



**Report**  
**of the seventh special session**  
**Amman, 20–21 December 2022**

**Summary**

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) held its seventh special session in Amman on 20 and 21 December 2022. The agenda contained several items on regional and global issues, including a survey of economic and social developments in the Arab region; ESCWA support to Arab least developed countries, especially Yemen; digital transformation in the Arab region and ESCWA efforts to support its acceleration; land electric mobility in the Arab region; and preparing transport professions in the Arab region and future challenges. The Commission considered the request of Djibouti for ESCWA membership, and the establishment of two new ESCWA centres: the first concerned with road safety and the second with advancing carbon emissions reduction.

At the close of its seventh special session, the Commission adopted five resolutions for submission to the Economic and Social Council for its consideration, in addition to recommendations on the agenda items discussed. The present report sets out the resolutions and recommendations, and summarizes discussions under each agenda item.

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## Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) held its seventh special session pursuant to rule 1 (d) of the ESCWA rules of procedure. The present report summarizes the work of the session, held in Amman on 20 and 21 December 2022.

### I. Resolutions submitted to the Economic and Social Council for action or information

#### Resolution 337 (S-VII) Request from Djibouti for membership of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

*The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,*

*Noting* the communication from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Djibouti of 11 July 2022, addressed to the secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, in which Djibouti requests to join the Commission as a full member,

*Recalling* that Egypt; the Palestine Liberation Organization; the Sudan; Libya, Morocco and Tunisia; Mauritania; and Algeria and Somalia joined the Commission as full members, pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolutions 2088 (LXIII) and 2089 (LXIII) of 22 July 1977, resolution 2008/8 of 22 July 2008, resolution 2012/1 of 10 July 2012, resolution 2015/32 of 22 July 2015, and resolution 2020/20 of 22 July 2020, respectively,

*Recalling also* its resolution 302 (XXVII) of 10 May 2012, which invites all Arab countries to become members of the Commission,

1. *Welcomes* the request of Djibouti to join the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia;
2. *Recommends* that the Economic and Social Council accept the request;
3. *Requests* that the Executive Secretary follow up on the implementation of the present resolution.

Fourth plenary session  
21 December 2022

#### Resolution 338 (S-VII) Establishment of an Arab integrated road safety observatory

*The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,*

*Recalling* United Nations General Assembly resolution 74/299 of 31 August 2020 on improving global road safety, which took into account the importance of strengthening institutional capacity and continuing international cooperation, including South-South and triangular cooperation, cooperation between countries that share roads across borders and cooperation among regional and international organizations, to further support efforts to improve road safety worldwide,

*Recalling also* the [political declaration of the high-level meeting on improving global road safety](#), adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 1 July 2022, which called for strengthening international cooperation on road safety through sharing of good practices, successful implementation mechanisms and technical standards; promoting capacity-building, knowledge-sharing and technical support; and encouraging research and improving and harmonizing disaggregated data collection on road safety, including those gathered from regional road safety observatories,

*Noting* initiatives to establish regional road safety observatories worldwide, including the [European Road Safety Observatory](#), the [African Road Safety Observatory](#), the Ibero-American Road Safety Observatory, and the [Asia Pacific Road Safety Observatory](#), which stemmed from recognizing the importance of creating a space for collaboration between neighbouring countries that belong to a similar environment, and that regional road safety observatories make significant contributions to the production of unified regional data and indicators, which are key to formulating regional measures for road safety in line with global goals and targets,

*Recognizing* the need to establish a similar institutional mechanism in the Arab region, comparable to those in other regions, to help build the capacity of Arab States and their institutions to develop effective and evidence-based national policies and strategies to improve road safety, and to develop and adapt tools and methods for managing and analysing road crash data in the Arab region based on consistent evidence and standards, in line with international best practices,

*Acknowledging* the need for Arab countries to provide adequate data, benefit from the applications of the digital revolution and available complementary tools that help increase the efficiency of data collection and analysis systems, simplify and increase the speed and accuracy of procedures, and implement projects to improve infrastructure,

*Recalling* the recommendations issued by its Committee on Transport and Logistics at its twenty-second session, held in Cairo on 6 and 7 December 2021, to complete the stages of establishing an Arab integrated road safety observatory, and to welcome the offer made by Morocco to host the observatory, in accordance with the criteria set by the Commission and the procedures and regulations of the United Nations,

*Having reviewed* the proposal to establish an Arab integrated road safety observatory, set out in document [E/ESCWA/S-7/13](#),

1. *Welcomes* the establishment of an Arab integrated road safety observatory, using resources from outside the United Nations regular budget, to support member States by undertaking functions including the below:

(a) Providing a regional platform to assist member States in developing effective and evidence-based national policies and strategies to improve road safety, and exchanging best practices, lessons learned and successful experiences;

(b) Discussing the challenges faced by member States in the field of road safety, the tackling of which requires a regional vision;

(c) Developing and adapting tools and methods for managing and analysing road crash data in the Arab region, in line with international best practices;

(d) Creating and managing a regional database of road safety policies and data;

(e) Contributing to training of trainers to build national and local capacities in formulating and implementing evidence-based policies to improve road safety.

2. *Also welcomes* the offer by Morocco to host the observatory, in accordance with the procedures and regulations followed by the United Nations;

3. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to submit a report on progress in implementing the present resolution to the Commission at its thirty-first session.

Fourth plenary session

21 December 2022

**Resolution 339 (S-VII) Establishment of a centre for advancing carbon emissions  
reduction under the Commission**

*The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,*

*Recalling* General Assembly resolution [70/1](#) of 25 September 2015 on “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, which noted with grave concern the significant gap between the aggregate effect of parties’ mitigation pledges in terms of global annual emissions of greenhouse gases by 2020 and aggregate emission pathways consistent with having a likely chance of holding the increase in global average temperature below 2 degrees Celsius, or 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels,

*Recalling also* the [Paris Agreement](#), adopted on 12 December 2015, which aims to reach global peaking of greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, in particular by formulating low-emissions development strategies, preparing and implementing national plans, and assisting developing countries in this regard and taking their needs into account,

*Recognizing* the need for collective action to achieve carbon neutrality and zero emissions, so as to ensure a sustainable future for people and the planet,

*Bearing in mind* the need for Arab countries to strengthen regional cooperation, knowledge and scientific data, and to disseminate measures and technologies to mitigate the effects of climate change complemented by adaptation measures,

*Recalling* the efforts of the secretariat of the Commission to build the capacity of member States in tackling the effects of climate change, supporting a just and inclusive transition in energy sources, identifying the main pillars of sustainable energy systems using the circular carbon economy framework, and strengthening the water-energy-food security nexus in the context of climate change and identifying ways to operationalize it,

*Having reviewed* the proposal for the establishment of a centre for advancing emissions reduction under the Commission, set out in document [E/ESCWA/S-7/14](#),

1. *Welcomes* the establishment of a centre for advancing carbon emissions reduction under the Commission, using resources from outside the United Nations regular budget, to support member States by undertaking the following:

- (a) Promoting regional efforts to reduce carbon emissions towards achieving climate neutrality;
- (b) Providing a regional platform that supports the positions of the Arab region in global dialogues on carbon emissions reduction;
- (c) Facilitating the implementation of the circular carbon economy approach;
- (d) Establishing new regional and international networks to support carbon emission mitigation efforts, and creating synergies with partners pursuing the same goals;
- (e) Developing a road map to reduce carbon emissions and devising innovative solutions to achieve this goal, in particular by accelerating the dissemination of measures and technologies that mitigate the effects of climate change.

2. *Also welcomes* the interest of Saudi Arabia in hosting the centre, in accordance with the standards, procedures and regulations followed by the United Nations;

3. *Recommends* completing the stages of establishing the centre as soon as possible;

4. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to submit a report on progress in implementing the present resolution to the Commission at its thirty-first session.

Fourth plenary session

21 December 2022

**Resolution 340 (S-VII) Proposed programme plan for the Economic and Social Commission  
for Western Asia for 2024**

*The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,*

*Recognizing* that achieving all aspects of sustainable development requires concerted efforts, based on universal principles and evidence-based analyses,

*Emphasizing* that the Arab region has all the necessary human capital and resources to achieve prosperity and dignified lives for all its peoples, but faces conflicts, occupation and significant social, economic and environmental challenges that threaten its progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

*Noting* the role of the secretariat of the Commission in supporting national and regional efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda, particularly by providing evidence, holding intergovernmental meetings to take necessary decisions, organizing dialogues on key development issues, providing policy advice, and building capacity in using available tools to support the formulation and implementation of required policy frameworks to achieve set goals,

*Having considered* the proposed programme plan for 2024 ([E/ESCWA/S-7/16](#)),

1. *Adopts* the proposed programme plan for 2024 set out in document [E/ESCWA/S-7/16](#);
2. *Requests* that the Executive Secretary take the necessary measures to ensure the full implementation of the programme, and submit periodic reports on the implementation of the programme.

Fourth plenary session

21 December 2022

**Resolution 341 (S-VII) Adoption of the session reports of subsidiary bodies of the Economic  
and Social Commission for Western Asia**

*The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,*

*Emphasizing* the importance of the role of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission, each in its field of specialization, in developing, coordinating and following up on the programme plan of the Commission so that member States optimize its outcomes,

*Recognizing* the importance of implementing recommendations issued by the subsidiary bodies to enable the Commission to perform its functions under the respective specializations of these bodies,

*Having reviewed* the recommendations set out in the reports of the subsidiary bodies on their sessions held between the eighth meeting of the Executive Committee (23–24 December 2021) and the seventh Special Session (20–21 December 2022), namely the report of the Committee on Transport and Logistics on its twenty-second session ([E/ESCWA/C.5/2021/8/Report](#)); the reports of the Committee on Women on its ninth

session ([E/ESCWA/C.7/2019/13/Report](#)) and tenth session ([E/ESCWA/C.7/2021/8/Report](#)); the report of the Committee on Financing for Development in the States members of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on its second session ([E/ESCWA/C.9/2021/12/Report](#)); the report of the Committee on Water Resources on its fourteenth session ([E/ESCWA/C.4/2021/6/Report](#)); and the report of the Committee on Energy on its thirteenth session ([E/ESCWA/C.3/2021/8/Report](#)),

1. *Adopts* the recommendations contained in the reports of the aforementioned subsidiary bodies, and requests the secretariat of the Commission to follow up on the implementation of these recommendations;

2. *Calls on* member States to take the necessary measures to ensure the implementation of the recommendations contained in the reports.

Fourth plenary session

21 December 2022

## **II. Recommendations**

2. At the close of the seventh session, representatives of member States thanked Jordan for its hospitality during the session, and the ESCWA secretariat for organizing the session. They also congratulated Egypt for organizing the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change ([COP 27](#), Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, 6–20 November 2022), Qatar for organizing the FIFA World Cup in December 2022, and participating Arab countries for their performance. The Commission adopted the following recommendations related to agenda items of the special session.

### **A. Recommendations to ESCWA member States**

3. The Commission made the following recommendations to ESCWA member States:

(a) Welcome the ESCWA secretariat's efforts to implement the recommendations made by the Executive Committee at its eighth meeting, and the increased momentum in responding to requests for technical support received from member States;

(b) Emphasize the risk of providing climate finance by increasing indebtedness and replacing it with innovative financing tools, including the ESCWA Debt Swap/Donor Nexus Initiative to finance climate action and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

(c) Prepare to benefit from the climate change loss and damage fund by assessing potential losses and damages;

(d) Take note of the results of the 2022 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development and the ongoing preparations for the 2023 Forum, and encourage broad participation of various societal sectors in the Forum;

(e) Note ESCWA efforts in the following areas:

(1) Supporting the Arab least developed countries, especially Yemen, in formulating a vision for recovery and development;

(2) Promoting and accelerating digital transformation in the Arab region, and welcoming proposals for the future in that regard;

(3) Monitoring megatrends that have a profound impact on the economic and social situation worldwide;

(f) Benefit from recommendations set out in the ESCWA study entitled “[Land electric mobility in the Arab region: options and opportunities](#)” to prepare for a major transformation in the land transport sector, reflected in the use of electric means of transport;

(g) Optimize benefits from the services and activities provided by ESCWA centres;

(h) Ensure integration and coordination in the support provided by all United Nations bodies and organizations in achieving the SDGs, while optimizing benefits from the comparative advantage of each of them.

## **B. Recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat**

4. The Commission made the following recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat:

(a) Focus on ways to expand the fiscal space of Arab countries, especially those affected by conflict and war;

(b) Continue supporting efforts to strengthen entrepreneurship in the Arab region given its important contribution to development efforts and to reducing youth unemployment, and provide frameworks for measuring entrepreneurship performance indicators in Arab countries;

(c) Continue providing technical support in assessing the effects of climate change and developing adaptation measures, and in implementing the ESCWA Debt Swap/Donor Nexus Initiative and to finance climate action and the SDGs, in collaboration with countries wishing to do so;

(d) Assist member States to actively participate in presenting a vision on the working mechanism of the climate change loss and damage fund and the issues it may address, which the States Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change decided to establish at their twenty-seventh conference (Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, 6–20 November 2022), so as to maximize the fund’s benefits;

(e) Benefit from the key messages emanating from the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development in developing the ESCWA programme plan, and prepare a report to monitor and evaluate the implementation of those messages at the national and regional levels;

(f) Expand technical support to improve the production and dissemination of data on SDG indicators, with a focus on vulnerable groups;

(g) Strive to develop a platform to showcase successful policies promoting SDG progress;

(h) Increase focus on the social aspects of the Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the Arab Region, including by ensuring that the thematic chapter in the upcoming edition is dedicated to the impact of displacement on regional developments, given its specificities in the region owing to crises and conflicts;

(i) Continue providing technical support to Yemen in formulating a national vision for recovery, reconstruction and development, and to other Arab least developed countries, and continue providing technical support to countries affected by conflicts and crises;

(j) Focus on digital transformation issues by providing technical support to member States to develop strategies and policies that accelerate the transformation;

(k) Continue working on monitoring megatrends affecting economic and social development in the Arab region, especially those that could enhance regional integration, and continue studying the repercussions of the Fourth Industrial Revolution on future professions;



(l) Continue holding national workshops in member States to present the technical cooperation services provided by ESCWA, focusing on providing training on how to prepare requests for cooperation, and submit periodic reports on progress in implementing activities under the technical cooperation programme;

(m) Hold the thirty-first ESCWA session in 2023 in Tunisia, which chaired the thirtieth ESCWA session, or in any country wishing to host, or at ESCWA headquarters in Beirut.

### **III. Topics of discussion**

#### **A. Consideration of a request from Djibouti for ESCWA membership**

(Agenda item 3)

5. With reference to document [E/ESCWA/S-7/3](#), the Commission decided to submit to the Economic and Social Council a recommendation on accepting the membership request from Djibouti.

#### **B. Follow-up issues**

##### *1. Implementation of recommendations made by the Executive Committee at its eighth meeting* (Agenda item 4)

6. With reference to document [E/ESCWA/S-7/4](#), the representative of the ESCWA secretariat presented the ESCWA secretariat's progress in implementing the recommendations made to it by the Executive Committee at its eighth meeting (Amman, 23-24 December 2021), calling on representatives of member States to review what had been implemented at the national level in accordance with the recommendations addressed to them. He briefly reviewed the recommendations and key actions taken to implement them, including producing papers, reports and studies on topics such as recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and its links to conflict, global development challenges, and institutional options to strengthen the Palestinian economy and reduce its dependence on the Israeli economy. He added that ESCWA activities in 2022 also included building consensus, holding meetings to stimulate regional dialogues, and peer learning in the areas identified by the recommendations. Such activities included the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, the first Arab Forum for Equality, a regional dialogue on climate change and migration in the Arab region, the first Arab SMEs Summit, the third Arab Competition Forum, the Expert Forum for Producers and Users of Disaster-related Statistics, and several capacity-building workshops. He noted that ESCWA had enhanced its response to requests for technical support and advocacy meetings on its services in various economic and social fields, pursuant to recommendations by the Executive Committee in that regard.

7. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Egypt said that COP 27 had been an opportunity for developing countries to express their position on climate change and its profound effects on them. He commended the ESCWA Debt Swap/Donor Nexus Initiative to finance climate action and the SDGs, stressing the importance of mobilizing financing for climate action and facilitating access to it without increasing the debt burden on Arab countries, and providing special support to developing countries in formulating, implementing and financing adaptation measures, especially by benefiting from the climate change loss and damage fund established at COP 27. He noted that Egypt had integrated green economy issues in its 2030 national strategy, and inquired about the role of ESCWA in supporting the use of green hydrogen. The representative of Oman thanked the ESCWA secretariat for holding an advocacy workshop on technical cooperation in Muscat in May 2022, for holding the third Arab Competition Forum in Oman in the same month, and for scheduling a visit by the ESCWA Executive Secretary to the country to enhance bilateral cooperation and support. The representative of Jordan praised ESCWA efforts in supporting the region in 2022, and in assisting his country in particular in important matters that were sometimes difficult to implement, such as financing climate action and expanding fiscal space. He also commended the timeliness of the ESCWA Debt Swap/Donor Nexus Initiative for financing climate action and expressed his hope that it would expand globally and be adopted by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

8. The representative of the Sudan highlighted the challenges his country was facing, which had had a negative impact on its ability to participate in ESCWA activities, and requested additional support in areas such as technology transfer and debt reduction. The representative of Yemen welcomed progress by the ESCWA secretariat in implementing the recommendations of the Executive Committee, and thanked it for supporting Yemen in formulating a national vision for recovery, peacebuilding and development. He suggested developing a special initiative to reduce the debt of countries in conflict and partially forgive those debts, and that ESCWA support the implementation of the findings of a report it prepared on challenges and opportunities for development in the Arab least developed countries. The representative of the State of Palestine said that he greatly appreciated the efforts of the ESCWA secretariat in implementing the recommendations addressed to it, and congratulated it on the success of the regional events it had organized during in 2022, which had provided an opportunity for the exchange of knowledge and experiences. He also thanked ESCWA for its support to the State of Palestine, adding that the country had launched a new planning round for the period up to 2030, which provided an opportunity to utilize the findings of ESCWA reports on the Palestinian economy and other studies. He invited the ESCWA Executive Secretary to visit the State of Palestine to become closely acquainted with the situation there. The representative of Iraq requested more support from ESCWA for her country, which was going through special circumstances. She expressed her appreciation for the role of ESCWA in implementing key programmes, such as the human rehabilitation programme in liberated areas, women's empowerment programmes, and digital transformation. The representative of Kuwait requested that the ESCWA secretariat present new topics or proposals to member States before including them in reports.

9. In response, the ESCWA Executive Secretary stressed that it was necessary to reduce debt levels in Arab countries and to not package climate finance in offers that misleadingly claimed that such funding would not increase debt, noting that ESCWA had launched a new project aimed at supporting member States in reducing debt and achieving financial sustainability, in parallel with its Debt Swap Initiative for financing climate action. She reviewed the implementation steps of that Initiative and discussions thereon with international organizations and other stakeholders. She noted the completion of consultations with the International Monetary Fund and the Arab Monetary Fund on optimizing special drawing rights to expand the fiscal space of Arab countries, especially by mediating between rich countries that did not need to use those rights and other countries that could significantly benefit from them. She reviewed ESCWA practical support for a just transition to sustainable energy through the Regional Initiative for Promoting Small-Scale Renewable Energy Applications in rural areas of the Arab Region (REGEND), whose implementation would be expanded beyond its previous scope that covered only Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia, and by providing technical support to countries according to their circumstances and needs, adding that the energy transition process was not the same in oil-producing and non-oil-producing countries. She stressed the importance of defining national priorities and needs for technical support, because demand was great but implementation capacity was limited. She emphasized that the ESCWA secretariat had taken note of recommendations from member States and would work to implement them.

## *2. Activities of the ESCWA Technology Centre (Agenda item 5)*

10. With reference to document [E/ESCWA/S-7/5-E/ESCWA/C.8/2022/6](#), the representative of the ESCWA secretariat presented the activities of the ESCWA Technology Centre for 2021 and 2022, explaining that they included work to promote entrepreneurship by supporting innovators and entrepreneurs in defining their priorities, anticipating opportunities, tackling the challenges they faced, and providing them with direct solutions, such as helping them digitize their projects. ESCWA also worked with the support community, Governments and specialized non-governmental and international organizations to build supportive networks for entrepreneurship, strengthen the enabling environment and related government measures, and create cross-border opportunities, especially by holding the first Arab SMEs Summit in Amman in October 2022, which attracted more than 650 participants representing various stakeholders. He presented the SME Digital Enabling Portal for the Arab Region (DEPAR) developed by ESCWA in 2022 and its many components supporting entrepreneurs, Governments and knowledge in the fields of technology. He also noted ESCWA studies on technology applications in the agriculture, renewable energy and sanitation sectors, and the numerous training

workshops that targeted young people to build their capacity in the areas of green technology, business models and electronic marketing of products.

11. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Jordan stressed that entrepreneurship was neither a luxury nor a popular phenomenon, but a necessity for development, especially entrepreneurship in the technology sector. He requested that ESCWA develop an entrepreneurial performance index. The representative of the State of Palestine asked about the relationship between the ESCWA Technology Centre and ESCWA Cluster 4 that worked on technology, why the Centre had shifted from working on technology transfer to the topic of entrepreneurship, and whether it had been evaluated since its establishment. The representative of Iraq presented her Government's efforts to develop entrepreneurship and create job opportunities for fresh graduates, and praised the projects undertaken by ESCWA in that regard. The representative of the Sudan stressed that technology, innovation and entrepreneurship were priorities for his country, especially since 60 per cent of entrepreneurship in the Sudan was related to the agricultural sector. He requested more comprehensive studies in various fields of entrepreneurship, and commended the efforts of the ESCWA Technology Centre in that area.

12. In response, the ESCWA Executive Secretary said that the proposal of Jordan regarding working on an entrepreneurship index was interesting. It was possible to build on a report outlining the region's performance in an available international index, the Global Entrepreneurship Index, to identify gaps and provide technical support to bridge them before developing and adapting it to Arab countries. In response to the question of the representative of the State of Palestine about the Centre's change of direction, she said that the change had occurred after the reform of ESCWA, which was welcomed by member States, as the Centre had begun addressing multiple and interrelated issues, not only the applications of technology in the management of natural resources. The focus was on entrepreneurship to tackle youth unemployment, which was very high in the region. ESCWA had not stopped working on new technologies, especially the metaverse and the numerous job opportunities and profits it could provide, and green technologies that also offered great opportunities and played a pivotal role in achieving sustainable development. She explained that ESCWA Cluster 4, which was concerned with statistics, the information society and technology, and other clusters, such as those concerned with green energy, generated knowledge, formulated policies, and worked on government digital transformation, cybersecurity, big data, artificial intelligence, the geospatial data system, and the relationship between technology and statistics. The Technology Centre focused on creating opportunities, especially in terms of the nexus between technology, entrepreneurship and creative industries, and on networking Arab entrepreneurs with entrepreneurs, donors and opportunities from all regions worldwide, in collaboration with ESCWA clusters.

### 3. *Activities of the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies* (Agenda item 6)

13. With reference to document E/ESCWA/S-7/6, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat presented activities conducted by the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies since the eighth meeting of the Executive Committee. He briefed participants on key outcomes of COP 27, on ESCWA activities at the Conference, and on the latest developments in climate change negotiations. He reviewed key outputs of ESCWA work in climate modelling and analytical studies on the impact of climate change at the basin and groundwater level; the events ESCWA had organized on climate forecasting and disaster risk reduction; and training workshops held on climate and hydrological modelling and on climate negotiations. He also noted the Centre's achievements in supporting the management of water basins and groundwater, assessing agricultural production in view of climate change and water scarcity, enhancing food security and sustainability, transitioning to green energy, and promoting energy efficiency. He also reviewed ESCWA activities related to supporting partnerships, especially in the field of financing climate action; and Arab countries' priorities for climate change negotiations after COP 27, especially adaptation issues and means of implementation, defining a new global goal for climate finance, allocating funding to address losses and damages caused by climate change, capacity-building related to carbon markets, and the requirements of the Enhanced Transparency Framework.

14. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Iraq requested ESCWA support in dealing with climate change through detailed studies and guidance on relevant development policies, as the country was suffering from high temperatures, desertification and water scarcity. She also requested support in mitigating the effects of climate change on rural women who worked in agriculture and produced food in Iraq. The representative of Egypt reaffirmed the importance of securing climate finance and facilitating access to it for developing countries, and commended the ESCWA approach of linking disaster risks with water risks, especially in informing discussions on the loss and damage fund and issues that it could cover. The representative of Saudi Arabia referred to the Middle East Green Initiative that his country had launched in 2021 and had prepared a road map for its implementation in 2022 in Arab countries, within the framework of a regional cooperation initiative on the circular carbon economy aimed at supporting Arab countries in achieving their climate goals by promoting energy efficiency, renewable energy, hydrogen and other technologies, adding that Saudi Arabia would invite other Arab countries to workshops on those topics in 2023. The representative of the Sudan noted the negative effects of torrential rains on his country despite the many dams that had been built, asking for ESCWA support in that regard so that the Sudan could produce food for the Arab region.

15. In response, the ESCWA Executive Secretary stressed the urgency of climate change in the Arab region, which was prone to floods, drought, desertification, high temperatures and other climatic phenomena, and the need for technical support to deal with its impact. She highlighted ESCWA efforts to strengthen partnerships to support the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies in playing a greater role in that regard. She commended the proposal of Egypt to promote dialogue on the topics to be covered by the loss and damage fund and to enhance the ability of Arab countries to obtain financing, and applauded the Middle East Green Initiative of Saudi Arabia and the regional cooperation initiative on the circular carbon economy, adding that she looked forward to further collaboration with ESCWA in its implementation.

#### 4. *Outcomes of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development 2022* (Agenda item 7)

16. With reference to document E/ESCWA/S-7/7, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat presented the outcomes of the 2022 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, which was held virtually and in Beirut from 15 to 17 March 2022, and the key messages emanating from it that were submitted to the High-level Forum on Sustainable Development, which was held in New York and virtually in July 2022. She noted key sessions of the Arab Forum and the background papers that participants discussed, and the broad attendance that enriched its key messages. She provided a summary of those messages, which focused on building resilience, good governance, social justice and environmental sustainability, intensifying efforts to bridge the gender gap, expanding social protection, preventing transboundary risks resulting from climate change and sand and dust storms, and strengthening partnerships to increase financing for development and improve the efficiency of public expenditure. She said that the 2023 Arab Forum will be held on the theme "Solutions and action" and would discuss regional priorities, including combating poverty and promoting equality. The 2023 Arab Forum would also review progress on SDGs 6, 7, 9 and 11, and discuss regional preparations for the Sustainable Development Goals Summit to be held in September 2023.

17. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of the United Arab Emirates asked if ESCWA had established a mechanism to follow up on the implementation of the key messages emanating from the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development. The representative of Yemen suggested that ESCWA prepare a report on the implementation of those messages by its secretariat and member States, adding that it was important to highlight the role of the private sector in achieving development in the agenda of the 2023 Arab Forum. The representative of the State of Palestine concurred with the representatives of the United Arab Emirates and Yemen on the importance of employing key messages in formulating the ESCWA programme plan, especially the work of Cluster 5 concerned with coordinating the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and guiding national action plans. He suggested that the Arab Forum should not address voluntary national reviews since specialized workshops were held on them, and that the participation of all stakeholders, not just the private sector, should be encouraged in implementing the SDGs and monitoring progress.

18. The representative of Iraq highlighted the importance of technical support in localizing the SDGs and promoting work on targets and indicators related to vulnerable groups, including children and not just persons with disabilities. The representative of Bahrain inquired about the possibility of providing quarterly or biannual reports on progress towards the Goals in each country to identify what had been achieved in the short term, not just the long term, and to share experiences. The representative of Egypt indicated that his country had issued several voluntary national reviews on the Goals and its first voluntary review on financing for development, and had held two sessions of the Egypt International Cooperation Forum. He stressed the role of the financial sector and the business environment in achieving development and ensuring financial inclusion for vulnerable groups, and the importance of strengthening social protection.

19. In response, the ESCWA Executive Secretary confirmed that the key messages of the Arab Forum were being followed up, but perhaps not in the required manner. She supported the proposal to prepare a report on their implementation by sending a form to countries to identify what had been implemented at the national level. Regarding the proposal by the representative of Bahrain on progress reports, she indicated that ESCWA had developed the Arab SDG Monitor and fed it with national data and coordinated United Nations data to facilitate comparisons. The SDG Monitor gave a continually updated picture of achievement levels in all indicators across countries. She added that ESCWA worked to build the capacity of national statistical offices to provide quality data, improve data flows, and update national and regional platforms for reporting. ESCWA also submitted annual reports to the Arab Forum on the region's progress towards the selected Goals. She said that ESCWA was greatly invested in providing data on the region, where only 40 per cent of data needed to monitor progress was available, and in strengthening networking between organizations concerned with indicators, relevant ministries and statistical offices. It had also contributed to doubling capacity to provide quality national data in a timely manner and in the correct format. She stressed the need to provide the necessary financing for development and set national priorities for spending, and the readiness of ESCWA to assist countries wishing to do so, especially in terms of linking spending with the Goals. Concerning vulnerable groups, she said that ESCWA had developed its own window containing data on young people, older persons, women and persons with disabilities, and that it would be further expanded to cover other groups if the necessary national data were available.

20. Commenting on the response of the Executive Secretary, the representative of the State of Palestine commended the statistical support provided by ESCWA, particularly in setting up an institutional framework to ensure data flows, but stressed the need for that framework to be formally adopted in each country to ensure its continuity and effectiveness through its institutionalization and departure from a "voluntary" approach. He also requested that statistical support not be limited to introducing metadata, which was now understood by countries, but rather to enhance the ability to provide data, as sometimes it was not possible to conduct the necessary surveys, or administrative records were incomplete or not mature enough to provide data. He said that what Arab countries lacked were policy options to achieve progress and solutions adopted by other countries, and that it was important to provide support in that field too, not only in the statistical field, and to establish a knowledge base in that regard. The representative of the United Arab Emirates asked about the position of Arab countries compared with other countries in terms of progress towards the Goals. The representative of the Sudan requested that ESCWA provide support not through standard reports but according to the level of implementation in each indicator in each country, and to address special situations.

21. The ESCWA Executive Secretary said that the ranking of the Arab region in relation to other regions differed in terms of the 17 Goals, as the region would achieve some but not others. Comparisons were made for each Goal separately in the reports submitted to the Arab Forum, rather than for all the Goals. She noted that ESCWA had already provided technical support in line with country priorities and special circumstances, and it was keen to link interventions to the achievement of the SDGs. Regarding work on enhancing data flows, ESCWA supported establishing an interconnected national network and addressing coordination issues between relevant national bodies. As for support in providing data, ESCWA offered technical assistance in conducting surveys, using technology in their implementation, and sometimes replacing them with geospatial data and other modern technologies for generating data. ESCWA also connected countries to enhance the exchange of experiences and lessons in linking records and improving administrative records, and aimed to

develop a database of global policy solutions, not just regional ones, similar to the one dedicated to monitoring response policies to the COVID-19 pandemic in all countries worldwide.

### **C. Regional and global issues**

#### *1. Survey of economic and social developments in the Arab region* (Agenda item 8)

22. With reference to document E/ESCWA/S-7/8, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat reviewed the latest edition of the Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the Arab Region, which covered the years 2021–2022 and gave estimates for the next two years. He said that the Survey focused on the repercussions of the war in Ukraine and sanctions on the Russian Federation, which was a major exporter of oil, gas and minerals, pointing to a sharp rise in prices in the world's energy and commodity markets, and to a general slowdown in economic growth. However, he noted that the Arab region had witnessed a rise in gross domestic product (GDP), which reached 5.2 per cent in 2022, resulting from Arab oil-exporting countries benefiting from the effects of the war in Ukraine, but that percentage would decrease in the next two years to reach 3.4 per cent in 2024. He added that four Arab countries suffered from very high inflation rates, namely Lebanon, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, which pushed the regional average to rise in 2022 to 13.7 per cent. Nonetheless, the financial situation in Arab countries was expected to improve in 2022. As a direct result of the war in Ukraine, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries would benefit from higher energy prices, and were expected to record a fiscal surplus of 5.6 per cent of GDP in 2022. Middle-income, oil-importing countries would suffer from narrow fiscal space and a fiscal deficit amounting to 8 per cent of their GDP. The situation was worse in least developed countries and those affected by conflict. On the social level, he indicated the high poverty rates in the region and a very slight decline in unemployment rates and the gender gap, adding that the region needed 115 years to bridge the gender gap if relevant policies and practices continued as they were.

23. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of the United Arab Emirates thanked ESCWA for the comprehensive report, and expressed his hope that optimism would prevail in the forecasts for 2024-2025 despite ongoing geostrategic problems. He said that his country had adopted an ambitious vision for 2031, aimed at increasing GDP and promoting foreign trade and economic diversification, and requested that ESCWA provide support in identifying options to deal with challenges. The representative of the State of Palestine said that the war in Ukraine had exacerbated existing structural issues that had negatively affected Arab economies, and that the numbers did not change much and would likely not change after the end of the war either. He requested that the Survey address social aspects in more detail, and tackle issues of food security and health that were fundamental to all countries. He said that analysing the repercussions of the war on social conditions, such as gender equality, for example, was also absent from the discussion. He questioned why the Survey considered that the region had not achieved equality in terms of life expectancy between women and men, when in his country, for example, women lived longer than men, as was the case in many other countries.

24. The representative of Somalia said that there was an Arab initiative to forgive his country's debts, and appealed to member States and Arab financial institutions to move forward with the initiative and support the country's budget and development. The representative of Egypt said that the report was important but alarming, and requested ESCWA support in promoting the exchange of experiences in dealing with debt, noting that his country had undertaken financial reforms in collaboration with the International Monetary Fund to address inflation and increase tax revenue, but had continued to expand social protection programmes despite restrictions imposed on its fiscal space. The representative of Yemen hoped that the report would shed light on social issues of great importance to the Arab region, such as displacement, and that it would shift from a mere survey of the situation into a space for reviewing successful experiences in economic and social reforms. The representative of the Sudan referred to the liberalization of the exchange rate in his country, a measure that was part of a comprehensive economic reform programme whose positive outcomes had begun showing in the country, including greater availability of goods and lower inflation. He said that the situation would improve further in 2023 after the signing of a political agreement in early December 2022.

25. In response, the ESCWA Executive Secretary said that the Survey comprised two parts. The first was a two-year survey of developments, and economic analysis and forecasting for the next two years. The second part was a thematic chapter devoted to a priority issue for the region, which analysed it in depth and provided policy recommendations. The current edition dealt with the issue of taxes, highlighting successes and failures and presenting proposals to improve revenues and increase equality. The next edition might deal with the issue of displacement, which was raised by the representative of Yemen. As for gender equality, ESCWA used the World Economic Forum index and presented its results in the Survey. It did not produce data, but rather highlighted the significant gaps that must be bridged to improve the ranking of Arab countries in the index, especially in the field of women's economic participation. She said that ESCWA would publish a full report dealing with the issue of food security and inequality to mark the second Arab Forum for Equality, which will be held in mid-2023, and that the issue of inequality in all its forms was at the heart of ESCWA interests and work, not only equality between genders but also in income, nutrition and other fundamental issues.

2. *ESCWA support to Arab least developed countries: Yemen vision for recovery and development*  
(Agenda item 9)

26. With reference to document [E/ESCWA/S-7/9](#), the representative of the ESCWA secretariat presented ESCWA efforts to support the least developed Arab countries. He informed participants of the poverty rates in those countries, their per capita GDP, and their Human Development Index rankings, comparing them with other Arab countries. He also reviewed the efforts of the United Nations system in assisting those countries through action programmes to accelerate their development and graduation from the category of least developed countries, such as the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2022–2031 that included commitments to invest in human capital, and harness the power of science, technology and innovation to confront vulnerabilities, support structural transformation to achieve prosperity, enhance the participation of those countries in international trade and regional integration, address climate change and environmental degradation, build resilience to shocks, mobilize international solidarity, and revitalize partnerships. He devoted the second part of his presentation to ESCWA support to Yemen, where conflicts were affecting all development processes. He said that ESCWA had launched a project to help the country formulate a national vision for recovery and sustainable development that focused on increasing institutional readiness to implement recovery requirements and building capacity to plan, develop policies, follow up on their implementation, and provide services. He added that the vision would be based on a national socioeconomic dialogue, and would then be put into practice by supporting national institutions to implement it. ESCWA had launched the first round of the dialogue in November 2022, and developed an electronic platform to coordinate the activities of the capacity development and technical assistance team led by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and in which ESCWA participated.

27. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Yemen thanked ESCWA for its tireless efforts to support his country. He said that the Yemeni Government relied heavily on the ESCWA project to crystallize the national vision, aimed at transitioning from a state of conflict to building peace and achieving sustainable development.

28. In response, the Executive Secretary stressed that ESCWA would support all member States experiencing conflict, and highlighted the importance of the Yemeni vision in that context.

3. *Digital transformation in the Arab region and ESCWA efforts to support its acceleration*  
(Agenda item 10)

29. With reference to document [E/ESCWA/S-7/10](#), the representative of the ESCWA secretariat reviewed the region's progress towards digital transformation, in particular the shift from analogue government to e-government and then to digital government, which entailed a transition from closed internal processes and paper-based procedures to more transparency and a focus on users of government services and technology-

enhanced procedures, then to open user-led approaches that transformed operations, indicating that the world was moving beyond digital government to virtual government, such as in the metaverse, where blockchains and virtual reality were employed. He said that the Arab region was making slight progress in the E-Government Development Index, and that ESCWA efforts were aimed at improving performance by strengthening regional cooperation in that field and providing tools to support decision-making. In 2013, ESCWA had established a mechanism to promote dialogue on the management of e-government programmes in the region, which provided technical support in formulating national plans for digital transformation, digital integration, new technologies, innovation and technology transfer, and in developing legal frameworks supporting digital transformation. ESCWA also developed a regional index to measure the maturity of electronic and mobile government services to bridge gaps in the global index, provide a more accurate analysis of the situation in Arab countries, and support Governments in improving their performance. He presented the recommendation of the ESCWA Committee on Technology for Development to focus its work on digital transformation and related issues, such as strengthening the ecosystem and enacting relevant legislation and laws in the Arab region.

30. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Iraq stressed the importance of the topic and its priority for her country, which was working on building a smart city as an alternative to the capital outside of Baghdad, which would host important institutions to reduce overcrowding in the capital. She requested that ESCWA provide support in developing a strategy for building the city.

4. *Land electric mobility in the Arab region: options and opportunities*  
(Agenda item 11)

31. With reference to document E/ESCWA/S-7/11, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat presented the topic of land electric mobility in the Arab region, as it was a megatrend with implications for a number of economic and social sectors. He said that ESCWA was analysing those trends to support Arab decision makers in addressing their repercussions and the opportunities they presented at the economic and social levels. The first trend analysis dealt with the importance of electric mobility. The region's population was expected to increase by 50 per cent between 2015 and 2050, which would inevitably lead to an increase in traffic, accompanied by a rise in carbon dioxide emissions with huge costs for health services in the region estimated at \$140 billion annually.

32. He added that it was expected that all new vehicles in 2035 in Europe and North America would be powered by electricity or hydrogen. As for the Arab region, there were only 20,000 electric vehicles on the roads today, but that number was expected to increase in the coming years, with the global figure now rising to 16 million. He stressed that Arab countries had good capacity to produce electric vehicles, but lacked user confidence in the availability of electricity and the necessary infrastructure. However, the region could rely on solar energy to generate the necessary electricity, which would achieve green growth and create many job opportunities. He reviewed some ESCWA recommendations in that field, such as accelerating the transition to electric mobility as part of a comprehensive and sustainable strategy for the development of urban transport, with a focus on public transport; providing integrated services for transporting people and goods through various means such as electric vehicles, trains and bicycles; adopting regional standards on electric charging equipment for vehicles; developing the necessary infrastructure for such transport; increasing the share of investments in the sector; and building industrial capacity and maintenance capabilities.

33. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of the Sudan requested that the possibility be explored of granting preferential advantages for the import of electric mobility vehicles to his country.

5. *Preparing transport professions in the Arab region and future challenges*  
(Agenda item 12)

34. With reference to document E/ESCWA/S-7/12-E/ESCWA/C.5/2022/8, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat made a presentation on preparing transport professions in the Arab region, based on



developments in the transport sector over time, which entailed leaps mostly associated with technological innovations, from vehicle wheels to air transport. He said that each stage of development brought about major structural shifts in society and the economy, and in professions related to the sector, as some professions became obsolete, while some advanced, and others were created. He noted that the sector in general generated many job opportunities worldwide, but was a largely male-dominated sector as the percentage of female workers therein did not exceed 15 per cent, and was much lower in the Arab region. He said that ESCWA monitored the skills required in the sector today by analysing job advertisements published on the Internet using artificial intelligence. Based on an analysis of about 277,000 jobs related to the transport sector that were published in Arab countries between June and August 2022, it had found that the largest demand was for engineers, then light vehicle drivers and truck drivers. Most of the advertisements were not accompanied by a request for a university degree. When a qualification was requested, it was often a bachelor's degree in areas including engineering, manufacturing, management, law, or information and communication technology.

35. He said that the sector had recognized the growing importance of technology in today's world, and the effects of the Fourth Industrial Revolution that had caused a boom in the field of software, such as the Internet of Things, big data, artificial intelligence and cloud computing; and in the field of equipment, including smart phone applications, communications, robotics, three-dimensional printing, and solar energy. He added that those innovations had affected professions in the transport sector, making obsolete professions with low skills and those with an intermediate role, and enhancing the efficiency of highly qualified professions. It was necessary to revamp and advance some of the sector's professions related to management and organization using technological applications, and to prepare for new professions emerging in the sector through artificial intelligence, software, control systems, and cybersecurity. He concluded that it was important to promote equality in the sector, guarantee the rights of employees in view of the transformation of most contracts into temporary contracts, take advantage of new ways to acquire skills such as distance learning and short courses, and devise technical and organizational solutions that would enable the workforce to keep pace with transformations while ensuring equal opportunities.

36. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of the United Arab Emirates thanked ESCWA for the comprehensive report. He noted that a change from low-skilled to high-skilled professions could serve gender equality and create greater opportunities for women to access new jobs in the sector.

#### **D. Programmatic issues**

##### *1. Proposal for the establishment of an Arab integrated road safety observatory* (Agenda item 13)

37. With reference to document [E/ESCWA/S-7/13](#), the ESCWA Executive Secretary presented a proposal for the establishment of an ESCWA Arab integrated road safety observatory, explaining that the region witnessed nearly 200 deaths per day from road crashes, which represented a great waste of the region's human and material resources. She said that the observatory's proposal aimed to support Arab countries in advancing road safety issues, noting that the region was the only one worldwide that did not have a regional road safety observatory. She noted that the objective of the observatory would be to collect data on road safety by employing the latest technologies to provide guidance to Arab countries on the best policies related to road safety, adding that discussions on the issue had begun at sessions of the ESCWA Committee on Transport and Logistics among officials from transport ministries. Morocco had shown interest in hosting the observatory.

38. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Kuwait enquired whether the observatory would be under the umbrella of ESCWA. The representative of the United Arab Emirates stressed the importance of the subject, enquiring about the role of the observatory and whether it would be limited to providing data or would cover other issues such as infrastructure. The representative of Jordan also enquired about the contributions requested from member States.

39. The representative of Morocco said that discussions had been held between ESCWA and his country after it had submitted an official request to host the observatory, noting that his country was very interested in the subject following successful national efforts undertaken over the past years, which had led to a significant decrease in the death rate from road crashes. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic welcomed the establishment of the observatory, stressing the importance of wide participation by all concerned parties in its activities. The representatives of Oman, Tunisia, the Sudan and Yemen welcomed the establishment of the observatory. The representative of Oman asked about the integration of the observatory with other ESCWA activities in the field of transport. The representative of Bahrain requested that member States be provided with the experiences of road safety observatories in other regions worldwide.

40. In response, the ESCWA Executive Secretary explained that the observatory would be under the umbrella of ESCWA and would not provide support to transport infrastructure projects. Its role would be limited to providing technical and policy support, including exchanging experiences between countries and regions worldwide and Arab countries to improve road safety. She also stressed that the observatory's budget would be from outside the regular budget of the United Nations, and that Morocco would support the observatory by sponsoring its budget, adding that all ESCWA activities related to road safety would be transferred to the observatory once it was established, while other transport and logistics activities would remain under the remit of the relevant cluster.

*2. Proposal for the establishment of an ESCWA centre for advancing emissions reduction*  
(Agenda item 14)

41. With reference to document [E/ESCWA/S-7/14](#), the ESCWA Executive Secretary presented a proposal for the establishment of an ESCWA centre for advancing emissions reduction, explaining that efforts to achieve an energy transition differed between oil-exporting and oil-importing countries, with the first category focusing on reducing emissions to reach carbon neutrality. She stressed that there were various mechanisms to reach carbon neutrality, including engagement in the carbon circular economy, noting in that context the request of Saudi Arabia to focus on that issue and develop a regional framework for advancing the region's position at international forums to support countries in achieving carbon neutrality. She noted that the centre would reflect the commitment of Arab oil-exporting countries to reach carbon neutrality without harming their capacity to achieve development, recalling the role of ESCWA in supporting the efforts of Arab countries at the regional level to achieve that important balance.

42. In the ensuing discussion, the representatives of Jordan and Kuwait enquired about the proposed sources for financing the centre, especially its operating expenses; and the links between it and the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies and whether it was possible to merge them, expressing their concern that a large number of centres would fragment efforts. The representative of Saudi Arabia expressed his country's willingness to host the centre, noting the importance of achieving energy security by focusing on mitigating emissions, rather than on their sources, through the circular carbon economy approach. The representatives of Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates welcomed the centre. The latter noted that GCC countries did not only provide energy for themselves, but also for other countries worldwide.

43. The representative of Egypt commended the proposal but stressed the importance of providing more information about the centre to clarify its objectives and contributions, and whether it would support countries' national priorities or only develop regional frameworks, stressing the need to study the proposal further to ensure its sustainability and effectiveness in practice. He reiterated that more time was needed to study the proposal to avoid conflicts with existing similar centres and efforts.

44. The representative of Lebanon said that the centre's scope of work might reflect the interests of a group of Arab countries only. The representative of Somalia enquired about the role of member States and their relationship with the centre with regard to supervisory or administrative issues, such as appointing its employees, and whether there were internal regulations for the centre regulating its work in a way that ensured that it was representative of all member States.

45. In response, the ESCWA Executive Secretary explained that the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies prepared analyses based on different climate models regarding the effects of climate change on member States, and accordingly proposed various policies to mitigate those effects, while the proposed centre would specialize in a specific topic to provide support to oil-exporting countries on achieving carbon neutrality without affecting their energy sources. She stressed that the centre would be a platform for expressing the interests of Arab oil-exporting countries at international forums, noting that ESCWA held the view that the energy transition did not have a single pathway and that other pathways must also be adopted.

46. She explained that the centre's membership would be limited to ESCWA member States, stressing that Saudi Arabia would contribute to financing the centre entirely and logistically, but all countries would benefit from its objectives, noting the ESCWA Technology Centre as a model. With regard to the centre's employees, she said that the centre would attract expertise from all member States, in accordance with United Nations procedures, and there would be no allocations to any country. If a country financed the centre's activities, that did not mean its employees would be from that country. She emphasized that there would be no requests for additional funding from member States, explaining that the centre would not be out of the loop and would support existing regional frameworks of the League of Arab States and other international frameworks.

### 3. *Reports of the Commission's subsidiary bodies* (Agenda item 15)

47. The representative of the ESCWA secretariat presented the reports of the subsidiary bodies that had held their sessions or completed their reports in the period between the eighth meeting of the Executive Committee, held in Amman on 23 and 24 December 2021, and the seventh special session of the Commission. He said that the following reports included recommendations, topics for discussion, and information on the organization of the sessions, participants and session documents:

(a) Report of the Committee on Transport and Logistics on its twenty-second session ([E/ESCWA/C.5/2021/8/Report](#));

(b) Reports of the Committee on Women on its ninth session ([E/ESCWA/C.7/2019/13/Report](#)) and tenth session ([E/ESCWA/C.7/2021/8/Report](#));

(c) Report of the Committee on Financing for Development in the States members of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on its second session ([E/ESCWA/C.9/2021/12/Report](#));

(d) Report of the Committee on Water Resources on its fourteenth session ([E/ESCWA/C.4/2021/6/Report](#));

(e) Report of the Committee on Energy on its thirteenth session ([E/ESCWA/C.3/2021/8/Report](#)).

48. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of the United Arab Emirates enquired whether there was follow-up on the implementation of the recommendations issued by those committees, and whether there was a report monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

49. In response, the representative of the ESCWA secretariat said that there were follow-up items on the agenda of each of the committees, under which a report on the implementation of the recommendations made at previous sessions was presented by the secretariat, as was the case at the current session.

### 4. *Proposed programme plan for 2024* (Agenda item 16)

50. With reference to document [E/ESCWA/S-7/16](#), the ESCWA Executive Secretary presented the proposed ESCWA programme plan for 2024, focusing on work areas in the next phase. She said that in the

field of natural resource management, the focus would be on transboundary water and groundwater, achieving sustainability in changing climatic conditions, and paying particular attention to financing climate action and improving its conditions for Arab countries. In the social field, the focus would be on reducing multidimensional poverty and improving social protection and social spending, while in the field of ensuring economic growth the focus would be on achieving prosperity in an equitable manner, improving regional integration and trade opportunities, debt restructuring, establishing small and medium enterprises, and paying attention to the informal sector. She noted that the trend was to employ new technologies and data science to develop platforms capable of serving decision makers by benefiting from information in real time for decision-making. She mentioned ESCWA efforts with the League of Arab States to develop a vision for the future of the Arab region for 2045, which was the date of the centenary of the establishment of the League.

51. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of the United Arab Emirates welcomed the plan, stressing the importance of providing greater support to young people therein. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic indicated the importance of ensuring integration between the ESCWA programme plan and national plans prepared by United Nations country teams in collaboration with member States. The representative of Yemen requested that there be a focus on reconstruction and peacebuilding programmes, especially since many Arab countries were experiencing such circumstances. The representative of Jordan requested further expansions in the provision of data and support to women's issues.

52. In response, the Executive Secretary said that the programme plan was prepared according to a guiding model that entailed a lack of detail, and therefore few indicators were mentioned for the implementation of the plan. She urged countries to coordinate their requests for technical support from United Nations bodies to ensure maximum benefit.

#### *5. Other matters* (Agenda item 17)

53. The issue of the upcoming ESCWA session was included under this item when adopting the agenda. The Executive Secretary said that ESCWA had tried to hold its thirty-first session in Tunisia in 2020 and beyond, but health and national conditions had not allowed it. She confirmed that it would be held in 2023 in Tunisia, which chaired the thirtieth session, or in any country that wanted to host the session, or at ESCWA headquarters in Beirut. The representative of Kuwait requested that the issue be included in the recommendations of the seventh special session addressed to the ESCWA secretariat.

### **IV. Adoption of the resolutions and recommendations made by the Commission at its seventh special session** (Agenda item 18)

54. At the close of its seventh special session, the Commission adopted the resolutions and recommendations presented to it, as amended during the discussions, and which are set out in chapter I of the present report.

55. Within the framework of the adoption of resolution 339 (S-VII) on the establishment of an ESCWA centre for advancing carbon emissions reduction, the ESCWA Executive Secretary stressed that countries did not have any material or legal obligations. Countries that had detailed comments on the functions of the centre, rather than on the idea of its establishment, could send them to the ESCWA secretariat before the end of the year. In response to the enquiry by the representative of Oman on presenting those resolutions to the Economic and Social Council for action, she clarified that they would be sent to the Council and then to the United Nations General Assembly to vote on and adopt them.

## **V. Organization of work**

### **A. Date and venue**

56. ESCWA held its seventh special session in Amman on 20 and 21 December 2022. The Commission adopted the practice followed in the case of a special session, with members of the office of the previous regular session assuming the same functions in the special session. Accordingly, the representative of Tunisia chaired the sixth special session since his country had chaired the regular session. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic assumed the position of Vice-Chair. The representative of the Sudan was appointed Rapporteur.

### **B. Opening**

57. ESCWA opened its seventh special session in Amman on Tuesday, 20 December 2022 at 10 a.m. The representative of Tunisia, Mr. Mohamed Ali Benhabib, Acting Chargé d'Affaires at the Embassy of Tunisia in Jordan and chair of the seventh special session, welcomed participants and thanked Jordan for hosting the session. He reviewed existing collaboration between ESCWA and his country, commending ESCWA efforts in providing support to other member States to overcome the successive challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. He welcomed the request of Djibouti to join ESCWA and concluded by thanking the ESCWA secretariat for organizing the session.

58. The ESCWA Executive Secretary, Rola Dashti, thanked Jordan for its hospitality, and all countries for their support to ESCWA and their fruitful collaboration in 2022. She welcomed the request of Djibouti to join ESCWA and stressed the Commission's aim to include all Arab countries therein. She said that ESCWA was the voice of the region at international forums, and its main concern was to support all member States in their various paths towards achieving the SDGs. She introduced the topics to be covered by the special session and thanked everyone for their participation.

### **C. Attendance**

59. Representatives of ESCWA member States participated in the seventh special session. The list of participants is set out in annex I to the present report.

### **D. Agenda and other organizational matters**

60. The Secretary of the Commission presented the proposed agenda for the seventh special session. At its first plenary session, the Commission adopted the agenda contained in document [E/ESCWA/S-7/L.1/Rev.1](#) and the organization of work set out in document [E/ESCWA/S-7/L.2](#), as amended.

## Annex I

### List of participants

#### Algeria

Mr. Mohamed Sharif Korta  
Ambassador of the Embassy of Algeria in Jordan

Mr. Hassan Marzi  
Diplomatic Correspondent  
Embassy of Algeria in Jordan

#### Bahrain

Mr. Issa Youssef  
Second Secretary  
Embassy of Bahrain in Jordan

#### Egypt

Mr. Omar Taha Ali  
First Secretary  
Multilateral Economic Sector  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

#### Iraq

Ms. Khawla Ali Muhammad  
Expert  
Ministry of Planning

Ms. Nidale Salman Judeh  
Assistant Legal Advisor  
Director of the Non-Governmental Organizations  
Department  
Ministry of Planning

#### Jordan

Mr. Marwan al-Rifai  
Secretary-General of the Ministry of Planning and  
International Cooperation  
Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation

Mr. Malik Brizat  
Head of the Department of Arab and Islamic  
Relations  
Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation

#### Kuwait

Mr. Talal Saleh al-Nimesh  
Assistant Undersecretary for Economic Affairs  
Ministry of Finance

Mr. Saad Mohammed al-Rashidi  
Director of the International Economic  
Cooperation Department  
Ministry of Finance

#### Lebanon

Mr. George Fadel  
Acting Chargé d'Affaires  
Embassy of Lebanon in Jordan

#### Mauritania

Mr. Muhammad Abdul Rahman al-Dadi  
Assistant General Manager for Development  
Strategies and Policies  
Ministry of Economic Affairs and Promotion of  
Productive Sectors

#### Morocco

Mr. Zakaria Fassal  
Multilateral Cooperation Advisor  
Embassy of Morocco to Lebanon

Ms. Ibtisam Tuhas  
Foreign Affairs Correspondent  
Embassy of Morocco in Jordan

#### Oman

Mr. Ali bin Said bin Abdullah al-Jabri  
Acting Director of the International Institutions  
Department  
Department of Arab and International  
Organizations  
Ministry of Economy

#### State of Palestine

Mr. Mahmoud Ataya  
Planning Director  
Prime Minister's office

### Saudi Arabia

Mr. Abdul Rahman bin Mansour al-Zamil  
Director-General of External Communication for  
Sustainable Development  
Ministry of Economy and Planning

Mr. Faisal bin Anwar al-Qaruni  
Sustainability and Climate Change Specialist  
Ministry of Energy

Ms. Lina bint Ibrahim al-Sabti  
Senior State Relations Specialist  
Ministry of Energy

### Somalia

Mr. Hassan Muhammad Ali  
Director of International Organizations  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International  
Cooperation

### Sudan

Mr. Issa Tartib Shater  
Undersecretary of the Ministry of Trade and  
Supply

Mr. Omar Mustafa Hassan  
Deputy Director of the Organization Department  
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Ms. Insaf Abdullah Al-Mufti Ahmed  
Director of the Office of Trade and Supply

### Syrian Arab Republic

Ms. Soraya Idelbi  
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### Tunisia

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Ms. Rafeeqa al Rajhi  
Director of the Ambassador's Office  
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### United Arab Emirates

Mr. Ahmed al-Stad al-Hammadi  
Director of the Information and Economic Studies  
Department  
Ministry of Economy

### Yemen

Mr. Mohamed Ahmed Al-Hawry  
Undersecretary of the Ministry of Planning  
Economic Studies and Forecasts Sector  
Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation

## Annex II

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