

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COUNCIL**

Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/SDPD/2007/IG.2/5(Part I)
21 March 2007
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ARABIC

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Committee on Water Resources
Seventh session
Muscat, 20-22 March 2007

Item 8 (a) of the provisional agenda

**REVIEW OF ACTION TAKEN IN THE FIELD OF WATER RESOURCES SINCE
THE SIXTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON WATER RESOURCES****FOLLOW-UP OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE
BY THE SIXTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON WATER RESOURCES****Summary**

The Committee on Water Resources was established pursuant to Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) resolution 205 (XVIII) dated 25 May 1995, adopted by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 26/1995 dated 24 July 1995, in recognition of the vital role played by the water resources sector in supporting programmes for economic and social development in the countries of the region. The Committee participates in determining the priorities of the programme of work in the field of water resources and coordinating the efforts of member countries, assists them in the implementation of recommendations issued by regional and international conferences and supports intraregional cooperation. The sixth session of the Committee on Water Resources was held in Beirut from 2 to 4 December 2004. The report of that session, which is set out in document E/ESCWA/SDPD/2004/IG.2/6 and contains recommendations for the work of ESCWA in the field of water resources, was adopted.

The following table contains a brief overview of the measures taken by ESCWA and the activities carried out pursuant to the recommendations made by the Committee on Water Resources at its sixth session.

**RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE SIXTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE
ON WATER RESOURCES**

Text of recommendation	Follow-up of implementation
<p>1. Efforts to build national capacities should continue, with particular respect to strengthening IWRM concepts and negotiating skills, in order to avoid disputes arising from the management of shared water resources. In cooperation with the German Technical Cooperation Project (BGR/GTZ), training workshops should be organized for decision makers, technical staff and the relevant officials in Government bodies that are involved in negotiations on internationally shared water.</p>	<p>ESCWA has devoted considerable attention to supporting member country efforts to build national capacities and raise the awareness of those involved in water issues, at all levels, with a view to promoting IWRM concepts and negotiating skills, in order to avoid disputes arising from the management of shared water resources. To that end, ESCWA has prepared various reports and studies and has organized a number of conferences, symposiums and training courses in cooperation with various national, regional and international parties. Those activities are set forth in detail in document E/ESCWA/SDPD/2007/IG.2/5(Part III), which has been presented to the committee. Activities include the following:</p> <p><i>IWRM Capacity-building</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ESCWA organized a workshop for the training of trainers on the application of IWRM guidelines in the Arab region (Kuwait, 14-18 May 2005), which was attended by experts from water and other related fields. The Workshop report is set forth in document E/ESCWA/SDPD/2005/WG.1/19; - ESCWA took part in the third coordination meeting to prepare the Second United Nations World's Water Development Report (Paris, 16-18 June 2005); - ESCWA organized a seminar on Water governance: role of stakeholders (Beirut, 14-15 November 2005), as part of the activities of the Beirut Water Week. The seminar report is set forth in E/ESCWA/SDPD/2005/WG.5/32; - ESCWA participated in the Seventh Gulf Water Conference: Water in the GCC: Towards Integrated Management, which was organized by the Water Sciences and Technology Association and the Secretariat-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) (Kuwait, 19-23 November 2005). ESCWA participated through the German project by financing the participation of four member country specialists in the field of water resources, who presented scientific papers; - ESCWA organized the Expert Group Meeting on National Institutional Reforms for the Implementation of IWRM in the ESCWA region (Oman, 18-20 March 2007); - ESCWA prepared a detailed study on the development of frameworks for the application of national IWRM strategies. (E/ESCWA/SDPD/2005/10) (Arabic only);

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ESCWA is currently preparing a study on guidelines for institutional and legal development for the implementation of IWRM at the national level in the ESCWA region; - Preparations are being made for a consultative meeting of Arab members of parliament on the application of an IWRM approach, to be held in June 2007. A guide to the role of Arab members of parliament in the ESCWA region has been prepared for the meeting. <p><i>Capacity- and skill building in the field of negotiating and settling disputes over the management of shared water resources</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ESCWA has prepared a study on regional cooperation between countries in the management of shared water resources: case studies of some countries in the ESCWA region. (E/ESCWA/SDPD/2005/15); - ESCWA has prepared a study on the environment in the transboundary context in the ESCWA region: situation and recommendations. (E/ESCWA/SDPD/2005/5); - ESCWA sent to Committee focal points a book which included a questionnaire designed to solicit the views of member countries on building their capacities in that field. Most member countries affirmed the importance of building capacities and negotiation skills for settling disputes related to the management of shared water resources. Iraq and Jordan were chosen to initiate such training; - In December 2006, ESCWA convened a preliminary meeting in Amman in preparation for a workshop on building negotiating capacities. During the meeting, the scope of work was delineated, as were the desired goals and the standards for choosing participants for the workshop, which is scheduled to be held in April 2007.
<p>2. With support from BGR/GTZ, assistance should be provided to countries, as needed, in developing their national strategies and plans in accordance with IWRM methodology and concepts, with a view to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the WSSD Plan of Implementation.</p>	<p>Since the sixth session of the Committee on Water Resources, ESCWA has received six requests for IWRM consultative services. Most such services concentrate on strengthening the ability of member countries to devise integrated policies for the effective and sustainable management of water resources. Those services also include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Responding to a request from the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research to attend a workshop which was held on 15-16 February 2005 on Artificial groundwater recharge: a step towards water security; participate in discussions; and make final recommendations designed to enable GCC States to take advantage of artificial recharge techniques;

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Responding to a request from the Ministry of Water and Environment of Yemen to present a working paper on water resource management in Yemen as part of the activities of the workshop on <i>Desalination and renewable energy in Yemen</i> (26-28 April 2005); - Responding to a request from the Ministry of Regional Municipalities, Environment and Water Resources of Oman to devise a strategy to raise efficiency and promote IWRM concepts. ESCWA sent an expert to prepare the guidelines necessary to evaluate and establish a plan for national IWRM capacity-building; - Responding to a request from the Ministry of Economy and Planning of Saudi Arabia for technical assistance in the fields of hydrology, hydrological networks, mathematical models and the management of water demand. ESCWA is currently preparing to send experts in those fields; - Responding to a request from the Ministry of Water and Irrigation of Jordan for technical assistance in building capacities to identify and analyse the possible environmental impact of proposed development projects, and build the capacities of the Ministry in the field of integrated water resource policies. ESCWA is currently preparing to send other experts in those fields; - Responding to a request from the Ministry of Works and Housing of Bahrain for technical assistance in issuing and developing the necessary rules, conditions and standardized specifications related to law No. 33 of 2006 on sanitation and surface water drainage. ESCWA is currently preparing to send two experts in that field.
<p>3. Support should be provided for the building of national capacities in preparing the necessary guidelines for the quality management of water in the region and core water-related indicators; using all technical means and media to raise awareness of optimal water consumption; and formulating guidelines on standards for the sanitary equipment used in the various water sectors, by holding seminars, training sessions and study groups, with support from GTZ and through the Arab Integrated Water Resources Management Network (AWARENET). Consideration should also be given to the feasibility of making use of the programme offered by Bahrain.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ESCWA prepared the first issue of the water development report: vulnerability of the region to socio-economic drought (E/ESCWA/SDPD/2005/9); - ESCWA is currently preparing a study to evaluate procedures for water quality management in the ESCWA region in order to evaluate water quality management systems in the region, with the emphasis on the cases of Egypt, Jordan and Yemen. All sources of pollution have been determined for each country, and the most detrimental have been identified. A detailed discussion on the current status of the institutional structure and the infrastructure needed to activate water quality management systems was also conducted;

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Towards the end of 2005, the Sustainable Development and Productivity Division prepared a series of five pamphlets entitled <i>Country and regional features of sustainable development indicators in the ESCWA region for selected sectors in the ESCWA region</i>. Each contains tables and explanations of sustainable development indicators and priority policies in each country of the region with regards to the energy, water, environment, agriculture, industry and technology sectors. Each pamphlet also discusses the indicators themselves on the regional level. E/ESCWA/SDPD/2005/Booklet.2 (Arabic only) deals with the water sector.
<p>4. Support should be given to technical cooperation and regional advisory services, provided the country requesting the service clearly specifies the consultancy required and prepares the relevant terms of reference.</p>	<p>ESCWA has responded to a number of requests for its services, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparing a national strategy for water security and participating in national deliberations on the preparation of a strategy and a plan of action for its implementation (Kuwait, 26-28 March 2006); a meeting with the chief of the Environment Public Authority to discuss the role expected of the Authority in the implementation of that strategy and supervision of aspects of future cooperation with ESCWA in the field of the environment; - Participating in the training and educational course on the environment which targeted Arab media professionals and dealt with the preservation of water resources (Kuwait, 20-23 May 2006). Lectures were given on obtaining information on the environment, and determining whether such information is suitable and sufficient for publication. The lectures also dealt with interpreting environmental information and how to publish it; - Preparing a study on the <i>falaj</i> system in Oman, in order to draw attention to it as a model. Based on the traditional practices and cultural heritage of the peoples of the region, that system supports IWRM application. The system was presented as a best practice at the Fourth World Water Forum which was held in Mexico City in March 2006.

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<p>5. With the support of BGR/GTZ, countries should be assisted in formulating the policies and mechanisms necessary to provide and improve water supplies and sanitation services, in order to achieve MDGs and the WSSD Plan of Implementation.</p>	<p>The issue of water supplies and sanitation services was incorporated into the programme of work of the ESCWA Water Issues Management Team, and into the activities of the German technical cooperation project, through which extrabudgetary financing is provided. The goal of the project was to formulate the necessary policies and mechanisms to provide and improve water supplies and sanitation services with a view to meeting the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Details are set out in document E/ESCWA/SDPD/2007/IG.2/5(Part III), which was presented to the Committee under agenda item 8(c). The most significant activities undertaken by ESCWA were the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A fact-finding visit to water departments in the following cities: Manama, Cairo and Alexandria (Egypt), Muscat, and Dubai and Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates). The visit was conducted in order to view at close proximity the particularities of the various departments and consult officials on the formation of an Arab water utilities network; - Consultative meeting on the proposal to form an Arab Water Utilities Network (Cairo, 4-6 September 2006), where the constituent assembly was adopted and its officers were elected; - Meeting for the constituent assembly of the Arab Water Utilities Network in Bonn, where the draft statutes were discussed and adopted, and where the German experience in that field was presented for consideration by the German Association for Water and the European Water Association; - A special meeting of the Arab Water Utilities Network at the Water Middle East 2007 conference which was hosted by Bahrain (Bahrain, 22-24 January 2007).
<p>6. ESCWA should participate in the International Law Commission meeting that will be held for the purpose of formulating an international treaty on shared groundwater, in order to ensure that the position of Arab countries is taken into consideration and represented in that treaty.</p>	<p>ESCWA sent to member countries and Committee on Water Resources focal points shared natural resources: transboundary groundwaters the Third report prepared by the International Law Commission at its fifty-seventh session.</p>
<p>7. With support from BGR/GTZ, assistance should be provided in arriving at a clear terminology for internationally shared water (surface water and groundwater), given that the current terminology is not universally agreed upon.</p>	<p>The issue of agreeing on terminology on shared international waters (surface- and groundwater) was incorporated into the programme of work of the Water Issues Management Team and the activities of the technical cooperation programme through which extrabudgetary funding was provided. The issue is considered in detail in E/ESCWA/SDPD/2007/IG.2/5(Part III), which was presented to the Committee under agenda item 8(c).</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two documents and an index were prepared on terminology. The first section of the document comprises technical social and economic terms, while the second section deals with legal and institutional terms.
<p>8. A preparatory meeting should be held for the Fourth World Water Forum, which will be held in Mexico in March 2006, in order to coordinate the positions of the countries of the region and develop a harmonized regional stance on water issues in the ESCWA region. That meeting should be held by the end of September 2005.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A regional paper on the current status of water resources in light of the essential particularities of the ESCWA region was prepared. It considers the principle challenges facing the region with regard to water, the strategies that must be adopted, successful experiences and relevant local activities; - As part of the contribution of the Arab region to the World Water Forum, ESCWA participated in the First Arab States Regional Consultation for Preparation for the Fourth World Water Forum, organized by the Arab Water Council (Cairo, 19-20 June 2005); - On 29 September 2005, ESCWA held a preliminary meeting, attended by member country focal points, with a view to reaching a unified Arab vision that could be presented at the Fourth World Water Forum, with the emphasis on the pioneering regional role played by the Arab Water Council. Details of this are set out in E/ESCWA/SDPD/2007/IG.2/5(Part III), which was presented to the Committee under agenda item 8(c); - ESCWA participated in the Second Regional Consultation in preparation for the Fourth World Water Forum, organized by the Arab Water Council (Cairo, 14-15 December 2005), where the outcomes of the first meeting and its report were submitted; - ESCWA participated in the forum held in Mexico City which was organized by the World Water Council and the Mexican Government in cooperation with United Nations agencies. ESCWA organized a side meeting on capacity-building on a day allotted for that purpose, in coordination with the International Network for Capacity-Building in the Field of the Integrated Management of Water Resources; - ESCWA participated in the general public meeting of the Arab Water Council (Cairo, 7-8 December 2006) which was held in order to elect the Board of Governors, adopt the statutes and discuss the work programme for 2007-2009.