



Report

Ninth session of the Committee on Women Amman, 26-27 November 2019

Summary

The Committee on Women of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) held its ninth session in Amman on 26 and 27 November 2019. The Committee considered measures taken by Arab countries and the ESCWA secretariat to implement the recommendations made by the Committee at its eighth session, and progress in implementing activities under the ESCWA programme of work and the Beirut Declaration on Building Effective Institutions to Empower Women in the Arab Region. The Committee reviewed ESCWA efforts aimed at increasing gender equality, and at supporting member States in meeting their national and international commitments. It also considered the review and regional assessment of the implementation by Arab countries of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25 years after their adoption; and issues related to combatting violence against women, removing barriers to women's participation in the judiciary, and cultivating the resilience of national women's machineries in challenging times. Moreover, the Committee held a round-table discussion on technology as a lever for gender equality in the Arab region.

At the close of its ninth session, the Committee on Women adopted several recommendations addressed to member States and to the ESCWA secretariat, to be implemented in the next biennium. At the close of the High-level Meeting on Progress in the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 25 Years, held in Amman on 28 November 2019, member States adopted the Arab Declaration on Progress in the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 25 Years. The present report reviews the Arab Declaration and sets out the recommendations made by the Committee on Women at its ninth session. It also summarizes the main topics discussed by participants.

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Introduction

1. The Committee on Women held its ninth session in Amman on 26 and 27 November 2019. It discussed key women's issues, and the Arab region's related priorities. At the close of its ninth session, the Committee adopted several recommendations addressed to member States and to the ESCWA secretariat. The main outcomes of the ninth session included consensus on the text of the Arab Declaration on Progress in the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 25 Years, adopted by member States at the close of the High-level Meeting on Progress in the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 25 Years, which was held in Amman on 28 November 2019 following the ninth session.

I. ARAB DECLARATION ON PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION AFTER 25 YEARS

Participants, Arab State representatives concerned with women's affairs, met at the High-level Meeting on Progress in the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 25 years (1995), held in Amman on 28 November 2019, and stressed that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remained one of the choices and strategic pathways for the advancement of women, and that they contributed to prosperous and peaceful societies based on gender equality, non-discrimination and equal opportunities, in which women participated equally in the development process. They emphasized the following:

1. Progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25 years after their adoption provides an appropriate opportunity to consider achievements and identify challenges and gaps to be addressed. This review coincides with the five-year anniversary of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which pays particular attention to gender equality in its Goals, the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women, peace and security, and the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by the General Assembly of the United Nations (1979). All of this gives additional impetus to women's issues at the national, regional and international levels, and enriches the substantive dimensions of the review.

2. Arab States that have conducted national reviews to reflect on achievements and challenges, despite security situations and worsening crises that have negatively affected a number of them, have exerted significant efforts.

3. Arab States have made progress over the past five years in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, reflected in increased social awareness on the importance of the role of women, and in the numerous initiatives adopted to empower and ensure the advancement of women and increase their representation and participation in political, social, economic and public life and in decision-making positions. Achievements include the following:

(a) Developing and adopting policies, strategies and action plans aimed at advancing the status of women in general; and ones aimed at combating violence against women, improving services for women in general and under all social and environmental conditions, integrating a gender equality and equal opportunity perspective into the work of Governments and public administrations, and adopting national action plans to implement resolution [1325](#);

(b) Continuing to review and develop national legislation that ensured more consistency with international commitments, including strengthening the protection of women and girls, whether through the adoption of legislation on violence against women or on sexual harassment, or through the repeal or amendment of articles and legal texts that discriminate against women;

(c) Launching innovative initiatives and undertaking activities and programmes on women and girls' access to education and health services that contributed to improving their status, through linking education outputs to labour market requirements, and through health insurance and other services;

(d) Supporting and promoting civil society organizations in their work to advance the role of women, achieve gender equality and empower women.

4. Despite the importance of these achievements, it should be noted that some Arab States still face a number of development challenges, such as high poverty and unemployment rates, and a widening gap between social classes, which affect the resources available to them to implement their development goals and plans and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

5. Challenges are exacerbated by war, terrorism, armed conflict and coercive measures faced by some Arab States, and their devastating effects on the history and civilization of the Arab region and its natural resources and infrastructure, in addition to negative social and economic impacts, especially on women and children suffering from marginalization and violence, including child marriage, sexual violence and absence of health and education services, particularly in asylum and displacement situations.

6. The challenges faced by Palestinian women continue to be compounded by the Israeli occupation. Women, in addition to suffering from home demolitions, forced displacement and arbitrary arrest, also suffer from an absence of basic services that affect all aspects of life, including health, education and security. The suffering of women continues in the occupied Arab Syrian Golan, Shebaa Farms, Kfar Chouba Hills and the north of Ghajar village, resulting from the Israeli occupation and its measures aimed at perpetuating the occupation. The international community must work to end the occupation and demand that Israel, the occupying power, implement all related United Nations resolutions, including those calling for the protection of women and girls living under occupation, and the release of all prisoners.

7. Following the review of progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25 years after their adoption, it is important to emphasize the following:

(a) Continue reviewing national legislation for further development and amendment, eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, take measures to address discriminatory violations and practices, expedite the development of public policies and programmes to combat violence against women in the private and public spheres, and commend achievements in this field;

(b) Strengthen commitment to Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security to ensure the prevention, protection and participation of women and girls in times of peace and armed conflict and thereafter, and in relief, reconstruction and peacebuilding work, and develop relevant national plans consistent with national strategies and priorities;

(c) Call upon the Security Council to adopt a new resolution succeeding resolution [1325](#) and others based on it, so as to address gaps in the women, peace and security agenda, which does not address the situation of women in the State of Palestine suffering under Israeli occupation;

(d) Continue to address and raise awareness about negative and discriminatory social stereotypes that aggravate gender inequalities, and promote the sharing of responsibilities within the family between women and men in unpaid care work, thus contributing to enhancing work-life balance;

(e) Continue reviewing social protection policies and programmes to ensure integration and to provide a comprehensive protection system that includes social security and health insurance for all groups, including women working in the informal sector;

(f) Provide and develop preventive, protective, health, legal, judicial, social and economic services for victims and survivors of violence, ensure their availability, accessibility and quality, and draw on international standards in that regard;

(g) Monitor and address disparities in development levels between rural, remote areas and refugee camps on the one hand, and urban areas on the other, to ensure that marginalized women benefit equally from development programmes;

(h) Continue working to ensure women's access to decision-making positions by providing tools and measures, including information and communications technology, to ensure equal participation of women and men;

(i) Continue supporting and developing the work of national women's machineries, allocate financial and human resources and build their capacity to enable them to fulfil their role in improving the status of women at the national level and in implementing related national policies;

(j) Continue developing gender-disaggregated statistical information and data systems, and make them available to decision makers to develop, endorse, adopt and implement national strategies, policies and plans aimed at addressing the imbalance in the status of women and ensure their advancement;

(k) Continue to work jointly at the Arab level and strengthen regional and international partnerships to develop programmes and policies that contribute to improving the status of women;

(l) Continue monitoring and assessing progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and work on bridging gaps over the next five years.

8. Tribute must be paid to resilient Arab women struggling in all fields and at the national, regional and global levels.

In conclusion, participants commended the efforts of the League of Arab States, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the Arab Women Organization (AWO), which contributed to the preparation of the regional review on progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after twenty-five years, to identify trends and priorities in the region over the next five years towards achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.*

* The Syrian Arab Republic expressed reservations on the final paragraph of the present Declaration.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS BY COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AT ITS NINTH SESSION

A. RECOMMENDATIONS TO ESCWA MEMBER STATES

2. At the close of its ninth session, the Committee on Women adopted the following recommendations addressed to member States:

(a) Take note of progress in implementing the recommendations made by the Committee on Women at its eighth session and the Beirut Declaration on Building Effective Institutions to Empower Women in the Arab Region, provide the secretariat with reports on implementing the recommendations and the Beirut Declaration by 31 December 2019, and welcome the continued efforts of the secretariat on the main pillars of its work in the fields of justice, gender equality, women, peace and security, combating violence against women, and supporting countries in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

(b) Note the secretariat's efforts in fulfilling technical support requests submitted by member States in all fields, especially in translating Goal 5 of the SDGs in national action plans and in developing strategies related to combating violence against women, promoting the women, peace and security agenda, and enhancing gender justice;

(c) Benefit from knowledge and training manuals issued by the secretariat regarding the Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in National Institutions, and create opportunities for its application in national women's machineries and public institutions in accordance with national needs;

(d) Continue working to develop legislation, laws and regulations to combat violence against women and ensure their inclusiveness to strengthen the prevention of violence in all its forms and provide protection frameworks for survivors, including protection orders and services to support survivors and their children, benefit from Arab countries' experiences to improve access to shelters and develop national standards for the services they provide, in accordance with relevant international agreements;

(e) Develop national mechanisms to monitor the quality and benefits of services provided to survivors of violence;

(f) Stimulate the role of the private sector, within the framework of social responsibility, to support programmes that protect women from violence, either by supporting shelters or through training and treatment programmes, and develop electronic applications for guidance and protection services;

(g) Continue developing tools to provide national data on SDG indicators of violence against women, time-use surveys and unpaid care work, and benefit from the secretariat's experience in conducting research at the national level to calculate the economic cost of violence against women and monitor child marriage;

(h) Continue supporting women's participation in the judiciary and provide statistical data on their participation in the judiciary and in public prosecution, benefit from the experiences of Arab countries that have achieved balanced participation to enhance women's presence at all levels of litigation, develop national tools and use available knowledge on women's participation in the judiciary to raise awareness of this important issue, and cooperate with relevant academic and official institutions according to countries' national priorities;

(i) Continue building the institutional capacity and strength of national women's machineries and institutionalizing their tasks, provide them with the necessary tools and human, technical and financial resources, strengthen and institutionalize the links between them and all relevant national stakeholders and civil society partners to mainstream a gender equality perspective, and develop their capacity to confront challenges and crises;

(j) Continue developing and evaluating approaches to change stereotypes that lead to violence against women, and use enlightened religious discourse to educate society about women's rights;

(k) Continue supporting the Palestinian people in their struggle to realize their rights as stipulated in international law, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, provide support to women and girls under the Convention, and call for an end to the Israeli occupation and for justice and lasting peace for all Palestinians;

(l) Disseminate knowledge on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the formal and informal levels, including at the level of parliamentarians, local communities, and young people, enhance their role in adopting initiatives towards implementing the Platform for Action at the local level, and work with the media to propagate this knowledge;

(m) Take note of the work of the Subcommittee on Gender Equality and the Sustainable Development Goals, and commit to participating in its activities and to transferring its knowledge at the national level to implements the SDGs and national priorities;

(n) Cooperate with stakeholders to enhance women's participation in and benefit from the specializations of science, technology, engineering and mathematics to bridge the gap in women's participation in the digital economy, and adopt a gender inclusive approach and an equal opportunity perspective when developing and implementing national technology and innovation policies.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE ESCWA SECRETARIAT

3. At the close of its ninth session, the Committee on Women issued the following recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat:

(a) Continue supporting member States through the ESCWA Centre for Women's work, which covers violence against women; women, peace and security; gender justice; and mainstreaming gender equality in public institutions, further develop knowledge associated with implementing the SDGs, especially Goal 5 and its means of implementation and related targets, and continue supporting member States in developing national strategies and action plans to fulfil their commitments and aspirations in the field of women's advancement;

(b) Publish and widely disseminate the Arab Declaration on Progress in the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 25 Years, especially to those involved in negotiating the outcome document that will be issued by the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixty-fourth session, so as to ensure that the outcome document reflects the priorities of Arab States;

(c) Expand studies on critical areas of concern in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, including obstacles to women's economic participation and recognition of their role;

(d) Provide technical support to launch the Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in National Institutions in national women's machineries in Arab States, and continue building and strengthening the necessary capacities under this framework;

(e) Continue developing tools that contribute to identifying inequalities and discrimination, including combating violence against women, and services and mechanisms that contribute to providing quality services to survivors of violence;

(f) Support member States in developing national systems for documenting cases of violence against women and girls and providing protection orders and access to shelters, and expand knowledge of women's economic participation and their participation in the information and communications technology (ICT) sector;

(g) Work with national women's machineries and other stakeholders to strengthen the competence of judiciary personnel in mainstreaming international agreements and gender equality in their training programmes;

(h) Continue supporting member States in combating violence against women by developing national strategies to combat violence, reviewing related legislation and regulations, estimating the economic cost of violence against women, and expanding the development of tools to calculate other aspects of discrimination against women;

(i) Continue providing technical support and experience exchange to member States to develop and support public institutions concerned with gender equality and women's empowerment, including national women's machineries, to ensure their resilience and capacity to carry out their tasks by supporting the development of policies and strategies for that purpose;

(j) Continue monitoring the economic and social status of Palestinian women and girls under occupation, and benefit from the tenth anniversary of the periodic report issued by ESCWA to document the trends resulting from the accumulated repercussions of the Israeli occupation and present them to international mechanisms;

(k) Support the State of Palestine in promoting gender equality and empowering women within its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the 2030 Agenda, in building on available data to determine the economic cost of violence, and in ensuring the allocation of adequate financial and human resources to implement the National Action Plan for the Implementation of Security Council Resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#);

(l) Continue providing technical support to the Subcommittee on Gender Equality and the Sustainable Development Goals, provide the diverse knowledge and tools to assist member States in accelerating the implementation of the Goals and their targets, especially those related to gender equality, and invite national women's machineries, national statistical offices and other stakeholders to participate in the activities of the Subcommittee;

(m) Undertake activities to support countries in employing enabling technology, especially ICT, to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls;

(n) Continue forging partnerships and strengthening cooperation between various stakeholders, including Governments, the private sector, academia and civil society, and networking them with national women's machineries and national statistical offices to support regional and national efforts to advance the status of women in all areas.

III. TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

A. FOLLOW-UP ISSUES

1. *Implementation of activities under the ESCWA programme of work, recommendations made by the Committee on Women at its eighth session and the Beirut Declaration on Building Effective Institutions to Empower Women in the Arab Region*
(Agenda item 4)

4. With reference to document E/ESCWA/C.7/2019/3, the representative of the secretariat made a presentation on the activities and programmes undertaken by the ESCWA Centre for Women since the eighth session of the Committee on Women to implement the ESCWA programme of work in the field of women's advancement for the biennium 2018-2019; the recommendations made by the Committee at its eighth session to the secretariat; and the Beirut Declaration on Building Effective Institutions to Empower Women in the Arab Region that was also adopted at the eighth session. She said that the activities mostly focused on the main

working themes of the Centre for Women, namely violence against women, gender justice, women, peace and security, the SDGs, and mainstreaming gender equality in institutions.

5. She noted the methodology of ESCWA work that linked evidence-based analytical studies and research, and translated them into field projects, advisory services and activities to develop the capacity of member States. She presented key partnerships forged by the ESCWA Centre for Women to implement its activities. She gave an overview of major studies, research and reports, expert meetings, training workshops and dialogue sessions, and projects and activities implemented to raise awareness of women's issues. She also presented the online platform developed by ESCWA in the framework of the project on calculating the economic cost of violence against women - an interactive platform summarizing the content of relevant studies, and providing an easy-to-use tool to countries and survivors of violence to calculate the economic cost of violence to those affected by it and to the budget of civil society organizations providing related services.

6. In the ensuing discussion, representatives of member States thanked the ESCWA Centre for Women for its work and momentum, reflected in the number and quality of implemented activities. They noted in particular the valuable studies issued by ESCWA and the tools it developed to maximize benefit through simple interactive methods. The representative of Oman requested that the secretariat send its studies to national women's machineries, especially those related to women's participation in the judiciary. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic enquired about the method for selecting partners from outside the United Nations system, such as research centres, universities and civil society organizations, and whether there was consultation with countries on that issue. The representative of the State of Palestine thanked ESCWA for its efforts in implementing the recommendations made by the Committee at its eighth session, and asked whether related work would stop or would be developed into indicators to continue following up on implementation.

7. The representative of Yemen requested that subsequent studies address issues related to cases of violence and displacement. She said that in Yemen, there were more than 3 million internally displaced persons, in addition to refugees abroad, and that the impact of violence and displacement on women was great and its study obligatory. She also requested that ESCWA continue to assist countries in implementing their national plans to calculate the economic cost of violence against women. The representative of the United Arab Emirates stressed the importance of studying the social cost of violence against women, not just the economic cost. The representative of Bahrain asked how to calculate the prevalence of violence, and said that it was difficult to imagine that one in every three women was subjected to violence. The representative of the State of Palestine noted the importance of the ESCWA project to calculate the cost of violence against women, and its significant results in her country that had showed a decline in the spread of violence: 37 per cent of Palestinian women had suffered from violence in 2011, dropping to 29 per cent in 2019. However, violence against women still affected a third of women.

8. The representative of Iraq thanked the ESCWA Centre for Women for implementing the workshop on calculating the cost of violence against women in her country, despite the exceptionally difficult circumstances the country was facing. She asked about the mechanism for selecting cases that ESCWA studied and presented its findings thereon. For example, the cases of Lebanon and the State of Palestine were the subjects of the study on women in the judiciary. She enquired whether countries could contribute to the selection process. The representative of Iraq expressed her country's readiness to participate in case studies, given that Iraq was an appropriate environment for studying many issues. The representative of Egypt stressed the importance of implementing Committee recommendations in the period between its sessions. He said that reviewing what had been implemented constituted a horizontal assessment of the region's progress in women's issues, which was of great importance, especially in the context of preparations for the sixty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women that would be held in New York in March 2020 to review progress in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the global level. He asked about the level of coordination, especially within the United Nations, between various women's machineries, such as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and other universal periodic review mechanisms. To avoid duplication of efforts, he also enquired whether ESCWA reviewed reports submitted to other international bodies, and if those bodies reviewed reports submitted by Arab countries to ESCWA, which contained valuable information.

9. In response, the representative of the secretariat confirmed that ESCWA sent all its studies to focal points in member States and uploaded them on its website, and that it would update the list of focal points if necessary. She said that ESCWA consulted with countries concerned when selecting national partners to implement national activities. As for regional partnerships and organizations selected within that framework, they were subject to specifications determined by the United Nations, including common ideas, interests and values, and to rules of accreditation set by the Economic and Social Council. She added that past recommendations would be reinforced through the adoption of new recommendations at the close of the ninth session of the Committee, which might tackle new topics or issues previously addressed to amend certain aspects therein if countries so choose. She expressed the willingness of ESCWA to assist Yemen in implementing its national plan to calculate the economic cost of violence against women, noting the urgent need to secure extrabudgetary resources given the high cost of the national survey. She recalled that the secretariat had sent a form to focal points in member States following each session of the Committee, to gauge participants' opinions on interests and priorities for the intersessional period, and that it based its programme of work on the responses. She emphasized that the secretariat was fully prepared to undertake case studies in Iraq. She indicated that in the presentation on technical cooperation activities, the secretariat would address methods used to avoid duplication of work within the United Nations system, noting that ESCWA supported countries based on direct requests received from them, and that countries usually did not request support in the same field from two different bodies.

10. The Acting Regional Director of UN-Women, who participated in the ninth session of the ESCWA Committee on Women as an observer, noted that calculating the social cost of violence against women was extremely important. He added that calculating the economic cost had direct benefits, notably assessing the burden on the State as a result of that violence. Knowing the size of that burden helped the State determine the budgets needed to combat violence. He emphasized the reality of one in three women being subjected to violence, noting that it was a global rate that had been proven in many reliable studies. Although that rate always raised questions, it was reliable and supported by several sources. One third of women and girls worldwide suffered from some form of violence against them. He said that the current session coincided with the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence, a campaign launched every year by the United Nations with many partners globally to raise awareness of gender-based violence and to urge against it.

2. Technical cooperation activities (Agenda item 5)

11. With reference to document E/ESCWA/C.7/2019/4, the representative of the secretariat made a presentation on ESCWA technical support to member States, based on requests for bilateral cooperation received directly from them on gender justice issues, the women and peace and security agenda, estimating the cost of violence against women, examining the interrelated frameworks of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and mainstreaming gender in public institutions. He explained the work methodology in the field of technical cooperation, based on providing technical advice and organizing workshops to build capacity and implement pilot field projects, using knowledge products and tools issued by ESCWA. In the period 2018-2019, 40 per cent of countries' requests for technical support centred on activities to combat violence against women, and 30 per cent focused on communication with international machineries concerned with women's rights. He added that ESCWA work in that field made it greatly informed of Arab countries' reports submitted to those machineries, which fed the knowledge produced in its publications and helped it avoid duplication of interventions. He also gave examples of key ESCWA activities in the field of bilateral, subregional and regional technical support.

12. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of the State of Palestine referred to a list of technical needs previously submitted by the Ministry of Women's Affairs to ESCWA at a meeting on the technical cooperation framework between the State of Palestine and ESCWA, which did not cover the services that ESCWA would provide to his country. He asked whether he could present the list directly to the ESCWA Centre for Women. He also enquired whether a country could request the implementation of activities outside the technical cooperation framework. The representative of Jordan thanked ESCWA for its support to the Jordanian National

Commission for Women and for its rapid response to new issues, not only within the framework of the project agreed two years ago on mainstreaming gender equality in the work of the National Commission, but also in updating the national strategy on Jordanian women and preparing a national review of progress in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. She requested increased flexibility in naming participants from the National Commission to attend meetings of the Subcommittee on Gender Equality and the Sustainable Development Goals, held within the framework of technical cooperation activities, to ensure that the invitation was not always limited to the focal point so as to guarantee greater benefit.

13. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic thanked ESCWA for its efforts and for the support it had provided to her country, especially in the area of combating violence against women. She noted an error in document E/ESCWA/C.7/2019/4, which listed activities concerning Kuwait and Yemen but not the Syrian Arab Republic. She emphasized that her country welcomed ESCWA support within the framework of the project on Syrian refugee women that had been submitted, and she hoped that they would benefit from ESCWA programmes upon returning to their country. She noted however that the project had not been implemented at the official request of the Syrian Arab Republic. The representative of Oman requested that the Ministry of Social Development be added to the list of requestors for implementing technical cooperation activities. The representative of Yemen requested that ESCWA pay particular attention to violence against displaced women, and that capacity-building be planned in a series of activities spanning a short period of time to ensure its effectiveness.

14. The representative of Lebanon praised efforts by the secretariat to support countries in preparing studies to estimate the economic cost of violence against women, and stressed the importance of training statisticians and parliamentarians to maximize the impact of the work and its results. She also noted the importance of forging partnerships to avoid duplication of work.

15. In response, the representative of the secretariat said that ESCWA and the State of Palestine were in the final stage of identifying technical cooperation activities to be included in the final version of the bilateral technical cooperation framework before signing it, and that the topic of women was included in the list of activities under discussion, despite the difficulties of direct implementation under Israeli occupation. However, ESCWA was prepared to receive requests not included in the framework, and to review the requests referred to by the representative of the State of Palestine. He agreed with the representative of Jordan that knowledge should be disseminated as widely as possible, and proposed that ESCWA assist by organizing national workshops dedicated to achieving that goal. Regarding the project to support Syrian refugee women and host communities, he indicated that it addressed the needs of refugee women in the phase of returning to their homeland, as determined by them. He added that the results of the project, which would be completed at the end of 2020, would be sent to the relevant authorities through the official channels usually used by ESCWA for that purpose. He emphasized that the official document would be amended and reissued, and that ESCWA was concerned with the issues of countries experiencing conflict and waves of displacement and asylum, and that ESCWA was ready to provide support in its fields of competence. The representative of the secretariat confirmed that such discussion helped ESCWA identify country needs, and that ESCWA adopted an integrated programme approach where possible and not a one-workshop method, to ensure effective capacity-building.

*3. National action to implement the recommendations made by the Committee
on Women at its eighth session
(Agenda item 6)*

16. Under this item, the representatives of Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, the State of Palestine and Yemen made presentations on the measures taken by their countries to implement the recommendations issued by the Committee on Women at its eighth session. Representatives made written contributions, which were uploaded to the ESCWA website.

17. In her intervention, the representative of the State of Palestine referred to a number of measures that her country had taken to implement the recommendations. She focused on efforts related to combating violence against women, benefiting from technical cooperation to work with the secretariat to estimate the cost of

violence against women, and reviewing the national plan on women, peace and security. The State of Palestine had also benefited from the secretariat's publications on mainstreaming gender equality in public institutions and various programmes. The representative of Qatar focused on the establishment of the National Committee on Women, Children, the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities, in accordance with a decision issued by the Council of Ministers in September 2019, and on the Committee's role and working mechanisms. She referred to an Emiri decree on forming the Supreme Committee for Shura Council Elections, which would provide an opportunity to enhance women's participation in political life. The representative of Oman presented steps taken by her country to implement the recommendations issued by the Committee on Women, including participating in the work of the Subcommittee, and holding workshops on the SDGs in Omani governorates. She also noted efforts to combat violence against women, including providing health services, establishing a protection hotline, and founding Dar Al-Wefaq. The representative of Jordan made a presentation on efforts to implement the recommendations, including supporting the work of the Subcommittee, highlighting how the country benefited from the secretariat's experience in developing the national plan for women, peace and security and from experiences of other international bodies. She noted that monitoring mechanisms remained limited, despite Jordan being one of the developed countries providing mechanisms to protect women from violence. She focused on the work carried out by the Jordanian National Commission for Women with the Prime Minister related to the national policy mainstreaming gender equality in the Government.

18. In her intervention, the representative of Yemen reviewed actions to develop the women, peace and security agenda, and a strategy for older persons. The representative of Morocco noted that Morocco had implemented all the recommendations, except for developing a national plan on women, peace and security that was expected to be approved in 2020. She presented the work that Morocco was currently undertaking to implement a law on violence against women, including training people to enforce the law across Morocco. She said that Morocco had recently completed a survey on violence to ensure that the cost of violence against women was measured, and that the country was currently developing a national strategy to combat violence and a national strategy on gender equality. She noted that the interactive tool developed by the secretariat was important and should be disseminated to countries. The representative of Kuwait gave an overview of her country's accomplishments, including establishing the Family Affairs Committee of the National Office for Human Rights, which would undertake the development of a strategy on women's rights in line with key human rights principles and all aspects of women's rights. With regard to combating violence against women, she said that Kuwait had established a family court and a community police department to advise women. She also expressed her country's desire to enact a law to combat violence against women. The representative of Iraq referred to a number of accomplishments, including the presence of civil society in all committees on women, such as the Rural Women's Committee, and updating the strategy to combat violence against women. She also mentioned a workshop organized by the ESCWA secretariat on calculating the economic costs of violence. The representative of Lebanon made an intervention on implementing recommendations related to developing a system of indicators to measure progress in achieving SDG 5, and cooperating with the Central Administration of Statistics within the framework of the National Gender Observatory. She said that Lebanon has developed a national plan to implement Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women, peace and security, and had introduced legal amendments such as the separation of financial income and assets between spouses. The representative of Saudi Arabia presented her country's achievements, including developing a national plan for women's advancement in line with SDG 5, and reviewed recent legal amendments that gave women the right to request identity documents.

B. IMPLEMENTING THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION 25 YEARS AFTER THEIR ADOPTION

1. *Review and regional assessment of the implementation by Arab countries of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25 years after their adoption* (Agenda item 7)

19. With reference to document E/ESCWA/C.7/2019/5, Mr. Magued Osman, Chief Executive Officer of the Egyptian Centre for Public Opinion Research (Baseera), professor of statistics at Cairo University and former Minister of Communications of Egypt, made a presentation on the methodology for preparing the

regional report on progress in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25 years after their adoption, which ESCWA had tasked him to prepare, and highlighted key regional outcomes and trends in that regard. He stressed that the data in the report were taken from the ESCWA Statistics Division and from relevant United Nations bodies, such as the International Labour Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), when calculating the participation rate in the labour market and in education, respectively. He added that those organizations had adopted uniform definitions for all countries, thus providing comparable indicators. Country reports, that contained national data, were uploaded on the review website. He noted that the regional report addressed general trends in the region, prevalent in most countries, and did not focus on individual country achievements. He reviewed trends in the following six main pillars: inclusive development and shared prosperity; poverty eradication; freedom from violence, stigmatization and stereotypes; participation, accountability and gender-sensitive institutions; peaceful societies; and environmental protection.

20. He indicated that the Arab region had made progress in employment-related legislation, reflected in intensified efforts to achieve equal remuneration, increase women's quotas in government appointments, achieve greater equity in promotion, criminalize violence against women in the workplace, establish nurseries in work places and adopt flexible working arrangements, with varying levels of achievement between countries. He stressed the remarkable progress in the field of entrepreneurship, and in women assuming influential positions in the executive and legislative branches, which contributed to breaking the glass ceiling and eliminating some negative social patterns. He highlighted several challenges, indicating that women's participation rate in the economy remained low, the gap between men and women was wide, and female unemployment rates were high. Women were still concentrated in the informal sector, with scarce decent work opportunities for women in many countries. The region had made little progress in men's participation in unpaid care work. He added that although there had been a clear improvement in the health of women and girls, providing services for migrant and displaced women remained a daunting challenge. Despite significant progress in the cognitive empowerment of women and girls, that progress had yet to have a positive impact on women's position in the labour market. He noted that improvements in poverty eradication were also limited, but there were a significant number of laws and legislation related to eliminating discrimination.

21. He said that violence against women remained prevalent in the region, despite adopting laws to combat harassment and other forms of violence. Child marriage had subsided, except among refugees and displaced persons. The region had witnessed progress in developing national plans to implement resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) and a 2015 regional plan under the auspices of the League of Arab States, but a significant decline had occurred in basic development gains and in women and girls' issues in countries experiencing conflict, reflected in the continued suffering of Palestinian women owing to the Israeli occupation. He added that little progress had been made in the areas where the environment affected women, or in women's participation in environmental and sustainable development decisions. He reviewed the recommendations of the regional report, especially the need to localize global commitments related to women's issues in national legislation and programmes; support women in carrying out their dual role, career and family; develop social protection policies; adopt positive discrimination in favour of women and girls to leave no one behind; and complete the data and statistics system on gender issues and build capacity in that field.

22. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of the United Arab Emirates thanked ESCWA and the author of the Arab report for the commendable work and excellent presentation, and for the report that accurately represented national reports. However, he pointed out that the data were not up to date, that they were borrowed from international reports, and that they were sometimes unfair to countries that had made recent achievements. The representatives of Oman and the Syrian Arab Republic agreed with the representative of the United Arab Emirates that national data should be used, that the data in the report should be updated, and that observations made by countries at the expert meeting that discussed the draft report should be taken into consideration. They also requested to see the final version of the report. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic stressed that her country had submitted a report despite challenges, which highlighted actions taken in legislation and other areas, but the regional report did not include this qualitative information.

23. The representative of Jordan stressed the importance of the consolidated Arab report, which covered progress in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the Arab region. She thanked ESCWA for the flexibility it had shown in accepting countries' comments and amendments to the greatest extent possible, as international organizations rarely showed such a degree of flexibility. The representative of Yemen expressed her regret that her country was unable to prepare a national report given the difficult circumstances it was facing. The representative of the State of Palestine referred to a number of accomplishments that had occurred in his country after the submission date of the national report, including raising the legal age for marriage, and asked whether they would be included in the regional report. He stressed that Israel must be held accountable for the situation in the State of Palestine, as the occupying power, which impeded action on women's issues in general, and on implementing resolution 1325 (2000) in particular. He enquired whether the regional report would address the issue of the State of Palestine, and whether the international community would address the obstacles preventing the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action under occupation.

24. In response, Mr. Osman stressed, in his capacity as the author of the report, that the final version of the regional report included country comments taken from the expert meeting and from written messages, such as amendments to the system of work and compensation for maternity leave, and the number of women ministers in newly appointed councils. However, he stressed the impossibility of including unemployment and participation rates in the national workforce because they were not comparable between countries, given that each Arab country calculated them according to a different baseline. As for ESCWA and the United Nations Statistics Division data, they were drawn from national data, but recalculated according to a unified international definition for standardization, thus allowing comparison and the identification of regional trends. He emphasized that national reports were published, and had been translated into English to facilitate their submission to international forums. He recalled that the regional report was 70 pages long and did not contain country details. However, in the event of significant differences between international and national data, a footnote had been placed in the regional report indicating national figures.

2. Action plan on gender equality and the empowerment of women in national institutions
(Agenda item 8)

25. With reference to document E/ESCWA/C.7/2019/6, the representative of the secretariat made a presentation on the action plan on gender equality and the empowerment of women in national institutions, based on the United Nations plan on the same topic. She presented the 15 indicators of the plan, and the methods and criteria for evaluating its implementation. She referred to the training manuals prepared by the secretariat to support countries in implementing the plan, and the workshops held to build member States' capacity in that area. She noted that the Jordanian National Commission for Women had successfully implemented the ESCWA plan, identified the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation process, and worked to bridge gaps by developing an integrated reform plan.

26. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Jordan stressed the importance of implementing the plan in national women's machineries. She said that the Jordanian National Commission's awareness of the 15 indicators had revealed shortfalls in its response to gender equality issues, which had provided an opportunity to develop internal mechanisms to deepen the National Commission's commitment to gender equality issues, thus assisting it in directing its efforts to urge the Government to adopt the action plan on gender equality and women's empowerment in national institutions.

27. In response, the representative of the secretariat thanked the representative of Jordan, and stressed the readiness of ESCWA to work with member States to implement the action plan on gender equality and women's empowerment in national institutions.

3. *Combating domestic violence: protection orders and shelters in the Arab region*
(Agenda item 9)

28. With reference to document [E/ESCWA/C.7/2019/7](#), the representative of the secretariat presented two studies prepared by the secretariat on protection orders and shelters, which dealt with mechanisms for providing protection to survivors of violence in Arab countries. She indicated that the two studies were core parts of the secretariat's work, which sought to enhance knowledge of the various international frameworks to assist countries in their efforts to combat violence against women. She noted the importance of the partnership between the United Nations Population Fund, ABAAD Resource Center for Gender Equality and Women against Violence Europe in completing the study on shelters. She also touched on the complementarity between the two protection mechanisms under consideration. She said that while protection orders provided a way to prevent perpetrators from harming victims of violence, shelters provided a safe place for survivors. When considering the availability of those mechanisms in Arab countries, she emphasized that the two studies showed tangible progress in all Arab countries in terms of giving adequate attention to combating violence against women. She noted that all Arab countries provided shelters for women survivors of violence. However, only a limited number of countries had adopted separate laws to combat family violence or violence against women. She explained that most Arab countries that had passed laws to protect against violence have adopted legal texts covering protection orders or shelters, but the consistency of those texts with international standards varied between countries. For example, not all protection orders included economic violence, and some allowed for reconciliation and mediation, which impacted opportunities to provide protection to women and prevent a recurrence of violence. She added that the same applied to shelters, which were marred by various problems whether in terms of availability, women's ability to access them, or the quality of the services provided. She made a number of recommendations to member States based on the findings of the two studies, including the importance of enacting comprehensive anti-violence laws; providing more effective policies and mechanisms to respond to requests for protection orders; amending existing laws regulating shelter work; and increasing the availability of shelters in Arab countries.

4. *Women in the judiciary in the Arab region: removing barriers, increasing numbers*
(Agenda item 10)

29. In view of time constraints, the secretariat was requested to submit agenda item 10 before opening the floor to discussion on items 9 and 10. Accordingly, the representative of the secretariat, with reference to document [E/ESCWA/C.7/2019/8](#), presented the study prepared by the secretariat, in collaboration with the Regional Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Commission of Jurists, entitled "Women in the judiciary: removing barriers, increasing numbers", and a related policy brief entitled "Women in the judiciary: a stepping stone towards gender justice". She noted that the study was the first of its kind in Arab countries, which provided a comprehensive and analytical view of the status of women in the judiciary based on case studies in the following five Arab countries: Jordan, Lebanon, the State of Palestine, the Sudan and Tunisia. She said that the study provided a quantitative monitoring of women's presence in the judiciary, and contributed to enhancing knowledge about the importance of that presence and its specificities in Arab countries. She indicated the main findings of the study related to the presence of women, which contributed to developing strong and independent judicial institutions, supported the achievement of gender justice within society, and was viewed positively by an overwhelming majority of judges and actors in the judicial system. However, the results of the study had also shown that the presence of women in the judiciary in Arab countries was weak. The share of women in the judiciary was still limited, except in a number of countries. Moreover, women's participation in the judiciary was concentrated in courts of first instance, and low in higher courts. Furthermore, women mostly participated in civil courts, not criminal or military courts. She concluded with some recommendations, including setting national goals and accountability mechanisms for increasing women's participation in the judiciary, and reviewing the rules of enrolment and career advancement in the judiciary in line with the principles of transparency and fairness.

30. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Jordan stressed the importance of the studies in terms of providing a favourable framework to assist countries in reviewing protection orders, and in presenting

experiences on increasing women's participation in the Sharia judiciary, such as the experience of the State of Palestine. The representative of the United Arab Emirates noted his country's absence in the studies, and stressed the need to identify focal points between the secretariat and countries given the importance of the issues raised for his country. He added that a decree on protection against domestic violence had recently been issued, and shelters had been established by non-governmental organizations with government support. The representative of Bahrain highlighted the necessity of activating the role of the private sector in supporting shelters. The representative of Iraq emphasized that the issues raised were important and sensitive, and that Iraq dealt with protection under the penal code because there was no separate law in that regard. She also stressed the importance of approaching female law school graduates and encouraging them to join the judiciary. The representative of Lebanon indicated the importance of empowering male and female judges and training them in gender equality, and suggested that studies related to the concept be converted into support activities and programmes to facilitate learning. The representative of Kuwait thanked the secretariat for its presentation, and pointed out that violence against women had multiple facets, including the denial of education. She added that Kuwait was working to address those issues, and that it aimed to collect all those efforts and rights in one law, which required a review of the legislative system. The representative of the State of Palestine noted that results of a recent violence survey indicated that, despite 40 per cent of Palestinian women being aware of the availability of shelters, only a small percentage used those services. She stressed the importance of approaching such issues holistically, to ensure that those services were available to all. She suggested that a study be prepared on the proportion of women who benefited from their natural and legal right to inheritance and property. The representative of Saudi Arabia requested that more details be provided on best practices in managing shelters. She also asked about harassment and violence outside the family, and methods for dealing with it. The representative of Algeria stressed that some of the information on shelters in Algeria should be reviewed. The representative of Qatar discussed the services provided by its shelters.

31. In response, the representative of the secretariat thanked participants for their valuable comments, and congratulated the United Arab Emirates on issuing a decree on domestic violence. She assured the representative of Algeria that the information provided in the presentation was summarized, and therefore was not sufficient to clarify the reality of shelters in Algeria; however, the study was more comprehensive and included more accurate information. She invited member States to read the studies, as they included a detailed discussion of the issues raised by countries, and provided an opportunity to become acquainted with experiences of Arab countries in the various topics addressed. She noted that the results of the questionnaires sent to countries were a key source for studies prepared by the secretariat, therefore country responses to those questionnaires were of utmost importance because the secretariat would draw on them in the future.

*5. Cultivating resilient institutions in the Arab region: national women's
machineries in challenging times
(Agenda item 11)*

32. With reference to document [E/ESCWA/C.7/2019/9](#), the representative of the secretariat made a presentation on a 2019 ESCWA study on the ability of national women's machineries to respond to political changes, their capacity to continue working and fulfilling their role in time of crisis, conflict, occupation and political transitions. He presented the features required for building resilient and healthy institutions, notably awareness, diversity, complementarity, self-regulation and resilience, within a clearly defined conceptual framework. He reviewed key policy recommendations, stressing the importance of national women's machineries in the Arab region developing comprehensive frameworks and plans that contributed to strengthening their resilience, and working to enable them to recover, especially in periods of instability, to ensure their ability to resist shocks and challenges.

33. In the ensuing discussion, the representatives of Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates commended ESCWA for its choice of research topic on the resilience of national women's machineries. However, they stressed the need to shed light on the experiences of other countries that had not faced challenges in establishing their national machineries, such as Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates. The representative of the Syrian

Arab Republic presented his country's experience in dealing with women's issues during the war, which imposed new and different priorities than those championed during the period of stability.

34. In response, the representative of the secretariat stressed that country interventions fed into the topic of the study and contributed to its enrichment. He added that the study covered the topic in greater detail, whereas the presentation could not because of time constraints. He emphasized that ESCWA pursued a continuity approach in selecting the topics of its studies, in a manner that built on topics covered in previous studies. For example, the secretariat had published many papers on the work of national women's machineries to highlight good practices in Arab countries, but it had focused in the study under review on a specific topic which was the impact of instability on the resilience of national women's machineries.

6. *Social and economic situation of Palestinian women and girls*
(Agenda item 12)

35. With reference to document [E/ESCWA/C.7/2019/10](#), the representative of the secretariat presented the periodic report on the social and economic situation of Palestinian women and girls (July 2016 - June 2018), which reviewed the difficult economic and social situation of women in the occupied Palestinian territory, and showed the devastating impact of the 12-year Israeli blockade on Gaza and the humanitarian catastrophe resulting therefrom and its impact on women. She noted the faltering aspects of development in the West Bank and its effects on the health, livelihoods and economic prospects of women, and the policies of the Israeli occupation that prevented the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in the occupied Palestinian territory, including SDG 5. She stressed the need for cooperation between internal and external stakeholders to improve the social and economic situation of Palestinian women and girls, and the role of the international community in holding Israel accountable for its violations and its role in supporting the State of Palestine in its efforts to meet the humanitarian and development needs of the population, especially women and girls.

36. In the ensuing discussion, the representatives of Jordan, Morocco, the State of Palestine, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen stressed the importance of the periodic report on the social and economic situation of Palestinian women and girls. The representative of the State of Palestine noted the need to study other themes in the report, such as the lack of parity between Palestinian girls' higher educational attainment and their labour market participation. She called for a constant reminder of the need to implement Security Council resolutions, and the need to urge the authorities to continue efforts to harmonize national legislation with international obligations. The representative of the United Arab Emirates referred to the request addressed to the Arab community, and not only the international community, to play its role in pressuring Israel to end its occupation of the Palestinian territory.

37. In response, Ms. Mehrinaz Elawadi, Director of the ESCWA Centre for Women, said that the report followed a specific structure aimed at simplifying comparisons between countries and following up on progress when reviewing successive reports, which simplified the comparative analysis and facilitated progress evaluation. She noted that the next report would comprise two parts. The first part would review progress made in the period 2019-2020, while the second part would consider developments over the periods reviewed since the issuance of the first report on the subject.

C. GENDER EQUALITY AND THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

1. *Supporting the Subcommittee on Gender Equality and the Sustainable Development Goals*
(Agenda item 13)

38. With reference to document [E/ESCWA/C.7/2019/11](#), the representative of the secretariat made a presentation on the activities undertaken by the secretariat and its partners to support members of the Subcommittee. Those activities included responding to the recommendation made by the Committee on Women at its eighth session to expand the membership of the Subcommittee to include all Arab countries and statistical offices. She added that national women's machineries and statistical offices in non-member Arab

countries had been invited to participate in the work of the Subcommittee. She mentioned the training courses organized by the secretariat, the League of Arab States and UN-Women in the past two years. She made a presentation on the experiences of countries that had submitted voluntary national reviews on exchanging experiences between Arab countries and Sweden. Those experiences included training on a methodology for integrating gender equality issues in voluntary national reviews, both at the methodology level for preparing reviews or in the content they provided, offered at a workshop held in cooperation with the Swedish Institute in Alexandria, Egypt. She noted a workshop on the topic “Accelerating the achievement of SDG 5 through ICTs”, organized by the secretariat in collaboration with strategic partners and the Danish Institute for Human Rights and the Danish Centre for Information on Gender, Equality and Diversity. She briefed participants on the recent publication issued by the secretariat and its partners entitled *Guidelines for Mainstreaming Gender Equality in Voluntary National Reviews*.

39. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Jordan affirmed that the Subcommittee had proven since its inception that it was vital, distinct and beneficial for improving country performance in implementing SDG5. She suggested that membership of the Subcommittee be sufficiently flexible to nominate representatives from non-member States, especially when dealing with more specialized topics. The representative of the United Arab Emirates enquired about the structure of the Subcommittee, and whether high-level participation was a membership requirement. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic requested that evidence be expanded to include measurable indicators, and the targets that must be fulfilled to achieve SDG 5. The representative of Oman stressed that the work of the Subcommittee was considered successful practice, and that it was contributing to capacity-building and had great benefits. She also commended the guidelines, and called for promoting activities related to integrating Goal 5. The representative of the State of Palestine stressed the importance of the Subcommittee’s work and the continuity of its members to ensure the transfer of expertise, and the establishment of coordination mechanisms with the authorities responsible for other Goals to ensure complementarity in linking the SDGs.

40. In response, the representative of the secretariat thanked participants for their interest in the work of the Subcommittee. She noted that although the work of the Subcommittee and its capacity-building activities were linked to the availability of financial resources, the secretariat and its partners remained committed to continuing its work. She emphasized the importance of continued membership of country representatives therein, to ensure the institutionalization of knowledge related to SDG 5 and its targets in national women’s machineries. She said that the Subcommittee’s membership had the flexibility to allow participation of representatives of national mechanisms women’s machineries in a manner consistent with various topics, especially those requiring specific specializations.

41. Participants agreed that membership of the Subcommittee would remain open mainly to representatives of national women’s machineries, until consensus was reached on the possibility of other members (if necessary), according to the topic under consideration.

2. Round-table discussion: technology as a lever for gender equality in the Arab region
(Agenda item 14)

42. At its ninth session, the Committee on Women held a round-table discussion on technology as a lever for gender equality in the Arab region, with reference to document [E/ESCWA/C.7/2019/CRP.2](#). The Centre for Women organized the discussion in line with the resolutions and outcome document issued by ESCWA at its thirtieth session. The discussion provided a platform to shed light on the topic, and to benefit from the presence of high-level representatives and actors from the region. Examples of good practices in harnessing technology to advance gender equality were reviewed, while highlighting potential risks resulting from their inappropriate use. Two experts from ESCWA and three from the Arab region participated in the discussion.

43. Ms. Sukaina Al Nasrawi, Social Affairs Officer at the ESCWA Centre for Women and expert in harnessing technology for women’s empowerment and gender equality, discussed prospects for using ICT as a means to implement SDG 5, and to assist Governments and key stakeholders in their efforts to achieve the Goal in the Arab region.

44. Ms. Nibal Idlebi, Acting Director of the ESCWA Technology for Development Division and Chief of the Innovation Division, addressed the obstacles to the full use of ICT in empowering women, and to bridging the technology divide between men and women in the Arab region, and the different methods to overcome those obstacles. Ms. Maysoon Ibrahim, a member of the Board of Directors of the Higher Council for Innovation and Excellence of the State of Palestine and chair of the Fourth National Forum on the Fourth Industrial Revolution, discussed the role of innovation incubators in empowering women in the Arab region, and in overcoming obstacles hampering the full use of ICT in empowering women and bridging the gender gap in the Arab region, and considered ways to address those obstacles. Ms. Rouda al-Amir Ali, Technology Programme Officer for Gender Equality and Sustainable Development in the Arab Region and Regional Coordinator of the Cyber Security Initiative and related activities at the Arab Regional Office of the International Telecommunication Union, made a presentation on the role of ICT in addressing prevailing gender roles and stereotypes, and in combating ICT misuse. She explained how the absence of women in the fields of science, technology and innovation led to a lack of gender-sensitive content, which contributed to strengthening existing stereotypes. She mentioned issues related to cybersecurity and the risks of technology misuse. Through her experience as an entrepreneur in the ICT field and in heading the *Riyada* foundation, Ms. Mona Itani considered the challenges facing women in entrepreneurship and ICT, and the main steps to support women in the field of technology-based innovation.

45. The discussion emphasized the potential of technology, especially ICT, in implementing SDG 5 on gender equality. Participants stressed the importance of social media in ensuring that women's rights were recognized and realized. They said that good practices should be applied, both in the Arab region and at the international level, to bridge gender gaps and eradicate information illiteracy, by improving women's employment opportunities, access to financial resources, knowledge acquisition and training, and altering profession and business patterns; and enhancing digital and technical skills as well as personal skills. Participants also stressed the need to address the risks of ICT misuse; to improve cybersecurity for women and girls; to develop national policies and frameworks to make digital technologies affordable, and to overcome barriers to accessing them; and to create a supportive environment to empower women in the Arab region. Regarding safe cities, participants highlighted the importance of focusing on policies for providing safe spaces, which would have a significant impact on women's economic and social participation.

3. *Date and venue of the tenth session of the Committee on Women*
(Agenda item 15)

46. Participants agreed to hold the tenth session of the Committee on Women at the United Nations House in Beirut in 2021, provided that no other member State requested to host the session, in accordance with United Nations established procedures and regulations.

4. *Other matters*
(Agenda item 16)

47. No matters were discussed under this item.

5. *Adoption of the recommendations made by the Committee
on Women at its ninth session*
(Agenda item 17)

48. The recommendations made at the ninth session of the Committee on Women were presented to representatives of member States, and were reviewed and adopted as amended.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. DATE AND VENUE

49. The Committee on Women held its ninth session in Amman on 26 and 27 November 2019.

B. OPENING

50. The ninth session of the Committee on Women opened at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, 26 November 2019. Ms. Amal Hamad, Minister of Women Affairs of the State of Palestine who chaired the eighth session of the Committee, made an opening statement. She expressed her hope that the discussions would identify ways to achieve a free, democratic and fair future for present and future generations. She paid tribute to those involved in women's issues in the Arab region, to activists working for the advancement of Arab women towards a brighter tomorrow filled with prosperity, dignity and equality. She also paid tribute to all women, including refugees, prisoners, displaced, kidnapped and besieged women, leaders, workers and housewives, who were steadfastly resilient in the face of challenges and difficulties. To mark the launch of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence on 25 November every year, she reaffirmed the need to mobilize efforts to protect women and girls from violence globally, and empower them in society, the economy and politics to ensure justice and sustainability. She also stressed the need to establish comprehensive social protection systems for women and provide them with decent work opportunities, noting challenges caused by unemployment and poverty among women, especially in the State of Palestine, particularly in the Gaza Strip, where unemployment affected nearly 80 per cent of women. She said that the Israeli occupation impeded development, justice and peace throughout the region, and not only in the state of Palestine. She wished the meeting every success, and expressed her hope that it would result in practical steps to improve the conditions of women in the Arab region.

51. Ms. Mehrnaz Elawadi, Director of the ESCWA Centre for Women, made a statement in which she thanked the State of Palestine for chairing the eighth session of the Committee on Women, and wished Qatar success in chairing the ninth session. She considered the areas of ESCWA work aimed at supporting member States since 2017 in implementing the Beirut Declaration and the recommendations made by the Committee at its eighth session, notably in the fields of justice, gender equality, combating violence against women, and the women, peace and security agenda. She noted that ESCWA efforts had coincided with various international processes directly related to promoting equality, and commended achievements in legislation, programmes and plans related to women's issues, which highlighted the political will to improve the status of women and girls in the region. She added that challenges impeding sustainable development in Arab countries, especially the political, social and economic transformations that had greatly affected progress, still affected the reality of women. She said that armed conflict and terrorist attacks had deprived a large number of women and girls of basic health services and education, and had caused unprecedented violence and unacceptable forms of violence. The Palestinian issue remained unresolved, and the conditions of the Palestinian people had worsened in the light of declining interest in their legitimate rights, which had allowed the Israeli occupation to escalate rights violations without accountability. She stressed that the ESCWA secretariat was always ready to work with member States and support them in achieving their aspirations.

C. ATTENDANCE

52. The session was attended by representatives of national women's machineries, ministries, and women's councils and committees from 16 ESCWA member States. Representatives of Algeria and Djibouti (non-member States) participated as observers. Observers also included representatives of United Nations specialized agencies and programmes and of governmental and non-governmental regional and international organizations, and experts, consultants and academics.

D. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

53. Pursuant to article 18 of the Rules of Procedure of ESCWA, which provides that member States shall assume the presidency of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission on a rotating basis, in Arabic alphabetical order as established by the United Nations, Qatar assumed the presidency of the ninth session, succeeding the State of Palestine, which had assumed the presidency of the eighth session from 4 October 2017 to 26 November 2019. The Committee elected the representative of the State of Palestine by consensus as First Vice-Chair and the representative of Kuwait as Second Vice-Chair. The representative of Lebanon was elected as Rapporteur.

E. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND PROPOSED ORGANIZATION OF WORK

54. At its first meeting, the Committee on Women adopted the following proposed agenda as set out in document [E/ESCWA/C.7/2019/L.1](#).

55. The Committee also adopted the proposed organization of work, as set out in document [E/ESCWAC.7/2019/L.2](#).

F. DOCUMENTS

56. Annex II to the present report lists the documents presented to the Committee on Women at its ninth session.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

A. ESCWA MEMBER STATES

Bahrain

Mr. Izzaldin Khalil al-Moayad
General Manager of Administrative and Media
Affairs
Supreme Council for Women

Egypt

Mr. Mahmoud Afifi
Assistant Foreign Minister for International Social
Issues
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ms. Sherwat Ibrahim Mustafa Attia
Director of the Department of Cooperation with
Foreign Authorities
National Council for Women

Iraq

Ms. Bushra Hussein Saleh
Former minister and member of the Women's
Committee
Council of Ministers

Jordan

Ms. Salma Nims
Secretary-General
National Commission for Women

Kuwait

Ms. Mona Jassem Bouhamra
Director of the National Assembly Affairs
Department in the Council of Ministers
General Secretariat for the Council of Ministers
Member of the Family Committee at the National
Office for Human Rights

Ms. Hoda Abdul Mohsen al-Shayji
Vice-President of the Fatwa and Legislation
Department
Member of the Board of Directors and Chair of the
Family Committee of the National Office for
Human Rights

Lebanon

Ms. Hania Hammoud
Member of the Executive Office and Treasurer
National Commission for Lebanese Women

Ms. Nada Makki
Project Coordinator
Ministry of State for Economic Empowerment of
Women and Youth

Mauritania

Mr. Ahmed Salem wild Babout
Chargé d'Affaires
Ministry of Social Affairs, Childhood and Family

Morocco

Ms. Aisha Ashhabar
Organizer
Ministry of Solidarity, Social Development,
Equality and Family

Oman

Mr. Yaqoub Khamis al-Zadjali
Director of the Department of Social Surveys
National Centre for Statistics and Information

Mr. Yahya bin Mohammed al-Hinai
Director-General of the General Directorate for
Family Development
Ministry of Social Development

Ms. Jamila bint Salem Jadad
Director of the Women's Affairs Department
Ministry of Social Development

Ms. Saliha Mubarak Saleh al-Oreimia
Director of the Family Development Department,
Sharkia Governorate
Ministry of Social Development

State of Palestine

Ms. Amal Hamad
Minister of Women Affairs
Ministry of Women Affairs

Mr. Amin Assi
Director-General of Planning and Policy
Ministry of Women Affairs

Qatar

Mrs. Hanadi al-Shafei
Chair of Human Rights Treaties
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ms. Najat Dham al-Abdullah
Director of the Family Affairs Department
Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour
and Social Affairs

Ms. Hoda Nasser al-Kuwari
Legal Expert – Minister’s Office
Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour
and Social Affairs

Ms. Rawda al-Meraikhi
Second Secretary
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Saudi Arabia

Ms. Hala Al-Tuwaijri
Secretary-General
Family Affairs Council

Ms. Munira al-Khalil
Rapporteur of the Women’s Committee
Family Affairs Council

Syrian Arab Republic

Mr. Muhammad Akram al-Qash
Head of the Syrian Commission for Family and
Population Affairs

Ms. Khawla Yousef
Department of International Organizations
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants

Tunisia

Mr. Nabil Milad
Regional Representative for Women, Family,
Childhood and Elderly Affairs
Ministry of Women, Family, Childhood and the
Elderly

Ms. Malika al-Warghi
Director of Family Affairs
Ministry of Women, Family, Childhood and the
Elderly

United Arab Emirates

Mr. Mohamed Ibrahim Mansour
Adviser
General Women’s Union

Yemen

Ms. Ibtahaj Abdul Qader Al-Kamal
Minister of Social Affairs and Labour
Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour

Ms. Taiz Ahmed Ali al-Baadani
Director-General of Associations and Foundations
Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour

B. NON-MEMBER STATES OF ESCWA

Algeria

Mr. Rabeh Hamdi
Secretary-General
Ministry of National Solidarity, Family, and
Women’s Issues

Ms. Malika Moussaoui
Director of Women’s Issues
Ministry of National Solidarity, Family, and
Women’s Issues

Djibouti

Ms. Anisa Hassan Bahdoun
Secretary-General
Ministry of Women and Family Affairs

Ms. Arksin Ali Ahmed
Head of the Legal Affairs Department
Ministry of Women and Family Affairs

C. UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATIONS

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)

Mr. Moez Duraid
Acting Regional Director
Regional Office for Arab Countries

Mr. Jan Kristoff Buttfarken
Special Assistant to the Regional Director
Regional Office for Arab Countries

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

Ms. Simone Salem
Community Support Adviser
Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

Ms. Naila Amara
Private Sector Development Expert
Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Ms. Clara Mi Young Park
Gender Officer
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

World Health Organization

Ms. Maria Cristina Profili
World Health Organization Representative in Jordan
WHO Office in Jordan

D. REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Arab Women Organization

Ms. Fadia Kiwan
Director-General of the Arab Women Organization

Mrs. Mona Qasim
Education and Culture

Westminster Foundation for Democracy

Ms. Dina Melhem
Director of the Foundation's Programmes in North Africa, the Middle East and Asia
Senior Human Rights Adviser

E. EXPERTS

Mr. Magued Osman
Chief Executive Officer
Egyptian Centre for Public Opinion Research (Baseera)

Ms. Rouda al-Amir Ali
Programme Officer
International Telecommunication Union - Arab Regional Office

Ms. Maysoon Ibrahim
General Manager
Information Technology for Development
Palestinian President Office

Ms. Mona Itani
General Manager
Riyada for Social Innovation

Annex II

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Title	Item	Symbol
Information note		E/ESCWA/C.7/2019/INF.1
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Action plan on gender equality and the empowerment of women in national institutions	8	E/ESCWA/C.7/2019/6 (Arabic only)
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