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**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION****PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE REPORT  
FOR THE BIENNIUM 2006-2007****Summary**

In line with the results-based management promoted by the United Nations system, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has continued to focus on the assessment of results achieved through the implementation of its programme of work for 2006-2007.

This *Report* provides the highlights of achievements and lessons learned at the programme level, and specifies the results achieved and lessons learned for each of the seven substantive subprogrammes.

The attention of the Commission is drawn to the fact that, in preparing the draft strategic framework for the biennium 2010-2011, which will be considered under the provisional agenda item 8 (c) of the twenty-fifth session, the secretariat carried out an in-depth review of the mandates given by the ESCWA member countries, the United Nations Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, and of the lessons learned from the implementation of the programme of work for 2006-2007.

The Commission is invited to review this *Report*, and provide comments and guidance relating to the overall ESCWA programme performance, and to the individual subprogrammes.

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## Introduction

1. In line with the results-based management promoted by the United Nations system and the approach taken in the preparation of the programme performance report for the biennium 2004-2005,<sup>1</sup> the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has continued to focus on the assessment of the results achieved through the implementation of its programme of work for 2006-2007.
2. This *Report* provides the highlights of achievements and lessons learned at the programme level, and specifies the results and lessons learned for each of the seven substantive subprogrammes. Following the practice introduced in the preparation of the programme performance report for the biennium 2004-2005, this *Report* also includes an assessment of the performance of the executive direction and management component, including the work of the Office of the Executive Secretary, the Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Division and the Administrative Services Division of ESCWA, and the United Nations Information Service. The *Report* serves as an instrument for ESCWA member countries to assess the results and relevance of the overall work of the Commission, as well as the performance of individual subprogrammes.
3. The results have been self-evaluated by the managers responsible for the relevant subprogrammes, and synthesized by the Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Division as the central office responsible for coordinating programme planning, monitoring and evaluation. The performance has been verified by reports of intergovernmental sessions and expert groups; country papers and mission reports submitted to ESCWA; responses of participants to evaluation questionnaires of meetings, training workshops and seminars; feedback from stakeholders; media coverage and the number of hits of websites and of downloads; and the demands by member countries for technical assistance and advisory services.
4. The methodology for self-evaluation followed the global methodologies for monitoring and evaluating the programme performance for the biennium, comprising: (a) the establishment of baselines for indicators of achievement at the start of the biennium; (b) regular data collection for indicators of achievement to measure progress against those baselines; (c) regular monitoring by ESCWA management of progress towards achieving results; (d) identification, from monitoring and evaluation, of lessons learned and areas needing improvement for future programme planning; (e) formulation of the highlights of results for each subprogramme; and (f) identification of lessons learned, especially in terms of challenges, obstacles and unmet goals.
5. In accordance with the methodology referred to in paragraph 4 (d), the secretariat not only carried out an in-depth review of the mandates given by the member countries, the United Nations Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, but also took into account, to the extent possible, the lessons learned from the implementation of the programme of work for 2006-2007, to enhance the quality of the draft strategic framework for the biennium 2010-2011.
6. The Commission is invited to review the *Report* and provide comments and guidance relating to the overall ESCWA programme performance, and to individual subprogrammes.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF PROGRAMME RESULTS FOR THE BIENNIUM 2006-2007

7. This *Report* is based on the programme of work for 2006-2007 as approved by the General Assembly, and the amendments approved by the twenty-fourth session of the Commission, which reflect the new mandates of the General Assembly and the United Nations Economic and Social Council, and those of ESCWA member countries.

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<sup>1</sup> ESCWA, *Report of the Executive Secretary on the Activities of the Commission: Programme Performance Report for the Biennium 2004-2005* (13 March 2006), E/ESCWA/24/5(Part I).

8. During the period under review, the prevailing political situation in Lebanon continued to present serious challenges to the operations and performance of ESCWA. The evacuation from Beirut for a period of about two months, as a result of the July 2006 war, and the subsequent dispersal of staff in three different locations have put additional strain on and challenges to carrying out day-to-day work, holding meetings, planning processes and filling vacant posts. Despite the adverse impacts of the security situation, ESCWA was able to achieve most of the expected goals planned for the biennium 2006-2007, and to register a relatively high implementation rate of 85 per cent.

9. ESCWA continued to strengthen the complementarity between its normative and analytical work and technical assistance activities during 2006-2007. It forged strategic partnerships with regional and national players, particularly with the League of Arab States and its subsidiary bodies and with other United Nations agencies. Through the Regional Coordination Group, for which ESCWA is the secretariat and lead agency, an agreement was reached between 14 regional United Nations agencies and the League of Arab States on the preparation of a joint report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for the Arab region for 2007. The efforts of ESCWA resulted in reaching an agreement with the North Africa Office of the United Nations Economic Commission of Africa (ECA) to support the development efforts of the countries in that subregion, encourage South-South cooperation between ESCWA member countries and the States of North Africa, promote coherence and synergy and accelerate the regional integration process. Furthermore, ESCWA continued to coordinate with the four other regional commissions and with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs for greater coherence and synergy of economic and social development work among United Nations entities.

10. Work focused on four regional priority areas, namely: (a) managing water and energy; (b) social policies; (c) managing globalization; and (d) managing technology; and on three cross-cutting issues, namely: (a) the advancement of women; (b) statistical capacity-building; and (c) assistance to countries emerging from conflict.

11. With regard to the managing of water and energy, ESCWA actively assisted member countries in the preparation and implementation of integrated water resources management strategies, and prepared guidelines for legislative and institutional reforms needed for their implementation. Together with the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), ESCWA played a leading role in establishing the Arab Countries Water Utilities Association in April 2007, and 11 ESCWA member countries signed up to join. The association aims to play a crucial role in enhancing regional cooperation and integration, and in promoting South-South cooperation on water-related issues. Through a Development Account project,<sup>2</sup> ESCWA contributed to enhancing the capacity on using mechanisms for inter-State cooperation on shared water aquifers in the Mediterranean region, and for groundwater modelling and data analysis. Cooperation with the League of Arab States and the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for West Asia (UNEP-ROWA) supported the Arab countries in their preparations for the fourteenth and fifteenth sessions of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development,<sup>3</sup> held in 2006 and 2007, respectively, and facilitated the reaching of common stands among countries in the Arab world. In addition, the efforts of ESCWA led to the adoption of policies and programmes for increasing energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy, and of other measures to improve the sustainability of the energy sector.

12. In managing social policies, advocacy efforts and policy advice on integrated social and population policies during the last and current bienniums yielded positive results, as two ESCWA member countries, namely, Bahrain and Egypt, and the Sudan initiated projects to engage in social policy debate and analysis, or expressed a keen interest in re-examining their social policy agendas. ESCWA assisted member countries in adopting an approach to link such issues as population changes, international migration and development to integrated social policy formulation. Activities to foster partnerships for sustainable urban development

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<sup>2</sup> The Development Account projects are an integral part of the technical cooperation activities of the economic and social entities of the United Nations and aim at capacity-building through subregional, regional and interregional economic and technical cooperation among developing countries. Further information is available at: <http://www.un.org/esa/devaccount/>.

<sup>3</sup> The fourteenth session was held from 1 to 12 May 2006; the fifteenth session was held from 30 April to 11 May 2007.

and social inclusion contributed to the increase in the number of countries that adopted the Regional Campaign on Secure Housing and Land Tenure and Good Urban Governance to six.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, ESCWA advocated the social and participatory development approach, comprising consensus building, open dialogue and the promotion of an active civil society, and contributed to the exchange of good practices of public-civil society partnership in the social domain. Those efforts were commended by the League of Arab States.

13. Concerning managing globalization, ESCWA succeeded in increasing the linkages among the Arab countries through regional trade and transport facilitation. Pursuant to the signing of the international agreements on road and railways transport systems, ESCWA continued to follow up on their implementation. The Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq entered into force in September 2006. Four member countries, namely, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, established national transport and trade facilitation committees in line with ESCWA recommendations.<sup>5</sup> The work on transport facilitation influenced the League of Arab States, which decided to expand road and railway agreements to Algeria. Sixteen of the 18 routes specified in the League of Arab States railway linkage plan are within the framework of the ESCWA Arab Mashreq transport agreements. Moreover, the Council of Arab Economic Unity adopted recommendations to promote transport facilitation based on the work of ESCWA. ESCWA prepared a draft regional convention on international multimodal transport of goods in the Arab Mashreq, which was deliberated by experts and submitted for review to the ninth session of the ESCWA Committee on Transport, held in Beirut from 26 to 28 February 2008. Support was provided to Yemen, being the only least developed country in the region, through the preparation of the Draft of Yemen Port Law; the conducting of an economic feasibility study for the construction of a railway network; and the establishment of a ministerial unit and of the inter-ministerial public-private sector National Committee on Environment and Trade.

14. With the deadlock in the negotiation process of the World Trade Organization (WTO), work continued on keeping the member countries informed on the developments concerning the Doha Development Agenda and the negotiation process, in particular market access, trade facilitation and follow-up on the outcome of the Sixth WTO Ministerial Conference, held in Hong Kong, China, from 13 to 18 December 2005. ESCWA pioneered in advocating the single-window concept in the region as a means of facilitating and modernizing trade and customs regimes, and raised awareness on Mode 4 of the General Agreement on Trade in Services.<sup>6</sup> With ESCWA assistance, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic formed national committees on trade and environment, and upgraded their skills on the use of tools and techniques to assess the costs and implications of liberalizing trade in environmental goods and assessing the impact of free trade on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). ESCWA recommendations related to trade and environment issues were adopted in full by the nineteenth session of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment, held on 5 and 6 December 2007.

15. ESCWA provided a forum for member countries to, for the first time, deliberate on the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus and financing for development issues. ESCWA assisted Qatar and the United Arab Emirates in developing their databases on foreign direct investment statistics and in conducting relevant surveys.<sup>7</sup> Work also included the review of developments in capital markets in the region and the need to undertake reform measures and improve their governance, and the appraisal of the role of Islamic financial institutions in mobilizing resources and providing development finance.

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<sup>4</sup> They are ESCWA member countries Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen; and also the Sudan.

<sup>5</sup> Egypt, Jordan, Oman, Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic established such committees in 2004-2005.

<sup>6</sup> Mode 4 of the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS) relates to the movement of natural persons and the negotiation process of market access of labour within a multilateral framework that recognizes the principles of the most favoured nation and national treatment.

<sup>7</sup> In 2004-2005, ESCWA assisted Bahrain, Jordan, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic in developing foreign direct investment (FDI) statistics.

16. With a view to managing technology, ESCWA assisted the member countries in articulating information and communications technology (ICT) strategies, and contributed to: (a) increasing the responsiveness of member countries to strengthening institutional capacities and regulatory framework; (b) activating the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)<sup>8</sup> outcomes; and (c) enhancing the knowledge on such issues as affordability, unifying standards and regional peering for improving connectivity in and between member countries. ESCWA led the initiative to develop regional capacities in measuring ICT indicators and the main areas of the information society, and developed guidelines on ICT indicators. Its efforts led to the forging of strategic partnerships with a number of information society stakeholders, namely, the Safadi Foundation, the Fares Foundation and the Professional Computer Association ICT Academy (PICTA) of Lebanon, and the Attakaful Association and Al-Saleh Foundation of Yemen; and, at the regional level, with the League of Arab States and the Arab Women Organization. Furthermore, ESCWA forged networking partnerships between Cisco Systems Inc. and a number of Iraqi institutions. Those partnerships assisted in the development of ICT-based initiatives at the national and regional levels. They also contributed to the exchange of good practices of e-government applications, identified priorities for the establishment of a digital Arabic content industry and proposed reforms for the creation of an enabling environment for public-private partnerships. The online ESCWA Information Society Portal provided a platform to catalyse change and progress on information society projects.

17. With respect to the first of the three cross-cutting issues, namely, the advancement of women, ESCWA advocacy and work contributed to increasing the number of machineries for women in the region, enhancing the expertise of such entities in preparing national reports on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, assisting member countries in better understanding their obligations under the Convention and supporting national machineries in formulating gender-sensitive policies and in gender mainstreaming. ESCWA launched an e-network for the national machineries for women, providing an e-forum to increase their interaction and exchange of good practices. ESCWA published a regional shadow report of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the implementation of the Convention to give a voice to civil society with regard to progress on gender issues in the region, and to provide comparative reporting on the implementation.

18. Regarding statistical capacity-building, ESCWA contributed to increasing the capacity of member countries to produce harmonized macroeconomic, international trade and sectoral statistics for policymaking and formulation, and for monitoring the achievement of the major goals of international conferences, including MDGs. In the area of trade statistics, efforts resulted in that all ESCWA member countries are using the Harmonized System in producing and disseminating merchandise trade statistics, and most have implemented the Standard International Trade Classification, Revision 3; and the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, Revision 3. In the area of national accounts, ESCWA assisted member countries in conducting surveys on economic activities, encouraged the adoption of recommended concepts and definitions and contributed to increasing the scope and coverage of national accounts compilation along the 1993 System of National Accounts. ESCWA gathered information on environmental indicators, and forged common understanding on ways to gender mainstream MDG monitoring and reporting. ESCWA contributed to the establishing of a gender unit in the Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology of Iraq, and to the setting-up of a regional task force, consisting of directors of census operations, to harmonize efforts in conducting census operations in line with the initiative of the United Nations Statistics Division on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme. A virtual library was developed to provide users with resourceful tools and knowledge-sharing.

19. Concerning the third cross-cutting issue, ESCWA monitored the socio-economic and political developments in the conflict-stricken countries. Special emphasis was placed on analysing and reporting on the events of the July 2006 war on Lebanon to senior United Nations officials, which was received with appreciation. Work also focused on promoting the concept of development under crisis, exploring the potential for private-sector resilience in countries affected by conflict and tackling the emerging issue of

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<sup>8</sup> Held in Geneva from 10 to 12 December 2003; and in Tunis from 16 to 18 November 2005.

ethno-sectarianism. Through its partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), ESCWA continued to raise the knowledge and skills of Iraqi officials through specialized training tailored to their needs, and through training of trainers for a multiplier effect. Networking and clustering of small farmers and SMEs in South Lebanon was supported by ESCWA through pilot projects as a means of supporting employment creation. Modern practices to enhance productivity and competitiveness were introduced, leading to a good harvest in 2007 of *zaatar*,<sup>9</sup> which sold at a profit despite the damage to the infrastructure from the July 2006 war. In Iraq, an agro-food processing unit was launched, based on a network of small dairy producers. In Gaza, however, the unstable situation delayed the establishment of a network of agro-food producers.

20. The flagship publication *Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region* provided member countries with the means to position themselves with respect to other developing nations, and to bring regional concerns to the global level. The 2005-2006 edition<sup>10</sup> highlighted the importance of development with a “social face”, especially to the ESCWA region where there are large disparities in income within and between countries, and stressed on the right to development. To assist policymakers in issues of policy significance and in achievement of MDGs, ESCWA made available in-depth analysis of macroeconomic variables, trends and forecasts. ESCWA was instrumental in joint efforts of other United Nations agencies in the Arab region and the League of Arab States in the preparation of *The Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region 2007: A Youth Lens*,<sup>11</sup> and in the production of a booklet<sup>12</sup> on the same topic that was presented to the United Nations Economic and Social Council. ESCWA also provided support and assistance to member countries in monitoring and enhancing their achievements of the MDG targets by 2015 through capacity-building on indicators and *DevInfo*,<sup>13</sup> and through the preparation of booklets and pamphlets.

#### LESSONS LEARNED

##### *Strengthened coordination of work with United Nations and regional entities*

21. Efforts to increase networking and establish partnerships were fruitful in increasing the effectiveness of the work of ESCWA. During 2006-2007, cooperation and partnership with the League of Arab States on a number of activities and outputs widened the geographical coverage of the work of ESCWA and increased harmonization. Similarly, cooperation and partnership with regional organizations and regional and national United Nations agencies contributed to increased effectiveness, and to the meeting of national and regional needs in a better way. Furthermore, frequent interaction with member countries and other stakeholders, through the establishing of appropriate follow-up mechanisms, secured increased commitment and ownership, and helped in identifying priority issues and gaps.

##### *Increased linkages between normative and analytical work and technical assistance activities*

22. Increasing the complementarities between normative and analytical work and operational activities significantly contributed to the improvement of quality and impact of both types of activities. In addition, it is imperative to conduct periodic assessments to identify capacity-building requirements of member countries, and to extend relevant services in a timely and effective manner.

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<sup>9</sup> *Origanum syriacum*; a variant of thyme.

<sup>10</sup> ESCWA, *Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region 2005-2006* (United Nations, New York, 2006), E/ESCWA/EAD/2006/2.

<sup>11</sup> ESCWA, *The Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region 2007: A Youth Lens* (United Nations, New York, 2007), E/ESCWA/EAD/2007/3.

<sup>12</sup> ESCWA, *The Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region 2007: A Youth Lens* (ESCWA, Beirut, June 2007), E/ESCWA/EAD/2007/Booklet.1.

<sup>13</sup> *DevInfo* is a user-friendly database system with royalty-free distribution endorsed by the United Nations to assist Member States in monitoring human development and the achievement of MDGs.

*Enhanced formulation of logical framework elements and performance measures*

23. Some progress has been made in improving the formulation of logical framework elements. Yet, further effort is required to: (a) set realistic targets; (b) better articulate the formulation and linkages of logical framework elements, including objective, expected accomplishment and indicator of achievement and output; and (c) develop specific performance methodologies and measures. Such measures will assist in producing evidence and showing the impact of the activities undertaken more clearly.

24. Despite the additional costs involved and the extra time needed to organize intergovernmental meetings in locations other than at the ESCWA headquarters in Beirut, the holding of the majority of the intergovernmental meetings in various member countries has positively contributed to providing increased public awareness in the host countries on ESCWA and interest in its work, and for advocacy on the related theme of the meeting.

25. Thus, the ESCWA secretariat expresses its appreciation to the Governments of Jordan, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates for hosting intergovernmental sessions. A list of the ESCWA intergovernmental sessions and meetings during 2006-2007 is contained in the annex.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTION AND MANAGEMENT

26. The responsibility centre for the Executive Direction and Management comprises work carried out by the Office of the Executive Secretary, the Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Division and the Administrative Services Division of ESCWA, and by the United Nations Information Services. Set forth below are the results achieved under each of the three expected accomplishments.

<b>Expected accomplishment 1:</b> The programme of work of ESCWA is effectively directed and supported by human and financial resources
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*Results achieved*

27. The evacuation of staff for more than two months during the July war of 2006 and the continuing concern about the security situation in Lebanon adversely impacted the implementation of the programme of work. The security situation necessitated the holding of several meetings outside Lebanon, which required additional financial resources and more complex administrative procedures. The implementation of technical assistance activities also suffered, and most publications were delayed till the end of the biennium. Despite those challenges, ESCWA managed to register an implementation rate of 85 per cent at the end of 2007, excluding technical cooperation activities, compared to the set target of 94 per cent. The deteriorating security situation also had a negative effect on the recruitment and placement process, as the recruitment cycle recorded an average of 145 days, compared to the set target of 112 days. That can be attributed to the following factors: (a) the suspension of recruitment activities during the evacuation in 2006; (b) difficulties in attracting suitable candidates, as several offers were rejected, which necessitated the re-advertising of those posts; and (c) the vacancy of the post of chief of Human Resources Management Section as of March 2007, leading to heavier workload on staff and further delays. On the financial side, redeployment of resources, due to the changing requirements, in accordance with financial rules and within the allotted budget was approved by the United Nations Headquarters and fully justified.

*Lessons learned*

28. Investment in business continuity plans and the updating of ICT systems in accordance with United Nations specifications were essential in enabling ESCWA to continue to function with minimal disruption during the evacuation and the subsequent dispersal of staff in three locations in Beirut. There is a need for improving the timely dissemination of research results.



**Expected accomplishment 2:** Improved intergovernmental collaboration and interaction to increase the impact and effectiveness of the work of ESCWA

*Results achieved*

29. Despite the challenges posed by the political situation in Lebanon, ESCWA managed to hold its seven planned intergovernmental meetings. In responding to evaluation questionnaires, member countries indicated that the agenda items of those meetings adequately reflected their priorities. An average of 11 member countries expressed overall satisfaction with the conduct and results of the intergovernmental sessions in 2006-2007, representing a marked improvement from the average of seven member countries in 2005. The member countries also expressed their satisfaction with the conduct of the twenty-fourth session of the Commission on the issues addressed, and noted an improvement in the work of the secretariat from previous sessions. To provide a forum for deliberations on financing for development issues and the preparation of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus to be held in Doha in November 2008, member country delegates recommended to include financing for development issues in the mandate of the ESCWA Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade and Economic Globalization.

*Lessons learned*

30. The assessment of the intergovernmental process showed that a large number of representatives expressed the need to have closer links with the secretariat to enable them to better follow up on substantive issues. The convening of intergovernmental meetings outside Lebanon provided an opportunity to increase knowledge and understanding in the host countries on ESCWA and its work.

**Expected accomplishment 3:** Increased public awareness of the work of ESCWA in pursuing regional priorities and emerging issues

*Results achieved*

31. Throughout the biennium, ESCWA appeared 1,036 times in audio, visual and print media in the region, exceeding the target manyfold. That is attributed to several factors, namely: (a) improved and invigorated contact with media institutions at the national and regional levels; (b) increased issuance and expanded dissemination of Arabic and English press releases; (c) increased number of press conferences and interviews with the ESCWA Executive Secretary and substantive experts; and (d) intensified media advocacy of ESCWA activities and events, particularly through the proliferation of the daily news feature and weekly newsletter on the ESCWA website. The number of clients and users of the ESCWA weekly newsletter greatly exceeded the set target. In December 2007, the number of clients and users of ESCWA public information totalled 995. That is mainly attributable to the revamping of the weekly newsletter, which has made it more comprehensive, improved its design and boosted its attractiveness. As a result, the number of requests received from visitors of the ESCWA website to be added to the newsletter mailing list continued to rise. In addition, the electronic mailing list maintained by the United Nations Information Service expanded extensively as a result of the inclusion of delegates and participants of meetings who were interested in receiving information about the work and achievements of ESCWA.

*Lessons learned*

32. There is a need to sharpen the focus of media activities and select priority areas for more intensive public awareness and advocacy measures.

## **SUBPROGRAMME 1. INTEGRATED POLICIES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF REGIONAL RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

33. The Sustainable Development and Productivity Division (SDPD) was responsible for implementing this subprogramme, which aims to improve the sustainable management and use of natural resources in the region, and to promote regional cooperation and harmonization in the areas of sustainable management of water and energy and the production sectors. Set forth below are the results achieved under each of the four expected accomplishments of this subprogramme.

<b>Expected accomplishment 1:</b> Enhanced capacity of member countries to formulate and adopt integrated, environmentally-sound policies and measures, and introduce mechanisms to improve the sustainable management of natural resources, with particular emphasis on the water, energy and production sectors
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### *Results achieved*

34. As a result of ESCWA efforts, four countries, namely, Bahrain, Lebanon, Qatar and Yemen, adopted policies and programmes for improving energy sector sustainability by increasing energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy in 2006-2007. Coordinated efforts with the League of Arab States and UNEP-ROWA in preparing for the fourteenth and fifteenth sessions of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development contributed to the adoption by three member countries of policies related to energy efficiency labelling, clean development mechanisms and energy efficiency building codes. Activities on the sustainable use and management of water resources resulted in the adoption of related policies by Jordan and Oman, and provision of technical cooperation to the United Arab Emirates. Together with GTZ, ESCWA played a leading role in the establishing of the Arab Countries Water Utilities Association (ACWUA) in April 2007, aimed to increase regional cooperation and promote South-South cooperation on water-related issues, with 11 ESCWA member countries joining. Capacity-building on land degradation assessment and prevention in Jordan and Lebanon developed the skills of 39 officials in that field. ESCWA advocated the role of the media in raising awareness on environmental issues, which contributed to the adoption of a related policy in Kuwait. As a result of the work of ESCWA, the number of Arab countries that formulated and adopted sustainable policies and measures in energy, water resources and land degradation rose from 10 to 18, and the number of policies and measures to protect the environment and decrease pollution increased from 10 to 14 during the period 2005-2007.

### *Lessons learned*

35. Additional efforts are needed for obtaining feedback from regional stakeholders for evaluating progress achieved and drawing lessons learned. Constant updating of the ESCWA website would enhance interaction in the field of energy and water resources through feedback from online questionnaires and surveys. Regional workshops assist in improving the exchange of experiences among member countries, and the replication and/or adoption of best practices.

<b>Expected accomplishment 2:</b> Improved performance and competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises by networking, and by clustering and harnessing technology and innovation
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### *Results achieved*

36. ESCWA supported networking and clustering to create employment and increase income in South Lebanon through the establishment of a cluster of small-scale *zaatar* farmers, including women and youth, in Bint Jbeil in December 2007, in coordination with the Federation of the Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture in Lebanon. The introduction of modern practices to enhance productivity and competitiveness, including drip irrigation, efficient propagation techniques and improved forms of packaging, led to the production of half a ton of dry *zaatar*. Despite the damage sustained in the July 2006 war, operations were restored to their pre-war status, and the managed intensification of cultivation practices led to the doubling of the harvest in 2007, which was sold at profit, and supported the improvement of

business management skills of beneficiaries. Results led to the replication of the project in Debel, with the establishment of a new cluster of small producers. ESCWA efforts helped in the elaboration of a national quality standard for *zaatar*, which is expected to be further pursued. In Palestine, collaboration with the Palestinian Food Industries Association (PFIA) sought to support the establishment of a network of agro-food producers in Gaza. However, delays in implementation were experienced due to the unstable situation there. In Iraq, an agro-food processing unit was launched, based on a network of small dairy producers. The number of business associations and measures adopted reached the set target of four.

#### *Lessons learned*

37. Although risks to project development and implementation were considered during the preparation of the programme of work, it may be useful to have a contingency plan to face unexpected security conditions and other unforeseen factors.

**Expected accomplishment 3:** Increased application of measures and approaches for integrated water resources management among member countries for the prevention of water- and environment-related disputes

#### *Results achieved*

38. ESCWA assisted member countries in the preparation and implementation of integrated water resources management (IWRM) strategies, in partnership with the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR) of Germany. The number of measures applied which related to IWRM and shared water resources reached its set target of eight. Guidelines issued on legislative and institutional reforms required for the implementation of IWRM at the national level in the ESCWA region included selected case studies for replication of best practices. At the request of the sixth session of the Committee on Water Resources, held from 2 to 4 December 2004, ESCWA prepared a glossary on shared water resources terminology to strengthen harmonization in the use of related terms. ESCWA trained 15 Jordanian officials, including three women, on negotiation and dispute resolution over shared water resources. Activities under the Development Account project entitled Capacity-building for Sustainable Utilization, Management and Protection of Internationally Shared Groundwater in the Mediterranean Region contributed to knowledge-sharing and enhancing the capacity on using mechanisms for inter-State cooperation on shared water aquifers and management of shared groundwater. Activities resulted in raising the capacity of 12 participants from the Arab region on groundwater modelling and data analysis, instructing 14 participants on techniques for the protection of shared aquifers and training 19 participants on sustainable management of shared aquifers.

#### *Lessons learned*

39. ESCWA needs to continue promoting the benefits of IWRM towards regional cooperation in the management of shared surface and groundwater. Further emphasis is needed to identify areas where cooperation is more feasible, and for upholding agreements reached towards the achievement of sustainable use of water resources. Capacity-building for all concerned with shared water negotiations should be intensified. The circulation of questionnaires to member countries requesting their feedback on specific shared water issues was helpful for identifying priority concerns in the region. Additionally, travel to member countries led to increasing the demand for technical cooperation, and assisted in obtaining first-hand information on issues at stake.

**Expected accomplishment 4:** Increased use by member countries of tools and techniques to enhance productivity and competitiveness in the production sectors

*Results achieved*

40. With ESCWA assistance, Yemen established a ministerial unit, and set up the inter-ministerial public-private sector National Committee on Environment and Trade in May 2006. The work of ESCWA on improving sustainability and competitiveness of the fisheries sector and overcoming non-tariff trade barriers resulted in the incorporation of those issues into the national strategy for environmental sustainability. Activities on trade-related multilateral environmental agreements helped to set priorities and identify gaps facing the compliance of Yemen with those agreements. With ESCWA assistance, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic formed national committees on trade and environment, and enhanced the skills of their officials on the use of tools and techniques to assess the costs and implications of liberalizing trade in environmental goods and assessing the impact of free trade on SMEs.

41. During the Arab Civil Society Consultation on the Follow-up of the Arab Initiative for Sustainable Development, ESCWA facilitated dialogue on regional trade and environment priorities, and increased the awareness of over 150 participants on tools for conducting sustainability impact assessment (SIA) of free trade agreements, and on the limited benefits of the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area (EMFTA) unless significant socio-economic and environmental measures are put into place. The Consultation resulted in the Algiers Declaration on the importance of SIA for trade and environment issues, which was presented to the eighteenth session of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE), held in Algiers in December 2006. Furthermore, SIA was used by civil society organizations to influence the policymaking process and enhance sustainable development. ESCWA also highlighted the importance of enabling environments for SMEs to harness technology so as to improve their productivity and competitiveness.

*Lessons learned*

42. The performance measure “number of countries” does not well reflect the progress and/or achievement made. It would be preferable to assess performance based on “number of initiatives/measures”, which is a better indicator of results since more than one accomplishment may be achieved in a country.

**SUBPROGRAMME 2. INTEGRATED SOCIAL POLICIES**

43. The Social Development Division (SDD) was responsible for implementing this subprogramme, which aims to strengthen coherent and integrated national social policies that are region-specific and culturally sensitive, and to encourage community development action towards reducing social inequity and enhancing social stability in the region. Set forth below are the results achieved under each of the two expected accomplishments of this subprogramme.

<b>Expected accomplishment 1:</b> Enhanced capacity of member countries requesting assistance to formulate integrated social policies and programmes that are region-specific and culturally sensitive
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*Results achieved*

44. Advocacy efforts and policy advisory services on integrated social policy since the last biennium yielded positive results. Member countries and other Arab States expressed keen interest to re-examine their social policy agenda in the light of the proposed framework of ESCWA. ESCWA member countries Bahrain and Egypt as well as the Sudan initiated projects to engage in social policy debate and analysis, and adopted the integrated social policy approach, while in 2004-2005, no member country had initiated such projects. At their request, Morocco and ESCWA member countries Oman, Palestine and the United Arab Emirates benefited from technical advisory missions, resulting in the initiation of a new project in Palestine, a request for further advisory services in Oman and capacity-building seminars in Rabat and in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates. ESCWA support was important to assist countries in adopting an approach to link such issues as population changes and migration to integrated social policy formulation, thereby increasing the number of countries adopting such an approach from five in 2005 to seven in 2007. Those countries are Egypt, Jordan,

Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Continued awareness-raising and advocacy led to the implementation of measures to integrate the elderly and persons with disabilities into the development plans by the seven member countries mentioned above, as well as by Bahrain, thereby exceeding the planned target by two. Activities and assistance to foster partnerships for sustainable urban development and social inclusion led to the adoption of the Regional Campaign on Secure Housing and Land Tenure and Good Urban Governance by the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, raising the number of Governments adopting the campaign to six, including ESCWA member countries Egypt, Jordan and Palestine, as well as the Sudan.

#### *Lessons learned*

45. The set target was overambitious since the concept of integrated social policies is relatively complex and requires extensive advocacy and time to comprehend. Among the main lessons learned are the importance of investing in broad based consultations with partners; securing political commitment, high-level buy-in and national ownership; bringing in international development partners, in particular United Nations agencies, at the start of the process; adequately analysing the situation; and setting in place appropriate follow-up mechanisms. The dissemination of promotional material, including extensive use of websites, is important in advocacy and dissemination of information.

<b>Expected accomplishment 2:</b> Increased capacity of civil society institutions in implementing community development mechanisms
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#### *Results achieved*

46. The work of ESCWA on networking and participation between Governments and local communities contributed to building the capacity of 92 Palestinians and Yemenis, including 39 women, in planning, managing and implementing development projects based on a social and participatory development approach comprising consensus-building, open dialogue and the promotion of an active civil society. The efforts were appreciated by the Government of Yemen. The training was replicated to other local communities, bringing the total number of beneficiaries to 175. Furthermore, ESCWA activities contributed to the exchange of good practices of public-civil society partnership, recommended the creation of an enabling environment for such partnerships and identified priorities for improving social policy formulation and implementation. ESCWA efforts were commended by the League of Arab States. Four government entities adopted the community development approach and mechanisms developed by ESCWA for social services at the local level, namely, the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) in Lebanon, the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation and the Ministry of Local Administration in Yemen, and the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation in Palestine. The number of civil society institutions and local communities that adopted the approach also increased from 5 to 12, exceeding the set target. Furthermore, ESCWA contributed to strengthening networking mechanisms between government and civil society institutions by facilitating the establishment of eight joint committees, against the set target of six. Vocational training resulted in enhancing the capacities of 72 young women in rural areas in Saudi Arabia to undertake income-generating activities.

#### *Lessons learned*

47. ESCWA work provided a platform for enhancing networking capacity and social dialogue among partners and decision makers. It was noted that promoting gender mainstreaming and increasing the participation of women in social development projects had a positive impact on developing partnership and self-reliance mechanisms. Cooperation and partnership with the League of Arab States proved very effective in widening the geographical coverage and increasing harmonization.

### SUBPROGRAMME 3. ECONOMIC ANALYSIS AND FORECASTING FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPEMNT

48. The Economic Analysis Division (EAD) was responsible for implementing this subprogramme, which aims to strengthen macroeconomic policymaking for short-term economic growth and sustainable economic development in member countries, including those emerging from conflict. Set forth below are the results achieved under each of the two expected accomplishments of this subprogramme.

<b>Expected accomplishment 1:</b> Increased understanding of the use of macroeconomic variables and indicators of performance for economic forecasting in policymaking and planning
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#### *Results achieved*

49. Work continued on monitoring and analysing the progress made towards the achievement of MDGs, not only in the ESCWA region but in all Arab countries, and the interim result was reported to the twenty-fourth ministerial session of ESCWA. The flagship publication *Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region* provides the countries in the region with the means to position themselves with respect to other developing countries, and to bring the regional concerns to the global level. The 2005-2006 edition of the publication focused on the theme of development with a “social face” and the right to development, and the forthcoming 2006-2007 edition will focus on lessons learned from the first oil boom in the region to maximize the benefits from the current surge in oil prices. A summary of each edition<sup>14</sup> was presented to the United Nations Economic and Social Council substantive session in July 2006 and 2007, respectively. Moreover, timely dissemination of some analytical activities was achieved through electronic issuance, especially regional economic forecasts. ESCWA contributed to the publication by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs *World Economic Situations and Prospects 2007*<sup>15</sup> with a section on the economic situations and prospects for Western Asia, issued in both English and Arabic. The press conference of the publication attracted 11 citations in the media. From the returns of questionnaires on readership surveys, it was estimated that the target of 43 per cent of satisfaction with the quality of the overall output had been met.

#### *Lessons learned*

50. External peer review meetings to discuss preliminary results of some studies were useful and effective in directing substantive narratives regarding regional concerns. The feedback of readership surveys showed that, in general, the quality of the contents was either “excellent” or “satisfactory”; however, scores were relatively low with regard to presentation and timeliness. Peer review meetings and participatory seminars resulted in attracting increased interest of stakeholders. The participatory process for the preparation of recurrent publications was effective, but marketing efforts need to be enhanced upon the issuance of publications. More attention needs to be given to the timely dissemination of analytical output, including such informal means as technical materials and working papers, to increase the presence of ESCWA in the area of economic analysis.

<b>Expected accomplishment 2:</b> Improved national capacity to formulate macroeconomic policy and development programmes
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<sup>14</sup> ESCWA, *Summary: Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region 2005-2006* (E/ESCWA/EAD/2006/1); ESCWA, *Summary: Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region 2006-2007* (E/ESCWA/EAD/2007/2).

<sup>15</sup> ESCWA, *Economic Situations and Prospects for Western Asia: A note prepared for World Economic Situations and Prospects 2007* (ESCWA Economic Analysis Division, 26 October 2006).

*Results achieved*

51. Through a participatory approach, ESCWA led and coordinated the United Nations regional agencies and the League of Arab States in preparing the 2007 MDG report for the Arab region, and in producing a booklet on MDGs with a focus on youth, which was presented at the United Nations Economic and Social Council substantive session in July 2007. The participatory approach involved the holding of several meetings with experts and representatives of other United Nations agencies and the League of Arab States, and contributed to enhancing the quality and coverage of the report and its coherence and consistency. The subprogramme contributed to regional capacity-building for short-term economic forecasting on composite economic indicators by introducing a new method in constructing such indicators.

*Conflict-related component:*

52. ESCWA monitored the socio-economic and political developments in the region, especially in Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine. Emphasis was placed on the July 2006 war on Lebanon, and an analysis of political and military events was presented to senior United Nations officials and received their appreciation. Through its activities, ESCWA promoted the concept of development under crisis, exploring the potential for private-sector resilience in countries affected by conflict. ESCWA also raised awareness and provided a forum for deliberations on the emerging issue of ethno-sectarianism through the holding of two consultative meetings, one on Iraq and the second on the region as a whole. They were attended by a total of 37 participants, including 8 women. ESCWA, in partnership with UNDP, contributed to the capacity-building of Iraqi officials through a total of 15 workshop modules during the period January to December 2007. Fourteen workshop modules targeted the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works, and one was directed to the Ministry of Justice. A total of 259 participants, including 86 women, improved their skills in specialized management issues which were tailored to their needs. Moreover, a training of trainers on business planning and performance management given to 22 Iraqi officials is expected to multiply knowledge transfer. The impact of another workshop was demonstrated by the preparation by Iraqi officials of a project proposal incorporating the human rights approach pursuant to their training. The subprogramme contributed to raising the knowledge and skills of 65 participants, including 6 women, on issues relating to development under crisis conditions and emergency preparedness.

*Lessons learned*

53. Increased interaction with regional stakeholders through seminars and workshops resulted in requests from member countries for advisory services for macroeconomic policies. One of the challenges was the identification of the area of national and regional capacity-building where the delivery of output could be most effective. Future work will focus on the identified area of capacity-building with timely extension of activities into technical cooperation.

*Conflict-related component:*

54. The challenge was to maintain staff at the duty station and work under stressful conditions, while striving to develop capacity to work within a war situation. Cooperation and partnership with other regional and/or international organizations proved very effective in reducing response time and better meeting the national and regional needs.

**SUBPROGRAMME 4. REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND RESPONDING  
TO GLOBALIZATION**

55. The Globalization and Regional Integration Division (GRID) was responsible for implementing this subprogramme, which aims to improve the management of challenges posed and opportunities offered by globalization; to strengthen regional integration among member countries by facilitating transboundary flows of goods, services and persons; and to mobilize sufficient financial resources for development. Set forth below are the results achieved for each of the four expected accomplishments of this subprogramme.

**Expected accomplishment 1:** Enhanced ability of member countries to implement policies and measures recommended by the Monterrey Consensus on financing for development

*Results achieved*

56. The Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade and Economic Globalization in the Countries of the ESCWA Region examined and deliberated on the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus and issues of financing for development in preparation for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus to be held in Doha in 2008. ESCWA-related activities contributed to the adoption of 11 measures to implement the Monterrey Consensus until the end of 2007, compared with 3 measures at the end of 2005, thus surpassing the set target of 7. ESCWA assisted Qatar and the United Arab Emirates to develop their databases on foreign direct investment (FDI) statistics and in conducting surveys; and followed up with Oman, Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic in conducting their second surveys on enterprises with FDI participation. With the remarkable increase in financial resources availability in the oil-producing countries, ESCWA also paid attention to the development of capital markets, and the need to improve their governance and apply reform measures to enhance their role in mobilizing resources for development. Special attention was granted to Islamic financial institutions and the role they play in financing for development in the ESCWA region. ESCWA assisted Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates by upgrading the negotiation skills of 38 government officials from those two countries, introducing the basic concepts related to investment and presenting the overall legal and regulatory framework of investment agreements and dispute settlements.

*Lessons learned*

57. More intensive follow-up is needed to support member countries in their preparation for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus to be held in Doha in 2008. The response to evaluation questionnaires on the national training workshops on negotiations of bilateral investment agreements showed that technical assistance activities are appreciated by member countries, as they lead to tangible benefits.

**Expected accomplishment 2:** Enhanced capacity of member countries to implement and monitor the integrated transport system in the Arab Mashreq

*Results achieved*

58. The strategy adopted in previous bienniums led ESCWA member countries to adopt resolution 279 (XXIV) on 11 May 2006 requesting the secretariat to continue its follow-up on the implementation of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM). The subprogramme efforts resulted in the increase in ITSAM measures from 15 in 2005 to 30 in December 2007, surpassing the set target of 25. During the biennium, Bahrain, Kuwait and Palestine acceded to the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq, while Bahrain, Palestine and Saudi Arabia acceded to the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq, and both Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic ratified the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq, which entered into force in September 2006. In addition, ministerial decrees for the establishment of national transport and trade facilitation committees were issued in Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. In appreciation of the work of ESCWA, the Council of Arab Transportation Ministers adopted two resolutions for cooperation on expanding the roads and railways agreements to Algeria in November 2006. On 21 November 2007, the League of Arab States agreed on an Arab railway network connecting 22 Arab countries, where 16 of the 18 specified routes are within the framework of the ESCWA Arab Mashreq transport agreements. In addition, the secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) requested ESCWA to provide technical assistance to prepare a general framework for the integration of the transport sector in GCC countries.



*Lessons learned*

59. Achieving future positive impacts in the development and implementation of the different components of ITSAM will depend on continuing the long-term vision which has guided the work so far, combined with a systematic and gradual approach which includes analytical, normative and operational activities, professional expertise and appropriate coordination and cooperation. ESCWA should continue to build on the existing positive momentum, and on the success achieved so far.

**Expected accomplishment 3:** Greater participation in the multilateral trading system

*Results achieved*

60. ESCWA activities focused on keeping member countries informed on the developments concerning the Doha Development Agenda and the negotiations round, in particular market access and trade facilitation, follow-up on the outcome of the Sixth WTO Ministerial Conference and its implications for member countries, and the provision of policy advocacy and advice. The target of 10 rules, regulations and policies was reached. The new laws are in conformity with the Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and aim at providing more secured intellectual property environment for both trade and investment. ESCWA advocated and placed emphasis on establishing the single-window concept in the region for modernizing trade and customs regimes for trade facilitation. The topic was also deliberated in a meeting facilitated by ESCWA on the most suitable means to establish the single-window concept to enhance the role of trade as an engine for growth in a regional context among the United Nations regional commissions. The meeting emphasized the need for follow-up activities in that regard, and resulted in the development of a common project between the regional commissions and other United Nations agencies on capacity-building for trade facilitation. ESCWA also focused on advocacy and awareness-raising on Mode 4 of GATS, which relates to the movement of natural persons and the negotiation of market access of labour within a multilateral framework that recognizes the principles of the most favoured nation clause and the national treatment clause.

*Lessons learned*

61. Greater effort is needed to increase interaction with the relevant focal points in government entities. The performance measure needs to be adjusted in the next programming cycle in order to better reflect the impact of those activities.

**Expected accomplishment 4:** Increased facilitation of transboundary flows of goods, services, persons and capital among member countries

*Results achieved*

62. Based on a draft prepared by ESCWA, the first legislation on international multimodal transport is going through the legislative process in Jordan. As a follow-up to that initiative, ESCWA assisted Jordan in drafting regulations to accompany the legislation. A draft regional agreement on international multimodal transport of goods in the Arab Mashreq was deliberated by country experts, and the revised version was submitted for approval at the ninth session of the ESCWA Committee on Transport. Based on the work of ESCWA, the Council of Arab Economic Unity (CAEU) adopted recommendations to promote transport facilitation for enhancing intraregional trade in the Arab world. Cooperation with the League of Arab States is underway to expand the ESCWA roads and railways agreements, with the League of Arab States having adopted the same technical specifications as those of the ESCWA railways agreement, and on the extension of transport and trade facilitation committees to other Arab countries. ESCWA provided technical support to Yemen to prepare the Draft of Yemen Port Law, and is supporting an economic feasibility study for the construction of a railway network in that country. The results of the Development Account project on developing interregional land and land-sea transport linkages, for which ESCWA is the leading agency, included the identification of feasible land and land-cum-sea transport linkages between the regions, and a geographical information system (GIS) map, database and application software on those linkages. In

response to a United Nations Economic and Social Council resolution, and since the region has one of the highest road accident injury and fatality rates in the world, ESCWA provided advocacy and support for the First United Nations Global Road Safety Week in April 2007 at the regional level; developed the capacity of related national focal points, especially on the use and adoption of a relevant toolkit and a manual; assisted the Syrian Arab Republic in preparing a strategy for road safety; and provided technical assistance to Yemen.

*Lessons learned*

63. There is need for further developing the coordination with the League of Arab States on transport-related issues, especially on the replication of ITSAM in the Arab Maghreb countries.

**SUBPROGRAMME 5. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES  
FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

64. The Information and Communication Technology Division (ICTD) was responsible for implementing this subprogramme, which aims to narrow the digital divide to build an inclusive development-oriented information society and knowledge-based economy. Set forth below are the results achieved for each of the two expected accomplishments of this subprogramme.

<b>Expected accomplishment 1:</b> Improved enabling environment for the development of the information society and knowledge-based economy in the region through relevant instruments
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*Results achieved*

65. This subprogramme assisted the countries in the region in articulating ICT strategies and the critical issues that need to be addressed for accelerating ICT development. ESCWA contributed to: (a) increasing the responsiveness of member countries to integrated ICT policies; (b) strengthening institutional capacities and the regulatory framework; (c) activating the implementation of WSIS outcomes; and (d) increasing the knowledge of stakeholders on such issues as affordability, unifying standards and regional peering for improving connectivity within and between member countries, with such issues being placed high on the agenda. Five member countries, namely, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, developed ICT strategies and initiated implementation. In addition, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia formulated and/or implemented ICT strategies and plans of action in 2005. Furthermore, all countries in the region show substantive improvement in MDG 8, target 8.F, indicators 8.14, 8.15 and 8.16 related to ICT.<sup>16</sup> ESCWA led the initiative to develop regional capacities in measuring ICT indicators through a number of technical assistance activities, and developed guidelines on ICT indicators, which form a first step towards the standardization of ICT measurement in the region. The subprogramme also monitored the progress of member countries towards the information society, and provided indicators for the main areas of the information society. Wider dissemination of information on ICT issues contributed to increasing awareness and knowledge on ICT developments for all stakeholders.

*Lessons learned*

66. For better results, and in order to translate gained knowledge into action, programme design needs to give greater importance to technical cooperation activities to help member countries induce action and create an impact. Delays in committed financing and the security situation have led to a delay in the initiation of planned projects and other technical cooperation activities, and weakened the link between the analytical and normative work and the operational work. Cooperation with regional United Nations agencies and the

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<sup>16</sup> The 2007 revision of the official list of MDG indicators is available at: <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Attach/Indicators/OfficialList2008.pdf>. Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development. Indicator 8.14: Telephone lines and cellular subscribers per 100 population. Indicator 8.15: Cellular subscribers per 100 population. Indicator 8.16: Internet users per 100 population.

League of Arab States is essential to increase legitimacy, geographical coverage and harmonization, thus leading to an increase in impact.

**Expected accomplishment 2:** Activated partnership for implementing information and communications technology projects to achieve socio-economic development, with particular emphasis on the Millennium Development Goals

*Results achieved*

67. ESCWA efforts led to the forging of new partnerships with information society stakeholders for the development of ICT-based initiatives at the national and regional levels, namely, between ESCWA and the Safadi Foundation, the Fares Foundation and PICTA of Lebanon, and the Attakaful Association and Al-Saleh Foundation of Yemen; and, at the regional level, between ESCWA and the League of Arab States and the Arab Women Organization. Furthermore, ESCWA forged partnerships between Cisco Systems Inc. and a number of Iraqi institutions for building networking academies, thereby raising the number of partnerships to 11. Four knowledge-sharing networks involving 46 institutions were also initiated. Hence, the subprogramme exceeded the two set targets. ESCWA activities contributed to the exchange of good practices of e-government applications, identified the priorities for the establishment of a digital Arabic content industry and proposed policy reform for the creation of an enabling environment for public-private partnerships. The online ESCWA Information Society Portal for the region provided a platform to catalyse change and progress on information society projects, particularly the regional plan of action for increasing communication among member countries. Through capacity-building of ICT policymakers, promotion of new technologies for employment and poverty reduction and the establishment of ICT access points for disadvantaged communities through a Development Account project, ESCWA contributed to: (a) establishing a website to facilitate networking among selected access points in five countries; (b) providing decision makers with a framework and guide for the design and development of national strategies for the advancement of the information society and knowledge-based economies, support for the implementation of such strategies and for evaluating their impact; and (c) promoting new technologies for employment and poverty alleviation by the establishing of pilot facilities in Qusaybeh in the Syrian Arab Republic during 2006, and in Taiz and Hadran in Yemen in 2007, and by setting up multipurpose centres in North Lebanon in 2006. The Iraqi Networking Academies project graduated over 200 trainees and 24 university instructors in networking technology in 20 regional and local academies in cities throughout Iraq.

*Lessons learned*

68. Technical cooperation activities, including workshops, field projects and advisory services, are essential to forge and develop new partnerships in member countries by addressing capacity-building needs. It is therefore essential to emphasize cooperation and partnership in ICT projects among regional United Nations agencies, the League of Arab States, NGOs, the private sector and Governments.

**SUBPROGRAMME 6. COMPARABLE STATISTICS FOR  
IMPROVED PLANNING AND DECISION-MAKING**

69. The Statistics Division (SD) was responsible for implementing this subprogramme, which aims to improve the production and use of harmonized and comparable economic, social and sectoral statistics, including gender-disaggregated data, thereby allowing for informed decision-making. Set forth below are the results achieved in each of the two expected accomplishments of this subprogramme.

**Expected accomplishment 1:** Increased capacity of member countries to produce harmonized macroeconomic, international trade and sectoral statistics

*Results achieved*

70. Progress was achieved in the area of trade statistics, principally with regard to the implementation of the Harmonized System (HS). The target of all 13 member countries using HS in producing and disseminating merchandise trade statistics was achieved. An assessment of the needs of countries in statistics showed that 11 and 12 member countries implemented the Standard International Trade Classification, Revision 3 (SITC, Rev. 3) and the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, Revision 3 (ISIC, Rev. 3), respectively. The subprogramme upgraded the capacity of concerned officials on new revisions of international standards on economic classifications, the ISIC Rev. 4 and the Central Product Classification, Version 2 (CPC, Ver. 2). In the area of national accounts, whilst some countries progressed considerably in implementing the 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA), others are still anchored to the 1968 SNA. ESCWA (a) assisted member countries in conducting surveys and censuses on economic activities; (b) contributed to identifying ways to synthesize and make coherent use of data from various sources; (c) advocated the adoption of recommended concepts and definitions; and (d) contributed to increasing the scope and coverage of national accounts compilation along the lines of the 1993 SNA. In the area of environment statistics, which is essential for monitoring sustainable economic development, ESCWA capacity-building efforts resulted in increasing the ability of member countries to provide more data and indicators on environment and water.

*Lessons learned*

71. The subprogramme faced obstacles to fill the gaps in specific areas of environment statistics, especially transboundary issues and gender-disaggregated statistics, necessitating the provision of more training and systematic follow-up on the implementation of recommendations adopted during ESCWA meetings and workshops. It is essential to obtain the concurrence and support of decision-making bodies at the national level to enhance the performance of national statistical offices (NSOs). In general, the development of a harmonized statistical system among member countries is still in the early stages; hence, ESCWA should increase its support for and capacity-building of NSOs.

<p><b>Expected accomplishment 2:</b> Strengthened skills of national statistical officials to produce gender-disaggregated social statistics and indicators in such specialized areas as population, education and unemployment, and in other systems of statistics and data required to measure progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and for monitoring the implementation of the outcomes of major global conferences</p>
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*Results achieved*

72. Through its activities, ESCWA forged a common understanding among stakeholders on ways to gender mainstream the monitoring and reporting on MDGs, supported the efforts of member countries to develop gender statistics and contributed to the establishment of a gender unit in the Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology (COSIT) of Iraq. A number of workshops and a fellowship contributed to the capacity-building of Iraqi users and producers of statistics in collecting, compiling and disseminating gender-disaggregated data. ESCWA supported member countries in improving their monitoring of MDGs, which included the translation into Arabic of a manual on indicators for policy management, monitoring the progress of countries vis-à-vis the attainment of health and MDGs, and the development of the *HealthInfo* database based on national data. The subprogramme built the capacity of 12 participants from central statistical offices, ministries and civil society organizations from Jordan, Palestine and Tunisia, to deliver customized workshops at the national level, and to carry out data cleaning and review of national *DevInfo* databases. National *DevInfo* databases were developed and launched for Jordan and Palestine. ESCWA established a regional taskforce, consisting of directors of census operations, to harmonize efforts in conducting census operations in line with the United Nations Statistics Division initiative on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme, for which ESCWA is acting as its secretariat. A virtual library has been developed to serve as knowledge base for sharing information and

providing users with resourceful tools on five thematic areas in the ESCWA region, namely: population and housing censuses, MDGs, gender, health and national statistical systems.<sup>17</sup>

#### *Lessons learned*

73. A survey to assess the statistical needs of member countries and to identify priority areas was useful and greatly appreciated by the Statistical Committee of ESCWA, which recommended that it becomes a regular exercise to be periodically reported to the Committee. The survey revealed that there is a need to enhance the statistical expertise of countries in carrying out specialized surveys, and to process and disseminate timely and accurate quality data. The region still lacks a systematic mechanism in compiling and disseminating gender-disaggregated data, which calls for additional capacity-building efforts in that area. Further initiatives are envisaged in the future to strengthen the statistical skills of member countries in the harmonization of statistics and indicators, and in conducting periodic assessment on capacity-building of NSOs.

### **SUBPROGRAMME 7. ADVANCEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**

74. The ESCWA Centre for Women (ECW) was responsible for implementing this subprogramme, which aims to increase the focus on women and gender issues with a view to reducing gender imbalances and empowering women. Set forth below are the results achieved in each of the two expected accomplishments of this subprogramme.

<b>Expected accomplishment 1:</b> Strengthened capacity of national mechanisms for the empowerment and advancement of women to address gender imbalances and to mainstream a gender perspective
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#### *Results achieved*

75. ESCWA advocacy contributed to the increase in the number of member countries establishing national mechanisms for women, from 8 at the end of 2005 to 13 in 2007. Efforts focused on enhancing the expertise and skills of such entities in preparing national reports relating to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). As a result, Bahrain and the Syrian Arab Republic submitted their first periodical CEDAW reports within the set time frame. Lebanon also submitted its report within the stipulated time limit. ESCWA activities assisted Arab countries to better understand their obligations under the Convention, and to consider withdrawing their reservations on certain items. As per Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, advocacy work emphasized the need to adopt measures to mitigate the adverse effects of war and instability as they affect women in the region. Moreover, policy advocacy and technical assistance provided to national machineries for women contributed to an increase in the number of countries adopting a gender mainstreaming approach from five in 2005 to eight in 2006, thereby meeting the set target. The additional three countries were Bahrain, Lebanon and Yemen<sup>18</sup>. As a result of technical assistance activities, 36 participants from 11 member countries acquired skills in gender analysis and strategic planning necessary to promote gender mainstreaming, and 30 judges and parliamentarians were trained on CEDAW. ESCWA launched an e-network for the national mechanisms for women, providing an e-forum to increase their interaction and exchange of best practices and databases on over 700 activities and publications targeting women's empowerment in the Arab world.

#### *Lessons learned*

76. Complementing normative work with operational activities is very important and produces better results. Such practice should be replicated in future work. For greater effectiveness, more focus should be

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<sup>17</sup> The virtual library can be accessed from the Statistics Division home page, available at: <http://www.escwa.un.org/divisions/main.asp?division=sd>.

<sup>18</sup> The five countries are: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic.

placed on networking efforts, and on establishing partnerships and forging synergies between national machineries for women and NGOs concerned with women and gender issues.

**Expected accomplishment 2:** Increased civil society institution involvement in, and contribution to policy dialogue with Governments on gender issues, and in the monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations of global conferences

*Results achieved*

77. ESCWA is among the main regional players that contributed to an increasing number of women NGOs engaged in lobbying for the advancement of women and gender equality. Twelve NGOs drafted shadow CEDAW reports in 2006 and 2007, compared to six in 2005, thus exceeding the set target of eight. One NGO in Bahrain, three in Egypt, three in Jordan, three in Lebanon, one in the Syrian Arab Republic and one in Yemen drafted shadow CEDAW reports in 2006 and 2007. That is an indicator of active civil society participation in the policy dialogue with Governments on gender issues, and of their monitoring the implementation of the recommendations of global conferences. ESCWA contributed to that development through its advocacy and awareness-raising activities, encouraging civil society to follow up and monitor the implementation of such conventions, and through the dissemination of summaries of CEDAW Concluding Observations,<sup>19</sup> which assisted NGOs in monitoring the adherence of their member States to CEDAW. The subprogramme also published and disseminated a regional shadow report of NGOs on the implementation of the Convention to give a voice to civil society with regard to progress on women's issues in the region, and to provide comparative reporting on the implementation of the Convention.

*Lessons learned*

78. More focus should be placed on forging synergies between national machineries for women and NGOs concerned with women and gender issues, and on enhancing the capacity of such NGOs in monitoring the implementation of the Convention by member countries. The dissemination of the regional shadow report of NGOs was a good practice that should be continued in the future.

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<sup>19</sup> Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/txis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=publisher&skip=0&publisher=CEDAW&type=CONCOBSERVATIONS>.

Annex

**ESCWA INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETINGS 2006-2007**

<b>Subprogramme</b>	<b>Title of meeting</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Date</b>
Subprogramme 1	Seventh Session of the Committee on Water Resources	Muscat	20-22 March 2007
	Sixth Session of the Committee on Energy	Doha	4-5 February 2007
Subprogramme 2	Sixth Session of the Committee on Social Development	Amman	5-7 March 2007
Subprogramme 4	Fifth Session of the Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade and Economic Globalization in the Countries of the ESCWA Region	Beirut	24-26 April 2007
	Eighth Session of the Committee on Transport	Beirut	27-29 March 2007
	Seventh Session of the Committee on Transport	Beirut	17-19 April 2006
Subprogramme 5	Third Meeting of the ESCWA Consultative Committee on Scientific and Technological Development and Technological Innovation (ESTIC)	Beirut	6-7 March 2006
Subprogramme 6	Seventh Session of the Statistical Committee	Beirut	7-9 November 2006
Subprogramme 7	Third Session of the Committee on Women	Abu Dhabi	14-15 March 2007

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