youth and migration, with national development plans and programmes, should be activated in response to actual and potential development needs. Special mention was made of the ESCWA recommendation relating to the importance of strategic relationship between population, development and poverty at the macroeconomic level, and the need to operate on the principle of integrating policies and strategies which can assist in exploiting more fully the demographic window afforded by the changes that are taking place in the age structure of the population. That window is a historic opportunity to ensure economic growth and social justice. It is an unprecedented phenomenon in the Arab region and by its very nature can lead to increased savings and investments, lower unemployment and eradicate poverty;

(b) The role of national population councils should be activated in order to make their contribution one of supervision, guidance and coordination, thereby ensuring the formulation, implementation and monitoring of effective, integrated population policies within the principles, strategic frameworks, goals and objectives provided for in 1994 Cairo Plan of Action, General Assembly resolutions and decisions in 1999, and the Millennium Declaration and by ensuring the streamlining of the relationship between national population councils and the various sectoral ministries.

## **IX. INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE FAMILY (1994)**

### **A. OVERVIEW**

96. In preparation for the Ten Year Review of the International Year of the Family, 1994, and guided by the outcome of the discussions on that matter at the twenty-second session of ESCWA, which was held in Beirut from 14 to 17 April 2003, ESCWA prepared case studies on participation in the Arab family in three selected countries, namely, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen. The studies were based on a questionnaire that focused on certain changes, including level of education and place of residence (town or rural area); age of married couples (youth or elderly persons); income level; and whether or not the wife worked outside the home. It was clear that participation in the Arab family has increased in urban-dwelling nuclear families, young families with a high-level of education and income and families where the wife works outside the home and shares decision-making with her husband.

B. THE PARTICIPATION OF ESCWA IN PREPARATION AND FOLLOW-UP

97. As part of its research into the situation of the Arab family, including the role of women in the family and society, ESCWA prepared studies on personal status laws in the Arab region; national legal frameworks and systems for the protection of the family; and the distribution of roles and responsibilities in the Arab family. It also issued studies on the impact of occupation, war and armed dispute on the situation of the Arab family in Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestine, the Sudan and Yemen.

98. In cooperation with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the League of Arab States and the Arab Family Organization, ESCWA organized the Arab Meeting for the Ten-Year Review of the International Year of the Family, which was held in Beirut from 7 to 9 October 2003. The aim of that Meeting was to provide a forum for Arab experts to discuss experiences in the 10 years since the 1994 Year of the Family, review and evaluate achievements, identify obstacles that have prevented the realization of the goals that were formulated in 1994 and propose practical solutions to those obstacles, and formulate plans and measures for the future, with a view to achieving goals intended to empower the family.

99. The Meeting was attended by Government experts from Arab countries, representatives of the general secretariat of the League of Arab States and the Arab Family Organization, representatives of national family councils and governmental and non-governmental regional and international organizations, and a number of Arab consultants and experts on family issues. At the conclusion of the discussions, recommendations were made concerning support for the cohesion and protection of the Arab family and the review of labour legislation and social guarantees and security.<sup>27</sup>

100. On the occasion of the aforementioned Meeting, and as a side event, ESCWA and the Arab Family Organization signed a memorandum of understanding for cooperation and coordination in all activities in follow-up to the International Year of the Family.

101. The Regional Forum for the Ten-Year Review of the International Year of the Family was held in Amman on 5 and 6 October 2004, under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Rania Al-Abdullah. The Forum was organized by the National Council for Family Affairs in cooperation with ESCWA and in coordination with the League of Arab States and the Arab Family Organization. The Forum was attended by delegates from national family councils, non-governmental organizations and youth organizations from 12 Arab countries, in addition to some 200 experts. The focus was on achievements with respect to the situation of the Arab family, the part played by lack of political stability in increasing social problems and the need to make family cohesion a priority in the Arab region. At the conclusion of the Forum, a number of recommendations were made to national family councils, and ESCWA and the League of Arab States were given responsibility for establishing a database on family-related laws, legislation and policies and making available on the Internet data on the Arab family.

102. ESCWA took part in the Doha International Conference for the Family, which was organized by the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, Qatar, and held in Doha under the aegis of Her Highness Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser Al-Misned on 29 and 30 November 2004. At the Conference, ESCWA presented a working paper prepared jointly with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Regional Office for Education on international instruments and educating children.

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<sup>27</sup> ESCWA, *Report: The Arab Meeting for the Ten-Year Review of the International Year of the Family, Beirut, 7-9 October 2003*, 23 December 2003, (E/ESCWA/SDD/2003/WG.1/19).