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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Executive Committee
First meeting
Amman, 8-9 June 2015

Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda

Follow-up issues

**Implementation of recommendations made by the Technical Committee
at its eighth meeting**

Summary

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), at its twenty-eighth session held in Tunis from 15 to 18 September 2014, adopted resolution 320 (XXVIII) on redesignating the Technical Committee as the “Executive Committee” and amending its terms of reference, so that it may play a greater role in steering and coordinating all ESCWA activities, pursuant to a recommendation made by the Technical Committee at its eighth meeting, held in Amman from 10 to 12 December 2013.

Pursuant to the above-mentioned resolution, the Technical Committee has been redesignated as the “Executive Committee”. Its first meeting will be held in Amman on 8 and 9 June 2015.

At its eighth and final meeting, the Technical Committee made several recommendations and proposals on issues contained in its agenda and on the nature and operationalization of its work. The present document sets out the procedures adopted by the ESCWA secretariat and the activities it has undertaken to implement those recommendations.

**RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
AT ITS EIGHTH MEETING AND PROCEDURES FOR THEIR IMPLEMENTATION**

1. At its eighth meeting, held in Amman from 10 to 12 December 2013, the Technical Committee issued several recommendations and proposals on issues contained in its agenda and on the nature and operationalization of its work. The present document sets out these recommendations and the actions undertaken for their implementation.

A. RECOMMENDATIONS MADE TO MEMBER STATES

Recommendation (a)

Take note of the progress made in the implementation of recommendations by the Technical Committee at its seventh meeting and of the resolutions adopted by the Commission at its twenty-seventh session; and, for those member States that have not yet submitted reports on the progress made in the implementation of these resolutions, to do so no later than mid-February 2014.

Implementation

2. The secretariat has followed up on the implementation by members States of ministerial resolutions, and presented its findings at the twenty-eighth ESCWA session in document E/ESCWA/28/6(Part IV) on the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the Commission at its twenty-seventh session.

Recommendation (b)

Adopt the recommendation by the Technical Committee at its seventh meeting on the redesignation of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia as the “Economic and Social Commission for Arab States”; and consider a draft resolution on the subject at the twenty-eighth session of ESCWA with a view to adopting it.

Implementation

3. Representatives at the ESCWA twenty-eighth session adopted resolution 321 (XXVIII) on redesignating the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia as the “Economic and Social Commission for Arab States”.

Recommendation (c)

Approve the draft strategic framework for 2016-2017 and the priorities included therein, namely supporting the regional integration process, building statistical capacities and enhancing expertise in economic modelling as a tool to support decision-making.

Implementation

4. ESCWA has amended the draft strategic framework for 2016-2017 on the basis of discussions at sessions of the specialized intergovernmental committees and the eighth meeting of the Technical Committee, taking into consideration the comments received from member States prior to and following the meeting.

Recommendation (d)

Agree on the redesignation of subprogramme 7 as “Mitigation of the impact of crises on development” to reflect new developments in the region, and to highlight the role of the subprogramme in mitigating the impact of crises on development and in assisting member States to tackle developmental and institutional challenges (in accordance with relevant resolutions).

Implementation

5. ESCWA is currently in the process of redesignating subprogramme 7 as “Mitigation of the impact of crises on development”, which will be reflected in the strategic framework for 2018-2019.

Recommendation (e)

Agree on setting up an intergovernmental committee on emerging issues and development under crisis.

Implementation

6. The secretariat reviewed the reasons for establishing an intergovernmental committee on emerging issues and development under crisis, with reference to document E/ESCWA/28/7(Part V), prepared pursuant to ESCWA resolutions 292 (XXVI) and 296 (XXVI). Following extensive deliberations, representatives at the twenty-eighth ESCWA session recommended suspending the proposal owing to the ambiguity of the committee’s proposed terms of reference.

Recommendation (f)

Capitalize on the work undertaken by the ESCWA secretariat in the field of economic modelling, taking advantage of the Commission’s expertise to build the capacity of the concerned national entities to ensure the sustainability of that work; support the efforts of the secretariat in turning the Regional Integration Section of the Economic Development and Globalization Division into a centre for Arab economic integration; and request the secretariat to present its views on the design and implementation of this centre at the twenty-eighth ESCWA ministerial session.

Implementation

7. The secretariat presented a proposal at the twenty-eighth ESCWA session on the establishment of an Arab trade and economic integration centre, presented in document E/ESCWA/28/7(Part IV). Representatives approved the proposal, affirming the importance of complete coordination and cooperation with the League of Arab States. The centre is currently being established and consultations on coordination are being intensified with the League of Arab States secretariat.

Recommendation (g)

Agree on the redesignation of the Technical Committee as “the Executive Committee” and on the amendment of its terms of reference, so that it may play a greater role in steering and coordinating all ESCWA activities; and request the secretariat to submit a proposal on these terms of reference at the twenty-eighth ESCWA session.

Implementation

8. Representatives at the twenty-eighth ESCWA session adopted resolution 320 (XXVIII) on redesignating the Technical Committee as the “Executive Committee” and amending its terms of reference.

Recommendation (h)

Support the requests of those specialized subsidiary intergovernmental committees that wish to convene annually; and recommend the approval of the requests submitted by the Statistical Committee and the Committee on Water Resources to that effect.

Implementation

9. The Commission reviewed the meeting reports of the ESCWA subsidiary bodies held in the period between the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth ESCWA sessions. Three recommendations were highlighted on annually convening the sessions of the Committee on Water Resources, the Committee on Energy and the Statistical Committee; however, representatives did not reach a consensus on the proposals.

Recommendation (i)

Agree on holding the twenty-eighth ministerial session at the United Nations headquarters in Beirut, on 14 and 15 May 2014, unless a member State other than Lebanon expresses its wish to host it, noting that a three-day senior officials meeting will be convened prior to the session; and approve that social justice be the major theme of the upcoming session, which will coincide with the celebration of the fortieth anniversary of ESCWA, and that a ministerial declaration on addressing social justice in national policies be issued, with enhanced media coverage for the session.

Implementation

10. The twenty-eighth ESCWA session was held in Tunis, from 15 to 18 September 2014. Session meetings were held in two segments, one for senior officials and the other for ministers. The senior officials' segment reviewed the outcomes of the Arab High-Level Forum on Sustainable Development; the issue of support for the Palestinian people and the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People; the revised draft strategic framework for the biennium 2016-2017; the report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Commission; and management issues.

11. Four dialogues were held at the ministerial level on the subject "Social justice in the policies of Arab States", which was also the theme of the twenty-eighth ESCWA session. The following four topics were discussed, with reference to research papers prepared by the secretariat: social justice and the new development approach; economic policies supportive of social justice; intergenerational justice and access to natural resources; and the monitoring and measurement of social justice.

12. The session concluded with the adoption of the Tunis Declaration on Social Justice in the Arab Region, recommendations made at the senior officials segment and resolutions which were submitted to the Economic and Social Council for its action or attention.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS MADE TO THE ESCWA SECRETARIAT

Recommendation (a)

Prepare new draft terms of reference for the intergovernmental committee on emerging issues and development under crisis, including its objectives, framework, functions and powers. The draft should be based on the proposals of the Technical Committee, in the light of the mandate of ESCWA in the economic, social and developmental fields and ESCWA resolution 292 (XXVI). It should be presented to the senior officials meeting to be held prior to the session.

Implementation

13. Representatives at the senior officials segment of the twenty-eighth ESCWA session agreed that it was not necessary to establish an intergovernmental committee on emerging issues and development under crisis, given that the work carried out on the issue by ESCWA subprogramme 7 was currently sufficient.

Recommendation (b)

Implement regional programmes aimed at building the statistical capacity of member countries, improving the related infrastructure and expanding the scope of their statistical activities; build and strengthen the statistical capacity of policymakers; and draw mainly on national data for the preparation of ESCWA reports.

Implementation

14. The ESCWA Statistics Division is developing regional programmes to build the statistical capacity of member countries and improve related infrastructure. It is also expanding existing statistical activities funded through the regular budget, the United Nations Development Account and the Technical Cooperation Programme. Human resources in the Statistics Division have been bolstered as a result.

Recommendation (c)

Step up efforts to support Arab consultations on sustainable development goals, which should encompass the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and take into consideration the priorities and interests of the Arab region, thus strengthening the Arab position in negotiations scheduled for 2014. Progress made in this regard should be reported at the twenty-eighth ministerial session.

Implementation

15. Referring to document E/ESCWA/SDPD/2014/WG.1/6/Report, the secretariat reviewed the outcomes of the Arab High-Level Forum on Sustainable Development, organized by ESCWA in collaboration with the League of Arab States and the United Nations Environment Programme. The aim of the Forum was to follow up on the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

16. Representatives said that it was important to develop a unified vision for the Arab region when preparing the post-2015 development agenda, and that all Arab States should participate in the negotiations to ensure that the region had a strong and unified position and that its priorities were at the heart of the final outcome. They added that coordination mechanisms were vital to avoid duplication and overlaps in reports and initiatives. Concerning agreement on the final development goals at the international level, the Arab region must uphold its priorities, including peace, institution-building and science and technology.

Recommendation (d)

Submit to member States a list of the intergovernmental meetings scheduled for the upcoming biennium, including their preliminary dates, and a list of the recommendations adopted at such meetings as soon as it is available; disseminate the outcomes of expert group meetings as appropriate; and update the ESCWA website.

Implementation

17. ESCWA is updating the list of intergovernmental meetings scheduled for the upcoming biennium under its work programme, which is available on the ESCWA website. It is also currently developing a new website in line with its vision for the future.

Recommendation (e)

Review the terms of reference of the technical cooperation network to enhance its efficacy and efficiency, stressing the importance of holding regular network meetings and of coordinating with national focal points before the submission of technical cooperation requests to the secretariat; and submit the outcomes of this review to the Technical Committee at its ninth meeting.

Implementation

18. The secretariat is currently reviewing the terms of reference of the technical cooperation network.

Recommendation (f)

Agree that any communication on intergovernmental meetings with meeting participants should be channelled through a mechanism set by national focal points and the ESCWA secretariat.

Implementation

19. The secretariat is committed to continued communication with member States on intergovernmental meetings through mechanisms set by States, either by sending invitations and relevant documentation directly to national focal points and copying relevant sectors, or the opposite.

Recommendation (g)

Present its views on an ESCWA centre for Arab economic integration at the twenty-eighth ESCWA session.

Implementation

20. At the twenty-eighth ESCWA session, the secretariat presented a proposal for the establishment of an Arab trade and economic integration centre (an amended designation for ESCWA centre for Arab economic integration), with reference to document E/ESCWA/28/7(Part IV).
