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Item 4 of the provisional agenda

# Implementation of activities under the ESCWA programme plan and of recommendations made by the Committee on Technology for Development at its third session to the ESCWA secretariat

**Summary**

Since the third session of the Committee on Technology for Development, held online on 15 and 16 February 2021, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has carried out several technology-related activities under subprogramme 4 on "Statistics, the information society and technology", in accordance with its programme plan and Committee recommendations. The present document summarizes those activities, which included conducting studies and publishing reports, holding expert group meetings and capacity-building workshops, undertaking projects, and creating tools and platforms to support policymaking.

The Committee on Technology for Development is invited to take note of the content of the present report and comment thereon.

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**Contents**

**Introduction**

1.      Since the third session of the Committee on Technology for Development, held online on 15 and 16 February 2021, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has undertaken several activities under subprogramme 4 on "Statistics, the information society and technology", in accordance with its programme plan and Committee recommendations. A number of these activities are linked to global processes led by the United Nations, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the World Summit on the Information Society, and the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), and those under the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Team on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2.      The present document summarizes those activities covering the period 2021-2022. They included conducting studies and publishing reports, holding expert group meetings and capacity-building workshops, and developing a variety of knowledge-based platforms and tools to support decision makers in Arab countries leverage technology and innovation for sustainable development. The activities are classified along the following four main themes: new technologies and innovation; the information society and Internet governance; digital and open government; and digital inclusion.

# I. Activities under the ESCWA programme plan

## A. New technologies and innovation

### 1. *Projects and applications*

(a)     *ESCWA Digital Arabic Content Award*

3.      In March 2021, ESCWA, in partnership with the World Summit Awards, launched the ESCWA Digital Arabic Content Award for Sustainable Development at the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development 2021. The Award recognizes the best digital products in the Arabic language that focus on or contribute to the SDGs. It includes two categories, institutions and young entrepreneurs, whose submissions are evaluated based on criteria including impact, value, design, quality, innovation and used technology.

4.      As part of preparations for the first cycle of the ESCWA Digital Arabic Content Award, a webinar was held on 17 June 2021, in collaboration with the World Summit Awards, to call for applications and launch the online platform for submissions. The event, which was attended by about 70 participants, covered the Award context and objectives, its categories and evaluation process, and prizes for winners. A panel of regional experts discussed the value of digital Arabic content and its promotion through the Award, and the opportunities available to winners including connections with the World Summit Awards global network of experts. The first cycle of the Award (2021-2022) resulted in the announcement of eight winner products selected among 100 submissions received from 15 Arab countries.

5.      The second cycle (2022-2023) is also open to institutions and young entrepreneurs, and is governed by the updated Award rules and conditions. Jury members, including some 20 Arab experts, will evaluate the submissions and select the winners. Results will be announced at the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development 2023.

(b)     *Index Simulator for Policymakers in the Arab Region*

6.      Following advisory requests received by ESCWA on providing technical support to member States to enhance their performance in international indices, including those related to technology and innovation, ESCWA developed a Simulator of these indices in 2020, which allows policymakers to view the current assessment of their countries and estimate the possible direct impact of their national policies on the ranking and final value of relevant indicators.

## 2. *Meetings and workshops*

(a) *Side event on the theme "Perspectives on capacity-building in science, technology and innovation for achieving the SDGs"*

7.     The United Nations Interagency Task Team (IATT), which includes ESCWA, held this event on 6 July 2022, on the sidelines of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2022, to discuss major policymaking gaps in science, technology and innovation policies for the SDGs. The event highlighted the importance of partnerships and collaboration to strengthen capacity and overcome such gaps. It also presented the work of the IATT Work Stream 6, including technical materials, such as a brochure entitled "Science, technology and innovation for achieving the SDGs: guidelines for policy formulation".

(b) *Webinar on technology and innovation for land transport*

8.     The webinar was held on 20 December 2021 to discuss the content and outcome of an ESCWA report entitled "Technology and innovation for the development of land transport in Arab countries". Participants tackled the issue of integrating emerging digital technologies in land transport, in service of SDGs 9 and 11 aimed at building resilient infrastructure and inclusive cities. The following four key messages emerged: digital technologies and innovation are important for developing road transport in the Arab region, namely in terms of efficiency, safety and rationalization of energy use; Arab countries should assess their situations and identify practical steps for developing their transport sectors through technology; priorities for technological investments need to be set in the land transport sector, based on the development level of both the technology and transport sectors in a country; and it is necessary to provide and expand the use of broadband services, reduce the costs of Internet access, rely on fibre optics technology, and publish the Internet Protocol version 6 (IPv6) to be able to rely on technology to develop land transport.

(c) *Special session on the challenges and opportunities of technological transformations in the transport sector in the Arab region*

9.     The session was held on 17 March 2022, as one of the special sessions of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development 2022. It brought together high-level speakers representing the private sector, and representatives of international and regional organizations, who addressed the topics of digital technologies and transformation in the land transport sector, covering the use of technology and innovation, existing differences in technical capabilities, and emerging technologies for future mobility. The session also included case studies and tools for an effective and green transport sector. Key messages included the following: adopting technology is crucial for developing the transport sector, enhancing its efficiency and safety, and reducing its costs and carbon footprint, for which the proper infrastructure is needed, including telecommunications infrastructure; sustainable development cannot be achieved without an advanced integrated transport system that relies on innovative applications of technologies, digitization and communication solutions; Arab countries need to enhance and harmonize their legal and regulatory frameworks and adopt legislation that facilitates the application of technology in transport systems, towards enhancing standards, governance and efficiency, reducing border waiting times from days to minutes, and modernizing public transport; digital technologies, services and connectivity should be widely accessible in all areas by all social groups, facilitating communication and remote work, and enhancing social inclusion and integration; and efforts on artificial intelligence and cybersecurity would benefit the development of a smart transport sector in the Arab region.

## B.  Information society and Internet governance

### 1. *Studies and reports*

(a) *National digital development reviews for 2021: guiding manual* (E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2021/Guide.1)

10.     The guiding manual on national digital development reviews is based on a comprehensive conceptual framework for digital development consisting of five pillars, namely national, regional and international

strategic frameworks; infrastructure, governance and legal environment policy areas; digital economy, employment and trade policy areas; digital transformation and social inclusion policy areas; and culture and media policy areas. It provides technical and organizational guidelines to perform a comprehensive review of digital development in these five pillars, including a standard template and terms of reference for national focal points. It determines the role of ESCWA and participating Arab countries in designing and implementing reviews and forming national cross-sectoral teams to coordinate work and draft reports, under the supervision of ministries of information and communication technology in their role as coordinators.

(b)    *National and regional digital development reviews and digital development agendas*

11.    ESCWA launched the second round of national and regional digital development reviews in 2021. This initiative began with a first round in 2019 that led to the production and publishing of the first edition of the Arab Digital Development Report in June 2020 (with 10 participating countries). So far, more than 10 Arab countries have finalized their reviews, which will feed into a regional report. Some have formulated digital development agendas based on such reviews, with the technical support of ESCWA, namely Iraq, Mauritania and the State of Palestine.

(c)    *Arab digital agenda/Arab ICT strategy 2023-2033*

12.    The Arab digital agenda/Arab ICT strategy (ADAICTS), which is being developed under the umbrella of the League of Arab States, will provide a strategic framework for a long-term plan of action for the Arab region. ESCWA has adopted a collaborative approach to the initiative, involving key organizations in the field of digital development at the global and regional levels. Three successive iterations of the agenda have been produced to date, which were the product of several research and consultative meetings of the two main bodies formed for that purpose, namely the Joint Technical Committee and the Core Research Coordination Team Mechanism comprising representatives of participating Arab countries, lead experts, and organizations working in the field. The latest draft was endorsed by the Executive Bureau of the Arab Telecommunications and Information Council of Ministers at its fiftieth meeting, held on 19 July 2022. To formulate ADAICTS for the next 10 years, ESCWA, in collaboration with the League of Arab States, launched the collective research work at an event entitled the "First ESCWA-League of Arab States joint workshop on developing the Arab digital agenda/ICT strategy – a side event to the thirty-second Arab Working Group on the Arab ICT Strategy", held online on 23 and 24 March 2021. Eleven subsequent research workshops and consultative meetings have been held since, bringing together multi-stakeholders, Arab countries, and United Nations and regional entities that partnered with ESCWA and the League of Arab States to articulate the ADAICTS design and building blocks. These meetings have produced successive drafts of the agenda.

(d)    *Digital development maturity measurement model*

13.    The digital development maturity measurement model, under development by ESCWA, aims to measure and monitor the status of digital development in the Arab region, through a set of selected international and Arab indicators that address the Arab region's priorities on ICT for development. The model is built around the above-mentioned five pillars of the ESCWA digital development conceptual framework. An advanced version of the model has been developed, but will undergo a round of consultation and refinement at the end of October 2022. This improved version will be published along with the first edition of the Arab digital agenda slated for December 2022. Once published, the digital development maturity measurement model will be subject to a periodic round of improvements, updates and validation, and will be used to monitor the implementation of ADAICTS during the coming decade.

## 2.  *Projects and applications*

(a)    *Advancing Digital Cooperation and Development – Arab States Action Programme*

14.    In 2020, ESCWA launched the Advancing Digital Cooperation and Development – Arab States Action Programme (ADCD-ASAP) to support policymakers in harnessing ICTs for sustainable development and

accelerating the achievement of the SDGs. The programme will be discussed in detail under agenda item 12 of the current session of the Committee on Technology for Development.

(b)   *Building and upgrading the ESCWA information society portal and the ESCWA digital cooperation and development interactive smart online platform*

15.   The ESCWA information society portal is designed to host the ESCWA digital cooperation and development interactive smart online platform, which will allow policymakers to monitor the status and maturity of digital development in their countries; and to devise pertinent national evidence-based policies and strategies to bridge the digital divide in the Arab region. The portal will also host the Arab digital agenda website, an interactive collaborative space to take stock of initiatives and projects in support of the digital agenda's implementation. The portal is currently under development, and will be operational in 2023.

### 3.   *Meetings and workshops*

(a)   *Series of meetings and workshops to develop the second round of national digital reviews (Hybrid, Cairo and Beirut, October 2021-October 2022)*

16.   ESCWA held 16 one-on-one country meetings and online regional capacity-building workshops on national digital development reviews, such as the Arab Digital Development Experts Symposium held virtually in December 2021 and an expert group meeting held in Cairo in May 2022.

(b)   *ESCWA Open Forum on Digital Cooperation in the Arab Region (Online, 7 December 2021)*

17.   As part of the Global Internet Governance Forum 2021, ESCWA organized the Open Forum on Digital Cooperation in the Arab Region, held virtually on 7 December 2021. The Forum attracted 70 participants. Its key takeaway messages, intended as input into the global Forum, emphasized the value of the Internet that was highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic, and shortcomings related to the digital divide, the misuse of the Internet, and the need to protect people's data. It was agreed that these issues could not be solved by one country or one stakeholder group but only through global collaboration.

(c)   *Inaugural edition of the Arab Digital Cooperation and Development Forum 2021 (Online, 13-23 December 2021)*

18.   The Digital Cooperation and Development Forum, a consolidated inclusive and streamlined multipartite regional collaboration platform for policy dialogue on digital cooperation and development issues, is a pioneering initiative aimed at breaking the silos between the community of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and that of IGF, as well as other related development communities. ESCWA held its first edition of the Forum online from 13 to 23 December 2021 under the slogan "Shaping our digital future", in collaboration with the League of Arab States and a number of major players in the WSIS and IGF processes, including the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the National Telecom Regulatory Authority of Egypt.

19.   Around 1,000 participants representing all categories of stakeholders, including policymakers, experts and technologists from ministries of communication, regulatory agencies, information technology bodies, private sector companies, universities, research centres, civil society, international and regional organizations, and independent experts interested in the fields of Internet governance and ICT for development, actively engaged in the Forum. The event resulted in an outcome document on priority issues of concern to the global community and to the Arab region in the fields of digital development and digital cooperation.

## C.  Digital and open government

### 1.  *Studies and reports*

(a)  *Economic and Social Impact of Open Government: Policy Recommendations for the Arab Countries*

20.  Governments are increasingly struggling to address increasingly complex economic and social challenges. Published in collaboration with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the report recommends that Governments rely on open government to respond to some of these challenges, given that it can help increase public trust, reduce the risks of instability, and implement the SDGs. Using examples from OECD and Arab countries, the report demonstrates the social and economic impact of open government, and illustrates how it can be used to build better social services, foster inclusiveness and achieve economic growth. The report concludes with policy recommendations that could promote open government to achieve the SDGs.

(b)  *Digital divide and open government in the Arab region*
    *(E/ESCWA/CL6.GCP/2021/WP.1)*

21.  The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digitization, but the persisting digital divide has exacerbated inequality. The paper reviews the three levels of digital divide, namely physical access, digital literacy and use, and the outcomes and benefits of technology; and investigates the potential impact of the digital divide on the three principles of open government, namely transparency, participation, and collaboration and engagement. The paper proposes a socioeconomic framework to assess key elements of the digital divide and open government in the Arab region. It also presents a dashboard to track and monitor the digital divide in the Arab region, and the status of open government.

(c)  *Open government: citizen engagement toolkit*
    *(E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2021/MANUAL.1)*

22.  Published in January 2021, the citizen engagement toolkit is a short guide that can help in planning and implementing citizen engagement programmes for better government. The toolkit was designed based on three levels of engagement, namely participation, collaboration, and full engagement. It explains each levels' goal and features, and addresses the importance of developing an engagement policy and the aspects that it should include. A key aim of the guide is identifying technological tools, channels and features that can assist in implementing an engagement policy. The guide also provides suggestions for building the capacity of the Government and the public, and engaging young people in government work.

(d)  *Government Electronic and Mobile Service maturity index*

23.  In 2014, in collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates, ESCWA began developing an index to measure the maturity of electronic and mobile government services, called the GEMS maturity index. The assessment tool serves to measure the level of digital transformation in government services, and is built on the following three main pillars: service availability and development; service usage and user satisfaction; and outreach to the public on services. In 2021, the third round of assessment was implemented with the contribution of 13 Arab countries, namely Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Oman, the State of Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates.

24.  In 2022, ESCWA initiated an internal project to modernize data collection for the GEMS index. A dedicated online platform was developed and is currently being used for the 2023 edition.

### 2. *Projects and applications*

*Arab Open Government Portal*

25.    To promote open and innovative government in the Arab region, it is necessary to have access to information that can help in research and capacity-building, and to examples of related initiatives. ESCWA launched the Arab Open Government Portal in 2021 as a one-stop-shop to access information on open government published by United Nations entities, Arab government departments and agencies, and international organizations. The Portal includes online training courses, programmes and toolkits for capacity development, and case studies from Arab countries showcasing open government and public sector innovation initiatives.

26.    The case studies were collected from Arab countries through a questionnaire. Governments were requested to provide as many examples as possible of initiatives related to open data, participation, collaboration, engagement and public sector innovation. The submitted cases were edited and organized online by topic and country. Arab countries are invited to continue to submit initiatives by downloading and completing an adapted form available through the Portal.

### 3. *Meetings and workshops*

(a)    *Expert group meeting on open government and digital transformation for the New Urban Agenda in the Arab region*

27.    ESCWA and the UN-Habitat Regional Office for the Arab States held the meeting in Cairo and virtually on 18 November 2021, in partnership with the OECD and the Arab Economists Circle. The meeting brought together decision makers, experts and representatives from 16 countries to exchange knowledge and practices on open government and digital transformation in cities. Participants, representing national and local government and international organizations, explored the challenges and opportunities of applying open government initiatives in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

28.    Key messages included the following: for many countries and cities, facing the pandemic was an opportunity to advance digital transformation, open government and open data initiatives, but has also brought new risks and challenges concerning the digital divide and the privacy of citizens, requiring personal data protection; for better implementation of the New Urban Agenda, focus should be on socioeconomic resilience and sustainability, with the direct engagement of local authorities in finding solutions to local public issues; digital transformation and digital technologies could help overcome physical barriers and uphold the pledge of leaving no one behind, including older persons, vulnerable groups, and persons with disabilities; and applying the concept of subsidiarity is essential in open governance, as it enables local decision-making and promotes effective local development that better meets people needs.

(b)    *Round-table session – Revitalising open government: informed, engaged, and empowered citizens*

29.    On 6 October 2021, ESCWA, UNESCO and OECD convened round-table session 2 of the fourteenth International Conference on Theory and Practice of Electronic Governance, held in Athens from 4 to 8 October 2021. The session focused on the role that open government could play in providing solutions in the achievement of the SDGs. Participants discussed various topics, including open data in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the socioeconomic impact of open government and the need to create open culture, and open government and its impact on science, technology and innovation, specifically the openness of scientific information. The session concluded that open government was at the nexus of social, economic and technological transformation. The opportunities that it offered should be exploited but the challenges it presented should also be investigated and addressed.

## D. Digital inclusion

30.     In 2020, ESCWA launched the Arab Digital Inclusion Platform (ADIP) to support policymakers in Arab countries in developing or improving national policies and guidelines for enhanced e-accessibility, especially for persons with disabilities. ESCWA efforts in the field of digital inclusion have been recognized, and the project was championed at the WSIS Prizes 2022.

### 1. *Studies and reports*

(a)     *National e-accessibility policy template for the Arab region (E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2020/TP.13)*

31.     In the context of ADIP, ESCWA published a template to provide a general framework for national policies aimed at enabling access for persons with disabilities to ICTs and public services. Based on an analytical study and comparison of selected global and Arab policies and best practices, the template presents the main components that a national policy for digital accessibility should include.

(b)     *National technical guidelines on e-accessibility for the Arab region (E/ESCWA/CL4.SIT/2020/TP.14)*

32.     The document proposes technical guidelines to enhance e-accessibility at the national level, which can be customized by policymakers according to their needs. The guidelines are based on the latest international standards, and cover the accessibility of web, mobile and public service terminals. They range from the simple and easy to implement, to the more challenging and harder to follow.

### 2. *Projects and applications*

*Arab Digital Inclusion Platform*

33.     ESCWA developed the Arab Digital Inclusion Platform to assist policymakers in using the e-accessibility templates in an interactive way. The platform provides accessible information on disability as it relates to the Arab region, including research and resources published by ESCWA and other regional and international organizations, and laws and policies from Arab countries. It gathers knowledge, toolkits, capacity-building and best practices for the development of policies, guidelines and initiatives for bridging the digital divide and implementing e-accessibility in public websites and e-services. The platform also offers a secure and dedicated space where government officials and disability focal points across the region can share documents for discussion and suggestions. Access to that space is only enabled for the assigned Intersessional Group of Experts on Disability (IGED), which was set up in September 2016 at the request of the ESCWA Committee on Social Development to support member States in the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and related SDGs.

### 3. *Meetings and workshops*

(a)     *IGED consultation meeting on the Arab Digital Inclusion Platform prototype*

34.     On 24 August 2021, ESCWA organized a consultative meeting with IGED members, and other government officials and concerned experts in the field, to review the ADIP prototype, specifically the functionalities of the IGED-dedicated space on the platform. Participants proposed recommendations to improve the platform and finalize the IGED-dedicated space.

(b)    *Regional workshop on digital inclusion: e-accessibility policy and toolkits*

35.    ESCWA organized a regional workshop on 25 August 2021 to vet its proposed policy and technical interactive toolkits on digital inclusion, with a number of government officials and experts from the ICT sector working on digital government and digital inclusion in the region.

(c)    *Regional training of trainers on ESCWA e-accessibility templates for national policy and technical guidelines*

36.    ESCWA organized an online regional training of trainers from 23 to 25 November 2021 as part of the ADIP project to provide hands-on training and detailed knowledge to nominated delegates on the application and adoption of the national e-accessibility policy and technical guidelines templates and toolkits. The training paved the way towards forming national working groups of experts to help in the national roll-out phase. More than 80 government officials and experts attended the training.

(d)    *Accessible Arab Region: ICT for All*

37.    On 2 December 2021, and for the first time in the Arab region, ESCWA and ITU held the Accessible Arab Region: ICT for All conference as an open informative and interactive platform to discuss the importance of ensuring digital inclusion and the better use of e-accessibility in the development of services that could have an impact in the lives of all people, such as the vital information and health services provided during the COVID-19 pandemic. Attended by some 100 participants, the conference presented good practices in digital inclusion and cooperation, and sought solutions to eliminate barriers to ICT access.

(e)    *Age of digital inclusion: how technology can support the inclusion of persons with disabilities*

38.    This event was held virtually by ESCWA on 15 December 2021 to explore the important role that accessible ICTs can play in ensuring the inclusion of persons with disabilities. It explored the global frameworks that support e-inclusion, such as article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on accessibility, and the interlinkages between research centres, academia and industry in driving innovation for social and digital inclusion. The event reviewed the status of digital inclusion in the Arab region, and the challenges and opportunities faced by Arab countries in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants called for the adoption of "inclusive design" as an important approach to building physical and digital environments to ensure social inclusion. They also emphasized the important role of regional Arab initiatives in e-accessibility, including ADIP that supports policymakers and stakeholders in ensuring digital inclusion.

## II.  Implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on Technology for Development to the ESCWA secretariat

39.    The Committee on Technology for Development held its third session online on 15 and 16 February 2021. At the close of the session, the Committee made recommendations to ESCWA member States and to the ESCWA secretariat. Representatives of member States are invited to brief the Committee on national action taken pursuant to recommendations addressed to them under item 6 of the current session's agenda. Those recommendations can be viewed in the final report of the third session (E/ESCWA/C.8/2021/7/Report).

40.    Pursuant to recommendations addressed to it, the ESCWA secretariat implemented the activities referred to in the first section of the present document. The table below links each recommendation with related implemented activities.

| | | Recommendation | Related implemented activities |
|---|---|---|---|
| (a) | | Continue supporting member States in harnessing science, technology and innovation to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), and the Beirut Consensus on Technology for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region | • ESCWA continued to provide technical support to member States through technical services on the acceleration of digital government transformation, the enhancement of the innovation ecosystem and technology transfer, and harnessing new technologies for development.<br><br>• In the context of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development 2021 and 2022, ESCWA organized specific sessions on digital transformation, and technology and innovation for sustainable development.<br><br>• Current work on the Arab digital agenda/Arab ICT strategy 2023-2033, national digital development reviews, reports and agendas, and the series of related meetings support the implementation of WSIS outcomes and the Beirut Consensus on Technology for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region.<br><br>• Current work on ADIP is linked to the Beirut Consensus on Technology for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region and the 2030 Agenda, and supports the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. |
| (b) | | Support member States in developing and implementing policies and strategies to promote the information society, digital development and digital cooperation, e-government and open government policies, e-commerce, financial technology, e-accessibility, e-learning, new technologies, innovation and entrepreneurship | • ESCWA continued to support member States in developing their national plans and strategies in the fields of digital government transformation, digital development, e-accessibility, new technologies and knowledge-based economies.<br><br>• ESCWA continued to promote open government policies and to support member States in their journey towards fostering open data and open government.<br><br>• Current work on the Arab digital agenda/Arab ICT strategy 2023-2033, national digital development reviews, reports and agendas, and the series of related meetings reflect ESCWA efforts to promote the information society, digital development and digital cooperation.<br><br>• Current work under ADIP supports policymakers in developing their national policies and guidelines for enhanced e-accessibility at the regional and national levels.<br><br>• ESCWA and UNCTAD are supporting some member States, namely Jordan, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic, to establish their e-registration platforms to facilitate and automate business registrations and certifications. |
| (c) | | Support member States in leveraging science, technology, and innovation to respond quickly and resiliently to the repercussions of crises, such | • The United Nations Interagency Task Team (IATT) Work Stream 6, which includes ESCWA, organizes regular capacity-building activities on science, technology and innovation for sustainable development. During the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development 2022, ESCWA also held specific |

| | Recommendation | Related implemented activities |
|---|---|---|
| | as the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts and disasters | sessions on digital transformation and technology, and on innovation for sustainable development. |
| (d) | Continue providing technical support to member States and benefit from the Committee as a regional forum for transferring experiences among Arab countries in the fields of science, technology and innovation, in response to their needs and requests addressed to the ESCWA secretariat | • ESCWA has continued to support member States in developing their national capacities in the areas of digital technologies and innovation (more details will be presented under agenda item 5 of the current session). A regional event was held for the first time with ITU on digital accessibility in December 2021. A regional meeting for Arab e-government programme directors was convened by ESCWA in 2021 to discuss South-South cooperation in digital technologies (to be discussed under agenda item 7 of the current session). <br><br> • ESCWA held the Arab SMEs Summit in Amman on 30 October and 1 November 2022 to act as a platform for connecting policymakers with entrepreneurs and innovators to strengthen the entrepreneurial enabling environment (more details under agenda item 8 of the current session). |
| (e) | Assist member States in developing national plans and strategies related to digital development, and in using artificial intelligence and local applications of big data to make evidence-based decisions | • ESCWA has continued to support member States in developing their national plans and strategies on new technologies, including artificial intelligence and data (more details under agenda item 5 of the current session). Ongoing work on the Arab digital agenda/Arab ICT strategy 2023-2033, national digital development reviews, reports and agendas, and the series of related meetings reflect ESCWA efforts to promote digital development. |
| (f) | Provide support to SMEs, young people and women in the areas of innovation and entrepreneurship and set guidelines for the localization and application of green and new technologies | • ESCWA organized several workshops and meetings for young female entrepreneurs, especially women entrepreneurs, on the application of green technology. Furthermore, ESCWA established the DEPAR platform to support Arab SMEs with the required tools, knowledge resources and networks for scaling up their tech-driven businesses. |
| (g) | Update continuously the Government Electronic and Mobile Services (GEMS) Maturity Index in line with technological developments, and promote its use as a tool to assess digital transformation at the national level | • ESCWA continued its improvements on the conceptual framework of the GEMS index by updating the services covered. ESCWA has also developed a dedicated platform to modernize the data collection process. This platform will be deployed in 2022 and used by all member States participating in the GEMS index exercise. <br><br> • In 2021, ESCWA launched the Arab Open Government Portal, which features online training courses, programmes and toolkits, and case studies from Arab countries showcasing open government and public sector innovation initiatives. |

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