

PEACEBUILDING, THE FUTURE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) is the regional arm of the United Nations. As such, it has to play a dual role: firstly, to transfer to and adapt as appropriate for member countries latest world developments and successful practices in the field of sustainable development and enable them to make optimum use thereof; secondly, to bring the aspirations and concerns of those countries to the attention of the international community, thereby ensuring their inclusion for consideration in the formulation of international resolutions.

ESCWA is well aware that the region has long suffered from instability and conflict, which have taken a heavy toll in terms of lives and property and clearly hampered sustainable development. ESCWA has therefore continually stressed the need for the region to maintain development efforts in the face of those long-standing conflicts and instability, which are expected to continue into the foreseeable future, along with their political, economic and social causes.

The 2005 World Summit was convened in order to follow up implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The highest authority in the international community, the Summit, emphasized the interrelated nature of security, development and human rights. In all its efforts to support sustainable development in the region, the Commission was one of the first to focus on the mutual dependency of the issues that plague our turbulent area. While the World Summit on Development called for the establishment of a United Nations peacebuilding commission, ESCWA had already begun, years previously, to sow the seeds of success for such a peacebuilding commission and had established working groups for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of areas affected by conflicts and destruction in the region, namely, Iraq, the occupied Palestinian territories and South Lebanon. ESCWA had made early plans to combine the efforts of those groups into one integrated unit able to address conflict-related issues, including efforts to contain conflicts whenever possible and minimize their adverse effects on development. In all cases, the unit would work towards the achievement of rehabilitation and reconstruction in conflict stricken areas. ESCWA had also planned to add to the functions of that unit, which began in 2006, such issues as building institutional capacities and leadership skills in Government entities, civil society organizations and other entities concerned with monitoring human rights, good governance and popular participation. The United Nations Peacebuilding Commission will be entrusted with tackling all those issues.

In 2005 ESCWA also endeavoured to enhance its role in achieving regional integration through a number of projects aimed at facilitating mobility, trade and economic activity in the countries of the region. To that end, the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq was signed; agreements on road and railway transport had been previously concluded. ESCWA will work to ensure the implementation of those agreements. Furthermore, ESCWA has supported gas and electric power transmission networks between member countries and the preparation of cooperation agreements on the management of shared water resources and, in particular, underground aquifers, which constitute a considerable percentage of regional water resources. Having conducted an in-depth study of the impact of social and environmental technologies, ESCWA was keen to ensure that such agreements would take maximum advantage of the latest innovations in those technologies. Efforts were made in accordance with the Commission's commitment to



the priorities emphasized in repeated ministerial councils, namely, regional integration in the fields of water, energy and technology. Against that background, ESCWA has intensified its efforts to provide assistance to member countries in formulating appropriate social policies and in 2005 published its first report on social policies and a comprehensive study on women's movements in the region, thereby addressing one of the pressing priorities recognized by ministerial councils.

Through a successful partnership with such active players in the region as Government institutions, private sector institutions and civil society organizations, ESCWA was able to double its efforts in the implementation of field projects that have a direct impact on community development. Major field projects included training programmes and human resources capacity-building in Government and civil institutions, in order to make it possible for those resources to achieve necessary advancements in their own communities by making use of the expertise available in the field of administrative development and new technologies.

ESCWA has extended its activities to include coordination with Arab and international official and private sector donors. As a result, the extra-budgetary financial resources available for projects have exceeded \$15 million, which constitutes a landmark in the history of the Commission.

The Commission's efforts have attracted the attention of many entities involved in similar projects. In 2005, ESCWA was granted the Against All Odds award in recognition of its project with CISCO Systems and the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. The award was presented at the CISCO conference on local and regional networking academies. ESCWA also received a commendation from the High-level Approving Panel of the UN 21 Awards for excellence in executing a project, in cooperation with Abdellatif Jamil Ltd., on building the technical and economic capacity of women's non-governmental organizations in Saudi Arabia.

It should be noted that all those efforts, combined with high quality performance in the implementation of the Commission's work programme, have been carried out within the available resources of the budget approved by the General Assembly.

In conclusion, it should be noted that 2005 was a year of unrest and tension in Lebanon, following the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri. Under those circumstances, ESCWA had to adjust its work in order to be able to cope with the new situation, ensure the security and safety of its staff and guarantee the uninterrupted delivery of its services in support of the region's development efforts, thereby upholding the watchword that it has been seeking to promote in an area suffering from tension and conflict, namely, "Peacebuilding, the Future and Human Rights", in the face of conflicts and uncertainties.

Mervat Tallawy

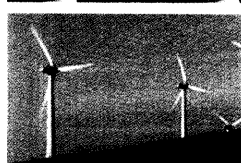
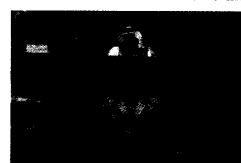
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations
Executive Secretary of ESCWA

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Introduction

This report reviews the most significant developments and achievements of ESCWA during 2005, which was quite an eventful year both regionally and internationally. The assassination of the former Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafic Hariri, has had serious security consequences that have obliged ESCWA to take security precautions with respect to its premises and the work hours of its staff. Yet the Commission has efficiently continued to deliver its services to member countries, and was able to implement the work programme, completing various achievements that have contributed to development efforts in the region.

In 2005, the most relevant event for ESCWA was the hosting of its twenty-third Session by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in Damascus in May 2005. A number of resolutions were adopted, the most important of which was the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq. The Memorandum is a complementary instrument to the two agreements adopted by ESCWA on international roads and railways and their implementation programmes. The Session is naturally the subject of chapter I of this Report, while chapter II is dedicated to a review of governmental, inter-governmental and advisory meetings held in 2005.

As a reminder that ESCWA publishes a series of comprehensive periodicals, chapter III reviews major publications and provides summaries of the contents, which deal with major economic and social achievements in regional sustainable development, including achievements related to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The year was also characterized by the publication of the first issue of the report: Towards integrated social policies in Arab Countries: Framework and comparative analysis, which is a comprehensive report on social policies, plans for their application and their impact on Arab societies.

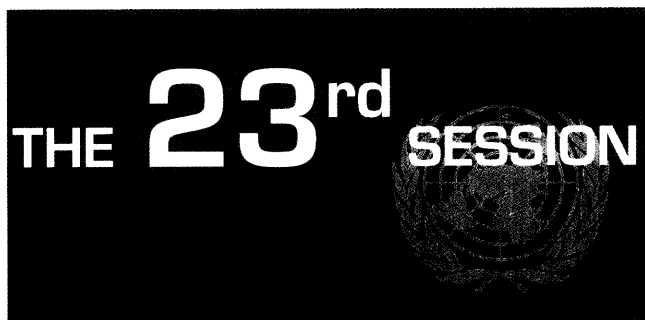
Chapter IV reviews the main development issues in the work of the Commission in 2005, including the establishment of integrated regional water resource management methodology and training experts from member countries to adopt that approach; the contribution of the Commission to the preparation of a regional work programme for member countries during the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS); the contribution of the Commission to the preparation of the regional report on the achievements of member countries, which will be submitted to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development at its forthcoming session; and the contribution of ESCWA to rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in conflict areas, which included projects worth more than \$8 million.

Chapters V and VI address the achievements of the substantive divisions in implementing the work programme, including advisory services provided by the Commission to its member countries and services provided in the field of public administration.

Chapter VII reviews the Commission's information-related activities, which were of particular note in 2005, in view of the numerous tasks undertaken by the Executive Secretary, which have exceeded the regular duties of the post and have firmly established the work, role and influence of ESCWA in the region, and for which the Executive Secretary has been commended on several occasions.

It is hoped that this Report will provide as faithful as possible an image of the work and achievements of ESCWA in various areas of concern to member countries, as mentioned in the Commission's multidisciplinary work programme, which aims to provide support to member countries in their endeavours to implement development projects and programmes.

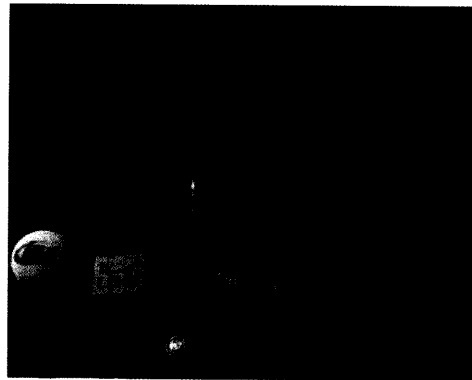
**TOWARDS IMPROVED
REGIONAL COOPERATION**



CHAPTER I

**The twenty-third Session of the Economic and Social Commission
for Western Asia(Damascus, 9-12 May 2005)**

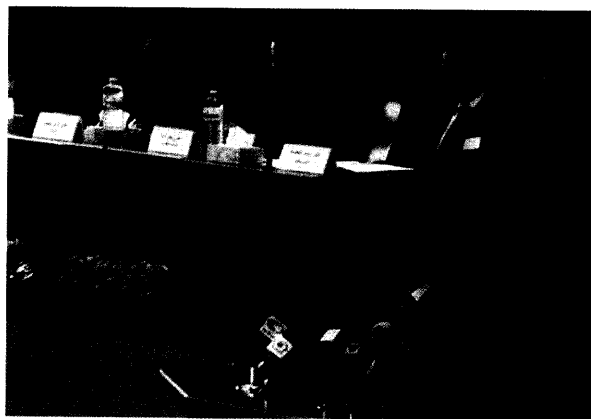
The twenty-third ESCWA Session constituted an important turning point in the developmental path of the Commission. Urgent economic and social issues facing member countries were discussed, together with possible ways of tackling them. The Session was held in Damascus from 9 to 12 May 2005, under the auspices of the President of the Syrian Arab Republic, Mr. Bashar Al-Assad. The comprehensive agenda of the Session contained topics related to security and peace and their impact on economic and social development; MDGs and how they can be realized; and social policies in member countries. Participants included ministerial delegations representing ESCWA member countries. Participating Ministers included Ms. Fatima Mohamed Al-Balushi, Minister of Social Affairs of Bahrain; Mr. Salam Awda Al-Maleki, Minister of Transport of Iraq; Mr. Saad Eddine Kharma, Minister of Transport and Communications of Palestine; Mr. Adel Hamiyah, Minister of Public Works and Transport of Lebanon; Mr. Essam Sharaf, Minister of Transport of Egypt; Mr. Jubara Bin Eid Al-Suraiseri, Minister of Transport of Saudi Arabia; and Mr. Abdalla Al-Dardari, Director of the State Planning Commission of the Syrian Arab Republic and Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs. Participants also included representatives from United Nations Member States not members of ESCWA and representatives of United Nations organizations, governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and donor institutions.



Ms. Mervat Tallawy making the inaugural statement

Three high-level round tables were held during the Session, one of which, chaired by Mr. Taleb Al-Rifai, Regional Director of the International Labour Organization office in Beirut, addressed the impact of security and peace on economic and social development. Participants included heads of delegation and high-level speakers, including Mr. Mahmoud Abdel-Fadeel, Mr. Maan Bashour and Mr. Nabil Sokkar. Pursuant to the Secretary-General's initiative regarding the formation of a high-level group to address issues of international security and peace, ESCWA has begun to hold meetings for decision-makers and academics on that issue. During the discussion, it was felt that insecurity and instability could only be tackled by establishing all aspects of security, namely, national security, food security and knowledge security; and by establishing a new social contract based on a common understanding between the various social groups which would strengthen society and lead to the formulation of a new set of social and insurance policies that would guarantee a minimum level of dignified life.

Participants also felt that it was necessary to direct domestic wealth towards productive projects, and to encourage investment. The public sector should provide necessary guarantees for private investment. ESCWA was invited to intensify its efforts in the field of capacity-building and providing necessary support to countries of the region that were suffering from instability. Participants called upon member countries, donor Governments and civil society institutions to contribute to the rehabilitation and reconstruction process in those countries.



Mr. Sayyid Muhammad Al-Husayn, Minister of Finance, who inaugurated the Session on behalf of the President of the Syrian Arab Republic, Mr. Bashar Al-Assad, and the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic; Mr. Essam Sharaf, Minister of Transport of Egypt, who chaired the Session; Ms. Mervat Tallawy and Mr. Khalid Abdul Hamid, Secretary of the Commission.

A round table was held on the implementation of MDGs, chaired by Mr. Jubara Bin Eid Al-Suraiseri, Minister of Transport of Saudi Arabia. Participants included Mr. Adib Neima, Mrs. Heba Nassar, and the ESCWA MDG coordinator. They discussed a report that highlights the progress that was made in implementing MDGs in the Arab region in 2004 and addresses the challenges that continue to face ESCWA member countries, notwithstanding the progress they have made in recent years. The challenges include the political impact of the continued occupation of Arab territory; political and security instability; slow economic growth in most countries of the region; weak commitment to, and poor management of, development policies; the conflict between the requirements of population growth with those of structural economic reform; and the prevalence of social traditions which impede women's participation in the development process and deny them access to political life.



Part of the audience

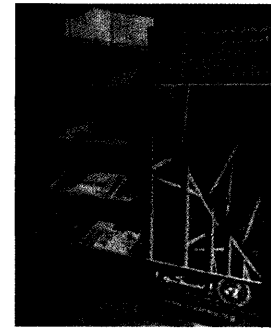
A round table on social policies was chaired by Ms. Fatima Al-Balushi, Minister of Social Affairs of Bahrain. Participants included Mr. Karim Farman and the Officer-in-Charge of the Social Development Division at ESCWA. They reviewed a document describing the efforts made by ESCWA in support of the plans by member countries to formulate integrated social policies and the related multi-phase ESCWA programme. The first phase of that programme has been completed; it covered the

identification of success criteria for social policies in a number of countries, and the activities that the Commission planned to execute in collaboration with member countries during the second phase of the programme, which aims to identify the various needs of member countries in that respect. Participants appreciated the progress made in implementation of the integrated social policies project and called on member countries to collaborate with the Commission in the implementation of the next phase of the project.

In the course of the Session, the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq was signed. ESCWA member countries depend heavily on maritime transport in their foreign trade given the advantages of this sector, which include large capacity and low cost relative to other modes of transport.

Also discussed during the Session were means of enhancing cooperation and coordination between ESCWA and the League of Arab States (LAS) in a number of priority activities in member countries. The discussion addressed the importance of depending on the resources of both bodies in providing services to member countries; it was also stressed that the true value of the two organizations resided in their relative advantages. It was felt that participants from Arab states not members of ESCWA should take part in the activities of the Commission, because the wider political framework gave the countries of the region no option but to integrate.

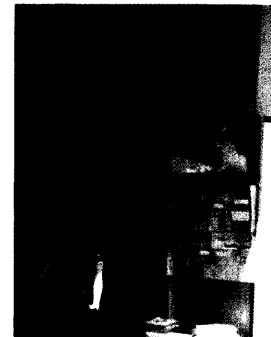
An exhibition was organized during the Session to showcase the major field projects undertaken by ESCWA during the biennium 2003-2004 and the projects which it plans to implement in future. The exhibition highlighted the role of the private corporations and institutions which finance these projects. The exhibition also focused on the four priorities of the Arab region, namely, water and energy; globalization and issues relating to the World Trade Organization (WTO); information and communication technologies; and social policies. The exhibition also included a presentation of ESCWA work and comments thereon in the press.



[ESCWA participates in the exhibition]

The Commission concluded the Session with the adoption of a set of resolutions, of which the following are some of the most important:

- The Damascus Declaration on the Realization of the Millennium Development Goals
- The establishment of the ESCWA Technology Centre
- The establishment of a Regional Mechanism for Building Capacities to Manage Shared Water Resources
- The Adoption of the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Field of Maritime Transport in the Arab Mashreq
- The Selection of the routes to be given priority in implementation of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq



**The Damascus Declaration on the Realization of the Millennium Development Goals
The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,**

Guided by the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which was adopted by Heads of State and Government by General Assembly resolution 55/2 of 2000,

Recognizing the importance of meeting the major challenge currently facing the region, namely, making globalization a positive force that promotes the interests of the peoples of the region by creating a shared future based on the highest and most equitable humanitarian principles,

Noting that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the region is a national responsibility, both with respect to identifying national development goals and targets and to adopting the general policies necessary to ensure that those goals and targets are achieved by 2015,

Stressing the need for the developed countries to honour their commitments towards developing countries, which represent the second part of the development partnership equation, and further affirming the relationship between the liberalization of international trade, opportunities for developing countries to gain access to global markets, and MDGs, while emphasizing the importance of coordination between developing countries,

Affirming the importance of intensifying cooperation between the countries of the region in order to realize MDGs by 2015,

Commending the efforts exerted by the secretariat in that field, and the report on the progress made towards realizing MDGs in the ESCWA region,

1. Affirms the importance of increasing economic growth and with a view to realizing MDGs, linking that growth to the formulation of strategies for the eradication of poverty and unemployment and the achievement of social integration, including by adopting the general policies necessary in respect of labour, social security, the improvement of living conditions, particularly for vulnerable persons, the eradication of corruption and the strengthening of accountability,

2. Urges member countries to coordinate at the regional level and work together in order to formulate coordinated and unified Arab positions in advance of the meeting that will be held in New York in September 2005, five years after the United Nations Millennium Declaration, and to update MDG monitoring and follow-up systems;

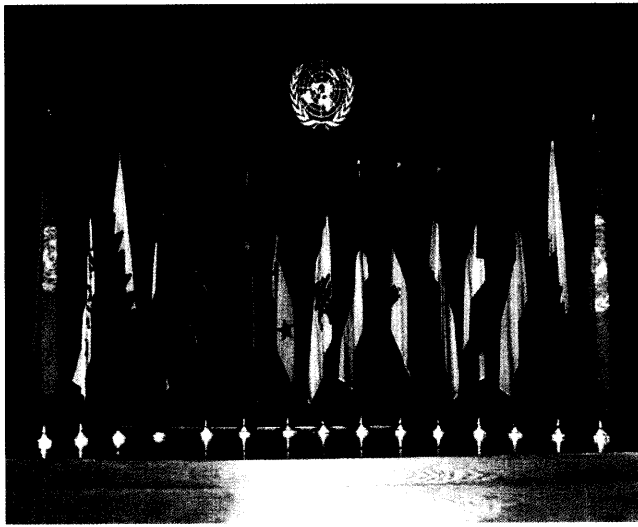
3. Calls upon the United Nations institutions that are working in the ESCWA region to coordinate and work together in order to meet regional needs and to focus, in the meetings of the regional coordination group organized by ESCWA, on the progress of the region towards the realization of those goals;

4. Requests the Executive Secretary to provide support to member countries in realizing MDGs, including by building national capacities to formulate policies, monitor the progress made, measure its impact and prepare regional reports;

5. Requests the Executive Secretary to submit a report on the progress made in this regard to the Commission at its twenty-fourth session.

[Women in the work of ESCWA]

Participants did not forget Arab women. In line with relevant Arab and international conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, they called upon member countries to adopt policies that take into consideration gender issues; formulate national policies to empower women; and set up necessary institutional frameworks for the implementation thereof, with a view to mainstreaming gender issues.

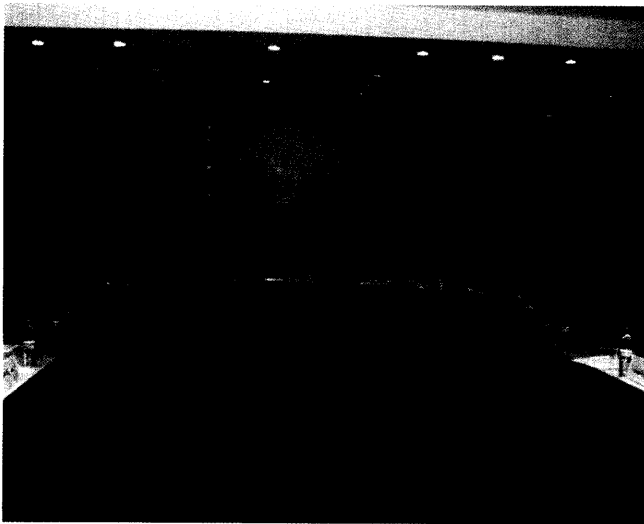


CHAPTER II

The Advisory Committee, intergovernmental and other committees

- A. The Advisory Committee
- B. Intergovernmental committees
- C. The Advisory Committee on Science and Technology Development and Technology Innovation

A. The Advisory Committee



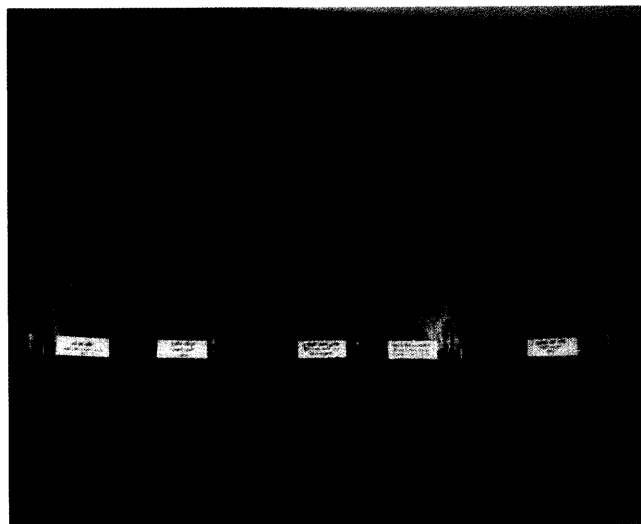
The Advisory Committee was established pursuant to ESCWA resolution 175 (XV) of 18 May 1989, concerning the strengthening of the role and performance of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. The Committee consists of accredited ambassadors in the host country, or their deputies, and a high-level representative of the host country. Periodic meetings held by the Advisory Committee constitute a forum for communication and consultation between member countries and ESCWA about issues tackled by the Commission during the periods between ministerial sessions. Those meetings provide an opportunity to discuss and exchange views, and contribute to the support of economic and social development plans in member countries. The meetings also provide an opportunity to review urgent issues and challenges faced by member countries and to implement the resolutions of the Commission.

In 2005, the Advisory Committee followed up closely the preparations for the twenty-third Session of the Commission and the resolutions adopted thereat and, in particular, the Damascus Declaration on the Realization of the Millennium Development Goals. It also followed up the implementation of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq, the adoption of the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq, the resolution on the establishment of the ESCWA Technology Centre, the establishment of a Regional Mechanism for Building Capacities to Manage Shared Water Resources, the provision of assistance to countries embroiled in conflict, and the enhancing of cooperation between ESCWA and the LAS.

At the three meetings it held in 2005, the Advisory Committee continued to show concern about developments taking place in Iraq and the occupied Palestinian territories, and the impact of those developments on the economic and social conditions of Iraqis and Palestinians, in addition to their impact on the development process in the region. The Committee looked closely at the outcome of the 2005 World Summit, which was held as part of the sixtieth Session of the General Assembly, in connection with the restructuring, reorganization and reform of the Secretariat. The work of the Advisory Committee also included follow-up of the mechanisms for cooperation between the United Nations and the LAS; participation in WSIS; the Arab position at the sixth WTO ministerial conference; the outcomes of the official missions of the Executive Secretary; the periodicals and studies issued by ESCWA; and the advisory and technical services provided by ESCWA to its member countries.

At the twenty-third Session, a number of countries had expressed a desire to activate and strengthen the role of the Advisory Committee in respect of a number of issues, including programme planning and preparing the session agendas. To that end, deputy ministers, who act as liaison officers with ESCWA in their countries, were called upon to attend the meetings of the Committee, together with the accredited ambassadors of ESCWA member countries in the host country.

B. Intergovernmental committees



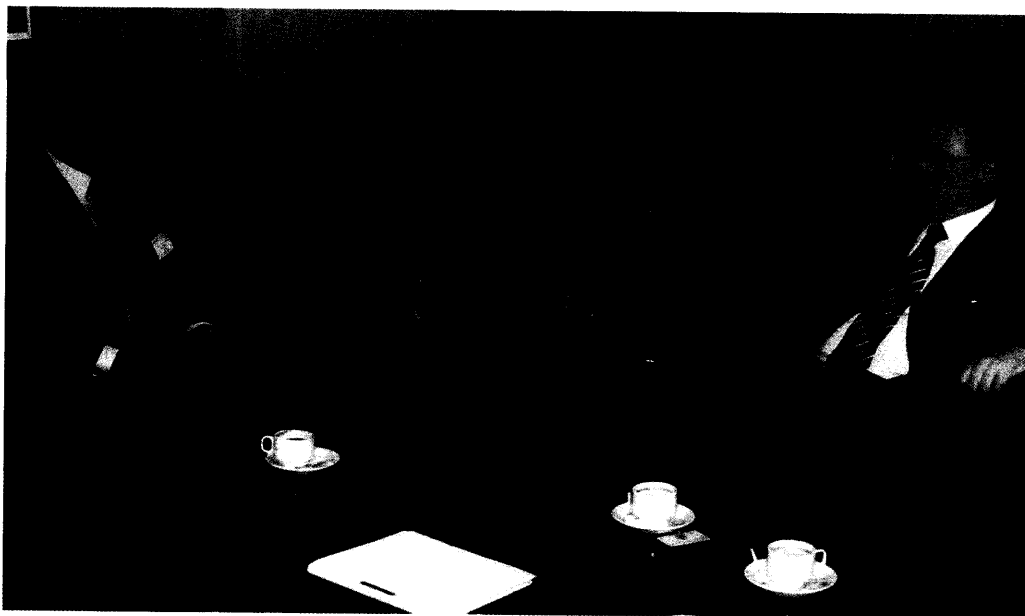
Committee on Social Development (Fifth session, Beirut, March 2005)

The Committee on Social Development is responsible for coordinating social development-related activities in the ESCWA region, in accordance with the economic conditions, culture, social structure and needs of those countries in terms of economic, social and cultural development. The Committee contributes to the identification and formulation of priorities related to social development in the ESCWA work programme, and to the monitoring of progress in the implementation of that programme. It proposes the measures necessary to enhance the process of social development; follows up international and regional conferences related to its field of work; encourages member countries to participate therein; and coordinates the implementation of relevant resolutions and recommendations.

The fifth session of the Committee on Social Development was held in Beirut in March 2005. The agenda of the session included a review of the reports submitted to the Committee on the following subjects: integrated social policies; community development policies and programmes; population and development policies; urban development; housing; statistics and social indicators. The agenda also included items related to following up the implementation of recommendations made at the Committee's fourth session, and the assessment of the progress made in carrying out activities related to social development in the period between the fourth and the fifth sessions. The agenda also included items on the ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2004-2005, in addition to proposals related to the ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2006-2007 in the area of social development.

At its fifth session, the Committee made a number of recommendations on various agenda items and, in particular, on the following:

- The need to define the concept and conditions of social policies, in view of the fact that such policies are related to the social and economic role of the State and the importance of political commitment as a precondition for the formulation and implementation of any integrated social policy;
- Emphasis on the principle of partnership between the State and civil society institutions in the formulation and implementation of social development policies, and on action to build the capacity of those institutions and enable them to play their role in that partnership;
- The importance of sustaining the approach of ESCWA, based on the local community, as the basis on which development priorities and options could be identified; the importance of formulating policies and programmes that would focus the central authority on the allocation of resources and the mobilization of capabilities necessary for the implementation of local community decisions;
- The importance of establishing a population observatory to monitor demographic changes in ESCWA member countries, in support for the "Population Window - Opportunity for Development" project, which was launched by ESCWA in collaboration with national population councils and representatives from sectoral ministries and in coordination with the Cairo Demographic Center;

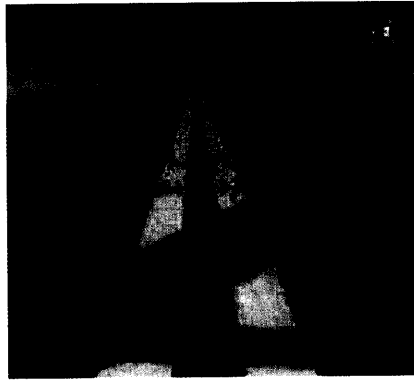


Side discussion between Ms. Tallawy, Mr. Abdalla Al-Dardari, Director of the State Planning Commission of the Syrian Arab Republic, and Lebanese media figure Georges Guerdahi, social development advisor to ESCWA

Committee on Transport (Sixth session, Beirut, March 2005)

The Committee on Transport held its sixth session in Beirut in March 2005. Discussions focused on, inter alia, the identification of priority routes in the implementation of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq; regional cooperation with respect to road traffic safety; and the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq. The Committee recommended the adoption of draft resolutions on all those three topics.

The Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq entered into force in October 2003. By the end of 2005, seven members had ratified it, namely, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. In implementation of the Agreement, ESCWA decided to commission the north-south M 45 routes, linking the Syrian Arab Republic, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, with a total length of 2,228 kilometres; and the east-west M 40 route linking Iraq, Jordan, occupied Palestinian territories and Egypt, with a total length of 3,712 kilometres.



The Committee on Transport also recommended that ESCWA should adopt a resolution on regional cooperation in the field of road traffic safety, given that the global road safety crisis has become a most serious problem which claims a considerable number of lives and causes many casualties.

In addition to the above-mentioned draft resolutions, the Committee adopted other recommendations on the following issues:

- The accelerated formulation of a plan of action for the implementation of the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq;
- Support member countries in the establishment and activation of national committees for the facilitation of transport and trade;
- A request to member countries to supply the Committee with the necessary CD on the regional transport information system.

The session was attended by delegations from 12 ESCWA member countries. Heads of delegations included Mr. Laith Hani Dababneh, Head of the Jordanian delegation; Mr. Salem El-Zaabi, head of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates; Mr. Aref Al-Mansouri, Deputy Manager of Financial and Administrative Affairs in Bahrain; Mr. Abdul-Aziz Abdul-Rahman Al-Awhali, head of the Saudi delegation; Mr. Ihab Mawaldi, head of the Syrian delegation; Mr. Khaled Mohammad Al-Mashhadani, Second Secretary of the Embassy of Iraq in Lebanon; Mr. Farid Al-Gharabli, head of the Palestinian delegation; Mr. Ahmad Almas, head of the Qatari delegation; Mr. Mubarak Al-Gharib, head of the Kuwaiti delegation; Mr. Abdul-Hafeez Al-Qaisi, head of the Lebanese delegation; Mr. Hasan Selim, head of the Egyptian delegation; and Mr. Ali Al-Metafi, head of the Yemeni delegation.

Land transport

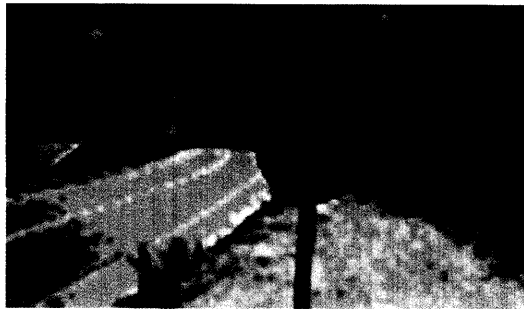
The Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq entered into force in May 2005, following its ratification by four countries, namely, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the

Syrian Arab Republic. In its seventh session, in 2006, the Committee on Transport will discuss a plan of action for the implementation of that agreement.

Under the plan of action for the implementation of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq, adopted in 2004, five countries, namely Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, have begun to put in place international road signs and to introduce some road upgrading, especially on priority routes M 40 (Iraq - Jordan - occupied Palestinian territories - Egypt), and M 45 (Syrian Arab Republic - Jordan - Saudi Arabia - Yemen).

The five United Nations regional commissions participate in the implementation of the project, financed from the United Nations Development Account, which aims to build the capacities necessary for the development of interregional land and land-sea transport linkages. ESCWA plays the role of the general coordinator in that project. Agreement has been reached on interregional linkages to connect ESCWA member countries to Europe and the remaining Asian countries on the one hand, and those connecting Africa to Asia and Europe on the other hand.

In the field of traffic safety, ESCWA has prepared a detailed assessment of the current situation of traffic safety in eight countries in the region, in preparation for the United Nations Global Road Safety Week, which is scheduled to be held from 23 to 29 April 2007. ESCWA will be responsible for regional coordination for the Week.



The technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade and Economic Globalization in the Countries of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (Fourth session, Beirut, March 2005)

The Committee held its fourth session in Beirut in March 2005. Discussions covered a number of issues on the Doha Development Agenda, which was established by WTO. Discussions also covered developments in foreign trade and economic globalization, including trade negotiations in the period between the fifth WTO Ministerial Conference and the conclusion of the July package, which ESCWA took the initiative of translating into Arabic. The Committee also discussed issues of concern to Arab countries, including agriculture, the access to markets of non-agricultural products, trade facilitation, trade in services and trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights.

The Committee stressed the importance of ongoing negotiations on modalities to reduce customs on agricultural and non-agricultural goods, the need for the countries of the region to be aware of the implications of such reductions on those goods and of special and preferential treatment.

The discussions of the Committee also concentrated on such major issues as trade facilitation and, in particular, articles 5, 8 and 10 of the 1994 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and the financial implications of the rehabilitation of custom facilities and procedures. Discussions also addressed issues related to Least Developed Countries (LDCs), other issues related to countries that are net importers of food, and the need to enhance coordination between Arab countries in all fields.

C. Consultative Committee on Scientific and Technological Development and Technological Innovation (Second session, Damascus, November 2004)



The second session of the ESCWA Consultative Committee on Scientific and Technological Development and Technological Innovation was held in November 2004, following the Second Regional Preparatory Conference for WSIS in Damascus. The Consultative Committee discussed many issues in the course of two sessions, one on the establishment of research and development (R&D) networks, and another on information and communication technologies (ICT).

In the first session, recent experience of the establishment and management of R&D networks were discussed, as well as ways to face difficulties encountered in the implementation of that kind of project in ESCWA member countries. The second session discussed the progress made in implementing the recommendations made by the Committee at its first session, held in Beirut on 1 and 2 December 2003. The Committee also discussed the main features of the Regional Plan of Action for Building the Information Society, which was submitted to the Second Regional Preparatory Conference for WSIS.

The most important recommendations made by the Committee included the following:

- The possibility should be studied of establishing centres of excellence in priority areas in economic and social development plans. Such centres could mobilize regional and international cooperation in response to the urgent developmental needs of member countries, with a view to increasing productivity and competitiveness;
- The regional plan of action submitted to the Second Regional Preparatory Conference for WSIS should be adopted, together with appropriate partnership mechanisms.



CHAPTER III

Major publications

- A. Survey of economic and social developments in the ESCWA region 2005
- B. Report of development goals in the Arab region 2005: an important turning point in the process of monitoring and reporting the Millennium Development Goals in the region
- C. Annual review of developments in the field of globalization and regional integration in ESCWA member countries 2005
- D. Towards integrated social policies in Arab countries: frame work and comparative analysis

A. Survey of economic and social developments in the ESCWA region 2005



"Strategies for development out of crisis conditions" is the theme of the 2005 Survey, which is based on three aspects of development categories, namely, economic, social and sustainable development. The impact of the current oil boom on region-wide development remains significantly below potential, because of comparatively low levels of economic integration and sub-optimal macroeconomic structures in most countries of the region. Any rise in productivity is hampered by institutional inadequacy caused partly by conflict and the lack of internal creative or absorptive capacity in the small, fragmented markets of the region. Analyses based on long-term trends suggest that the performance of ESCWA economies since the early 1980s has been well below potential.

Sustainability can only be achieved in the region through an appropriate employment environment, which may be reached either by linking investment to growth or by re-allocating available resources according to austerity conditions. In a region like ESCWA, so rich in resources, change may take place in a more regionally-integrated business environment, and if business and employment succeed in reducing tension and putting an end to conflicts. Economic policies should therefore focus on achieving regional cooperation, promoting investment and creating job opportunities, while social policies should concentrate on satisfying the needs and aspirations of people and allowing them to enjoy their full rights as citizens and participants. Sustainable development policies should focus on finding ways to compensate for the environmental degradation. In the context of increased oil demand, especially from China and India, oil prices have continued to rise worldwide, causing a rise in oil revenue, which promised a similar substantial rise in economic growth in the ESCWA region in 2004 for the second successive year, with the exception of in areas suffering from occupation and/or security unrest.

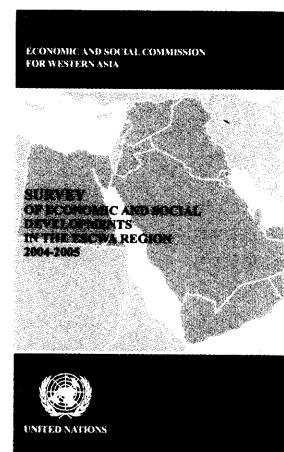
Higher production rates and prices led to increased aggregate oil revenues, which were close to \$213 billion in 2004, constituting a 29 per cent increase over 2003 figures. That amount represents 40 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) of ESCWA member countries, and 55 per cent of the GDP of the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Inflation pressures remained insignificant in all countries, and because financial surpluses exceeded their usual limits, a slight decrease in public debt levels in GCC countries was witnessed in some cases. However, unemployment rates remained very high, especially in the more diversified economies, as increases in oil prices were not conducive to investment that would create new job opportunities. Youth unemployment remains a particularly significant challenge facing decision-makers in all countries of the region.

The growth rates registered in GCC States would permit those countries to stimulate economic growth that would benefit the whole ESCWA region. To that end, oil revenues should be geared to more productive investment with more value-added. Economic policies should enhance the creation of new job opportunities and capital inflow to the region.

The path of sustainable development in the region may be changed and levels of development may be scaled up by adopting a specific set of adequate policies based mainly on human rights and, in particular, the right to work and the right to development. Furthermore, it is widely recognized that instability and growth are inversely proportionate. Despite some exaggeration in the assessment of the impact of unexpected oil profits on present growth, an analysis based on long-term trends shows that, since the early 1980s, the performance of ESCWA economies has fallen dramatically short of achieving the expected results. The reasons for labour productivity deterioration and the long recession prevailing in the ESCWA region may not be restricted to fluctuations in oil prices, wars or regional conflicts. While it is true that a prerequisite for the revival of the regional economy is the end of military, political and security conflicts in the region, and the creation of a politically, economically and socially stable environment, equally favourable to local and foreign investment, that does not seem to provide an adequate explanation for what takes place when external shocks are linked to economic activities, or the reason for the devaluation of real savings, or savings kept by countries, despite the rise in oil revenues. While recession and expansion may be attributed to external shocks, the magnitude and duration of any of them may be defined by the suitability of the economic policy that is being pursued and the efficiency of decision-making institutions. Based on long-term trends that go back to 2002, the long and heavy recession witnessed by the region raises serious questions about the macroeconomic systems, the institutions and policies which have been adopted in the region.

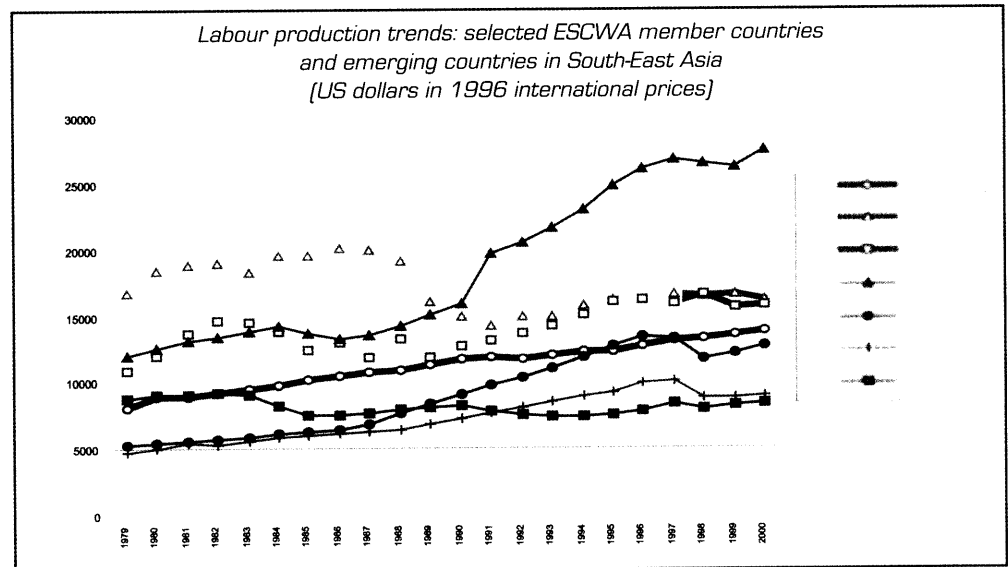
The problem in managing the macro economy is the existence of a specific set of national and regional economic constraints. The most important of those constraints are those related to the development of institutions that bring a certain degree of geopolitical risk. Two major elements affect the course of development, namely, war and uncertainty, which may be attributed to political, social and security tensions; and the successful distribution of income and wealth between the various social classes. To a large extent, ESCWA economies grow from the outside: they are influenced by the price of goods, and by political, social and security tensions. Thus, when oil prices fall, there is a commensurate fall in growth.

While intraregional trade represents only 8 per cent of the region's international trade, and while risks vary considerably from one member country to another, the whole region appears to contain only small, vulnerable markets, subject to geopolitical considerations, and unable to achieve more than 2 per cent of world income. Given that no imminent solution to the problem of instability seems forthcoming in the area, the region's resources should be redirected, as appropriate and on the basis of equality, towards welfare and economic efficiency. Under current conditions of conflict and political unrest, the region might not be in a position to incur the transitional social costs implied in the policy measures of Government non-interference, especially in view of its inherent structural weakness, which may be attributed to its small size. Country and regional discrepancies in the ESCWA region



are so sharp, that oil-exporting countries have managed over the past three years to export what amounts to \$830 billion in value in constant prices, while other countries remain in dire need of capital.

In December 2005, an expert group meeting was held in order to exchange the views of ESCWA and regional experts about the composition and content of the Survey. During that meeting, the experts discussed strong points, content, scope and methodology of the publication. Recommendations were made for the improvement of the Survey findings in general. In addition, participants discussed the human rights approach to economic analysis, based on the principle of the right to development. The meeting focused on the explanation of the principle at the regional context and stressed the need to study how the principle could be applied through specific topics related to the ESCWA region.

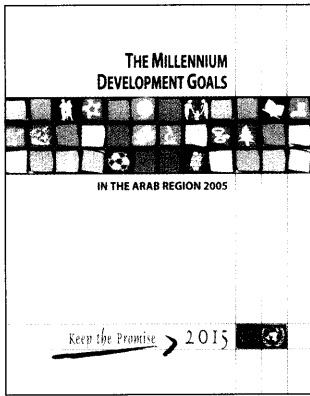


B. Report of the Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region 2005: An Important Turning Point in the Process of Monitoring and Reporting Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region



The Millennium Development Goals report 2005, which was overseen by the ESCWA Statistics Coordination Unit, is the result of concerted efforts made by United Nations organizations operating in the region. The report was prepared for the September 2005 World Summit held as part of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, where world leaders met to review the progress made in and follow-up to international development goals, including MDGs, and ways of securing the necessary financing for implementation of those goals.

The Report represents a turning point in the monitoring and reporting process carried out by ESCWA in order to measure the progress made in the achievement of MDGs. It is the first report of its kind, in that a group of United Nations organizations and agencies have contributed to its preparation and financing. In addition to ESCWA, those organizations include: the United Nations Development Programme-Subregional Resource Facility for the Arab States (UNDP-SURF); the United Nations Environment Programme - Regional Office for West Asia (UNEP-ROWA); the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR); the United Nations Children's Fund - Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa (UNICEF-MENARO); the United Nations Development Fund for Women - Western Asia Regional Office (UNIFEM-WARO); the International Labour Organization - Regional Office for Arab States (ILO-ROAS); the United Nations Population Fund; the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS); the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States (UNESCO/UNEDBAS); the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS); the World Food Programme - Regional Bureau for the Middle East and North Africa (WFP-RBMENA); and the World Health Organization - East Mediterranean Regional Office (WHO-EMRO).



The Report covers all Arab countries. It differs from the previous Report in the way data are presented and analysed. Major trends, challenges and issues facing the implementation of MDGs in the region are highlighted by addressing the subregional level or groups of Arab countries and, in particular, the Mashreq countries (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, occupied Palestinian territories and the Syrian Arab Republic); the Maghreb countries (Algeria, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco and Tunisia); the GCC countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates); and LDCs (Comoros, Djibouti, Mauritania, Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen).

Despite the scarcity and poor quality of statistical data, including data disaggregated gender, the 2005 Report attempts to expand the mainstreaming of the gender dimension beyond the third Goal, which is confined to one target and four indicators of gender equality and the empowerment of women. That 2005 Report includes the gender gap in education, illiteracy, employment and parliamentary representation. Recognizing that gender equality is a multidimensional issue, and in order to achieve a monitoring and reporting process that gives greater consideration to gender issues, the Report has included analysis based on that dimension wherever possible.

The Report shows that the Arab region has made progress in many MDG-related fields. However, that progress varies from one group of countries to another, from one country to another, and from one Goal to another. Without coordinated efforts and increased resources, it will be impossible to eradicate poverty and hunger from the Arab region as a whole, let alone from LDCs. In 2002, notwithstanding the limited progress made since 1990, some 20 per cent of children of primary education age had not enrolled in school and some 44 million females over 15 years of age were illiterate. Despite the fact that gender equality in school enrolment has generally improved at all levels of education, absolute rates in many countries are still low for boys and girls alike. Gains in the field of education were not translated into the economic and political empowerment of women in most countries of the region: the rates of women's economic and political participation are among the lowest worldwide. Furthermore, efforts must be coordinated and resources must be increased in order to ensure provision of the services needed by the region, including the necessary infrastructure for transport and water management, environmental sustainability, the harmonization of trade policies and procedures, and the settlement of conflicts and peace-building.

LDCs face many challenges in achieving the eight MDGs, particularly in terms of financing, basic services and infrastructure. Poverty, unemployment and emigration are basic issues of concern in those countries. In Iraq and occupied Palestinian territories, which constitute an exception from the general trend in the Arab Mashreq, the realization of MDGs is linked to the end of conflict and occupation. Efforts and resources in those two countries should be focused on building peace and establishing efficient public institutions and on strengthening civil society institutions and economic development. GCC countries, however, possess the necessary resources for achieving goals far beyond the limits defined in MDGs, but the question of sustainability, whether economic, environmental or social, assumes serious importance in those States.

Despite the varying level of progress towards the realization of MDGs, Arab countries face a number of common issues and challenges that fall under major elements of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, namely peace and security; eradication of poverty; development; establishing regional partnership to enhance regional integration; respect for human rights; democracy and good governance; and environmental protection.

The Report was published in Arabic and English, and was issued through national statistical offices in all the Arab countries; LAS; a number of research centres and academic circles in the region; various regional development organizations; the media; and more than 25 United Nations organizations, including regional commissions, specialized agencies and national

offices. Interested public may access the Report free of charge on the ESCWA Internet site:

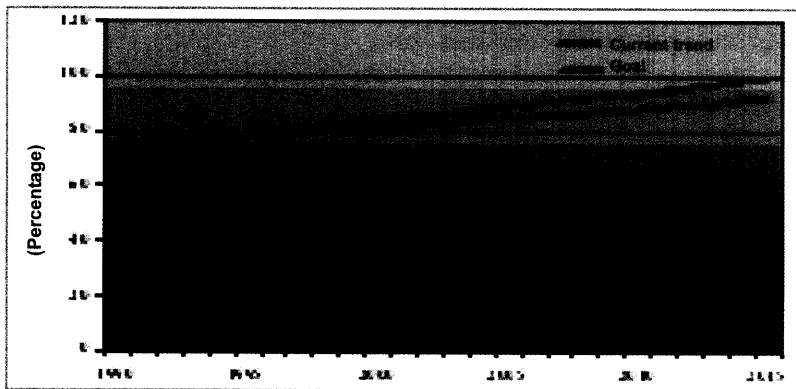
Arabic version: <http://www.escwa.org.lb/information/publications/edit/upload/scu-05-3-a.pdf>.

English version: <http://www.escwa.org.lb/information/publications/edit/upload/scu-05-3-rev1.pdf>.

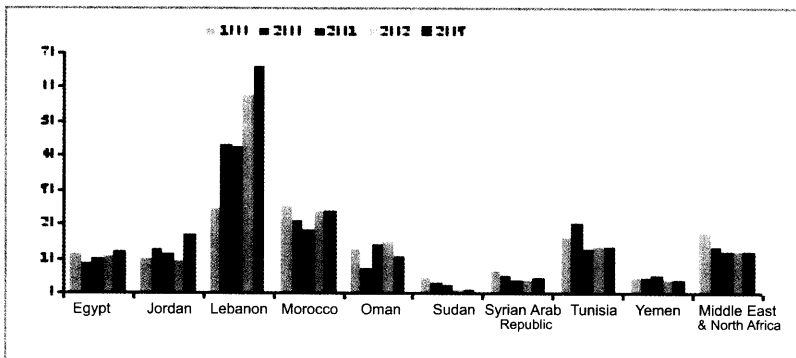
ESCWA has designed a special form to get feedback from its partners and all parties interested in the Report, with a view to improving the MDG monitoring and reporting process in the region. The bilingual two-page form addresses in Arabic and English a number of questions about the quality of data, the analysis and information contained in the Report, how easy they are to use and how useful, and how far the Goals have been realized.

The preparation of the Report was a successful instance of cooperation between United Nations agencies and an opportunity to derive a number of lessons that may be used in future to improve the MDG monitoring and reporting process and strengthen collaboration between United Nations agencies in the region.

More than 1,000 persons have visited the site of the summary of the Report in Arabic; some 400 have visited the site of the English summary. Some 500 persons have visited the full Report in both languages, up to March 2006, the day this publication was prepared.



Ensuring universal primary education for children in the Arab region by 2015



Total debt service as a percentage of goods and service exports and net foreign income, 1999-2003

C. Annual Review of Developments in the Field of Globalization and Regional Integration in the ESCWA Region 2005



The purpose of the fourth issue of the Annual Review of Developments in the Field of Globalization and Regional Integration in the ESCWA Region 2005, is to analyse the extent, on the one hand, to which the Arab economy is part of the world economy and on the other hand, of economic integration between Arab countries. This issue reviews the progress made by Arab countries towards integration in the world economy, and towards accelerating Arab economic integration. The publication is addressed mainly to decision-makers in Arab countries, researchers, academics and all those who are interested in the globalization economy and regional integration.

A slight improvement was noted in 2004 in some indicators related to globalization and regional cooperation in the Arab region. However, the participation of the region in the world economy remains low. Taking the area and population into consideration, the GDP of the Arab region, which accounts for 10.2 per cent of the world area and contains 4.8 per cent of the world population, has never exceeded 2.1 per cent of world GDP. The Arab countries account only for 3.5 per cent of total foreign trade. Their share of world foreign direct investment (FDI) was 1.9 per cent in 2004, compared to 1.5 per cent in 2003. The oil sector remains the most important sector in terms of the region's contribution to oil reserves and production. Oil production rates increased in 2004 to account for 31.2 per cent of world production, compared to 26.3 per cent in 2003. Oil reserves, however, declined to 55.5 per cent of world reserves, against 56.7 per cent in 2003. Natural gas production rates declined to 12 per cent of world production in 2004, as compared with 16.9 per cent in 2003.

Following lengthy negotiations, Saudi Arabia joined WTO, and became the 149th member, and the twelfth Arab country to join WTO. In 2004, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya was granted observer status, while Algeria, Lebanon, the Sudan and Yemen are still at the nego-

tiation stage. While regional integration is acceptable under WTO, new trends have recently emerged, based perhaps on political considerations, calling for the conclusion of partnerships and bilateral free trade agreements between developing and developed countries, as is the case in Euro-Mediterranean partnership agreements and the free trade agreements between the United States of America and some Arab countries, which is why bilateral agreements should not be allowed to exceed the efforts made towards Arab regional integration.

In 2004, four Arab countries joined the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA), namely Mauritania, Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen, bringing the total number of countries joining the area to 19. As part of that arrangement, Arab goods have recently been exempted from all custom charges, which increased the value of Arab intraregional trade from \$41.1 billion in 2003 to \$57.4 billion in 2004. The ratio of intraregional trade to foreign trade consequently increased from 7.8 to 8.8 per cent in 2004. However, that ratio, which represents a high percentage, remains low compared to similar ratios in other regional agglomerations.

Arab intraregional investment also increased considerably in 2004, growing by more than 53 per cent, from \$3.8 billion in 2003 to \$5.9 billion in 2004. Thus, during the period 1985-2004, the balance of Arab intraregional investment amounted to \$35.9 billion. The ratio of intraregional Arab investment to FDI registered a high of 48.2 per cent in 2004, which means that almost half of all FDI in the Arab countries represent Arab investment.

**1. Annual Review of Developments in the Field of Globalization:
selected indicators for regional integration
between Arab countries 2001-2004**

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004
Ratio of intraregional to foreign trade	7.5	8.1	7.8	8.8
Ratio of intraregional investment to total FDI	34.3	36.0	39.6	48.2
Intraregional tourism as a percentage of total tourism	40.4	44.6	45.4	..
Country development assistance as a percentage of GDP	1.37	1.67	1.44	..
Intraregional expatriate remittances as a percentage of GDP	4.4	4.9	5.7	6.1

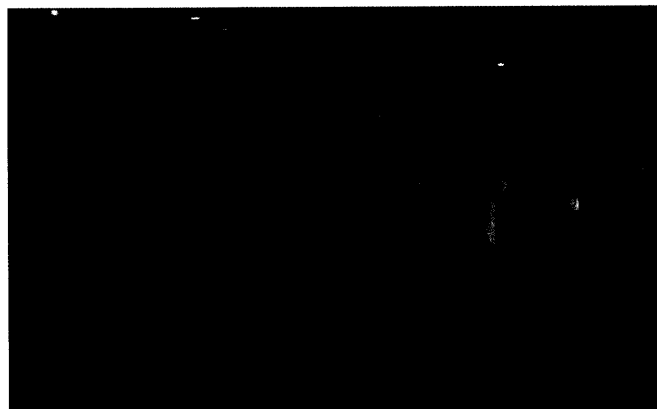
The value of expatriate remittances increased by some 8 per cent between 2003 and 2004 to reach \$9,900 million in 2004. Such remittances accounted for 6 per cent of Arab country GDP in 2004, compared to 5.7 per cent in 2003. Expatriate labour remittances in some Arab countries, including Jordan, accounted for 19.2 per cent of GDP. Official intraregional development assistance reached some \$3.4 billion in 2003. Intraregional Arab tourism grew substantially in 2004, which was one of the best years for that industry.

Electricity network linkage projects also made important gains. A specific plan was formulated to accelerate and strengthen the linkage of Arab networks. The Board of Arab Electricity Ministers was entrusted with the establishment of a mechanism for cooperation with the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, in order to assist LDCs in upgrading their electricity networks in preparation for their linkage process with other Arab countries.

In the field of ICT, a comparison between the number of fixed telephone lines and the number of mobile lines per 100 persons shows that Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have exceeded international rates. The rate of personal computers per 100 persons exceeds world rates in six Arab countries, namely, Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The number of Internet users per 10,000 persons is well over world rates in Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar. It is to be noted that in that field, the pace at which Arab countries access the world economy is faster than in other sectors.



*Launching change
Mr. Nazem Abdalla, Chief,
Globalization and Regional
Integration Division, flanked by Mr.
Abulgasim Abdalla,
Deputy Chief, Regional Integration
and Development
Financing Team and Mr. Ali Beru,
representative of the Minister of
Economy and Commerce in
Lebanon*



The Working group

D. Towards integrated social policies in Arab countries: framework and comparative analysis



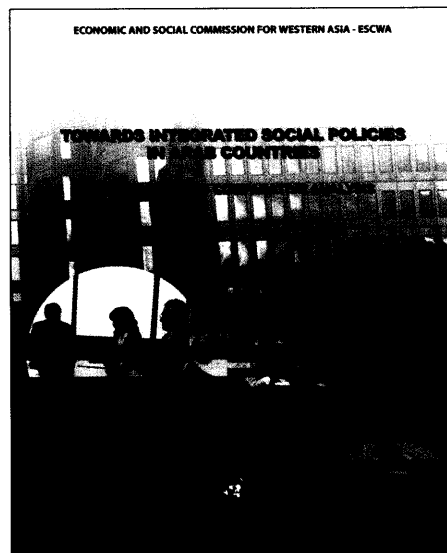
Social policies in ESCWA countries sometimes simply take the form of programmes and projects executed by disparate entities, without any coordination between the ministries concerned, or between those ministries and civil society and private sector institutions. Such programmes and projects do not form part of an integral social vision that relates to the general economic and social framework. That situation has resulted in considerable waste of human and financial resources. Such crises as marginalization, unemployment and poverty have been exacerbated. ESCWA therefore devotes particular attention to social policies as they relate to their cultural, ecological, economic and political environment, with a view to improving the quality of life for all, and encouraging conditions for the integration of social and economic policies. The most important of those conditions are the formulation of a comprehensive and integral vision based on clear goals; the adoption of appropriate coordination mechanisms; the enactment of suitable legislation; the provision of sufficient financial resources; the establishment of democratic institutions; the enhancement of human rights and preservation of basic human freedoms; and the participation of civil society.

Against that background, ESCWA issued a report entitled *Towards integrated social policies in Arab countries: framework and comparative analysis*, and organized an Expert Group Meeting in order to discuss the *Regional Report on Integrated Social Policies*. The meeting was held in Beirut in January 2005. The discussions focused on the identification of the concept and essence of social policies in terms of values, ideologies and structures, the function of social policies in the context of social problems and societal development. ESCWA also undertook to revise and update reports on social policies in member countries which review the impact of those policies on such sectors as health, education, employment, poverty and safety nets. The Commission also reviewed the mechanisms adopted in the formulation of social policies, the conditions for their development and the financial and human resources allocated thereto.

The report contains an analysis of social policies and a presentation of ways to improve their integration and efficiency in Arab countries. The analysis is comparative and covers some developed countries (Canada and Norway), and other countries at varying stages of development (Malaysia and South Korea). The report does not attempt to suggest legislative programmes for any given country, nor does it seek to study social policies in certain countries in particular, it aims rather to: (a) explain what is meant by the concept of social policy; (b) explain the context of social policies and identify what are called the actors; (c) identify the functions of social policies and assess their results in the context of social problems and societal development; (d) describe current models representing the course of those policies as applied by countries included in the analysis and outline a comprehensive model; (e) identify and discuss favourable or unfavourable conditions affecting the formulation and application of the policies; (f) make appropriate recommendations.

The indicators show that, with very few exceptions, the Arab countries covered by the analysis lag behind the countries to which they are compared in every aspect, and the gap is often considerable. Civil society institutions in those Arab countries are limited, and subject to State control; economic development itself is still below people's expectations, with high unemployment rates, especially among youth and educated persons; income levels vary considerably according to the availability of natural resources and, in particular, oil; and illiteracy is widespread, with rates high in many countries. The indicators also show that the quality of education needs further improvement; that health and health care, with some noticeable exceptions, need substantial development; that environmental safety standards constitute a problem that countries of the region must tackle; and that gender inequality in the region is an area that requires considerable attention.

In that context, the report puts forward and discusses a comprehensive model based on intervention in social problems and follow-up of the available development opportunities. That process is a series of stages, each one of which leads to the following stage. The report identifies eight stages, as follows: (a) the identification of problems and opportunities; (b) the identification of issues and priorities; (c) the inclusion of the issues in public agendas; (d) the identification of objectives, goals and alternative approaches; (e) the assessment of alternative approaches; (f) the selection of alternatives; (g) the application of those alternatives; (h) the evaluation of the programme.

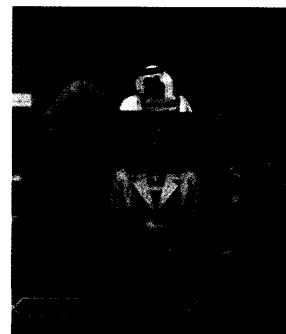


The publication of the regional report *Towards integrated social policies in Arab countries: framework and comparative analysis*, which was the outcome of ESCWA efforts to revise and update reports on social policies in member countries, had a positive impact on the region. During the twenty-third session of the Commission, Bahrain showed particular interest in the project related to social policies, and announced that it was prepared to apply it. That interest materialized in the signature of a memorandum of understanding between ESCWA and the Ministry of Social Development of Bahrain, concerning cooperation and coordination in the field of social policies. The report gained increasing interest in a number of ESCWA member countries: Jordan, Oman, occupied Palestinian territories and Saudi Arabia showed interest in working towards the project, by establishing effective frameworks for the relevant cooperation and coordination, following the example of Bahrain.

Signature of a memorandum of understanding between the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the Ministry of Social Development of Bahrain concerning cooperation and coordination in social policy-related fields (Cairo, 18 December 2005)

Since early 2001, ESCWA has been applying a programme that aims to provide assistance to member countries in designing and implementing integrated social policies. In that context, the Ministry of Social Development of Bahrain expressed its desire to collaborate with ESCWA, with a view to enhancing its capacity to formulate integrated social policies. The memorandum of understanding was signed between ESCWA and that Ministry during the meeting of the Council of Arab Ministers for Social Affairs which was held in Cairo in December 2005. The memorandum contained a number of steps to support integrated social policies in Bahrain, and five major programmes for implementation during the forthcoming biennium. Those programmes focus on the following:

- The establishment of a social policy unit in the Ministry of Social Development;
- The institution of a social information system;
- The preparation of a study on social policies and the role of the Ministry of Social Development;
- The convening of a national conference on social policies and the role of the Ministry of Social Development;
- The preparation and implementation of the capacity-building programme for social policy purposes.



After the signature of the memorandum of understanding.

The Executive Secretary shaking hands with Mrs. Fatima El-Baloushi, Minister of Social Affairs of Bahrain

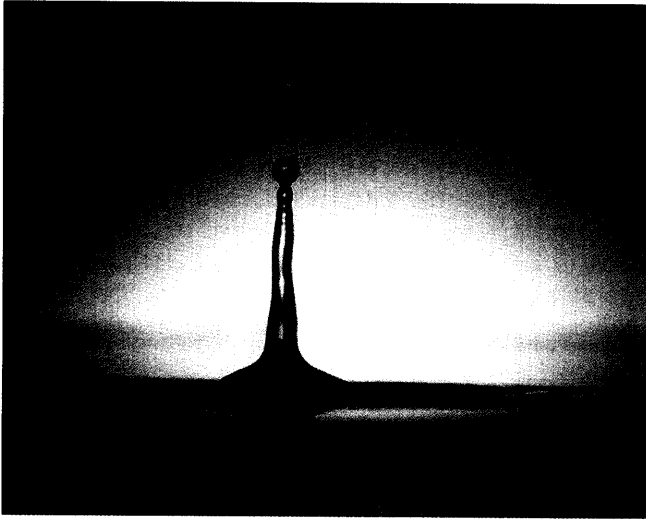


CHAPTER IV

Development issues

- A. Integrated management of water resources
- B. World Summit on the Information Society
- C. Energy for sustainable development
- D. Rehabilitation and reconstruction projects in conflict areas: Iraq, occupied Palestinian territories and South Lebanon
- E. ESCWA adopts the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq

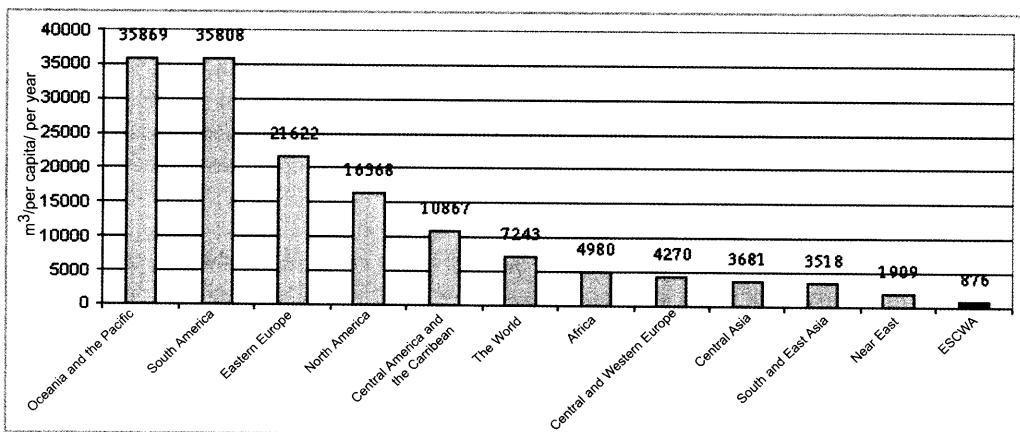
A. Integrated management of water resources

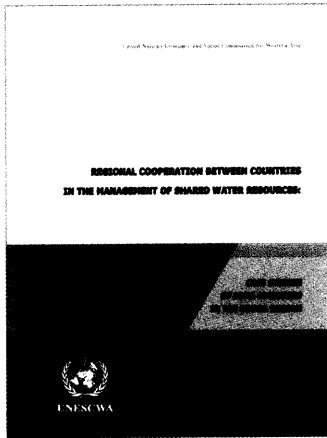


Current situation

The ESCWA region comprises arid and semi-arid zones. It accounts for 3.6 per cent of total world area, and its population represents 2.8 per cent of world population; however, its share of water does not exceed 0.30 per cent of total world water. In the northern part of the region, renewable water is provided by rainfall in springs and rivers; while the southern area, which suffers from water scarcity and the prevalence of a desert environment devoid of rivers or springs, depends on rain water harvesting, ground water, especially from fossil sources, and sea water desalination. Per capita share of water in the ESCWA region is hardly above the poverty line. In six countries of the region the yearly per capita share of water does not exceed 200 cubic metres. Those countries are among the 15 poorest countries in respect of water resources worldwide.

Figure 1. Renewable water resources (m^3 /per capita/year)





The region faces a number of pressures and challenges, manifested in poor water quality in many countries as the result of surface and groundwater contamination, excessive extraction of groundwater and the increased use of unconventional water sources, in addition to increasing population growth and emigration to urban agglomerations. The region also suffers from weak institutional systems, weak financial and technical capacities and inefficient economic mechanisms for the management of water demand. It also suffers from unsustainable and inefficient water use, which exacerbates environmental degradation, especially in the absence of long-term comprehensive water policies founded on proper statistics on supply and demand that take into consideration economic, social, health and environmental factors. The tendency of Governments to adopt food security policies has a direct impact on water security, which is a most important requirement for the national security of the countries of the region, in view of the priority given to the agricultural sector compared to other sectors. Against that background, ESCWA held a seminar on enhancing agricultural productivity through on-farm water use efficiency in November 2005. The purpose of the seminar was to increase awareness of the seriousness of water scarcity in the region and to assess the efficiency of water use, especially in the agricultural sector. Participants at the seminar included representatives of the ministries of agriculture of 10 ESCWA member countries.

Pursuant to the recommendations of the sixth session of the Committee on Water Resources, held in Beirut in December 2004, ESCWA organized a preparatory workshop in collaboration with the Arab Council for Water, in order to prepare a unified Arab position on water issues in the region. ESCWA prepared a comprehensive paper on the situation and on integrated water resource management (IWRM), and provided an assessment of national water strategies. The paper was to be presented to the fourth World Water Forum, held in Mexico in March 2006.

With regard to the assessment of the economic and social impacts of the waves of drought and desertification in the region, ESCWA prepared its first report on water development, which addressed the considerable social and economic influence of drought on the region. The study recommended that any scientific research related to drought should include a test of non-climatic factors affecting the extent to which society is influenced by drought, and put forward plans for mitigating such influence on the societies and economies of ESCWA member countries. The study stressed the need to build institutional and technical capacities, develop a "preparedness" strategy for drought, and install early-warning systems to reduce economic and social damage.

The region also faces a serious strategic challenge, namely, that nearly all its rivers originate outside its borders. In order to meet that challenge, ESCWA has made considerable efforts and organized a series of training programmes on shared water management and the development of negotiating skills; it has also prepared studies on shared water resources, including a most important study on the management of shared water resources in the ESCWA region. The study tackled the topic of cooperation between countries at the regional level in the field of water resource management, and stressed the importance of formulating plans for the integrated management of shared water resources. The study also recommended setting up a joint advisory steering committee involving all the countries concerned, to be entrusted with coordination, follow-up and the exchange of information related to water. The study also recommended the organization of workshops and negotiation sessions among concerned entities, as needed.

IWRM is based on a comprehensive view of water resources, whereby the development and management of water and land should take place in tandem with the development of other relevant natural resources. However, data related to population growth and other economic and social development needs should be taken into consideration, to permit economic and social welfare to be equitably enhanced without sacrificing the sustainability of basic ecological systems. There would be two aspects to integration: the integration of the

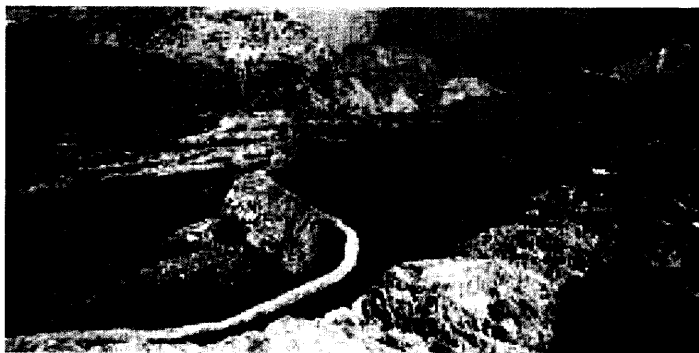
natural system, and the integration of the human system. The integration of the natural system would take place between land and water; between surface and fresh groundwater; between the management of fresh water and the management of littoral areas; between upstream and downstream countries and between fresh water and waste water. Thus, the water basin would become the geographical unit on which any plan for integrated management would rest. As for the human ecological system, integration takes into consideration the role of water in various sectors targeted by economic and social development, by virtue of the multiple uses of water in domestic and civil services, in agriculture, industry, urban development and power generation, with due respect to the life cycle of other creatures living on those resources. That implies, in effect, that there should be integration between different sectors in order to achieve coordination between water policies and other national development policies in all sectors of water use. It also implies that biological systems affected by human activities should be objectively studied. The integration of the human system should also comprise capacity-building, in addition to the integration between official entities, decision-makers, information, students and end-users, in order to enable them to participate in planning, decision-making, monitoring and preserving water resources.

Goals of the ESCWA programme for supporting integrated management

In view of the importance of IWRM in dealing with the severe water crisis in the region, ESCWA was eager to support its member countries in their efforts to prepare national plans for IWRM, as part and parcel of the development of national strategies and also in order to ensure safe drinking water and sewerage for all citizens. To that end, ESCWA has prepared a long-term programme supported by donor entities with the following major goals:

- **Providing support and technical assistance to member countries with a view to adopting and implementing IWRM principles:** In that context, ESCWA has prepared extension programmes on the principles of IWRM, and worked towards assessing national IWRM policies and assisting member countries in the formulation of new national policies based on IWRM. Currently, ESCWA is seeking to assist those countries in their efforts to achieve the institutional and legislative development required for the implementation of IWRM plans at the local and national levels.

- **Building the capacities of member countries to implement IWRM:** ESCWA has prepared a guide to the technical, social, economic, institutional and legal aspects of IWRM. It organized a workshop for the training of trainers on the application



of IWRM guidelines in the Arab region, which was held in Kuwait in May 2005. The workshop was attended by 59 participants from 14 Arab countries, regional organizations and bodies. The purpose of the workshop was to support the capacity-building of specialists, in water and relevant fields, in the application of IWRM in the Arab region. ESCWA also held a seminar on water governance which dealt with the role of stakeholders and civil society institutions in water management. The purpose of the seminar, which took place in Beirut in November

2005, was to strengthen the participation of all parties concerned with water matters in the context of IWRM. In cooperation with regional and international organizations, ESCWA is currently preparing two training guides addressed to Arab parliamentarians and the media explaining the role of each of those groups in the application of IWRM. ESCWA has also prepared a study on the role of rural women in water resource management.

■ **Establishing networks to link water training and research centres to IWRM bodies and institutions in the countries of the region:** Based in ESCWA, the Arab IWRM Network (AWARENET) aims to strengthen cooperation in the region, build IWRM capacities, and call for the application of its principles. The network comprises 50 elements, representing Arab countries and specialized water institutions in those countries. In support of MDGs related to the provision of drinking water and sewerage, ESCWA is in the process of establishing a new network to provide the necessary linkages between drinking water facilities and sewerage facilities, with the aim of transferring expertise, exchanging information and coordinating positions.

■ **Managing shared water resources from an IWRM perspective:** ESCWA has stressed the importance of preparing the region for effective shared water resource management. To that end, it has emphasized the legal aspects of such management by organizing in Lebanon, occupied Palestinian territories and the Syrian Arab Republic capacity-building workshops followed by training workshops in negotiating skills over shared water resources, and is currently conducting a feasibility study on the establishment of a regional



centre for capacity-building in the countries of the region in the field of shared water resource management. In addition, ESCWA organized the Capacity-Building Workshop for Sustainable Utilization, Management and Protection of Internationally Shared Groundwater in the Mediterranean Region. The Workshop was held in Beirut in November 2005. In the course of the Workshop the main findings regarding an analytical study of the tools used in ground water management in the Mediterranean region were presented. The outcome of the Workshop was the exchange of knowledge about sustainable management of shared ground water reservoirs and aquifers, including technical, legal, institutional, social, economic and environmental aspects, and the establishment of a mechanism for cooperation between countries.

Falaj management in Oman

It is worth mentioning that IWRM is deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of the region. Thousands of years ago, Omanis used the Falaj system, which is based on IWRM in the context of an integrated economic, social and environmental system. ESCWA has prepared a study on falaj management systems at the community level. The study explains that most principles of IWRM have been applied in the region for thousands of years. Those principles include the participation of community members in the management of the falaj by acquiring shares therein and participating in the management board. A deputy was elected to be in charge of the falaj management and maintenance and of water apportioning and distribution. The study also highlighted the important role of women in securing water for their families. Visiting the falaj also had a social dimension: it was an occasion for people to

exchange social calls and news, and sometimes an occasion for marriage. The economic dimension was manifested in the pricing and circulation of the falaj share, the selling of shares in public auctions and the contribution to the cost of maintenance of the falaj and water pricing. Those activities were carried out by the deputy and his assistants and other workers who were paid from the revenues of falaj shares or from holders of water rights. The study also established that the falaj, a coherent historic system that has been working successfully for thousands of years, was identical to the concept of IWRM, and was known long before the principles of IWRM were developed.

Falaj scheme



B. World Summit on the Information Society (Geneva 2003 - Tunis 2005)



"We, the representatives of the peoples of the world, have gathered in Tunis from 16-18 November 2005 for this second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society [WSIS] to reiterate our unequivocal support for the Geneva Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action adopted at the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva in December 2003."

[Report of the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, Chapter I, resolutions adopted by the Summit (Tunis phase) Tunis commitment, page 2].

By the adoption of the Declaration of Principles entitled Building the information society: a global challenge in the new millennium, the first phase of WSIS, which was held in Geneva from 10 to 12 December 2003, completed the plan of action complementing the Declaration, and preparations began for the second phase, which was held in Tunis from 16 to 18 November 2005. During the preparation period, intensive efforts were made to reconcile diverging views about two difficult questions, namely, mechanisms for financing the reduction of the digital gap; and Internet management. It was decided in the first phase to postpone any decision on the two questions to the second phase, as it was difficult to reach agreement on either of them. The Secretary-General was requested to set up a working group for each of the two questions. The working group was to make appropriate recommendations to facilitate a consensus during the second phase.

Regional conferences and meetings on specific issues in preparation for the second phase

Four regional conferences were organized in order to coordinate positions and devise plans of action for building the information society (IS), in Western Asia (Damascus),

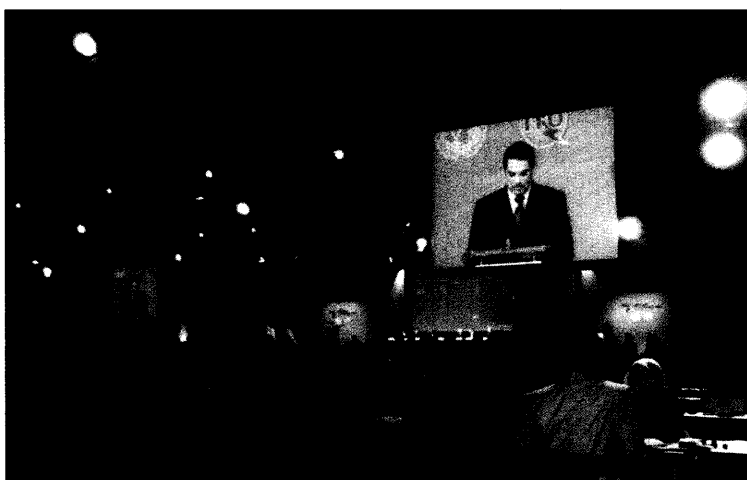
Africa (Akra), Asia and the Pacific (Teheran); and Latin America and the Caribbean (Rio de Janeiro). Two other subregional conferences were organized, one for Western Europe (Qirghestan), and the other for the Arab region (Cairo).

Regional and international meetings were also organized by topic. Each meeting dealt with one of the important subjects submitted to WSIS, the most important being the following:

- Internet management;
- Laws in information societies;
- Impact of ICT on economy and society;
- Applications to reduce the impact of natural disasters;
- Measurement of information societies;
- Intellectual property in information societies;
- E-commerce;
- The role of the private sector and partnerships;
- Security and safety on the Internet;
- The role and status of the media.

The Tunis phase

The summit was attended by the Presidents of the following countries: the Republic of Central Africa, Congo, Croatia, Guinea, Latvia, Montenegro, Nigeria, Senegal, Serbia, South Africa and Switzerland. The Arab Presidents who participated included those of Algeria, Comoros, Lebanon, the Palestinian Authority, the Sudan and Tunisia.



President Ben Ali reading the inaugural statement

Civil society entities, business and Government institutions, and regional and international organizations organized some 230 side events, including seminars, roundtables and meetings. The five United Nations regional commissions also organized two round tables, one on the regional dimensions of IS, and another on women in IS.

ESCWA in Tunis

ESCWA activities at WSIS confirmed its important role in the development of the Western Asia region, within the framework of the United Nations system. Ms. Mervat Tallawy, the Executive Secretary, headed the ESCWA delegation. The Commission participated in the organization of a number of side events, in which advisory services were provided to member countries.

Capacity-building Workshop on Information Society Measurements: Core Indicators, Statistics and Data Collection

The Workshop was organized by the partnership to assess harnessing ICT for development, which comprises 11 United Nations organizations and regional commissions, including ESCWA, and other international organizations. The purpose of the Workshop was to provide a number of essential ICT indicators, and to discuss the importance of IS measurements, with a view to formulating and developing ICT policies, especially in the fields of education and Government administration.

Building Regional Partnerships for the Information Society: Regional Perspective and Global Dimensions

The five United Nations regional commissions, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and the United Nations working groups on ICT, participated in the organization of the event, which consisted of the two following high-level roundtables:

- High-level roundtable on the regional perspective for the global IS;
- High-level roundtable on Women in IS: building a gender-balanced knowledge-based economy.

The first roundtable discussed the regional perspective of IS, future trends and ways of enhancing the exchange of experience related to interregional best practices.

The second roundtable was organized by ESCWA, and the Executive Secretary delivered a major statement. The roundtable was attended by the President of the National Council for Women in Egypt, and the Minister of Telecommunications in Jordan. The programme of work of the roundtable included a review of the lessons and experience acquired in other regions with a view to mainstreaming the gender perspective. The roundtable also paid particular attention to the economic and social changes that result from providing women with the same opportunities as men, thereby making it possible for women to participate and acquire, process and use information.

Roundtable: From commitment to action: implementation after Tunis

A high-level roundtable was organized in order to provide Heads of State and/or Government with the opportunity to engage in an interactive discussion with organization leaders attending WSIS on the future of IS. The Executive Secretary represented ESCWA at the roundtable. Other high-level officials from various countries of the world also attended. Discussions focused on appropriate policy proposals and suggested ways of implementing the commitments adopted by WSIS.



The Common Pavillion of the United Nations Regional Commissions

ESCWA shared with the other regional Commissions the common pavillion in the development and partnership section of the Kram PalExpo hall and distributed a

number of recently-issued publications, in addition to a CD containing all the publications related to ICT for development. One continuous video demonstration was run on the smart communities project, and another on building the Arab IS.

Press conference of the Executive Secretary

Ms. Mervat Tallawy held a press conference on ICT-based policies for economic and social development under conflict conditions. The Executive Secretary noted that WSIS resolutions had neglected the role of women in the follow-up and implementation of the post-Summit phase, and called for a revision of those resolutions.

The second phase of WSIS, which took place in Tunis, was very successful: a comprehensive international agreement was reached over proposals and procedures related to such difficult issues as financial mechanisms, Internet management and implementation and follow-up of the plan of action of the first phase of the Summit.

The countries of the region appreciated the outcome of the Summit but believed that it did not meet the expectations and aspirations of developing countries. It was necessary to vigorously activate those recommendations at the regional level in order to implement projects that would contribute to the establishment of a developmental IS in the region. Furthermore, holding the second phase of the Summit in an Arab country placed additional responsibility on Arab countries to make progress towards IS.



Executive Secretary Mrs Tallawy receiving CISCO award from CISCO President

The preparatory efforts made by ESCWA for the Summit and, in particular, the studies and preparatory expert group meetings, were commended by member countries.

Financial mechanisms to harness ICT for development

In order to fully exploit existing financial mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels and assess the efficiency of those mechanisms in meeting the challenges of using ICT for development purposes, the Secretary-General entrusted a working group chaired by the Head of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), comprising the World Bank, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and other major entities, to conduct a study of such mechanisms. The findings were as follows:

- Because most developing countries are unable to fully benefit from existing mechanisms, Governments and other stakeholders need to attract investment by encouraging the principle of equal opportunity and local investment, reducing taxes and tariffs, and formulating a national electronic strategy;
- The existing mechanisms need improvement and innovation in order to enhance world dynamism in financing the development of ICT; partnerships between the many stakeholders must be activated and expanded, focus must be placed on local financing, and local private sector support provided to relevant applications and content.

Report of the Working Group on Internet Governance

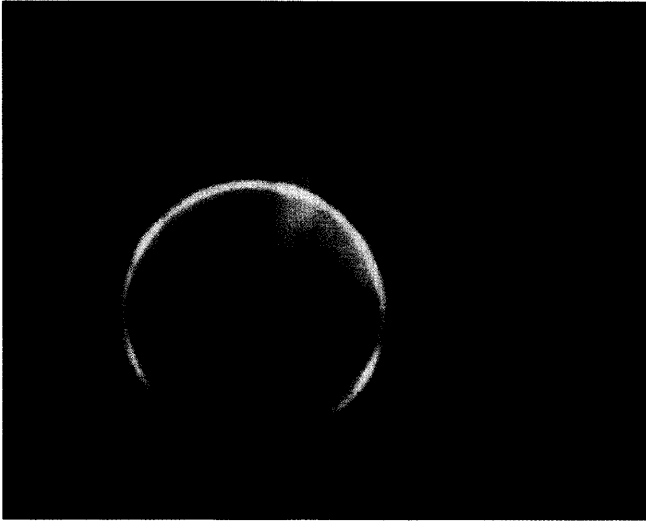
The Secretary-General has established a Working Group on Internet Management consisting of experts in many areas, including technical, legal, and applied aspects related to Internet management. As the Group failed to reach agreement on a specific model for Internet management, four different models were proposed with a view to giving Internet management an international aspect based on participation.

The report put forward many suggestions related to international policies for improving the Internet and making it more representative of the international community. Recommendations included language plurality, freedom of expression, capacity-building, intellectual property rights, data protection, privacy protection, security on the Internet sites, assignment of domain names and management of essential resources.

The successful partnership between ESCWA, the CISCO Company, the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, UNESCO Beirut Office, and the Lebanese American University (LAU), is an example to be followed in the rehabilitation and development of the education sector and for the creation of genuine job opportunities in countries suffering from wars and conflicts.

The importance and success of the initiative was highlighted when the CISCO/ESCWA Iraq Networking Academy project won the Against All Odds Award for 2005, which was granted to ESCWA at the CISCO Conference on Networking Academy in Valencia, Spain, in September 2005.

C. Energy for sustainable development

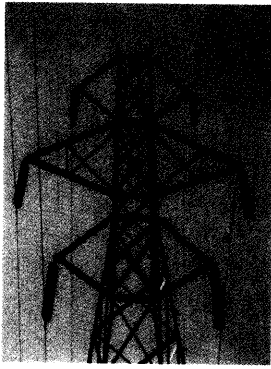


At its fourteenth session, held in May 2006, the Commission on Sustainable Development carried out a review of the progress achieved in the implementation of commitments and goals on the thematic cluster of energy for sustainable development, air pollution, climate change and industrial development.

In cooperation with UNEP/ROWA and LAS, ESCWA prepared a report that reviews the progress made, both regionally and subregionally, in implementation of the commitments and goals related to those four areas. The report addresses the challenges and opportunities pertaining to the implementation of those goals in the Arab region, and highlights priority work areas. The report also contains contributions and comments from member countries, and the discussions of the Arab Regional Conference on Energy for Sustainable Development: Progress Achieved and Environmental Issues, which was held in Cairo in September 2005. The report was discussed during the Regional Implementation Meeting held at LAS headquarters in November 2005.

Progress achieved in the field of energy for sustainable development

The energy sector in Arab countries plays an effective role in the economic and social development of those countries, by meeting the energy needs of various economic sectors and contributing to GDP. Despite that important role, 40 per cent of rural and poor urban populations continue to suffer from the lack, weakness and irregularity of electricity supplies. Progress in achieving the goal of energy for sustainable development requires effective action to solve such problems.



Authorities in member countries are exerting serious efforts to improve the sustainability of their energy sectors. Their efforts covered most of the goals related to major energy issues as identified in Agenda 21, the report of the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and the Johannesburg Plan of Action.

Integration of energy policies: Energy policies in the region have been oriented towards meeting the needs of development programmes and improving the infrastructure and capacities of the energy sector. The countries of the region have revised their policies with a view to improving the economic and sustainable management of the sector.

Energy supplies and the alleviation of poverty: Since 1992, energy services have expanded in most Arab countries to include new categories of consumers. However, the average rate of electricity supply in the region is 79 per cent, declining to less than 7.7 per cent in many Arab countries.

Changing production and consumption patterns: Many Arab countries have adopted policies and programmes aimed at encouraging energy conservation and improving energy efficiency in various economic sectors. In recent years, major initiatives have been implemented by national organizations or institutions supported by regional and international organizations and institutes. As a result, energy auditing operations have been conducted, and programmes to improve energy efficiency were implemented, which provided training for large groups of executives, engineers and technicians. Companies were established in order to provide energy services. Such activities have brought about a number of changes in electricity consumption rates. The efficiency of power generation plants has consequently improved, guidelines on energy efficiency in buildings have been prepared, the use of solar energy in water heating has increased, and the use of small solar photovoltaic systems and of plants using wind energy and clean fossil fuel has also increased. Progress has been made in the use of liquefied oil gas and compressed natural gas, unleaded petrol and low sulfur diesel.

Regional cooperation projects: Arab countries have implemented a number of cooperation and integration projects in the field of energy, including joint projects to link electricity networks and projects to lay pipelines for the transmission of oil and natural gas. There are also a number of bilateral agreements on the production of energy equipment, the development of renewable energy uses and energy conservation.

Regional initiatives: A partnership and framework for action have been established in respect of energy for sustainable development in the Arab region through the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE), in close cooperation with other concerned organizations, including ESCWA, UNEP/ROWA and the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC).

Priority work areas: Four priority work areas were identified based on the state of the energy sector in Arab countries, the issues addressed by the Abu Dhabi Declaration on Environment and Energy, 2003, the urgent need to alleviate poverty and the acute decline in energy supplies in many Arab countries. The four areas comprise the following:

- The alleviation of poverty by improving energy supplies and modern energy services, with a view to enhancing economic and social development in poor rural and urban areas;
- The improvement of the efficiency of energy production and consumption in all sectors, in particular, sectors that consume high levels of energy, with a view to increasing economic return from energy consumption;
- The diversification of sources of energy, including conventional and renewable sources,

depending on specific country conditions and available local materials and expertise;

- The development of and increased reliance upon clean fuels, and development of fossil fuel technologies, in addition to encouraging oil and gas prospecting activities.

Progress achieved in the area of air pollution

There is an increasing local awareness of the impact of human behaviour and energy inefficiency on air pollution. The quality of air is currently an indicator of the quality of life and sustainable development.

Air quality is currently being monitored in many Arab countries, and relevant data are being collected in big cities and urban centres through monitoring networks and other measures. An improvement in air quality has been observed following the application of effective pollution control measures, programmes to secure energy from clean sources, the use of new, more effective technologies, and the identification and application of environmental standards.

Priority work areas: There is a need for increased efforts to monitor and control urban air pollutants emitted from fixed or mobile sources, including the adoption of effective modern traffic control systems in order to reduce motor vehicle emissions, the use of unleaded petrol and such lower-polluting fuels as natural gas in the transport, electricity and industry sectors. Old motor vehicles and industrial equipment should not be used. Environmental monitoring systems should be modernized, their performance should be improved, their data should be analysed and assessed, and capacities should be built in that area.

Progress achieved in the area of climate change

The hot and humid climate prevailing in the region makes it necessary to use air conditioners extensively. The scarcity of rain and other water sources, especially in GCC countries, increases the electrical power needs of those countries for water desalination.

Many programmes are being carried out in the area in order to absorb carbon dioxide emissions and renew the air. Those programmes include afforestation and tree-planting in many Arab countries, isolation and storage of carbon dioxide, follow-up on littoral area management projects, storage of ocean gases, desertification control and preserving the biomass at the national and subregional levels.

Priority work areas: the efforts made in the region should be supported by the international community, which should support the building of institutional capacities to enable those institutions to assess the environmental and economic impact of climate change; support the relevant necessary adjustment measures; transfer to the region environmentally sound technologies; support regional cooperation in formulating strategies for the mitigation and monitoring of climate change; and benefit from international efforts made in the field.

Progress achieved in the area of industrial development

Industry in the Arab world is more focused on raw material extraction than on manufacturing, despite the important opportunity it has to increase value-added by developing industries in which the region enjoys some relative competitive advantage, including the petrochemical, plastic, aluminum and textile industries.

Sustainable industrial development in the region faces many challenges. A number of countries continue to adopt protective measures against competitive imports, grant financial subsidies, and practice discrimination in Government purchases in favour of public sector industries.

Priority work areas: Arab industries can resort to technological means to reduce pollution at reasonable cost, with international technical and financial assistance. That may be achieved by encouraging the private sector to develop sustainable industries, provide financial and technical support to small and medium size enterprises, recycle and reuse industrial waste, establish national centres for waste exchange, and promote research and development efforts (R&D) in order to improve industrial practices by developing and encouraging the application of environmentally sound technologies.



D. Rehabilitation and reconstruction projects in conflict areas: Iraq, Palestine and South Lebanon



ESCWA activities in Iraq

In 2003, ESCWA established a Task Force on Iraq (TFI) in order to participate in United Nations reconstruction and rehabilitation activities in that country, which has long suffered from conflict, war and sanctions. From the first, TFI sought to establish a close partnership with other United Nations entities working in the same field, and to develop consultation and cooperation with parties concerned in the new Iraqi Administration. In 2005, TFI undertook to prepare and implement three major infrastructure projects financed by the Iraq Trust Fund United Nations Development Group (ITF/UNDG), in cooperation with UNDP, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), and the CISCO Systems for Telecommunications Technology. Funds for those projects exceeded \$7 million.

The administrative capacity-building project

In 2005, at the request of the Iraqi Government, ESCWA prepared and executed, in cooperation with UNDP, a number of high-level administrative training projects. The aim of the projects was to rehabilitate Iraqi human resources in key Government posts. Programmes included acquainting trainees with modern public administration methods, and hands-on training in effective practice, following the adaptation of the most suitable of those methods to current working conditions in Iraq. Training workshops included such concepts as modern trends in public administration and the use of electronic equipment; administrative strategic planning; optimum administration of human resources and knowledge; the prerequisites of modern administrative skills; assessment of Government administrative performance, and other concepts and recent developments. More than 90 high-level public



administration employees benefited from the training workshops that took place in 2005. The employees belonged to the ministries of Planning, Development and International Cooperation, Housing and Reconstruction, Municipalities, Public Works, Justice and Human Rights. Employees from the municipalities of Baghdad, Basra and Arbeel have also benefited from such training.

In May 2005 ESCWA organized, in Beirut, a training workshop on the access of agricultural products to markets. The aim of the workshop was to prepare the employees of the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture for future negotiations on Iraqi membership of WTO.



The networking academies in Iraqi universities project

Iraq has endured many years of war and sanctions, which caused tremendous suffering for the Iraqi people and prevented Iraqis from benefiting from the technological and scientific advances enjoyed by other countries in that period.

The education sector and, in particular, higher education, was hardest hit by those circumstances. The universities, their infrastructure, branches and curriculums were all affected. Iraq was prevented from importing advanced equipment and programmes. Education and training personnel preferred to emigrate. Under those deteriorating conditions, Iraqi universities were unable to keep pace with the rapid changes in theoretical and practical aspects of ICT adopted by the international community in order to tackle development problems and raise living standards.

To that end, in late 2003 ESCWA initiated a pilot project that aimed to remedy some of the damage caused by politics and help Iraqi universities join the countries that were benefiting from the fruits of ICT. In cooperation with CISCO, and in coordination with the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and participating universities ESCWA formulated the Iraq Networking Academies project. The initiative was granted UNESCO support.



The project, executed by a team designated by ESCWA to work in Beirut and Baghdad, under the supervision of the ICT Regional Advisor, consists of the establishment of four academies in four Iraqi universities: two in Baghdad; one in Mosul, and one in Basra. Each academy is similar to a training unit for specialized trainers in the various sciences and skills required for the design, execution, and management of ICT networks. Later, the four academies will be responsible for the establishment of local academies in a number of colleges and institutes that will assume responsibility for training the personnel of those networks.

The implementation of the project will be completed in about three years, during which 44 academies will have been established. The United Nations Iraq Trust Fund, in coordination with the mission of UNESCWA Assistance for the Reconstruction of Iraq, provides financing for the establishment of the academies, supplying them with necessary equipment and linking them to the Internet.

The project won the "Against All Odds" CISCO award, as mentioned earlier.

ESCWA began implementation of the project in 2004 by inviting 13 professors and engineers from the four Iraqi universities to the Lebanese American University in Byblos, Lebanon, to participate in a five-week training course at the Networking Academy of the Lebanese American University, which is recognized by CISCO for training trainers from countries of the region.

Training course curriculums provide the participant with the necessary skills to

design, build and maintain computer networks. Participants receive training in many subjects related to communication technology, and are prepared to train colleagues, university students and public sector engineers.

Smart community project

ESCWA has been working for some time to formulate and implement a project for local community development in various member countries, and introduce ICT applications to those communities in the context of United Nations efforts to alleviate poverty by using such applications. The Task Force on Iraq made necessary arrangements for the implementation of the smart local community development project in two localities in Iraq: (1) Altun Kopri near Kirkuk in the north, and (2) Sayid Dikhil in Dhi Qar Governorate in the south.

The project involves the establishment of a multi-purpose technology centre for the communities in the two localities, including the establishment of a small food agro-industry unit and another ICT unit. It is expected that, once completed, the two centres will make it possible for the community to benefit through the establishment of small enterprises using suitable technologies. It is also expected that the two centres will contribute to the establishment of a small unit for wastewater treatment, and another for the use of solar energy in water heating.



Training course in administration for the members of the municipal council in Basra

Forthcoming projects

ESCWA has put forward to the United Nations Iraq Trust Fund (ITF) a number of reconstruction and rehabilitation projects, the most important of which include the development of national gender statistics in Iraq, and policies and strategies for the development of the construction sector. Once the required budget is approved, implementation of those projects will begin in cooperation with other relevant United Nations organizations, and in full partnership with the concerned Iraqi parties.

Task Force on Rehabilitation and Development in the occupied Palestinian territories

In 2005, the Task Force on Rehabilitation and Development in the occupied Palestinian territories (TFP) followed up implementation of the recommendations of the Arab-International Forum for Rehabilitation and Development in the occupied Palestinian territories, which was held in Beirut in October 2004. The task force aims to begin implementation of the practical initiatives proposed at the Forum. In June 2005, a meeting was held by the follow-up Committee of the Forum, which consisted of representatives from occupied Palestinian territories, the League of Arab States, 12 United Nations organizations and other regional and international institutions.

In implementation of one of the Forum initiatives, and in collaboration with the Arab NGO Network for Development, and the Palestinian NGO Network, ESCWA called for the establishment of an alliance of Arab and Palestinian civil society institutions whose goal would be to strengthen the participation of various sectors of Arab civil society in development efforts in the occupied Palestinian territories, through the exchange of information and experiences between the concerned non-governmental institutions and the increase of the effectiveness of networking, cooperation and coordination between those institutions.



A school from the Beqaa visiting the Centre in Marjeyoun

The first preparatory meeting of the alliance was held in November 2005, in order to discuss alliance goals and the characteristics of the institutions willing to join it, and consider the formulation of a realistic programme of action for the forthcoming period. A number of partnership initiatives between Arab and Palestinian institutions were also recommended during the meeting. Implementation of such partnerships would begin in 2006, and include projects for the promotion of the agricultural sector, the agro-food industry and other sectors.

In 2005, the Task Force organized a series of training programmes for the Palestine Standards Institution, in order to increase its capacity in formulating development projects documents that are to be presented to donor bodies for financing.

ESCWA Assistance Programme for South Lebanon



Training provided by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), in Kfar Kila

The programme was launched in 2001 in order to provide assistance in reconstruction and social and economic development in the area. In 2005, programme activities focused on the following five projects:

1. The establishment of two development centres in the villages of Kfar Kila and Marjeyoun, to be managed with the approval of the local municipalities, and in coordination with the Association for Rural Development. Centre activities include:

- Training workshops on business and advisory courses for some 574 beneficiaries, financed by UNDP and the Catholic Commission for Development;
- Numerous English language and computer training courses for some 100 beneficiaries, provided by local experts and trainers from the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL);
- A training course on breast cancer for female nurses;
- Continuous use of the Internet in the two centres.

2. A project to provide small loans in cooperation with the Association for Rural Development, which is part of a programme for capacity development and for encouraging trainees to establish small business enterprises. Twenty loans were provided in 2005 in 12 villages and small towns. Some 17 per cent of borrowers were women, and 80 per cent of the borrowers were below 40 years of age.

3. The Ebel Al-Saqi Ecological Park, in cooperation with Mercy Corps. Based on a study sponsored by ESCWA on the conservation of the Ebel Al-Saqi woodland, Mercy Corps implemented the project, which aims to combine economic, social and environmental elements, and create job opportunities through the protection of 38 hectares of woodland. Visitors may enjoy the area without changing it, because tracks have been created.

In 2005, the two towns of Ebel Al-Saqi and Kfar Zabad issued woodland protection guidelines and passed a regulation forbidding hunting. Mercy Corps issued a number of publications, and celebrated International Bird Day in Ebel Al-Saqi in October 2005. Training was provided to the community on how to manage the woodland and monitor and recognize different birds. The project also included the construction of the Lebanese Farmer Dwelling: a country farm with equipment and garden; a centre for meetings and another for managing the woodland; and an artificial lake to attract migrating birds.



The artificial lake in Ebel Al-Saqi woodland

4. Agro industries:

ESCWA is implementing this project in cooperation with ILO and UNIDO. The aim of the project is to enhance the development of the economic prospects of the liberated areas of South Lebanon. The project includes the promotion of honey and thyme production through a five-month training programme on various methods of thyme farming and honey production; it was organized in weekly courses in Bint Jbeil with technical assistance provided by training centres in accordance with local needs.



Projects for the production of honey and thyme in South Lebanon

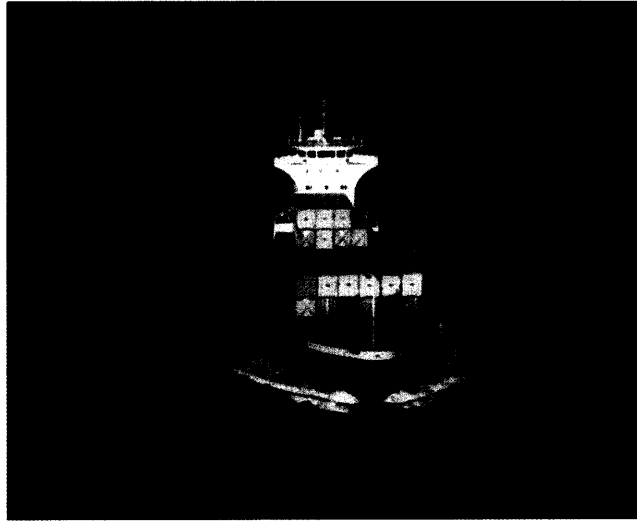
5. The E-Caravan project, in cooperation with Saradar Bank:

In cooperation with Saradar Bank, ESCWA has implemented the project of a mobile IT school to provide communities in 12 villages of South Lebanon with necessary services for computer and IT learning and, in particular, to provide youth, women and those with special needs with adequate training in computer techniques. In 2005, the caravan was constructed and equipped with a network of 10 computers, a projector and a printer.



E-Caravan

E. ESCWA adopts a Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq



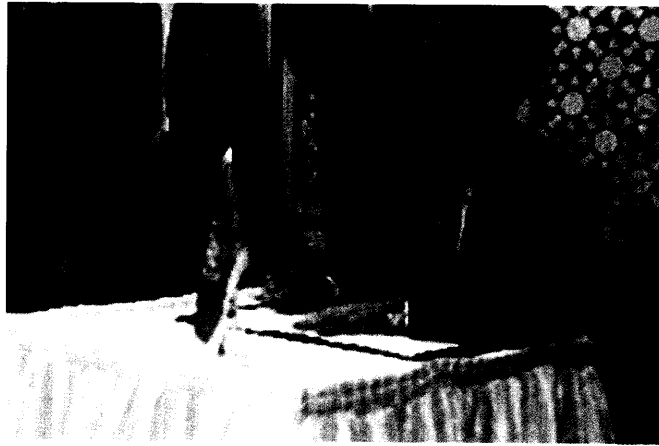
Aware of the fact that maritime transport plays an important role in strengthening intraregional and foreign trade, and promotes economic and social integration; and in view of the important advances and developments in the maritime transport sector in the countries of the region, which all depend considerably on maritime transport in their foreign trade, ESCWA prepared a Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq, which addresses a number of priority areas related to national fleets, ports, maritime safety and security, maritime environmental protection, State control over ships and ports, maritime labour, education and training, compensation and maritime insurance and multimodal international transport.

The aim of the Memorandum is to achieve the following:

- To take advantage of the large capacity and low cost of maritime transport and insurance;
- To improve and upgrade national maritime fleets in order to promote the foreign trade of ESCWA member countries and increase their competitiveness in international markets;
- To promote intraregional trade;
- To develop the maritime transport sector and ports;
- To harmonize and coordinate cooperation and integration between ESCWA member countries in various maritime transport fields;
- To formulate and implement common, standardized maritime policies that are able to achieve the sustainable development of Arab commercial maritime fleets;
- To strengthen cooperation between the parties to the Memorandum both regionally and subregionally and with other regions and areas.

The network of maritime ports and routes in the Arab Mashreq

The Memorandum provides for the holding of regular consultations, with the purpose of reaching unified positions at the regional and international levels regarding maritime transport policies, decision-making, adoption of solutions to specific problems and obstacles in maritime transport policies, and harmonizing the views and positions of the parties in relation to joining and implementing regional and international agreements and conventions. The Memorandum also provides for the promotion of bilateral and multilateral



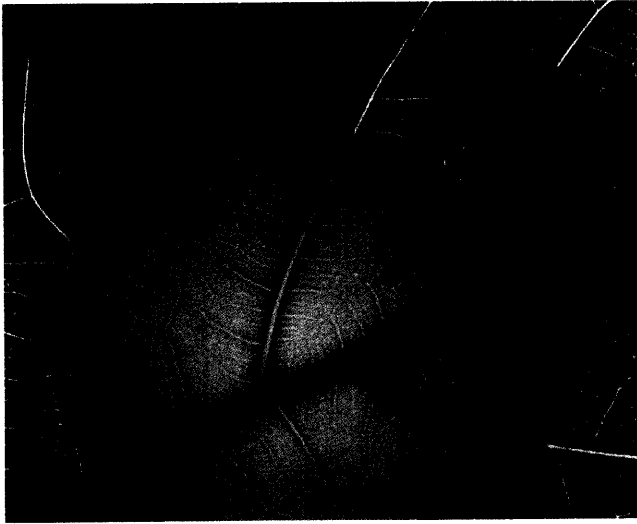
Mr. Essam Sharaf, Minister of Transport in Egypt, signing the Memorandum (Picture)

cooperation between various departments concerned with maritime transport and the preparation of studies to promote such cooperation. It further seeks to enhance and activate the role of national maritime transport institutions, to encourage the activities of the boards and federations of shippers and similar entities, and the associations and unions of national and Arab maritime commissions, as well as to encourage institutes for maritime training and scientific research.

The Memorandum, which is the first of its kind in the Arab region, and the first ever to be established by a United Nations economic commission, was approved during the ESCWA twenty-third ministerial session in Damascus, in May 2005, and was adopted and initialled in the presence of the Legal Adviser to the Secretary-General by the following parties: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, the occupied Palestinian territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.

Oman signed the memorandum in the form that requires ratification on 31 December 2005, at the Secretary-General's Office in New York. Jordan, Lebanon and the occupied Palestinian territories have deposited instruments of ratification at the Secretary-General's office in New York, bringing to three the number of ratifying countries. The Memorandum will enter into force within 90 days from the date it was finally signed by five ESCWA members, or from the date of the deposition of the instrument of ratification, or the date of acceptance agreement or accession.

In the context of the ongoing coordination between ESCWA and LAS, and based on the desire of the League to expand the scope of the Memorandum of Understanding to cover all Arab countries, the Memorandum was submitted to the Council of Arab Transportation Ministers at its eighteenth session, which was held in Damascus on 23 and 24 November 2005. The Council recommended that the Memorandum should be expanded, within the framework of the League to include all Arab countries, and that countries which had not signed it should study it with a view to acceding thereto.

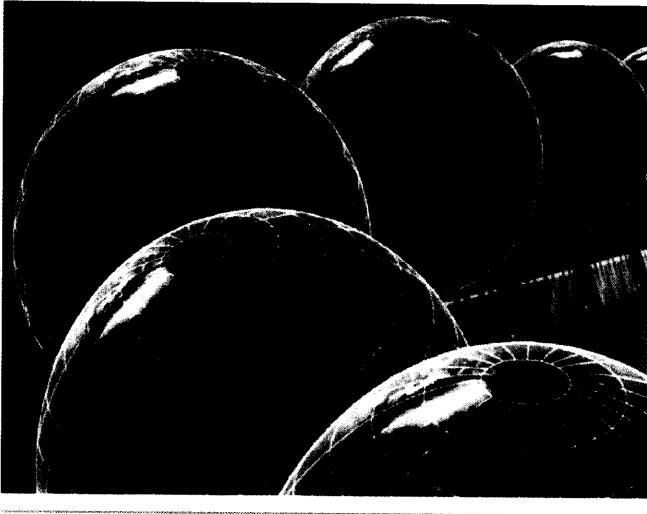


CHAPTER V

Achievements in 2005

- A. Regular programme
- B. Advisory services and technical cooperation activities

A. The regular programme



Globalization and regional integration

The objective of the Globalization and Regional Integration Division is to facilitate the movement of goods, services, people and capital across borders, in order to meet the challenges of globalization. The Division focuses on the integration of regional markets, with a view to enabling them to cope with emerging economic blocs and respond to changes occurring in world trade liberalization in order to minimize the possible risks of such changes and take advantage of the opportunities they offer. In particular, the Division focuses on issues related to the Arab Greater Free Trade Area (GAFTA) and WTO; providing assistance to ESCWA members in improving their export performance and strengthen regional development by encouraging local and foreign investment.

Trade facilitation under WTO

Capacity-building in the light of WTO negotiations: when the issue of trade facilitation matured in WTO, and the negotiation agenda became limited to improving and amending articles 5, 8 and 10 of GATT, ESCWA issued a study on trade facilitation with reference to Arab States, in which the major obstacles to trade facilitation were addressed. The study emphasized the comments made by a number of member countries about the proposed amendments to the above-mentioned articles and reviewed successful experiences in infrastructure services and ways to simplify custom clearance procedures.

A joint trade facilitation project undertaken by the five United Nations regional commissions during the period 2005-2007: The purpose of the project is to enhance trade in ESCWA member countries because, by adopting ICT, it constitutes an engine for growth. The project also concentrates on capacity-building in both the public and the private sectors in Arab countries, along the following three lines: giving Government human resources greater familiarity with trade facilitation; enhancing the capacities of the Arab business sector in the field of trade facilitation procedures; and increasing the role played by ICT in that respect. As part of the project, training materials will be made available in Arabic through translated programmes about the most significant ways and means of promoting trade facilitation. A global knowledge transfer website in many languages, including Arabic, will be developed which will provide forums for the exchange of ideas and experiences in the field of trade facilitation. The project comprises two series of workshops and meetings, one for experts, and another for trainees from Arab countries.



From right to left, Mr. Sami Haddad, Minister of Economy and Trade, Lebanon; Ms. Mervat Tallawy, Executive Secretary of ESCWA; Mr. Abdul Kader Omar Balkheir, Secretary of the General People's Committee, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya; Mr. Fouad Sanyoura, Prime Minister of Lebanon; Sheikh Ben Ahmad Al Thani, Minister of Economy and Commerce, Qatar; Mr. Taleb Al Rifai, Chief, International Labour Organization Regional Office, Lebanon.

Raising awareness of and building capacities with respect to WTO negotiations and agreements, towards a comprehensive and balanced multilateral trade system

In accordance with its normal practice, in 2005 ESCWA undertook preparations for the sixth WTO Ministerial Conference, which was held in Hong Kong in December 2005. Those preparations included, inter alia, expert group meetings, and the Arab Ministerial Preparatory Meeting along with Mr. Fouad Sanyoura, Prime Minister of Lebanon, the participating ministers included Sheikh Mohammad Ben Ahmad Ben Jassem Al Thani, Minister of Economy and Commerce, Qatar; Mr. Abdallah Abdurrahman Attaweel, Minister of Commerce and Industry, Kuwait; Mr. Amer Hosni Lotfi, Minister of Economy and Trade, Syrian Arab Republic; Mr. Jihad Azour, Minister of Finance, Lebanon; and Mr. Sami Haddad, Minister of Economy and Trade, Lebanon. The Meeting was also attended by deputy ministers, ambassadors, administrators, workers in the field of international trade in Arab countries, representatives of regional and international organizations and a number of university professors. The meeting adopted a Declaration by the Arab Ministers of trade, covering major issues related to trade negotiations. Papers prepared by ESCWA proposed many recommendations about issues pertaining to the July 2004 Package. The papers may be found on the ESCWA Arabic WTO Internet page, available at: <http://www.escwa.org.lb/arabic/wto/index.asp>.

Technical assistance on WTO issues

ESCWA participated in the expert group meeting on the facilitation of trade which was organized by the Islamic Development Bank in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. It is worth mentioning that ESCWA had convened a meeting of experts on the facilitation of trade in June 2005, in Geneva. Participants included representatives from a number of Arab countries, who presented their experience on the facilitation of trade and relevant procedures. ESCWA also organized a training workshop on measures against unfair trade practices: (Agreements on Anti-Dumping, Subsidies and Countervailing Measures and Safeguards), in November 2005, in which a number of experts, professionals and officials from 21 Arab countries participated.



Project for enhancing expertise and establishing a communication network for foreign direct investment experts

As part of the technical assistance provided to its member countries, ESCWA has, since 2002, been implementing a project to enhance expertise and establish a communication network for FDI experts, in collaboration with UNCTAD. The aim of the project is to improve the capacity of Government organs in participating countries to collect, disseminate and analyse FDI data, based on systematic methods and international standards; support liaison networks among FDI-promoting offices in ESCWA member countries in order to facilitate the exchange of expertise; provide assistance in the formulation of policies and the adoption of necessary measures to increase FDI inflows to those countries; and identify the difficulties that investors face when submitting their applications, as well as in the course of the investment operation, and create a suitable environment to attract investment.

In 2003, five Arab countries joined the project, namely, Bahrain, Jordan, Oman, the Syrian Arab Republic and Saudi Arabia, and in 2005, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates expressed their readiness to contribute to the financing of the project.

As part of the project, in collaboration with international experts in the field, national workshops were organized in each of the participating countries in order to familiarize specialists in the relevant ministries, and those responsible for collecting data, with FDI requirements and how to calculate them in accordance with international standards. A survey was carried out of companies in which FDI was made. The results are available for Bahrain, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic. Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have begun to implement similar surveys. In 2005, training was provided for users of the database in the Syrian Arab Republic. Country studies, however, have focused on the situation of FDI in those countries and the legislative and legal framework that would promote FDI inflows and activities.

Information and Communication Technologies

The objective of the ICT Division is to increase the capacity of ESCWA member countries to benefit from ICT in development, and to provide support to those countries in designing and implementing ICT policies and infrastructure. The Division also works towards increasing awareness of the contribution of such technology to enhancing sustainable development; enabling ESCWA member countries to integrate into the world economy; establishing mechanisms for cooperation and coordination between all the bodies concerned with ICT development in the region; promoting applications that will bolster development at the national and regional levels; and supporting the sustainability of the ICT sector in the region.

In 2005, the work of the ICT Division focused on a number of important issues, including increasing countries' response to integrated ICT policies; enhancing institutional capacities and organizational frameworks of the development process; implementing relevant WSIS first phase recommendations and achieving active participation in the second phase.

To that end, ESCWA formulated the Proposed Regional Plan of Action for Building the Information Society, and presented it as a major contribution of the Commission to the second phase of the Summit. The proposed plan has greatly influenced the formulation of the Greater Arab Plan of Action.

ESCWA also worked towards building a partnership with the private sector for the implementation of the Plan of Action. In collaboration with "Alcatel" company, it organized a workshop on novel telecommunication technologies for socio-economic development, which was held in Beirut in July 2005. The results of the workshop were three project proposals: (1) the development of market information systems for agricultural products and health services, both based on mobile communications; (2) the provision in community centres of broadband access to the Internet and, in particular, to educational content; and (3) the formulation of a regional framework for broadband deployment in the ESCWA region. ESCWA and Alcatel will work together to facilitate the execution of those projects, secure necessary funds, and follow up on implementation.

Improving networking in, and between, ESCWA member countries

ESCWA has completed a study on the improvement of communications infrastructure, services and policies in member countries. It has also updated the amended version of the draft Arabic Internet domain names system to include the comments of the League of Arab States expert team. The Commission has also completed a comprehensive publication about the various aspects of the Arabic domain names system, covering technical and executive issues that would help in the implementation of a regional project in that field.

Enhancing the positive impact of ICT in selected development sectors

ESCWA has launched two initiatives aimed at enhancing ICT applications in member countries, namely, the Knowledge Management project for the municipality of Dubai, and the Networking Academies project for Iraq. As part of the former, ESCWA has provided advisory services for the implementation of the project in the municipality of Dubai. Details of the Networking Academies project may be found elsewhere in this report.

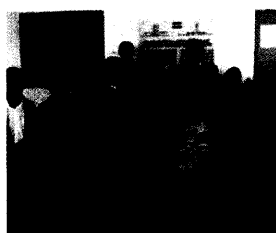


Multi-purpose technology centre in Akkar, Lebanon

The Commission has also published a study on the development of the Arabic digital content industry, which contained case studies and best practices, and suggested a strategy for the establishment of a sustainable Arabic digital content industry.

Highlighting the importance of ICT in enhancing corporate competitive capacity, improving opportunities for marginalized social groups and narrowing the digital divide

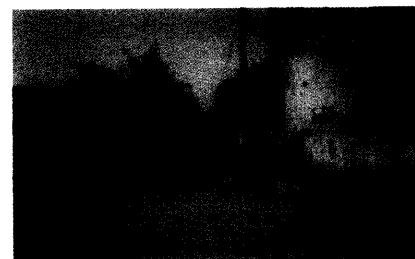
In April 2005, ESCWA established an Internet Web page (<http://www.escwa.org/lb/mtecpr>) concerning the role of modern technologies for employment creation and poverty reduction through building the capacity of communities and small and medium size enterprises (SMEs). It has also published a study on the role of ICT in combating poverty and unemployment in selected ESCWA member countries, in which it reviewed relevant best experiences and projects from those countries.



Multi-purpose technology centre in the Syrian Arab Republic

In same context, action was taken in order to expand the services of the multi-purpose technology centres established by ESCWA in the communities of Akkar in north Lebanon, and to adopt the International Computer Driving License (ICDL).

As part of the guidance centres project the aim of which is to promote modern technologies for employment creation and poverty reduction, a number of guidance centres were established for smart communities in the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, with women and children as the greatest beneficiaries. Work on the establishment of similar centres was initiated in Iraq through a project financed by the United Nations Development Group Iraq Trust Fund (UNDG ITF), which provided a budget of \$2.7 million.



Food agro industry unit, Sayed Dekhel-Iraq

Enhancing the availability of national and regional data and information in social and economic fields and improving the access to and use thereof

In collaboration with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) Arab Regional Office, and the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (AITRS), ESCWA organized the Regional Capacity-Building Workshop on Information Society Measurement: Core Indicators, Statistics and Data Collection, which was held in Beirut, from 7 to 10 June 2005. The Workshop focused on capacity-building in the identification and collection of ICT indicators in Arab countries.

The Commission also prepared a study on information society indicators, which considered the importance of such indicators in facilitating the formulation of actual policies aimed at advancing the information society in the region. The Commission also contributed to the preparation of a study on measuring ICT and the global status of ICT indicators which was published by the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development.

In December 2005, in collaboration with the Lebanese Information Technology Association (LITA) and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation in Lebanon, ESCWA organized in Beirut a workshop on legal informatics from an Arab perspective. The workshop focused on the important role of legal informatics in improving access to legal information and, in particular, the information possessed by Governments, which is necessary to increase people's awareness of their rights and responsibilities.

Participants in the Taskforce Meeting on 2010 Population and Housing Censuses which was held in Cairo in November 2005, agreed, after a recommendation from ESCWA, to include new ICT-related topics in the United Nations Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, 2010 session. ESCWA was charged with proposing principles and recommendations on any such topics.



Economic analysis

The objective of the Economic Analysis Division is to respond to new challenges and opportunities by increasing the capacity of ESCWA member countries to coordinate appropriate economic policies and achieve economic development based on a quantitative assessment of the financial and economic data related to decision-making.

The Division focuses on the following areas: (a) Macroeconomic performance and trends; (b) impact analysis and prediction; (c) economic reform policies in ESCWA member countries and their impact on employment and social issues.

The Division undertakes the following tasks:

It provides analyses of macroeconomic matters in the region in order to support ESCWA member countries in coordinating their economic policies and achieving their development goals. The Commission conducts a continuous assessment of economic developments in the region, and prepares studies and analytical forecasts based on the most recent scientific and theoretical methods. In 2005, economic analyses focused on growth and productivity, FDI, developing financial markets and regional cooperation.

Also in 2005, ESCWA contributed to a comprehensive study prepared by the United Nations on the international economic situation and future prospects, with the purpose of supporting dialogue about economic policies worldwide.

In addition to analytical activities, ESCWA has begun to adopt a standard methodology in reviewing the outcome of the World Summit held in 2005 as part of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. The concept of the right to development was introduced and the feasibility of its application in the regional context of development issues was considered.

Analytical activities

The Commission seeks continuous improvement in the quality of its economic analysis. In 2004, a survey of ESCWA publication readers on the pioneer study entitled Survey of economic and social developments in the ESCWA region showed that the quality of the work had improved compared to previous issues. ESCWA intends to continue efforts related to its analytical studies with a view to increasing interaction with the parties concerned.

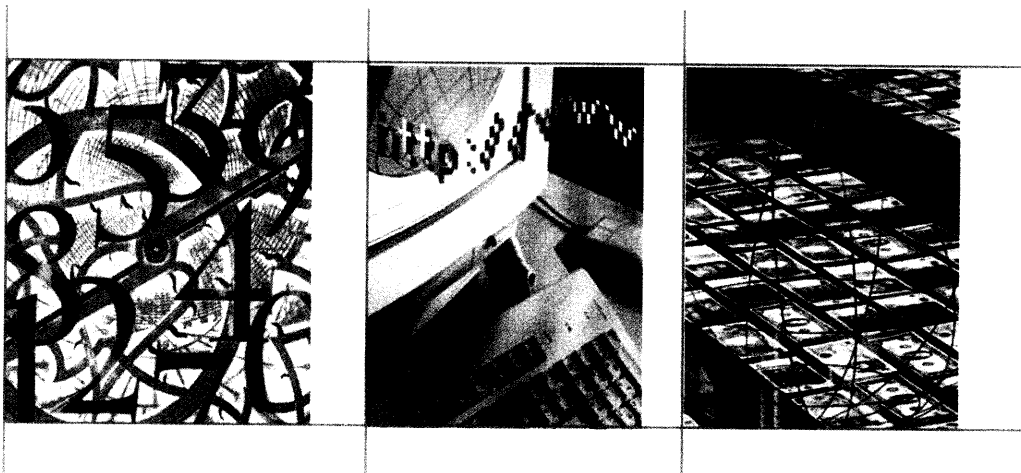
In 2005, the fourth issue of the Analysis of performance and assessment of growth and productivity in the ESCWA region was published. The study adopted a practical new method of analysing total factor productivity trends in some ESCWA member countries. It also analysed labour productivity in those countries.

Also in 2005, issue No. 3 of Global forecasts and predictions for the ESCWA region was published. The study identified the nature and types of growth mechanisms in the region. By using the time serial standard economy model, it highlighted the main growth elements of gross domestic product (GDP) in ESCWA member countries over the past 30 years, and established the relationship between the GDP growth rate on the one hand, and public and private debt and investment on the other hand.

Issue No. 3 of Economic trends and impacts: banking sector lending behaviour and efficiency in selected ESCWA member countries was also published. The issue contained an analysis of banking sector developments in some ESCWA member countries over the past 20 years.

The study entitled macroeconomic policy analysis for regional coordination in the ESCWA region: business cycle synchronization and macroeconomic policy coordination addressed the feasibility of increasing the coordination of macroeconomic policies in 11 ESCWA member countries, on the basis of an analysis of trade structures and the synchronization of the economic cycle over the past two decades.

Finally, economic analysis in 2005 focused on standard activities; the outputs of the analysis were published on the economic analysis Web page. In order to promote constructive interaction with regional partners, ESCWA has provided an e-mail address to which comments about economic analysis publications may be directed.



Social development

The Social Development Division seeks to promote regional cooperation and lay the foundations for comprehensive integrated social policies in the Arab region. The objective of the Division is to enhance the ability of ESCWA member countries and civil society organizations to formulate and implement such policies at the national level. The Division also seeks to bring about an Arab society able to meet the challenges of globalization, while taking into consideration its specific characteristics in terms of cultural and social values. In its work, the Division is motivated by the desire to support and enhance positive values, recognize the individual right to development and provide the opportunities necessary for the creation and development of skills. The work of the Division extends to the formulation of policies and programmes at the regional level that aim to achieve social development that takes into consideration the needs of all social groups and, in particular, the marginalized. In 2005, the work of the Division involved a number of areas.

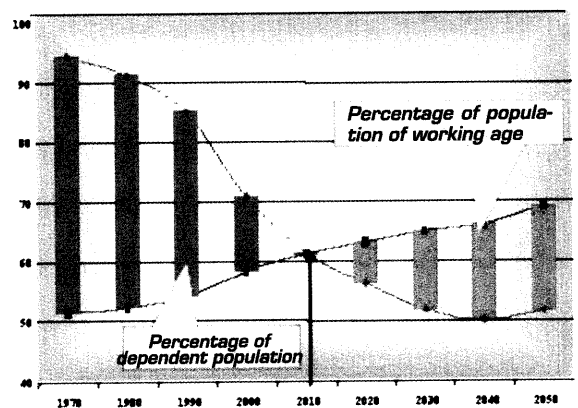
Population

The theoretical and structural foundations of ESCWA population activities are derived from the principles adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development which was held in Cairo in September 1994, the Beirut Declaration of the Regional Arab Population Forum, held in Beirut in November 2004, and MDGs. As a direct result of ESCWA population activities, six member countries, namely, Egypt, Jordan, Oman, Qatar, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, have established national population councils and have included the population dimension in their national plans. However, while ESCWA members are increasingly aware of the impact of population dynamics on economic development and poverty, there is still an urgent need to enhance strategic awareness of the important interrelation between population and development and build national capacity to formulate, implement and monitor integrated population policies.

On that basis, the Population and Development team has completed a number of achievements in 2005.

With a view to increasing awareness of the close relationship between population issues and development and the challenges imposed by population dynamics and demographic changes, ESCWA published issue No. 2 of the Report on population and development entitled Demographic window of opportunity for development in Arab countries. The main concern of the Report was to study indicators of demographic change in tandem with Arab labour market changes and the capacity of those markets to absorb the economically active population, in order to reach recommendations that would bring about effective policies to raise employment rates and improve per-

Time of appearance of the population window at the regional level



formance efficiency. ESCWA also issued a wallchart entitled Population and Development, Window of opportunity in the Arab countries, which contains a classification and analysis of a number of major demographic indicators.

As part of its monitoring of the population policies and programmes adopted by Arab countries in order to achieve goals and objectives related to sexual health, ESCWA prepared a file on sexual health policies and indicators in Arab countries. It also established a social development network in response to the Arab Population Forum, in order to increase dialogue and interaction between experts and coordinators in the fields of population, development and integrated social policies. Interested readers may log on to the network at the following address: <http://forum.escwa.org.lb>.

In order to enhance national ability to formulate population policies and integrate them into economic and social development, in September 2005, ESCWA, in cooperation with the Higher Population Council of Jordan, held in Amman, the Expert Group Meeting on the Formulation of Integrated Population Policies within the Framework of Good Governance. Subsequent to that meeting, a model of good governance was adopted for the use of Arab countries in developing institutional frameworks for their population work. ESCWA also initiated cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund in implementing the Integration of demographic change in the development process in the Arab countries project, which aims to enhance knowledge of demographic analysis and build national capacities to integrate population issues and in particular, the age structure of the population, into the planning process. The purpose is to provide support to ESCWA member countries in preparing for the demographic window and its challenges.

ESCWA has continued to disseminate population information by updating the demographic features of Arab countries on the Western Asia Population Information Network website, which, together with other population activities, may be accessed at the following address: <http://www.escwa.org.lb/popin>. In 2005, 12,400 people visited the site.

Expert Group Meeting on the Formulation of Integrated Population Policies within the Framework of Good Governance (Amman 6-8 September 2005)



Mr. Adnan Badran, Prime Minister of Jordan, and Ms. Massouma Al-Mubarak, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation of Kuwait

Urban development and housing policies

In the field of urban development and housing, ESCWA activities have three major focuses, namely, enhancing partnership, capacity-building, and poverty reduction. In that framework, ESCWA launched the Regional Campaign on Secure Housing and Land Tenure and Good Urban Governance, which represents the regional aspect of the two Global Habitat Campaigns, namely, the Global Campaign on Secure Tenure, and the Global Campaign on Urban Governance. The purpose of the Regional Campaign is to raise awareness and stimulate dialogue and partnership between Governments and local authorities and between civil society and the private sector with regard to the five main components of the campaign, namely, urban management, the right to housing and land tenure, citizenship and enhancing urban governance, reducing urban poverty, and enhancing civil society.

The Cairo Declaration and the Regional Campaign on Secure Housing and Land Tenure and Good Governance

In collaboration with the League of Arab States, the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities in Egypt, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (HABITAT), and the Organization of Arab Cities, ESCWA organized the High Level Arab Meeting on Sustainable Arab Cities, Security of Tenure and Good Governance, which was held in Cairo in December 2005. The Meeting adopted the Cairo Declaration, which is the first of its kind in the Arab region, representing an unprecedented commitment by the Governments, local authorities and municipalities of the countries of the region to an initiative through which the countries that have officially adopted the Campaign pledge to adjust their national development strategies to keep pace with the rapid evolution taking place in major issues. The most important of those issues include giving priority to the human being in the process of development; alleviating poverty; generating job opportunities; promoting aware citizenship; social participation; and good governance. Those countries have also pledged to recognize the direct impact of such issues on achieving sustainable Arab cities and equilibrium between rural and urban areas. The Arab and ESCWA member countries that have officially adopted the ESCWA Regional Campaign in the framework of the Cairo declaration are Egypt, Jordan, occupied Palestinian territories, and the Sudan, while Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, the Syrian Arab Republic, and the United Arab Emirates have welcomed the Regional Campaign and pledged to continue to work and coordinate with ESCWA with a view to adopting the Campaign in the near future.

ESCWA supports local urban observatories

Through the Regional Campaign on Secure Housing and Land Tenure and Good Urban Governance, ESCWA continues to provide support to and improve the work plan and programmes of local urban observatories in the capitals and cities of ESCWA member countries. The role of those observatories is to monitor the constants and variables that influence the implementation of national plans and their local dimensions, by preparing data bases and quantitative and qualitative indicators on the components of the Regional Campaign, in order to assess its operational outputs in terms of municipal decrees and resolutions, local projects and achievements, progressive follow-up and lessons learned, and document those outputs and use them to produce local management strategies and national housing and urban policies.

In that context, 10 cities in the ESCWA region have issued decrees which provide for the establishment of local urban observatories, namely, Aleppo, Damascus, Hamah and Homs in the Syrian Arab Republic; Greater Amman and Sahab in Jordan; Sana'a; Beirut and Sin El-Feel in Lebanon; Baghdad; and Jeddah in Saudi Arabia.

Cairo Declaration on Sustainable Arab Cities, Security of Tenure and Good Urban Governance

We, the representatives of the Governments of the Arab countries and Arab local authorities and their organizations, who are gathered together in Cairo, the capital of the Arab Republic of Egypt, from 15 to 18 December 2005, at the High Level Arab Meeting on Sustainable Arab Cities, Security of Tenure and Good Urban Governance,

- On the basis that cities are the incubators of globalization, generators of wealth and promoters of growth and contribute to the development of both rural and urban human settlements,
- Conscious of the link between the sustainable development of Arab cities and the effective implementation of strategies to eradicate urban poverty and its economic and social roots in rural and urban areas,
- Concerned by the threats posed to the sustainability of our Arab cities by migration and the sudden demographic changes brought about by unemployment and emigration caused by natural disasters, wars, conflicts and the Israeli occupation,
- Accepting that the development of our Arab homelands and cities is a collective responsibility we bear towards our Arab communities, to be undertaken by upholding the principles of equity, equality and democracy, with a view to achieving sustainable urban development,
- Undertake to continue work to develop our cities and human settlements, in the light of the Habitat Agenda and the 1996 Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements and the commitments made in the 2000 Manama Declaration on Cities and Human Settlements in the New Millennium, using integrated policies and strategies that embody the principles of empowerment and partnership, strengthen local authorities and stimulate the performance of civil society and the participation of the private sector and the media,
- Commend the achievements of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in inaugurating the global campaigns on security of tenure and good urban governance in the Arab region; also commend UN-Habitat and the basic mandate with which it was entrusted by the United Nations General Assembly, namely, to ensure the soundness and quality of those two campaigns and follow-up and monitor the stages through which countries launch and implement the campaigns, as part of the framework and responsibilities whereby UN-Habitat achieves the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),
- Welcome and commend the endeavours exerted by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), UN-Habitat and its regional partners with a view to launching the two global campaigns in the countries of the Western Asia region under the title of the Regional Campaign on Secure Housing and Land Tenure and Good Urban Governance, which embodies the principle of priority in development being given to the human being and the commitment to reduce poverty, generate employment opportunities, and strengthen the bases of informed citizenship, community partnership and good governance; and consider the Regional Campaign a mechanism for following up effective implementation of the Habitat Agenda and MDGs and, in particular, Goal seven, target 11, achieve significant improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, by 2020, and Goal eight, target 12, develop a global partnership for development and strengthen good governance,
- Accept the importance of regional partnership in upholding the goals of the Regional Campaign and MDGs and consider the implementation of those goals a collective regional responsibility,
- Affirm the importance of the development role played by labour institutions and the private sector in achieving the goals set forth in the 1996 Istanbul Declaration and 2000 Manama Declaration,
- Reaffirm our undertaking to bring national development strategies into line with the Regional Campaign on Secure Housing and Land Tenure and Good Urban Governance and MDGs and adopt national plans that will contribute to increased levels of investment and the equitable distribution of development in our countries, build the capacities of the local community, and continue to develop national, regional and international dialogue on the basic issues that lie at the core of the sustainability of Arab cities.

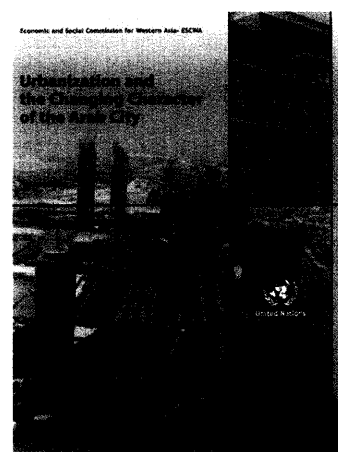
Framework for regional action in preparation for national initiatives

ESCWA has prepared a proposed general framework for the Campaign at the regional level. The framework contains the three components of the national initiative and the proposed plan of action for the implementation of the regional campaign in ESCWA member countries, namely, the institutional role of Government sectors, the role of local authorities and the participation of civil society institutions. The framework includes an assessment of the current situation regarding the proposed tenure and, in particular, an assessment of a number of methodologies and techniques suitable for implementation; required inputs in terms of human and financial resources, standard techniques and necessary indicators for implementation and assessment; with special emphasis on giving priority to confronting urban poverty and improving the living standards of slum populations. The ESCWA Regional Campaign has succeeded in attracting wide Arab support: a number of Arab countries have adopted the Campaign in the context of the Cairo Declaration.

ESCWA has established an Internet site for the Regional Campaign available at: <http://www.escwa.org.lb/rcshltgug/index.asp>, and has prepared a flyer on achievements and future prospects. A total of 3,070 visitors had viewed the site shortly after it opened.

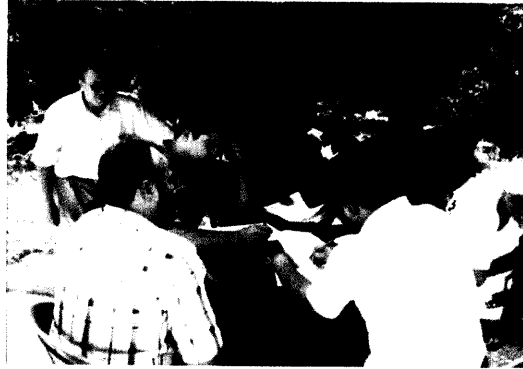
Reports on the status of Arab cities

In collaboration with the Arab Towns Organization (ATO), ESCWA published a report covering secure housing and land tenure and good urban governance issues in selected Arab cities. It continues to contribute to the enhancement of Arab local urban observatories: in collaboration with ATO and the Khatib and Alami Company, it organized a seminar on the applications of the Geographic Information System in municipalities and its urban observatories, and the establishment of a training mechanism on the use of technology in data collection and the formulation of urban indicators. ESCWA continues to support the plan of action for local urban observatories and to elaborate related programmes by providing relevant technical support to the countries of the region.



Local development policies

In response to the need to address community problems, and in an attempt to build adequate capacities for the application of decentralization and development of relevant systems, promote public participation in combating poverty, achieve social integration, support the efforts of productive labour, and preserve peace, ESCWA continued its efforts to develop local communities of the region. It worked towards an integrated approach to local development, to be applied through training programmes to mobilize capacities and make good use of available local resources in launching a local and sustainable development process.



A working group in one of the field training programmes in the Syrian Arab Republic

Against this background, ESCWA published assessment reports on the series of field projects that it has implemented in cooperation with the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND) and other national and international organizations, in a joint effort with relevant ministries and institutions in Egypt, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. According to surveys and assessment reports, some 4,348 persons (2,009 women and 2,339 men) benefited from such projects. Benefits included capacity-building through training and vocational rehabilitation programmes; the provision of opportunities for productive employment through income-generating projects and small loans; services rendered in the fields of education, literacy, health, housing, infrastructure upgrading, environmental protection, programme and project management and the advancement of women, and the promotion of social integration opportunities for youth and marginalized groups.

To enlarge the scope of benefits provided by the capacity-building project for community development, ESCWA has prepared an additional guide on the methodology, concepts, and techniques involved in research by participation, and a special training programme for that guide. With a view to testing the usefulness of the training programme, ESCWA and AGFUND, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme, the League of Arab States, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Will and Happiness Foundation in Lebanon, organized in July 2005 a subregional workshop to train researchers in community development.

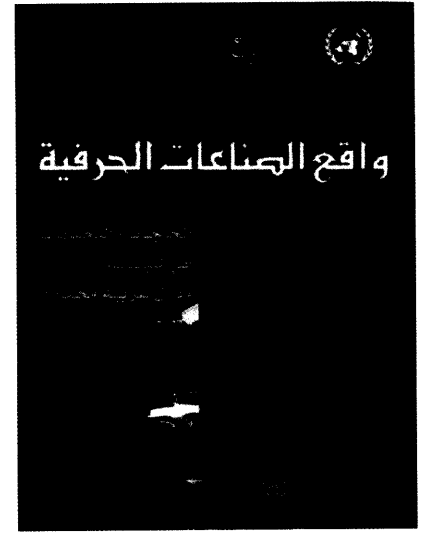


[Training workshop in the city of Tripoli, Lebanon]

The purpose of the workshop was to update the experience of a group of personnel. ESCWA also issued a publication in order to introduce the second phase of the community development human resources training project, involving workers, trainers and researchers, explain project goals and programmes and materials related to training and technical advice. ESCWA also prepared an integrated set of publications including a series of documents, references and technical materials, which constitute a methodological reference for training and provide technical advice on community development.



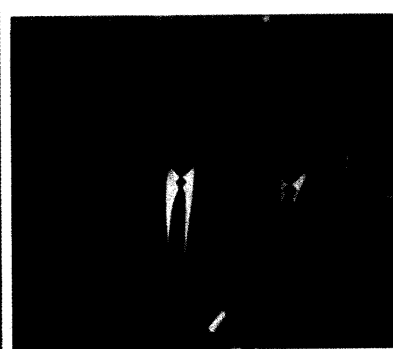
With regard to capacity-building to create opportunities for productive employment, ESCWA has completed implementation of a project on joining the labour market by training female vocational trainers. The project consisted of four training workshops organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs, private sector institutions and national women's organizations in Saudi Arabia. The workshops focused on the vocational training of Saudi women, and on developing their leadership skills in business and small enterprise. In cooperation with non-governmental organizations, ESCWA published an in-depth study on the status artisanal and handcrafts, the needs of that industry and the challenges they face in Lebanon and selected Arab countries. On the basis of that study, a field survey of artisanal and traditional crafts was conducted in Lebanon in collaboration with the Lebanese University. The survey included some documented reports on the most widespread group of such crafts in Lebanon, in addition to a documentary film showing all stages of various handcraft products.



The most notable achievements in local development policies in 2005

Benefiting from the experience acquired during the implementation of the first phase of the project on the rehabilitation of community development workers, ESCWA prepared the Directory of Developmental Research by Participation: Rehabilitation and Training Programme for Researchers in Community Development, in which the material necessary for the formulation of community development policies is updated. The directory is a reference for the capacity-building and training of the human resources needed to conduct development research with the participation of the community. It focuses on the development planning process and on the analysis of the relevant positive and negative factors, and proposes appropriate solutions for its development and sustainability.

Expert Group Meeting on The Impact of Globalization on the Social Situation In the Arab Region (Beirut, 19-21 December 2005)



In collaboration with the ILO Regional Office ESCWA organized the Expert Group Meeting on the Impact of Globalization on the Social Situation in the Arab Region, which was held in Beirut in December 2005. The Meeting provided an opportunity for experts to exchange information and views on the impact of globalization on social conditions in the Arab region, and on ways of assisting the countries of the region in benefiting from globalization while reducing the losses ensuing therefrom.

Ms. Mervat Tallawy with Mr. Taleb Al-Rifaii Chief, ILO Regional Office and Mr. Sami Haddad, Minister of Economy and Commerce of Lebanon

Arab Youth Directory A success to be preserved

"A practical tool for bringing together Arab youth with different backgrounds and experiences. A golden opportunity for networking". Ahmad Zahran, 24 years, Egypt.

"I appreciate what you're doing to build youth capacities. Thanks a lot...". Nirmine Moussa, 23 years, occupied Palestinian territories.

"A wonderful initiative to bring together Arab youth, our Arab world needs such initiatives". Roger Riachy, 20 years, Lebanon.

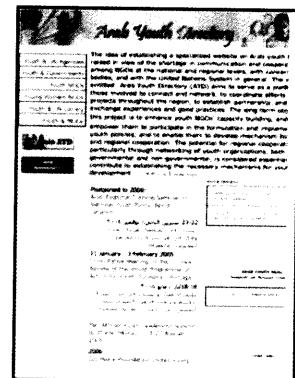
"A great way for youth to express their points of view and cooperate in building a better tomorrow". Areej Al-Saleh, 18 years, Oman.

The idea of the Arab Youth Directory arose out of the need to support cooperation between NGOs at the national and regional levels, and between those organizations and the relevant official bodies and United Nations organizations in general. The Web site met with remarkable success, its pages attracting some 40,000 visitors within a short period of time. The site has succeeded in providing an e-forum for Arab youth and opening a window for consultation and dialogue between them. They voluntarily subscribed thereto in order to gain support for their basic problems related to work, education and sharing in decision-making. The site established a data base to provide assistance in coordinating efforts, promoting partnership and exchanging expertise in the region. In the long term, the Arab Youth Directory seeks to empower NGOs and enhance their capabilities to contribute to the formulation of national youth policies. It also seeks to establish cooperation mechanisms to promote the participation of NGOs in the development process. For those who so desire, the directory offers a questionnaire, accessible on the home page, whereby opinions and views about the programme and activities related to Arab youth may be expressed, in order to exchange information and benefit from various experiences. ESCWA continues to work on expanding the directory to include more countries and the greatest possible number of Arab governmental and non-governmental organizations active in the youth field. Work will also continue on improving and upgrading the site, with a view to making it a forum for the exchange of opinions and suggestions, especially in the area of development challenges.

To visit the site, see: <http://www.escwa.org.lb/ayd>.

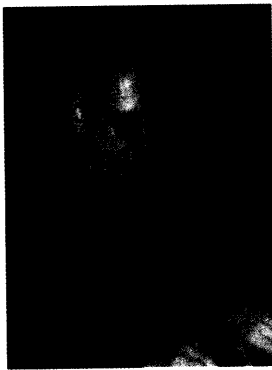
Youth in the ESCWA region

Some 32 million boys and girls (aged 15-24 years) represent 20.4 per cent of the total population of the ESCWA region and 32.3 per cent of the total population of the group aged 15 years and above.



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ESCWA website dedicated to the blind Net Forum for the Blind

"I very much admire the way in which this distinguished website has been developed in order to facilitate communication between those who suffer from visual and aural disabilities". Rola Hammam, American University of Beirut.

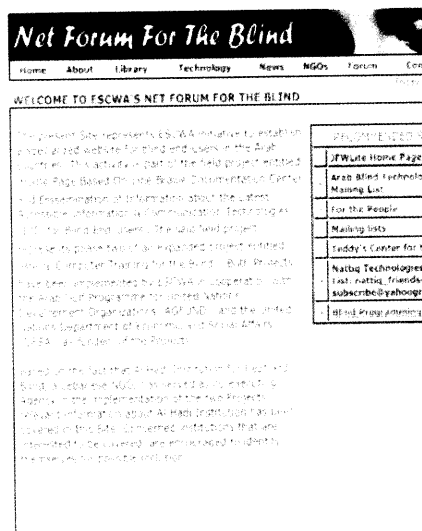
"We seek to communicate with you and establish a link between our two sites; thank you for this distinguished site". Denise Van der Hegden, USA-Assistive Technology News Portal.

"We thank you for the efforts you have made in respect of this useful site, and hope it will continue to be upgraded". Abdul-Qader Al-Farra, Syrian Arab Republic.

With respect to activities dedicated to disability-related problems, ESCWA has continued to upgrade the electronic site dedicated to blind persons in the Arab region within its main Internet site. That site enables them to access information in the field of relevant ICT.

The Net Forum for the Blind website allows for interaction between its visitors from Arab and foreign countries. Among the main things available on the site is the possibility for communication between readers with visual disabilities and those with hearing disabilities: there is no means of communication between those two groups without ICT. It should be noted that the site has been widely welcome by those with visual disabilities: it has attracted 9,000 visitors.

To visit the site, see:
<http://www.escwa.org.lb/nfb/index.asp>



Sustainable development and productivity

The Sustainable Development and Productivity Division is responsible for implementation of the subprogramme concerning integrated policies for the management of regional resources and achieving sustainable development. The objective of the Division is to support the capacity-building of member countries in the formulation of policies and sustainable management programmes, water resource, energy, and environment. The Division further provides support and advisory service to ESCWA member countries with respect to integrating the economic and social dimensions of water and energy management and environmental protection into development policies and plans, especially insofar as they relate to poverty reduction and the creation of new job opportunities.

Sustainable agriculture and rural development

Agriculture plays a number of roles in sustainable development, including securing subsistence, alleviating rural poverty, achieving food security and providing job opportunities and income-generating activities for wide sectors of society. However, the importance of agriculture has been declining in recent years, and its contribution to the economies of ESCWA member countries has been decreasing. Some 44

per cent of the population continue to live in rural areas and depend, in one way or another, on agriculture. Some 24 per cent of the work force continue to be employed in the agriculture sector. Yet the productivity and competitiveness of that sector are threatened by water scarcity and land degradation, which weakens the contribution of the sector to sustainable economic growth. As part of its efforts to promote sustainable agriculture, ESCWA has carried out a number of activities aimed at enhancing agricultural productivity and competitiveness in member countries by encouraging the efficient use of water and reducing arable land degradation. In 2005, there was a particular focus on building national capacities to formulate policies, identify necessary tools and ways to increase water use efficiency at the farm level, and combat arable land degradation in the region.

Meetings

Under the sponsorship of Mr. Talal Al-Sahili, Lebanese Minister of Agriculture, ESCWA organized the Expert Group Meeting on Reversing Land Degradation: Issues and

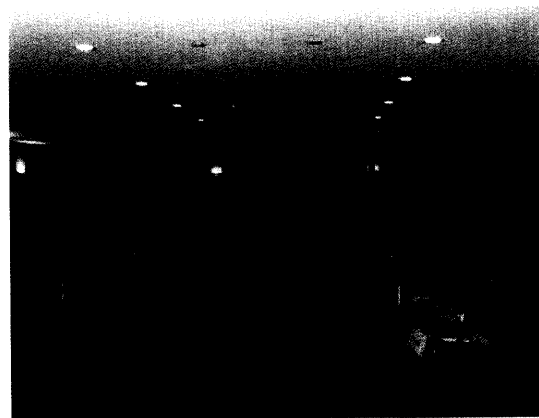


Options, which was held in Beirut in July 2005. The aim of the Meeting was to review appropriate measures to enable countries of the region to assess, monitor and reverse land degradation. It was attended by representatives from ministries of agriculture in 10 ESCWA member countries; representatives from Lebanese institutions and NGOs; regional and international experts; representatives from the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, UNEP Regional Office for Western Asia, and the United Nations University.

Recommendations underlined the fact that a methodological framework for assessing land degradation should be adopted in order to establish a system in which to store appropriate economic analyses, and that current policies and strategies related to land degradation should be reviewed. Recommendations also stressed the need to support ESCWA member countries in adopting a methodological framework for the assessment of land degradation; and the need to support those countries in assessing their national capabilities related to land degradation and coordinating their programmes.

ESCWA also organized the Seminar on Enhancing Agricultural Productivity through

On-Farm Water-Use Efficiency, which was held in Beirut in November 2005. The Seminar was cosponsored by the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries. The purpose of the Seminar was to raise awareness of the seriousness of water scarcity in the region and of the urgent needs and commitments that are required in order to assess the current situation with regard to water-use efficiency and regularly monitor water resources by using qualitative and quantitative means and tools, in order to identify practical ways of improving water-use efficiency at the farm level and throughout the whole agricultural sector.



practical ways of improving water-use efficiency at the farm level and throughout the whole agricultural sector.

The Seminar was attended by representatives from ministries of agriculture in 10 ESCWA member countries, in addition to representatives from the Mediterranean Agro Institute of Bari, Italy, the International Centre of Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies; the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ); and some Lebanese institutions concerned with providing agricultural extension services to the farmers, including ways to improve the efficiency of water resource use and increase productivity at the farm level.

Miscellaneous activities

International Conference on Water, Land and Food Security in Arid and Semi-Arid Regions, (Bari, Italy, 6-11 September 2005)

ESCWA participated in the International Conference on Water, Land and Food Security in Arid and Semi-Arid Regions, which was organized by the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute and attended by some 170 experts and specialists. During the Conference, ESCWA presented a major paper, entitled Water-use efficiency at the farm level: synopsis of ESCWA experiences. (Ref. pls.)



Detailed demonstration of map use to assess land degradation

Training Course on the Application of the Land Degradation Assessment Methodological Framework (Beirut, December 2005)

Some member countries suggested that the methodological framework adopted by ESCWA to assess land degradation can provide an effective tool for the assessment and analysis of the nature and extent of land degradation and its impact on the region. The ministries of agriculture in Jordan and Lebanon therefore requested ESCWA to organize a training course for their personnel on the use of the ESCWA methodological framework to assess land degradation. The training course was held in Beirut in December 2005, and its main purpose was to build the capacities of the participants to enable them to assess land degradation by using the ESCWA methodological framework, as a step towards controlling the phenomenon of land degradation and desertification and improving the response of their respective countries to their commitments under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

Participants were able to assess land degradation by using data, pictures and the methodological framework, which depends on indicators and was adapted to the ESCWA region. The process was carried out through 12 main steps, beginning with the identification of the region and its nature; the choice of indicators, methods, procedures and suitable tools for the assessment of the selected area; the drawing up of a map showing the distribution of land degradation and the monitoring of change. During the course, a booklet was distributed in order to complement the methodological framework. As part of the course, participants undertook field visits to Bekfaya, Hazerta, Majdal Tarshish and Taanayel in Lebanon to see and assess some examples of land degradation.

The Jordanian Ministry of Agriculture commended the efforts made by ESCWA to transfer expertise to the Jordanian team attending the course. The Ministry also requested ESCWA to continue its cooperation in training local personnel in using and applying the methodological framework for the assessment of land degradation.



Participants during the field visit to Bekfaya-Lebanon

Use of cleaner fossil fuels

ESCWA has prepared a study on the use of cleaner fossil fuels which includes factors related to the identification of potential and ways of producing and using clean fossil fuels in member countries. The study reviews the current situation of fossil fuel specifications in the world and in the ESCWA region, ways to improve those specifications and the impact on sources of pollution. It also reviews a case study in which the shift by the industry and transport sectors in Egypt to the use of natural gas, and the economic and environmental benefits of that shift are considered.



Improving energy efficiency

Notwithstanding the availability of diversified sources of energy worldwide, indicators show that energy from oil and natural gas will remain the most popular option for decades to come. As a result, the contribution of such resources to sustainable development requires many measures to be adopted, the most important of which are the conservation of energy, improvement of the efficiency of energy uses, and reduction of its adverse effects on the environment and, in particular, the pollution of natural resources, air, water and land. Against that background, the ESCWA work programme in the field of energy comprises the following two activities:

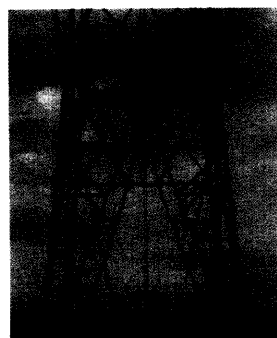
A study on improving the efficiency of energy use in energy intensive industries: the study contains a preliminary analysis of the role of energy in the industry sector worldwide, in the Arab region and in ESCWA member countries; and a review of several major industries in those countries. The study identified the standards and indicators on which the choice of a number of industries was founded, including cement, iron and steel, fertilizers and glass, which are energy-intensive industries. The study further addressed the current situation of the production and consumption of those materials in the world and in the Arab region, the energy consumption rates used in their production, and ways of conserving and improving energy use efficiency and reducing their impact on the environment. The study contained case studies of a number of companies in some ESCWA member countries.

A project to improve energy use efficiency in the electricity sector in Qatar: ESCWA concluded a technical cooperation agreement with the Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation (Kahramaa) to formulate a national plan for the conservation of energy and improve the efficiency of energy use in the electricity sector in Qatar. The agreement includes field studies and surveys of the current situation in the electricity sector, the identification of ways of conserving energy, the improvement of energy use efficiency in the sector, and the preparation of a national plan to achieve those goals.

Renewable energy in the Yemeni countryside

ESCWA took the initiative of preparing a project to promote the services of renewable energy for the alleviation of poverty in ESCWA member countries which is financed by ESCWA and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries Fund for International Development. The aim of the project is to supply rural areas with energy services and renewable energy applications in order to improve living conditions in those areas and create job opportunities in the field of installing, maintaining and operating renewable energy systems. The project concentrates on the participation of the private sector through awareness campaigns about the prospects of using renewable energy and investment opportunities in that field.

As part of the implementation of the project, in November 2005 ESCWA held in Aden a regional training course on the introduction of electricity to rural villages by using photovoltaic systems and the design, installation, operation and maintenance of such systems. The course was organized in coordination with the Ministry of Electricity of Yemen, and in collaboration with GTZ. The course was attended by trainees from ESCWA member countries and concerned local bodies. The aim of the training course was to improve skills and develop capacities in using photovoltaic systems to light houses, schools, social and health centres and pump water. The course contained hands-on training in building individual photoelectric systems for home use. A field visit was organized to Sheikh Salem Village in the province of Abyan, where the Ministry of Electricity had in 2003 carried out a light project using solar photoelectric systems.



Women's programmes

ESCWA works towards improving the status of Arab women and empowering them economically, socially and politically by promoting awareness of gender issues and formulating a common position on gender issues and gender equality in Arab countries. To that end, the Centre for Women seeks to enhance the capacity of decision makers to address gender issues and reduce the inequality between men and women.

A partnership strategy between decision makers and civil society organizations with a view to enhancing the social participation of women: why and how?

Efforts made to apply the strategy for the advancement of women and gender issues in Arab countries have intensified, both at the governmental and non-governmental levels. However, because of legal and cultural considerations, the gap between commitment and application remains wide. While Arab women have achieved progress in education and health, their economic and political participation are still among the lowest in the world.

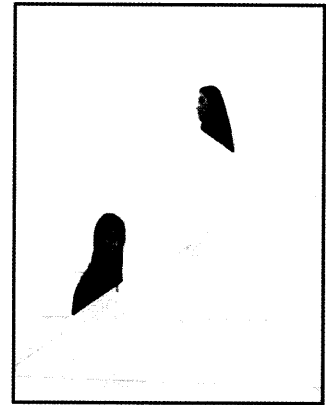
ESCWA has undertaken a number of activities aimed at mainstreaming gender issues and providing decision makers, and Arab women in general, with means of reducing inequality and eliminating gender discrimination. In 2005, ESCWA focused on the organization of workshops on capacity-building and enlightenment about gender issues, publishing studies and research and providing technical assistance.

Rationalizing the efforts made to study and analyse women's movements in the Arab world from a historical, political and social perspective

The ESCWA Centre for Women has conducted a study of women's movements in the Arab world which comprises an extensive historical review of the evolution, conditions and characteristics of such movements in the Arab world. The purpose of the study was to provide an in-depth assessment of the status of women's movements in the Arab world by monitoring their main features, analysing the mechanisms that have governed the course of their evolution and their different phases of development, and analysing their role and the extent to which they have influenced their environments.

The study consists of two major parts, dealing with old and new women's movements. It reviews the status of women's movements and their context in the Arab world; the roots and trends of women's movements; the role of women in intellectual life, public affairs, national struggle and liberation. The study addresses women's movements in the Arab Mashreq, the Arab Maghreb and in the Gulf. It further addresses the nature of new women's movements, the context of their evolution and their role in development work. The study then presents a number of conclusions and recommendations.

The study adopted a historical approach that helped to depict the various phases in the evolution of women's movements: different historical eras were divided into four major phases. The foundation phase, during which the main concepts were elaborated, continued until the mid 1970s; the internal building phase, in which there was a shift from an intellectual movement based on elite individuals, men and women, to women's movements founded on a solid basis, and engaging in a collective, social and national struggle using every means available; the achievement phase, during which a number of demands were fulfilled, including demands related to social status and participation in public life; and finally the renovation phase, covering the emergence of a new type of women's movement, where activity had developed away from charitable and benevolent action towards strategic action. That final phase concentrates on the distribution of social roles, the fulfillment of women's strategic needs and combating all forms of gender discrimination.



The methodology of the study was based on a conceptual framework that considers women's movements as the social movements of an active section of society that is aware of the stakes and challenges facing it, possesses a good deal of organization and continuity, is capable of achieving the desired change, seeks to achieve strategic demands likely to eliminate discrimination and inequality, and to create an empowering environment able to contribute to building the productive and creative powers of both men and women. Against that background, the study sought to analyse the different tracks followed by Arab women's movements, by linking those tracks to social contexts and highlighting the challenges and stakes that were encountered at each stage.

As part of the methodology adopted by the study in respect of presentation and analysis, the study dealt in the first part with the roots and dimensions of the women's movements in the Arab world. It reviewed the sequence of social and intellectual contexts from which those movements emanated by monitoring their evolution at specific historical and political stages, until they became social movements with their own views, speech and means of action. In the second part, the study dealt with the ambitions of new Arab women's movements and the challenges they have to face, and reviewed the conditions under which those movements originated in their modern form, and the nature of their work as a social movement with new thoughts and a contemporaneous reference point.

The study made a number of recommendations and proposals, the most important of which include: the need to give intellectual and cultural conditions the importance they deserve, because they represent the solid basis on which all social conditions and relations are founded. That should be done by enhancing education and media promoting, intensifying the cultural activities that pave the way for any social movement, confronting fundamentalist thought and stressing the fact that Islam is the religion that recognizes total equality between men and women at all levels, adopting a noble approach when dealing with women's problems, meeting modern challenges to the empowerment of women, promoting women's ability to participate in political life and decision making, and encouraging interaction between women's movements and the major components of society.

Stressing information literacy in order to bridge the digital divide and benefit women



Because globalization demands increased skills and abilities, ICT has become a basic means of development. Discrimination against women in access to and use of information technology increases the divide between women and men in that field. ESCWA has therefore focused on increasing the capacity of member countries to use ICT for the advancement of women.

Participants in a training workshop in building the capacity of national mechanisms for the effective use of ICT, 27 June 2005

In order to find a strategic formula to empower women to use ICT, in 2005 ESCWA prepared a study on women and the information society. The study tackled the use of ICT to empower women in ESCWA member countries; it consisted of two regional reports and two country studies on Bahrain and Saudi Arabia that addressed the use of ICT to improve the status of women.

In April 2005, ESCWA participated in the establishment of the first Arab Women Network in the field of ICT in Egypt. The Commission also cooperated with the Division for the Advancement of Women in New York, in the preparation for the World Summit on the Information Society, and organized a workshop on Women in the Information Society: Building a Gender-Balanced Knowledge-Based Economy, in which 10 Arab countries participated.

Women in conflict areas

The continuous instability prevailing in the Arab region, caused by conflict and occupation, hinders development efforts and delays the advancement of women. As follow-up to the Beijing Platform of Action, ESCWA organized in 2005 a direct dialogue about women and conflicts which aimed to assess women's concerns and identify their needs under conflict conditions. Through consultations with civil society institutions, a strategy was developed to assist women in areas of armed conflict. The strategy included ending impunity, increasing the participation of women in society, and ways forward.

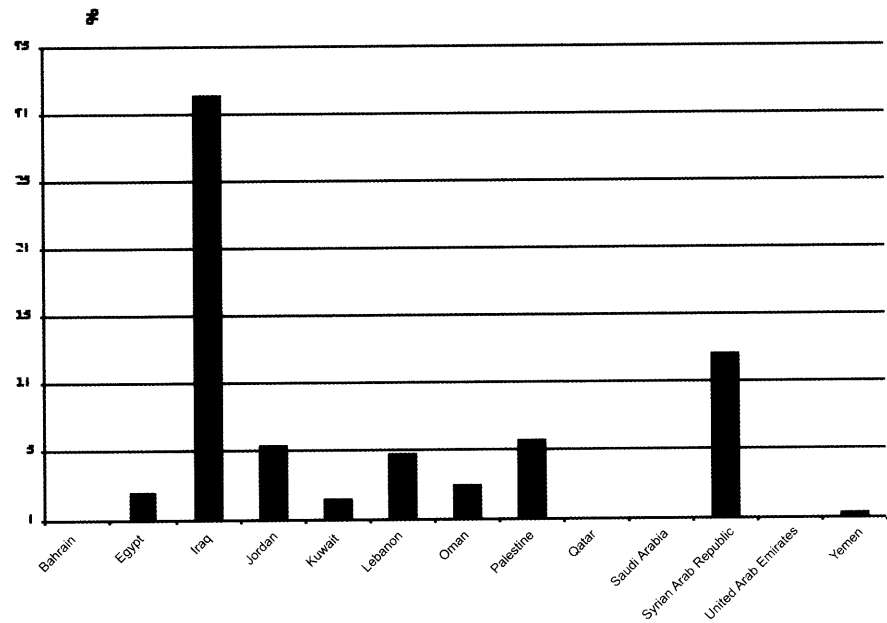
Cooperation with international institutions to train women in political participation in conflict areas

In conformity with ESCWA priorities in enhancing the role of women in decision-making, building peace and providing assistance to areas suffering from conflicts, ESCWA organized in 2004 and 2005 many workshops, in collaboration with the Woodrow Wilson Centre in Washington D.C. More than 100 Iraqi female trainees participated in the workshops, including ministers, parliamentarians and NGO staff. The first two workshops stressed capacity-building for women in preparation for the elections, while the third and fourth focused on the protection of women's rights under the new Iraqi constitution.

At the workshops, participants have received training in leadership, the upgrading of communication networks, political participation, decision-making under conditions of conflict and the application of international conventions. Women's participation in the political process in Iraq in 2005 was the highest in the Middle East: women won 86 seats in parliament in the January 2005 elections, representing 31.5 per cent of the total. The workshops were also attended by 22 of those 86 elected Parliament members, and 17 of the 55 members of the Constitution Drafting Committee.



Percentage of women members of parliament in ESCWA member countries



Continuing technical assistance to ESCWA member countries in capacity- building related to gender issues

74

In 2005, ESCWA provided advisory services and technical assistance to member countries in the following fields:

- Preparing the national report on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women;
- Building national capacities to reduce gender inequality;
- Planning gender issues strategies;
- Training in women's political participation.

Bahrain, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic have all benefited from such advisory assistance.

ESCWA will continue to build official and unofficial mechanisms to advocate women's issues, empower women and achieve gender equality. It will direct its efforts toward encouraging communication between those mechanisms and women's NGOs and enhancing the exchange of expertise.

Statistics coordination

Statistics for the formulation of fact-based policies

The vision

To upgrade the Statistics Coordinating Unit and make it a pioneering source of high quality statistical services and a central source for accurate and transparent data that reflect basic development issues in the region.

ESCWA has a leading role in supervising substantive statistical work in the region, applying international standards, supporting the efforts of member countries to meet the growing need for statistics and indicators at the national and international levels and focusing on serving the end user. ESCWA provides assistance to member countries in their efforts to upgrade their national statistical offices, produce data that allow for the formulation of policies based on actual facts and apply, monitor and assess the impact of such policies.

The Statistics Coordinating Unit works in close cooperation with regional and international statistical bodies, and in conformity with the official statistics principles laid down by the Statistical Commission of the United Nations. Its purpose is to support ESCWA member countries in the production of high-quality, complete data for the calculation of forecasts and projections, and encourage investment in the management of, and technology and necessary infrastructure for statistical information.



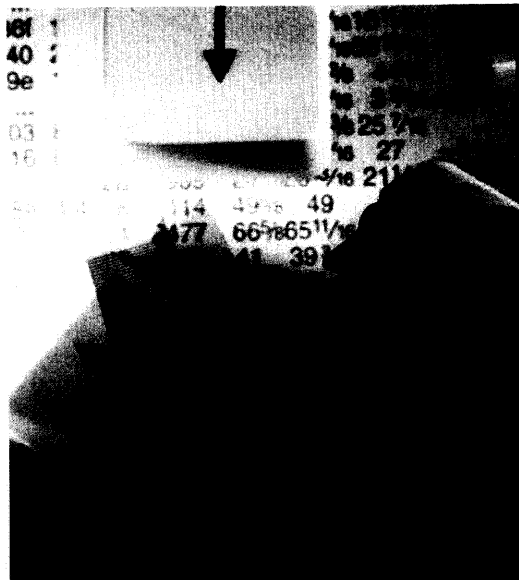
Expert Group Meeting on International Migration Statistics
(Cairo, 14-16 November 2005)

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 59/241 of 22 December 2004, concerning international migration and development, which focused on the contribution of the regional commissions to addressing the topic of international migration as part of the attempt to achieve MDGs, ESCWA organized the Expert Group Meeting on International Migration Statistics in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Europe, the United Nations Statistics Division, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Migration, the Statistical Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRTCIC) and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development.

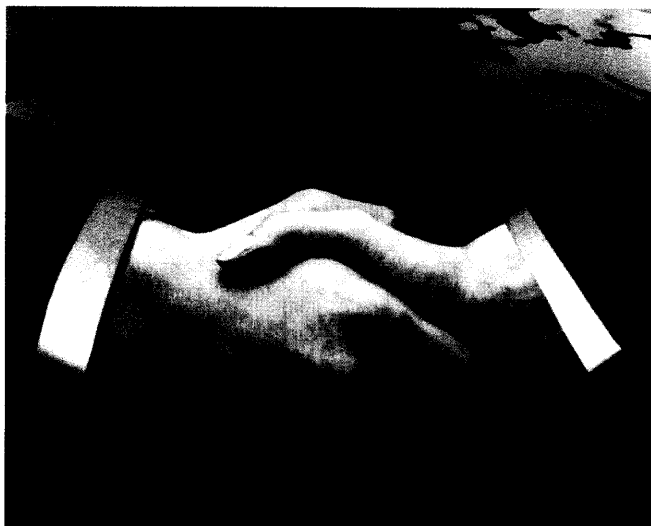
Some 25 statistics experts from national statistics offices in ESCWA member countries attended the Meeting, in addition to 15 statistics experts from international and regional organizations. The following topics were discussed: the importance of international migration statistics, and of collecting them at the international level; practices, and sources of data, related to international migration statistics; the response of national statistics offices to the current status of international migration statistics in the region and the regional perspective of the issue; methodological components of international migration statistics; and capacity-building for national statistics offices.

The Meeting also reviewed the possibility of adopting the latest revision of the United Nations recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, issued in 1998. Discussions were based on technical reports submitted by countries, and on information about national practices in collecting and publishing international migration statistics. Participants took into consideration data and indicators related to international migration statistics, which are used by decision makers in the formulation of policies and programmes.

An important outcome of the meeting was the adoption of a project proposal that aims to improve international migration statistics in the ESCWA region, in order to allow partners to perform their specialized roles in the improvement of such data. In addition, a memorandum of understanding on future cooperation in the field of international migration was signed between ESCWA and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development.



B. Advisory services and technical cooperation activities



The technical cooperation activities and advisory services provided by ESCWA are complementary to its developmental economic and social activities. Technical cooperation activities aim to enhance the national capacities of ESCWA member countries and enable them to meet commitments emanating from international conferences in all fields of development. The Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Division undertakes, in addition to planning and monitoring regular ESCWA activities, capacity-building activities for ESCWA member countries; the organization of workshops; the implementation of training projects; and the provision of advisory services.

Services of regional advisors

Regional advisors provide ESCWA member countries with the technical knowledge and the expertise necessary to address various problems facing the process of sustainable social and economic development in many fields, including: energy, national accounts, statistics, science and technology, development and social policies, water resource management, WTO-related issues, and the environment. ESCWA regional advisors contribute to the organization and management of workshops and training projects that help to build the institutional and technical capacities of member countries.

In 2005, 122 advisory missions were undertaken by ESCWA, as shown in the table below.

The Commission's regional advisors also participated in the organization of 11 training workshops, seven of which were at the regional level and four at the national level, in Bahrain, Iraq and occupied Palestinian territories. The total number of participants in those workshops was some 485, 32 per cent of whom were women.

Country	Number of advisory services
	7
	4
	9
	5
	9
	3
	7
	8
	7
	18
	34
	11
	11

In compliance with the technical cooperation strategy adopted by ESCWA at its twenty third session, the Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Division took a number of steps to coordinate the priorities of ESCWA member countries at the national level, taking into account regional and subregional topics. In general, those countries have expressed their satisfaction with the quality and usefulness of technical cooperation services. Beneficiaries also expressed satisfaction with the change in the quality of the services rendered in 2004 and 2005, when preference was given to capacity-building, and short-term advisory services provided flexibility.

Below is a review of the services rendered by regional advisors to ESCWA members in 2005.

Environment and Natural Resources

No country can ignore the impact of damage to natural resources on its national economy or on the health and the quality of life of its population. However, no efforts to preserve the natural environment can bear fruit at the national level unless they are part and parcel of a strategic plan that has clear short- and long-term goals, as ESCWA member countries have recently begun to realize. The Environment Public Authority of Kuwait has therefore decided to prepare a national environmental strategy to ensure sustainable development. Following a preliminary strategy prepared by Kuwaiti officials in 2002, preparations began in the spring of 2004 to formulate a new and comprehensive strategy with the assistance of ESCWA, through its regional technical cooperation programme.

The aim of the new strategy is to remedy all the damage to environmental systems and natural resources caused by the pressure of economic and social development exigencies. The strategy materialized with the participation of all parties concerned in development sectors, through the formulation of common concept of the work plans needed to reduce the pollution resulting from the activities of their sectors and the preventive and remedial procedures that should be applied at a given time.

Through the technical assistance provided by its regional advisor to the Environment Public Authority in Kuwait, ESCWA contributed to the preparation of the strategy document, which comprises three sections. The first section contains the foundations of environmental work in Kuwait and the goals of the strategy, which are: reducing pollution rates in the short-term; integrating the environment into national policies, plans and programmes pertaining to health and resource management in the medium-term; preserving national resources and biological diversity in the context of sustainable development in the long-term. The second section of the strategy contains an analysis of the current environmental situation in Kuwait a diagnosis of environmental problems and their causes, and a summary of recommendations for their solution. The third section contains details of sectoral plans of action to improve the environmental situation through the implementation of preventive and remedial programmes.

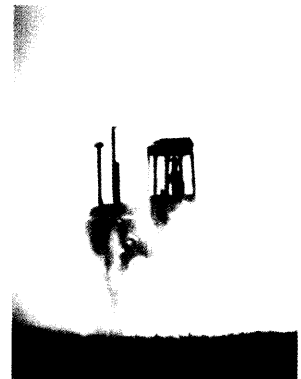
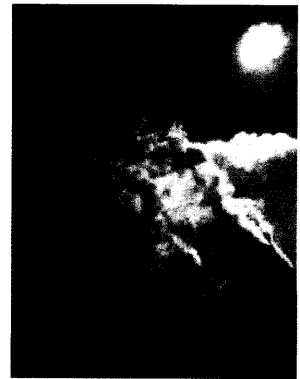
Prevention is the means chosen by the Syrian Arab Republic to reduce industrial pollution

Controlling industrial pollution entails additional costs likely to reduce the profits of any enterprise that restrict action to the installation and operation of effective systems to treat pollutants. So, how can industrialists limit pollution while taking economic efficiency into account? The answer lies in a simple formula that considers that a gram of prevention is better than a ton of treatment.

The philosophy behind the reduction of industrial pollution is based on the adoption of low-cost methods in the chain of production operations, with a view to rationalizing the use of resources and reducing pollutants, which leads to a cleaner, low-cost product, in addition to reducing the quantity of pollutants.

Egypt and Tunisia have made good progress in technology application to reduce industrial pollution. The Syrian Arab Republic followed suit by establishing, in September 2005, with technical assistance from ESCWA, a centre for the reduction of industrial pollution. Two positive factors will ensure the success of the operation thus the link between the centre and an NGO, namely, the Syrian Environment Association, did not deter official personalities from attending the inauguration ceremony of the centre, including the Governor of Damascus, representing the Minister of Local Administration and Environment; the second being the impressively convincing power of the great Syrian industrialist who heads the centre, which will have positive effects on other industrialists.

It is important to stress the fact that the concept of industrial pollution reduction in the Syrian Arab Republic has been spreading rapidly over the past four years. However, the concept of prevention adopted by the centre, which conforms exactly to the logic promoted by ESCWA in order to improve resource protection, will increase the efficacy of the effort, because the centre aims mainly to promote awareness among industrialists of the importance of methods to rationalize the use of resources, and assist the industry in adopting preventive means by training local personnel, cooperating with decision makers to enact necessary laws, and coordinating with international and local institutions to apply best standards in pollution control. Work in the centre will be based on a number of principles, including partnership with concerned parties, transparency, effectiveness, sustainability and continuous upgrading.



Environmental protection law in Yemen

A national initiative to ensure sustainable development

In the environment, as in any other field, law is the cornerstone for any good strategy to preserve natural resources. In view of the importance of reducing pollution and rationalizing the use of resources in achieving sustainable development, the Environment Protection Authority in Yemen has realized that the environment protection law was no longer sufficient to satisfy the ambitions of the country. It has therefore entrusted a committee of local legal advisers with the preparation of a draft new law for the protection of the environment. However, before submitting the new law to the parliament, the Government of Yemen deemed it appropriate to request the assistance of the ESCWA regional advisor on the environment to further refine the law; that cooperation is consistent with a number of goals set up by ESCWA, in particular the goal of establishing the principle of sustainable development in the countries of the region.

The progress achieved by Yemen in that direction shows that the timing is perfectly favourable to the adoption of a modern environment law. All the indications are that substantial economic progress, rapid urbanization, and an increase in population density are taking place in the country, bringing additional pressure to bear on the environment. That is evidenced by the fact that air pollution in Yemeni cities was not even included in the 1995 law. Pollution concerns were included at the heart of the second draft law which is currently being prepared.

A number of concepts were added to the proposed text, including sustainable development and concerns about the economic assessment of environmental degradation. The recommendations made by the regional adviser on the environment related to ways of improving application of the law in the future. Among the recommendations was the assignment of one authority to supervise environmental matters in the country and define and apply strategies. That shows that the analysis of the situation in Yemen has made it possible for ESCWA to propose solutions derived from the actual reality of the situation.

The system of statistical indicators

Through the technical cooperation programme, the ICT Division and the specialized regional adviser, ESCWA has taken action to upgrade its statistical information system, in order to compensate for the gap in statistical indicators in ESCWA and its member countries. That initiative constitutes a basis for building the statistical abilities of researchers, analysts, policy formulators and decision makers at the national and regional levels.

The ICT Division has developed and tested the ESCWA Statistical Information System (ESIS) with a view to making it an interactive programme for data analysis and decision makers. The system makes it possible to input and retrieve indicators and monitor data related to various social and economic development sectors in an integrated and consistent manner, and is available on the Internet for users interested in social and economic development and ICT indicators.

In order to establish the system, ESCWA organized the Capacity-Building Workshop on Information Society Measurements, which was held in Beirut in June 2005. Case studies of country achievements in capacity-building in the field of indicator collection and the challenges to be met were considered. Steps were proposed to promote the adoption of basic ICT indicators and the collection of relevant data to support the formulation of the required national and regional policies.

The Internet site may be visited at the following address: <http://esis.escwa.org.lb>.

ESIS constitutes an effective tool for specific change in the formulation and assessment of policies in ESCWA member countries. It is also an achievement that can benefit all the United Nations regional commissions and national statistical offices, which are seeking to join the international partnership concerned with the measurement of ICT for development through a comprehensive database of ICT indicators. The system is available at the following address: <http://measuring-ict.unctad.org>.

Initiatives in Yemen to bridge the digital divide

Regional and international initiatives that aim to increase ability to benefit from ICT in order to achieve development and integrate into the information society abound in Yemen.

Against that background, ESCWA has undertaken to activate policies that aim to improve economic and social conditions in Yemen. To that end, it entered into a partnership with UNDP to formulate an ICT-related plan of action. In 2003, the specialized regional advisor submitted a preliminary document that proposed enhancing economic and social development through ICT and developing integrated initiatives as part of the cooperation between the Government and the private sector, to the benefit of both.

Implementation of those initiatives, which are financed by UNDP, will take three years. However, a considerable amount has already been achieved.

The initiatives seek to support the following:

- The formulation of a national ICT plan of action that would allow the use of that technology in development efforts, and would include the formation of an advisory council concerned with the topic in the relevant ministry;
- The establishment of an electronic portal, to be accessed through Internet cafés and private Internet subscriptions;
- The establishment of mobile Internet units to train public and education sector employees;
- The implementation of projects that produce tangible results, including the International Computer Driving License programme (ICDL) and training in the development of small and medium size enterprises.

ESCWA was also the execution agency of an important workshop that targeted top officials in the Government of Yemen. The workshop was organized under the auspices of the Prime Minister in cooperation with the Ministry of Telecommunication and Information Technology, and was attended by more than 100 participant

The topic of world trade

Advisory services provided by ESCWA related to world trade vary with the different needs of the countries of the region and according to their specific concerns, which may be summarized as follows:

- Negotiations over WTO membership;
- Implementation of WTO agreements;
- Participation in WTO negotiations (Doha Work Programme);
- Training and national capacity-building in WTO-related topics.

ESCWA provided advisory services to Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen on preparations for future WTO accession negotiations. Advisory services were also extended to the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

ESCWA has further provided advisory services on the application of WTO agreements to Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, with a view to enhancing national capacities especially in the areas of intellectual rights and trade in services. Services regarding the application of commitments under the agriculture agreement have also been provided to Iraq and Oman.

All countries of the region are anxious to enhance their negotiating abilities in the Doha Work Programme, which covers all WTO-related issues. A project has therefore been set up to enhance the negotiating ability of Arab countries in such negotiations, in cooperation with the World Bank and the Institute of Development Studies in Canada, where a set of studies specialized in negotiation topics were prepared in coordination with the Globalization and Regional Integration Division.

Cooperation with regional and international organizations

ESCWA has continued to enhance cooperation links with United Nations commissions and specialized agencies, the League of Arab States and its various institutions, regional and international organizations, and civil society institutions working in the region. Cooperation has included many common activities varying from preparing joint studies and reports to organizing meetings, financing and implementing projects and signing agreements.

Agreements to strengthen partnership and cooperation

In 2005, ESCWA signed seven agreements to strengthen partnership in a number of priority development areas that might contribute to upgrading and supporting institutional and technical capacities in the Arab region. Such agreements include the following:

- An agreement with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, which aims to support dialogue and multilateral cooperation on issues related to migration between West Asia and Europe;
- An agreement with the Higher Council for Science and Technology in Jordan, which aims to enhance contributions by science, technology and innovation institutions to sustainable development in the region;
- An agreement with the Ministry of Economy and Planning in the United Arab Emirates on the implementation of the second phase of the project for supporting expertise and interlinkages in the field of FDI;
- An agreement with the International Labour Organization (ILO) allowing ESCWA to translate and use the international guide prepared by ILO for training in labour statistics and statistics related to employment, unemployment, underemployment and the economically active population;
- An agreement with the General Statistics Department of Jordan for the implementation of a price survey in the framework of the programme of international comparisons;
- An agreement with the Ministry of Social Affairs of Bahrain concerning cooperation and coordination in social policy-related fields;
- An agreement with Alcatel Company to support social and economic development in the ESCWA region and enhance the empowering environment for building the information society, through a number of activities that would facilitate the promotion of ICT and encourage partnership between the public and private sectors.

Sectoral Meeting between the United Nations and the League of Arab States in support of coordination at the regional level

Pursuant to the policy adopted by ESCWA, which is based on continuous coordination and cooperation with United Nations organizations and regional organizations in the Arab region and, in particular, the League of Arab States, ESCWA participated in the preparation and organization of a number of meetings at the international and regional levels.

Ms. Mervat Tallawy, the Executive Secretary of ESCWA, led the United Nations delegation to the cooperation meeting with the League of Arab States, in order to discuss the efforts made by the United Nations in general and ESCWA in particular with respect to cooperation and coordination at the regional level. The sectoral meeting between the League of Arab States and its institutions, on the one hand, and the United Nations and its specialized agencies on the other hand, was held at League headquarters in Cairo, in November 2005. The purpose of the meeting was to strengthen cooperation in the implementation and financing of activities related to MDGs and sustainable development in the Arab region. Topics addressed by the meeting included development and the eradication of poverty; environmental protection; efforts aimed at promoting the role of women; literacy; adult education in Arab countries; and the existing cooperation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States; and the mechanisms that should be adopted in the assessment and follow-up on sectoral meetings between the United Nations and the League.

During the meeting, ESCWA submitted the United Nations paper on enhancing the status of women, together with the 2005 report on MDGs in the Arab region, which was prepared by ESCWA and other United Nations organizations working in the region.

The meeting also discussed the mechanisms that should be adopted to implement its recommendations, and stressed the importance of cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and its agencies and the League of Arab States and its specialized organizations, including activities related to national capacity-building in disseminating statistics and indicators relating to progress achieved in the implementation of MDGs, and deriving advantage therefrom in the formulation of development policies that can be monitored and measured to ascertain their effectiveness.

The United Nations delegation to the meeting with the League of Arab States

In addition to ESCWA, the United Nations delegation to the meeting included representatives from the United Nations secretariat, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs at United Nations headquarters in New York, UNDP, UNEP, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Relief and Works

Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Programme for Human Settlements, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).



United Nations regional coordination meeting

In May 2005, ESCWA hosted the tenth periodic meeting of the Regional Coordination Group (RCG) between United Nations agencies operating in the region.

The 2005 meeting focused on the progress made by ESCWA member countries in realizing MDGs and in identifying the challenges hindering their realization and on the regional strategic initiatives required in that regard. The meeting also focused on follow-up to the issue of peace, security and development at the regional level, through discussion of the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations entitled *In Larger Freedom, Towards Security, Development and Human Rights for All*.

On the basis of the Secretary-General's report, the meeting reached a number of recommendations focused on formulating a strategic concept of the challenges and opportunities in the region in respect of issues related to peace, security, human rights and development. Recommendations also addressed the topic of national capacity-building to monitor and follow-up on MDGs, including the upgrading of statistics and statistical indicators. They further tackled the exchange of information on best practices and lessons learned in respect of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).



The Executive Secretary between Mr. Georges Corm, Expert in economic and financial affairs, and former Minister of Finance of Lebanon, and Mr. Chris de Clercq, Chief, Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Division, ESCWA.

The United Nations attending the meeting

Participants, in addition to ESCWA, included representatives from the United Nations Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS), UNDP, UNEP, the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), OHCHR, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), UNICEF, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), ILO, FAO, UNESCO, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the United Nations Information Service/United Nations Information Centre, Beirut.

The budget

In 2005 the total budget of ESCWA projects from extrabudgetary sources was some \$15,502,442. However, ESCWA is seeking additional financial support for those projects, with a view to broadening the scope of its services, implementing more of the essential projects in development fields and realizing MDGs.

Commendation award

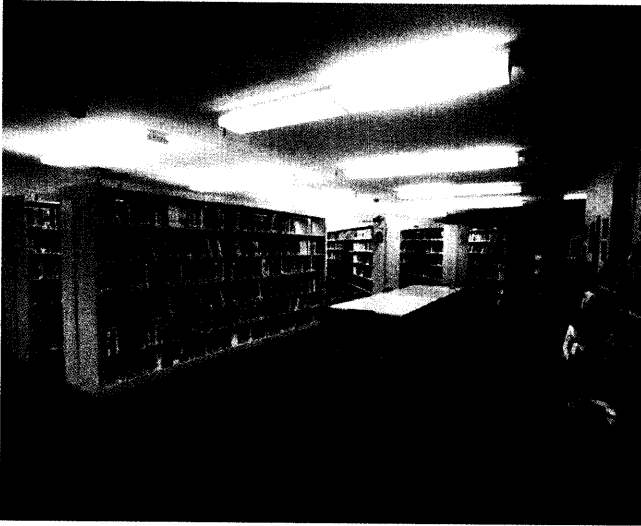
ESCWA received a commendation from the High-level Approving Panel of the UN 21 Awards for Excellence in implementing a project, carried out in cooperation with Abdellatif Jamil Ltd., for building the technical and economic capacities of women's NGOs in Saudi Arabia.

Cooperation and coordination between ESCWA, regional and international organizations and civil society institutions comprised joint projects with a development dimension. The 45 projects undertaken in 2005 were markedly diverse. They were all financed from extrabudgetary resources and covered a number of fields, including energy, international trade, social development, urban and rural development, population policies, statistics, ICT, energy and water resources, agriculture, environment, transport, improving vocational capacities in small and medium size enterprises, and the assessment of development and productivity, other projects related to the empowerment of Arab women and support for youth and marginalized groups. ESCWA reconstruction projects in conflict areas met with considerable success in Iraq, occupied Palestinian territories and South Lebanon, reflecting the increasing attention given by ESCWA to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of those areas.

ESCWA was able to finance those projects from various sources, including the World Bank, the ESCWA Trust Fund, the United Nations Programme for Human Settlements, AGFUND, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFEST), the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Development Account, and the Iraq Trust Fund of the United Nations Development Group.

Projects not already mentioned include the following:

- A capacity-building project to upgrade land and land-sea transport links, financed by the United Nations Development Account, which provided a budget of \$1.250 million. The aim of the project is to strengthen local ability to upgrade land and land-sea transport links and facilitate transport border-crossing procedures and trade between territories;
- A project to enhance the exploitation of modern techniques to increase employment and reduce poverty, to which the United Nations Development Account has also contributed. The aim is to adopt mechanisms able to provide radical solutions to a number of problems facing deprived areas in ESCWA member countries and, in particular, unemployment and poverty;
- An international comparisons programme project, which is being implemented in cooperation with AFESD and ILO. The budget allocated to the project is \$696,000, and its purpose is to compare between the GDP of various countries by using purchase power indices rather than exchange rates;
- The regional initiative to use modern technology in combating poverty project, which is being implemented with support from AFESD. The aim is to provide new job opportunities and other training and education services to slum dwellers using modern technology;
- A project for community development in rural areas in Egypt, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic; a regional project for household surveys and a programme for upgrading gender statistics, all of which were the outcome of continuous cooperation with AGFUND, that was instrumental in funding many projects in a variety of fields with budgets in excess of \$0.5 million in 2005;
- An ongoing technical cooperation project between ESCWA and the German Government in the field of water resources, the purpose of which is to enhance cooperation between ESCWA member countries in respect of such shared groundwater resources as the groundwater reservoir between Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, and other such reservoirs in Iraq and Yemen, as well as such shared surface water resources as Al-Kabeer Al-Janoubi River between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. As part of that project, technical and financial support was provided for the implementation of the Arab Network for IWRM including, in particular, the organization in Kuwait in May 2005 of a workshop on the application of integrated water resource management in the region, to support the capacity-building of specialists in IWRM in the Arab region.

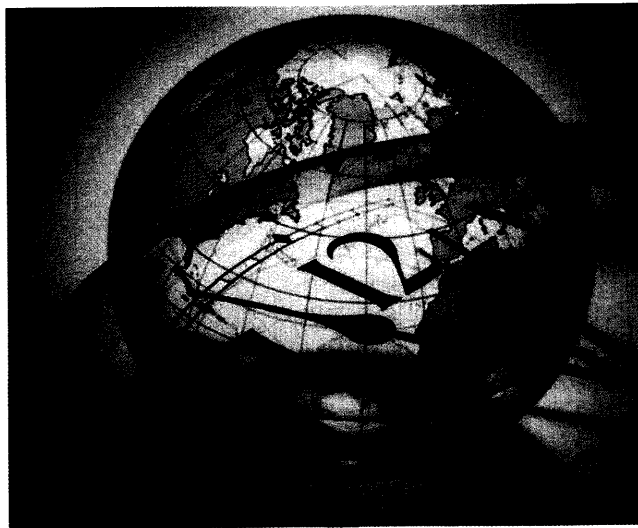


CHAPTER VI

General services

- A. Administrative services
- B. The library

A. Administrative Services



The Conference Services Section

The Conference Services Section (CSS), provides organizational and administrative support to ESCWA intergovernmental and expert group meetings, seminars and workshops. In 2005, CSS provided services to five intergovernmental meetings; 15 expert group meetings; and 50 seminars and workshops. A small number of those meetings were held away from ESCWA premises. CSS also had a role in providing coordination and support to 182 activities organized by other United Nations agencies in 2005, including 25 UNDP meetings, the United Nations Information Center, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNICEF, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and the Association of Former International Civil Servants; in addition to other meetings not pertaining to the United Nations.

CSS also undertook to process, issue and distribute ESCWA publications during the biennium 2004-2005. It should be noted that all ESCWA publications for the said period were issued in Arabic, in addition to English.

The Budget and Finance Section

This Section prepares and implements the regular budget of the Commission; it carries out the financial administration of extrabudgetary projects; establishes reports on the budgetary performance of ESCWA specialized divisions; and settles accounts with United Nations agencies for common services.

During the 2004-2005 biennium, extrabudgetary resources increased by an estimated 87 per cent over 2003-2004. Total expenditure from those resources amounted to \$4.86 million, representing a 39 per cent increase in resources for support services to programme activities (\$394,900); 92 per cent for implementation projects (\$4,491,200); while resources for specialized activities doubled (\$4,000).

Human Resources Management Section

ESCWA provides a wide range of services in the field of human resources. Such services are not confined to the Commission's substantive divisions: they extend to other departments related to the United Nations secretariat. These services include recruitment of staff and consultants; the management of contractual entitlements; performance management; staff training and skill development; and medical services.

The Section includes a centre for career development that aims to encourage staff mobility, continuous learning and development. The services of the centre include developing specialized skills in various areas of the work programme and training in the fields of administration, languages and information technology.

The medical centre provides both medical and administrative services. It works to increase awareness, providing training in certain public health issues and coordinating measures for preparedness in emergency cases in close collaboration with other United Nations agencies and local medical institutions.

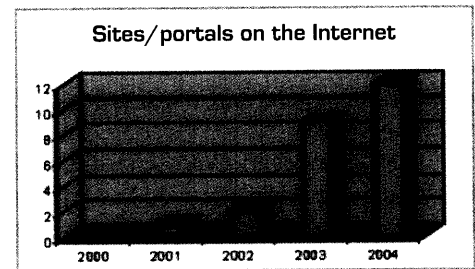
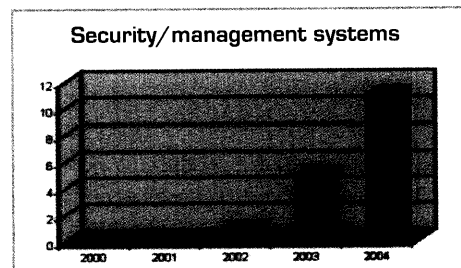
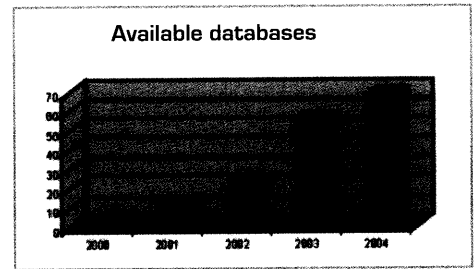
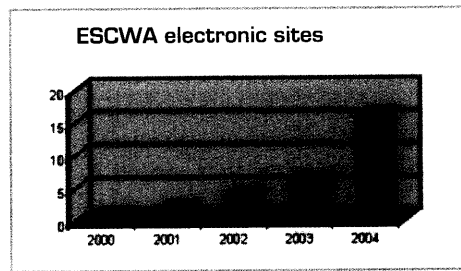
For ESCWA staff, 2005 was a year of challenges. Concerns for staff safety in an atmosphere of instability and for the completion of the work programme within established time schedules have imposed difficult choices on the Commission's administration. However, staff members have manifested flexibility, commitment and considerable creativity in the achievement of goals and observance of deadlines, despite the temporary closure of offices, the termination or postponement of some activities and the transfer of other activities outside United Nations premises. Rescheduling of work hours and work from home at times when security conditions were critical were among the measures that helped the Commission achieve its goals notwithstanding the challenges.

Central Support Services Section

The Information Technology Unit provides a number of IT services to more than 500 staff members working for UNDP; the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR); the Office of the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to Southern Lebanon and UNIC; in addition to ESCWA. The services provided include the development of the IT infrastructure and management, the design and development of electronic sites, the design and updating of database systems, the insurance of equipment and the performance of preventive maintenance, and technical support services for all staff members.

In response to the increasing needs of the Commission, the Unit supports the execution of IT reforms proposed in 2005. The Unit made progress by evolving into a structure that meets the standards recognized by the United Nations System for IT infrastructure, adopting a unified strategy, unified computer standards and a unified approach to the exchange of information through the Centre, and establishing many databases for the region that work on electronic sites. The Unit has also worked towards earning the safety certificate issued by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) for ESCWA IT infrastructure. The IT Unit has enhanced in-house support to a number of ESCWA systems, including

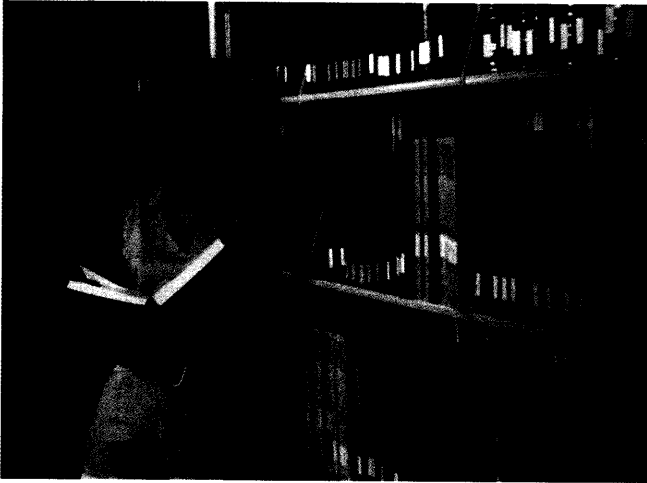
the automated library system and specialized databases, and has facilitated access to headquarters systems in order to strengthen integration in the field of information exchange and processing.



The number of common electronic sites and portals assigned to the work programme has increased. Measures have been adopted to protect electronic data from outside intrusion and inappropriate use.

During the 2004-2005 biennium, the IT Unit designed and established 19 databases accessible from electronic sites. In 2005, 885,450 visitors used the ESCWA site. Some 15,000 pages were reviewed and 550,000 documents were downloaded for various purposes.

B. The library



The library occupies half of the second floor at United Nations House. It contains more than 45,000 publications and documents that cover various ESCWA activities in the fields of economic and social development. Acquisitions include reference volumes, individual studies, periodical magazines, newspapers, CDs, databases directly available on computer, publications of United Nations agencies, and United Nations and ESCWA documents. In addition to those acquisitions, the Library receives, within the limits of available resources, regular new publications issued by non-United Nations entities on subjects of interest to the Commission. Visitors to the Library include ESCWA and other United Nations staff. It is open to the public three days a week. Library staff comprise a team of employees who provide search, reference and source organization services to visitors in all fields related to ESCWA activities, namely, the sustainable economic and social development of the region. Such fields include a considerable number of studies and statistics on various development elements, including the economy, industry, trade, transport, tourism, agriculture, energy, technology, water resources, population, education, poverty, community development, environment, women and gender equality. The ESCWA library is presently carrying out an inventory of and indexing all Commission documents issued in Arabic and English since 1974.

Other advantages of the library:

A Bulletin Board displays current information related to the Middle East and the United Nations. The bulletin is revised on a daily basis and may be directly accessed by staff members from their PCs.

An Internet page provides access to the library catalogue and contains a list of magazines, databases and new books; it serves as a digital library that facilitates access to various Internet sites that may be of interest to ESCWA staff.

A page within the ESCWA Internet site:

<http://www.escwa.org.lb/information/library/main.htm>: allows access to the library catalogue and the United Nations system and to other sites on the Internet that provide information on the ESCWA region. Internet users in the ESCWA region and other parts of the world may address their enquiries to the library by e-mail at the following address: library-escwa@un.org.

United Nations databases on the Internet: allow direct retrieving, by PC, of the full texts of United Nations documents and resolutions.

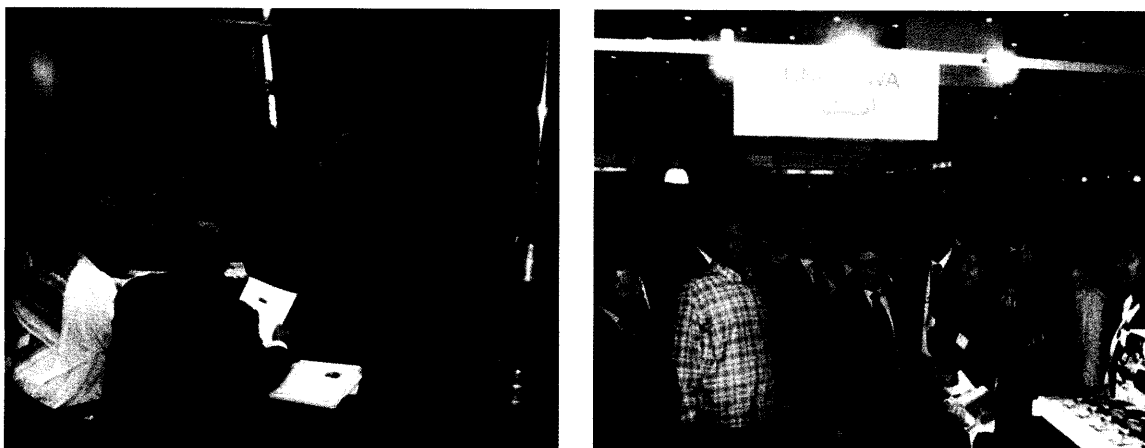


CHAPTER VII

In the field of information

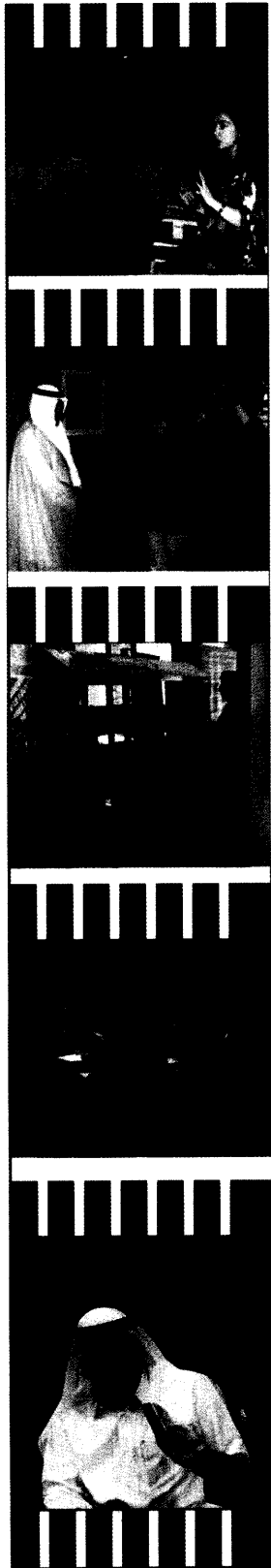
- A. General activities**
- B. The activities of the Executive Secretary**

A. General activities



In 2005, information activities focused on the strategic goal that ESCWA seeks to achieve through its work programme, namely, to establish regional integration and economic and social cooperation among the countries of the region. Despite the obstacles created by unfavourable political and security conditions in the host country, the Commission was able to achieve the information plan as formulated in the 2001 strategy that focused on the following three major areas:

- To cover the Commission's activities in the light of its strategic goals, including the functions of the Executive Secretary, meetings, conferences, advisory services, field projects, studies and reports;
- To undertake various strategic information activities;
- To acquaint the public with the work of the United Nations, with emphasis on the priorities of its work programme.
- That required an effort to reach as wide an audience as possible, by means of the following:
 - Expanding the electronic distribution network of press releases and other written information materials on a regular basis throughout the year;
 - Publishing ESCWA daily news on its Internet site;
 - Issuing the weekly bulletin and distributing it to more than 1,000 interested individuals, Government and non-governmental institutions;
 - Producing simplified written information materials, including booklets, pamphlets and posters;
 - Producing and broadcasting information items and documentaries on television channels throughout the region;



- Organizing information seminars for school and university students, civil society institutions and resource specialists;
- Strengthening continuous direct communication with Arab and international information institutions.

Public relations

In 2005 information activities which highlighted the work of ESCWA were paralleled by the activities of the Executive Secretary and public relations exercises aimed at acquainting the public with the work of the Commission. Visits made to ESCWA by some personalities became more than formalities, turning into good opportunities for the Commission to explain the nature of its work and strengthen cooperation with Government and non-governmental institutions. Visits made by the Executive Secretary widened the channels of communication with the Commission, and some eminent Arab media figures helped to acquaint the public with the Commission: the media figure Georges Querdahi was requested to help ESCWA enlighten people about social issues through his interesting shows. Such other popular personalities as Miss Lebanon appeared in publicity items that had been prepared in order to acquaint viewers with ESCWA activities.

The ESCWA Internet site

In 2005, ESCWA Internet pages were transformed into a comprehensive site supported by a large database containing a substantial amount of news and press releases which are often updated more than once a day. The database also contains information, presented in an attractive electronic format, about the Executive Secretary, conferences, field projects, advisory services provided to ESCWA member countries, studies, regular and other reports. In addition, five other sites were launched, devoted to the following major issues:

- The Regional Campaign on Secure Housing and Land Tenure and Good Urban Governance;
- The use of modern technology in combating unemployment and reducing poverty;
- ESCWA sessions;
- International statistics in the field of emigration;
- Arab domain names system.

ESCWA in the region

By monitoring the activities of ESCWA and the interest shown by the Lebanese and Arab press therein the Information Service produced, at the request of the Executive Secretary, statistics showing that ESCWA was mentioned 715 times in the Lebanese press and 269 times in the Arab press during 2005, while the activities of the Executive Secretary were mentioned 137 times in the Lebanese and Arab press. In addition, ESCWA was featured 181 times in the Lebanese and Arab press in the context of the coverage of activities that took place in, or in front of, its premises, or with respect to its studies and other activities concerning the region.

In 2005, the ESCWA secretariat produced 10 information slots about the work of ESCWA; the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations; WTO-related issues; water, the environment and information and communication technology. In addition, the twenty-third session of the Commission was covered by Lebanese and Arab satellite channels, and three documentaries were produced about the work of ESCWA, maritime transport and WTO-related issues.

B. The activities of the Executive Secretary



The appointment of Ms. Mervat Tallawy, the Executive Secretary of ESCWA, was a turning point in the history of the Commission. Ms. Tallawy restructured ESCWA in order to reflect the priorities of its member countries and new trends in the United Nations. She also endeavoured to strengthen regional integration by concluding a number of important agreements, including the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq, the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq and the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq. Working groups were set up to monitor the conflict areas in Iraq, OPT and Lebanon. An information plan supported by modern means was formulated in order to develop an Internet site. From the day she took office, the Executive Secretary has been working hard to enhance the image of the Commission, establish the important economic and social roles of ESCWA, and highlight those roles in regional and international forums. Over the past five years, Ms. Tallawy has made ESCWA a focus of media interest, and placed it firmly on the agendas of decision-makers.

In 2005, the Executive Secretary made intensive efforts in a number of areas, including following-up and sponsoring meetings and conferences held by ESCWA, representing ESCWA in regional and international events, holding meetings with eminent personalities in various fields and supporting technical cooperation activities and advisory services provided by the Commission to its member countries.

Important meetings

In 2005, the Executive Secretary played an important role in hosting the meeting of the Executive Secretaries of the United Nations five regional Commissions, which was held in Beirut in July and attended by eminent international figures, high-level officials from a number of United Nations organizations and a large number of personalities, including politicians,

diplomats, economists, intellectuals, and figures from the fields of culture and information. Ms. Tallawy also had a role in the hosting by the Syrian Arab Republic of the twenty-third session of the Commission in Damascus in May. The session resulted in the Damascus Declaration and a number of resolutions described by observers as extremely important.



Important meetings

With respect to regional and international events, the Executive Secretary inaugurated the celebration organized by Egypt in order to mark implementation of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq, which was prepared by ESCWA. Ms. Tallawy headed ESCWA delegations which participated in a series of high-level meetings, notably the Meeting of the Committee on Social Development and the Fifth Meeting of the National Council for Women in Egypt. The Executive Secretary made a distinguished statement during the Sixth Special Session of the Beirut Development Forum, The Session of Martyr Prime Minister Rafic Hariri. She also participated in the Meeting of the Executive Secretaries of the United Nations Five Regional Commissions, and took part in a dialogue on globalization organized by the Second Committee of the United Nations General Assembly.

In order to provide decision-makers with a clearer image of ESCWA, and discuss the challenges facing the Arab region, in 2005 the Executive Secretary met many Arab and International officials and accredited Arab and foreign ambassadors to Lebanon. Those meetings resulted in a number of cooperation agreements, as mentioned earlier in this report.

Periodically, the Executive Secretary receives governmental and parliamentary delegations, as well as delegations from the national and student organizations of ESCWA member countries. During such meetings, visitors voice their concerns, the way they view the current situation in the Arab region and their expectations for the future. Convinced of the important role those people can play in the development of Arab societies, the Executive Secretary is keen to bring their opinions, as expressed in the notes and reports they submit to her, to the attention of the Secretary-General and stresses the importance of bringing the younger generation closer to the work of ESCWA and acquainting that generation with the activities of the Commission in Arab countries. To that end, visits are periodically organized to educational institutions, institutes, universities and civil society organizations. The Executive Secretary also focuses on acquainting the public with the activities and publications of ESCWA: an exhibition was organized during the twenty-third session of the Commission and a stand was assigned to ESCWA at the Beirut International Arab Book Fair.

It should be mentioned that the persistent efforts and dedicated work of the Executive Secretary were appreciated and commended by the National Center for Social and Criminal Research in Cairo, Diwan Ahl Al-Kalam in Beirut and Rotary International, Beirut.