

**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

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**Report of the Executive Secretary
on the activities of the Commission****Programme performance
in the biennium 2014-2015****Summary**

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) attaches importance to the assessment of the results obtained through the implementation of its programme of work, in line with the results-based management approach promoted throughout the United Nations system.

This report highlights some of the achievements of ESCWA and the lessons learned through the implementation of its programme of work for the biennium 2014-2015. It also presents some of the results attained through each of the seven substantive subprogrammes.

It should be noted that the lessons learned from the implementation of the 2014-2015 programme of work were taken into consideration in the formulation of the strategic framework for the biennium 2018-2019, which is presented to the twenty-ninth session of the Commission.

The Commission is invited to review this report and provide comments thereon.

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Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) attaches importance to the assessment of the results obtained through the implementation of its programme of work, in line with the results-based management approach promoted throughout the United Nations system.
2. This report highlights some of the achievements of ESCWA and the lessons learned through the implementation of its programme of work for the biennium 2014-2015. It also presents an assessment of the performance of the executive direction and management, including the work of the Office of the Executive Secretary, the Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Section, the Strategy, Evaluation and Partnership Section, and the Administrative Services Division. It finally underlines some of the results attained through each of the seven substantive subprogrammes.
3. This report is intended to serve as an instrument for ESCWA member States to assess the results and relevance of the work of the Commission, as well as the implementation of individual subprogrammes. The Commission is invited to review the report and provide comments thereon.

I. MAIN OUTPUTS OF THE PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2014-2015

4. This report is based on the programme of work for 2014-2015 as approved by the General Assembly and the amendments made to it at the twenty-eighth session of the Commission (Tunis, 15-18 September 2014), which reflected the new mandates of ESCWA defined by the General Assembly, the United Nations Economic and Social Council and member States. The substantive work of ESCWA focused on five regional priority areas: (a) integrated management of natural resources for sustainable development; (b) social development; (c) economic development and integration; (d) information and communications technology for regional integration; and (e) conflict mitigation and development. It also addressed two cross-cutting issues: the advancement of women and statistics for evidence-based policymaking.
5. During the period under review, ESCWA worked towards increased effectiveness in implementing its programme of work, improving its programme implementation performance from 96 per cent in 2012-2013 to 98 per cent in 2014-2015.
6. The work of ESCWA on environmental issues focused on supporting Arab States in their preparations for global negotiations on climate change, in partnership with the League of Arab States and the Regional Office for West Asia of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/ROWA). A series of regional training workshops, held in May 2014, November 2014, May 2015 and November 2015, were aimed at enhancing the capacity of climate change negotiators and formulating a unified regional position on climate change issues prior to the twentieth and twenty-first sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 20 and COP 21). ESCWA also convened two side events at COP 21 with global and regional partners.
7. In the context of regional preparations for the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ESCWA issued the first edition of the Arab Sustainable Development Report, which provided a snapshot of trends and status in the Arab region in relation to sustainable development; an analysis of sustainable development challenges and opportunities; and recommendations for implementing the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region. To prepare the report, sustainable development assessments were conducted for Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen. Data gaps were highlighted as an important challenge for SDG monitoring.
8. On the subject of disability, ESCWA issued a report titled "Disability in the Arab region: An overview", which was adopted by the League of Arab States. The Commission also observed the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December 2015, and chaired the Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention

on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2015. Member States showed a growing interest in the social inclusion of persons with disabilities throughout the biennium. Consequently, the tenth session of the Committee on Social Development established an intersessional working group to follow up more closely on disability matters in Arab countries (Rabat, 8-9 September 2015). ESCWA organized two workshops on the framework and on national disability coordination mechanisms, which were deemed very relevant and beneficial.

9. The work of ESCWA in the area of population and development focused on enhancing the contribution of Arab States to the global debate on the 2030 Agenda from a population perspective. It was also aimed at the integration of key population issues into the national development agendas of several member States, including Jordan, Morocco and the Sudan.

10. As part of efforts to improve decision-making processes in the Arab region in terms of inclusiveness, a pilot National Committee of Practice on Participatory Development and Public Policy Processes was established in Iraq with the support of ESCWA. It was launched during a conference held in Baghdad in October 2015. The Committee comprises government, academia and civil society representatives. It undertakes capacity-building and outreach activities based on the participatory development approach and programmes of ESCWA.

11. In the area of development planning, ESCWA implemented a project on strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Economy and Planning of Saudi Arabia to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate the ninth and tenth national development plans in the country. The project included three major activities: enhancement of the capacity of the Ministry staff to analyse and evaluate implementation of the ninth National Development Plan; review of some chapters of the tenth Plan; and identification and preparation of key performance indicators to monitor implementation by 70 different government institutions.

12. On the subject of regional integration, ESCWA prepared research papers to examine the impact of the establishment of a customs union in the Arab region. These papers studied the issues of non-tariff measures, possible implementation scenarios and institutional frameworks for the creation of a customs union, and the related fiscal challenges. The importance of complete implementation of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) measures was underlined.

13. In the area of information and communications technology (ICT), ESCWA continued the implementation of the Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders in the ESCWA Region during 2014-2015. Four core training modules were produced to build the capacity of government officials in harnessing ICTs for development. An online platform was also developed, and 108 experts from 14 member States were trained to become trainers in their countries. National roll-out plans were prepared for 11 Arab countries, nine of them were launched in 2015 and have resulted in the training of 1,580 public employees.

14. ESCWA also published the seventh edition of the Regional Profile of the Information Society in the Arab Region, which measured and evaluated progress in building the information society over the period 2003-2015, as a follow-up on the World Summit on the Information Society outcomes. It included case studies and reviewed success stories and good practices in the region.

15. In the field of statistics, ESCWA worked closely with national statistics offices to formulate a strategy and identify priorities for the development of official statistics in the Arab region and the improvement of data quality, availability and dissemination. The strategy was discussed and agreed upon at the eleventh session of the Statistical Committee (Amman, 4-5 February 2015). It is geared towards the assessment of status and progress in terms of sustainable development through a set of about 30 quantitative indicators.

16. ESCWA also became a leader in the International Comparison Programme (ICP) aimed at comparing the purchasing power of national currencies in individual countries. It has developed a new method for extrapolation beyond the last benchmark year, adding additional benchmark years and harmonizing data

collection for ICP with data collection for consumer price indices. It has also assisted member States in calculating subnational purchasing power parities.

17. ESCWA organized a series of expert group meetings and consultations in cooperation with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the League of Arab States, to develop a detailed regional synthesis report on the issue of the advancement of women in the region. The Arab High-level Conference on Progress Achieved in the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 20 years, held in Cairo on 2 and 3 February 2015, analysed the progress made by Arab States on promoting gender equality and empowering women. It helped identify the gaps and needs to translate the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action into national legislation.

18. ESCWA also examined the ways in which the right of access of women and girls to justice is put into practice in the Arab region, and the extent to which international human rights frameworks are implemented in the region. An annual report on the status of Arab women was launched. The 2015 issue was entitled “Access to Justice for Women and Girls in the Arab Region: From Ratification to Implementation of International Instruments”.

19. ESCWA conducted a detailed assessment of the impact of the 2014 July-August Israeli offensive and eight years of blockade on the living conditions of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, in partnership with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) and Birzeit University. A paper on the effects on health of the offensive, based on detailed analysis of survey data, examined the impact of violence on the physical and mental health of the survivors, trying to uncover “the wounds of the inside”.

20. ESCWA also embarked on a series of research activities related to the impact of conflict on development. A quantitative model was developed in partnership with the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) for that purpose, and was tailored to the Arab region. The conclusions of the analysis were published in an ESCWA report titled “Trends and Impacts in Conflict Settings, Issue No. 4: Protracted Conflict and Development in the Arab Region”.

II. CHALLENGES

21. Political instability and protracted conflict in a number of Arab countries have posed problems in the implementation of all ESCWA activities. However, the secretariat has not discontinued its support to member States, and has dealt effectively with the increase in demand for capacity-building activities.

22. Reductions in the regular budget for 2014-2015, especially in the area of technical cooperation, also posed a significant challenge for the work of ESCWA. Budget cuts in programme support and changes in administrative systems have created difficulties for support operations. Further budget cuts in the Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation in 2016-2017 are likely to hamper the ability to respond to the ever-increasing demand for services.

III. EXECUTIVE DIRECTION AND MANAGEMENT

23. The executive direction and management includes the Office of the Executive Secretary and the offices of the Deputy Executive Secretary for Programme and Deputy Executive Secretary for Programme Support. The results achieved under the five expected accomplishments of the workplan are briefly described below.

Expected accomplishment 1: Effective management of the ESCWA programme of work

Results achieved

24. ESCWA has been diligently working on improving the effectiveness of its work. During the biennium 2014-2015, evaluations were undertaken for three Development Account projects, subprogrammes 6 and 7, and the ESCWA Technology Centre. The evaluation team followed up on the implementation of recommendations made on the basis of the assessments that were undertaken in 2012-2013.

25. ESCWA is very active in implementing the United Nations System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. In June 2014, the Executive Secretary appointed a Senior SWAP Coordinator to accelerate implementation. A policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women within the Commission was developed; a biennial award for advancing that cause was created; a human resources plan to achieve the equal representation of women among staff in the next three years was adopted; and a comprehensive training package for gender focal points, alternates and newcomers was devised.

26. ESCWA has also successfully deployed or adopted new administrative systems and initiatives, such as UMOJA and the Information and Communications Technology Strategic Road Map for the United Nations, which will modernize the way it does business.

Expected accomplishment 2: Increased timeliness of the submission of documentation

Results achieved

27. ESCWA was able to increase the effectiveness of its intergovernmental meetings (IGMs) by finalizing and sharing the related documentation with member States well ahead of meeting dates. For example, documentation for the twenty-eighth ministerial session was distributed, on average, six weeks ahead of the session and delegates expressed their satisfaction with the timely issuance of documents, which they rated 4.46 on a 5-point scale. ESCWA has also strengthened its interdisciplinary approach by enhancing synergies among its different IGMs: sessions of the trade and transport committees on the one hand, and of the energy and water committees on the other hand, were held back-to-back with common themes. This approach helped in advancing the integrated approach to development challenges that the Commission promotes.

Expected accomplishment 3: Identification of emerging issues that require attention by member States

Results achieved

28. The 2014-2015 biennium has been challenging to the region due to the prevailing circumstances in many Arab States. ESCWA continues to adapt its work to emerging regional needs and priorities and to respond to recommendations made by member States during intergovernmental meetings. Guided by the conviction that the issue of social justice is a key driver of the political changes witnessed over the past years, it has exerted efforts towards the adoption of the first political document that forged regional consensus on the subject, the “Tunis Declaration on Social Justice in the Arab Region”, adopted by the Commission at its twenty-eighth session.

29. ESCWA has also been working on strengthening its capacity and that of member States to produce reliable statistical data. The Statistics Division is modernizing statistical systems at ESCWA and creating a database in order to render reliable, high-quality data accessible to all stakeholders. The achievement of this objective would help the formulation of evidence-based policies in member States and promote statistical coordination at all levels.

Expected accomplishment 4: Enhanced policy coherence in the management of the economic and social activities of the United Nations

Results achieved

30. ESCWA continues to be convener of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) for the Arab States, an important platform aimed at increasing coherence among United Nations entities. The twentieth RCM meeting was held in 2014; it focused on the impact of conflicts on the region and on their economic, social and political ramifications. Participants emphasized the importance of not doing business as usual, overcoming deficiencies of past development approaches and improving coherence across interventions. RCM members committed to a series of collaborative initiatives focused on the integration of regional priorities into the 2030 Agenda, social justice and development work in crisis contexts. The twenty-first RCM meeting was held in 2015 and hosted by the League of Arab States; it focused on strengthening coordination between regional United Nations offices and other regional organizations to support Arab States in adapting and implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. ESCWA has also convened the first and second sessions of the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development, which is the main regional multi-stakeholder platform for deliberations on sustainable development issues.

Expected accomplishment 5: Increased public awareness of the work of ESCWA in pursuing regional priorities and emerging issues

Results achieved

31. ESCWA expanded its outreach with the accession of Mauritania, which became member of the Commission in October 2015. It also stepped up efforts to increase the dissemination of information and outputs through a variety of means. In December 2015, ESCWA launched its completely revamped website, which can be easily viewed on tablets and smartphones. The website is bilingual (Arabic and English); it has new features, additional resources, better tools and improved design. The number of document downloads increased from 32,414 in 2012-2013 to 61,145 in 2014-2015, of which 6,637 were recorded since the launching of the new website. ESCWA also enhanced its presence on social media platforms like Facebook and created its Twitter account in May 2014. Media services were provided to cover a large number of activities and meetings, through press releases and the organization of press conferences and other media events.

IV. SUBPROGRAMMES

A. SUBPROGRAMME 1. INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Expected accomplishment 1: Strengthened capacity of member States to develop and increase inclusive and equitable socioeconomic opportunities by increasing the productivity of small and medium-sized enterprises for employment creation and economic diversification

Results achieved

32. ESCWA strengthened its Green Help Desks (GHDs) network by establishing a desk in Morocco, in partnership with CMPP (*Centre Marocain de Production Propre*). It received expressions of interest for the establishment of GHDs in Bahrain, Iraq, Palestine, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. A continuation of the GHDs project, which officially ended on 31 December 2014, is being sought through the new Development Account project on “Building capacities in developing appropriate green technologies for improving the livelihood of rural communities in the ESCWA region”.

33. As part of the regional consultative process on the 2030 Agenda, ESCWA and its partners organized the first meeting of the Arab High-level Forum on Sustainable Development in Amman, from 2 to 4 April 2014. The meeting contributed to preparations for the second session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (New York, 2014). It also included a session focusing on the preparations of Arab States for the 2014 Annual Ministerial Review, which was convened under the theme of “Addressing ongoing and emerging challenges for meeting the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 and for sustaining development gains in the future”. The second meeting of the Arab High-level Forum on Sustainable Development was organized in Manama, from 5 to 7 May 2015, to discuss regional sustainable development challenges, focusing on means of implementation, institutional frameworks and monitoring.

Expected accomplishment 2: Enhanced capacity of member States to develop and implement national, subregional and regional policies, strategies and action plans for the sustainable management of water, energy and land

Results achieved

34. ESCWA extended capacity-building support to Yemeni officials on enhancing financial mechanisms for renewable energy and energy efficiency; operating solar pumps; and organizing tenders to introduce large-scale solar water pumping in the country. Egypt and the Sudan also looked into upscaling energy efficiency in the building sector. A paper titled “Sustainable Development Goals: An Arab regional perspective” was also prepared to propose an approach to tailor SDGs to the region, highlighting the issues of water, energy and land as main concerns. Technical support was provided by ESCWA to the Ministry of Environment in Lebanon to develop the national sustainable development strategy and align it with the 2030 Agenda. Consultations between member States supported by ESCWA resulted in the endorsement of the Regional Initiative on the Energy-Water-Food Nexus at the sixth session of the Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC) and the eleventh session of the Arab Ministerial Council for Electricity. Finally, the first report on the Regional Initiative for Establishing a Regional Mechanism for Improved Monitoring and Reporting on Access to Water Supply and Sanitation Services in the Arab Region (MDG+ Initiative) was endorsed by AMWC and included primary datasets from 11 Arab countries on a dozen region-specific water supply and sanitation indicators, which were set through a regional project coordinated by ESCWA.

Expected accomplishment 3: Enhanced food, water and energy security of the Arab region to sustain long-term development and preserve the achievements in poverty alleviation and human development by promoting regional cooperation on shared water resources, energy networks and land management

Results achieved

35. ESCWA participated in a special session of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) held on 14 and 15 June 2014 in El-Gouna, Hurgada, Egypt. Participants emphasized the importance of intraregional cooperation on food, water and energy security within an Arab strategic framework for sustainable development, which is being developed by ESCWA and its partners. ESCWA also participated in the twenty-seventh CAMRE session, held in Cairo on 19 November 2015, which discussed follow-up on the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and tasked ESCWA and UNEP with the organization of a yearly consultative meeting of the Joint Committee on Environment and Development (JCEDAR) to prepare for the Arab High-level Forum on Sustainable Development. ESCWA extended support in the finalization of the Action Plan for the Arab Strategy for Water Security in the Arab Region to Meet the Challenges and Future Needs for Sustainable Development 2010-2030, which was adopted by AMWC at its sixth session held in Doha, on 27 May 2014, and participated in the fourth and fifth intergovernmental consultations on the draft convention on shared water resources in the Arab region, held in Cairo in 2014 and 2105.

Expected accomplishment 4: Enhanced resilience and crisis management capacity of member States to absorb and respond to the impact of crises, including the development of subregional and regional mechanisms, for a coordinated response to climate change and natural crises

Results achieved

36. Climate change experts and negotiators in Arab countries were introduced to the history of negotiations on climate change in two regional training workshops held in Amman from 26 to 28 May 2014, and in Kuwait from 11 to 13 November 2014, respectively. The workshops were organized in cooperation with the League of Arab States and reviewed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), recent developments and challenges faced by negotiators. They helped to formulate a common position of Arab States in view of the preparatory meetings to COP 20, held in Bonn, Germany, from 4 to 15 June 2014, and of the global negotiations that took place at COP 20 in Lima, Peru, from 1 to 12 December 2014. AMWC, under resolution K105 (adopted at Doha on 27 May 2014) and decisions 3, 4 and 5 (adopted at Cairo, on 27 May 2015), endorsed the proposal of ESCWA, formulated in partnership with the Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), to establish an Arab regional knowledge hub on climate change and water that would be overseen by the AMWC Technical Scientific Advisory Committee. It also invited ESCWA to continue its coordination of climate change negotiation training and provide additional training on climate change assessment, in cooperation with the Arab Permanent Committee for Meteorology. The resolutions and decisions of AMWC increase the number of recommendations adopted by member States that aim at coordinated responses to climate change and natural crises by four: ESCWA has thus achieved its target for the biennium 2014-2015 on the subject.

B. SUBPROGRAMME 2. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Expected accomplishment 1: Strengthened capacity of member States to develop a rights-based social policy that promotes social integration, social protection, the provision of adequate social services and employment generation

Results achieved

37. The work of ESCWA contributed to the formulation of the inclusive and gender-sensitive National Development Plan 2014-2016 in Palestine. A national dialogue was held on integrated social policies in the Sudan, with the support of ESCWA. The number of new policies, programmes and measures that were aimed at expanding social protection, improving the provision of social services and generating employment thus increased from four in 2013 to six in 2015, and ESCWA has met the target set for this biennium. Moreover, ESCWA has exceeded its target of contributing to the adoption of 24 policies and programmes aimed at ensuring the integration of key sociodemographic groups in national development by 2015, with the adoption of a national youth policy in the United Arab Emirates and the integration of new population priority areas in the national development plans of Jordan (family planning and technical education), Morocco (policies for the inclusion of older persons) and the Sudan (migration policies).

Expected accomplishment 2: Enhanced capacity of member States to adopt social development policies and programmes based on the participation of the civil society and other stakeholders, in public policy formulation, implementation and monitoring

Results achieved

38. ESCWA continues to advocate a participatory approach to policymaking. The number of instances in which civil society organizations have engaged, with the support of ESCWA, in discussions on development

priorities increased from 10 in 2013 to 15 in 2015, exceeding the target set for this biennium. Civil society representatives participated in regional consultations on the 2030 Agenda and the Arab High-level Forum on Sustainable Development, and in the social justice policy dialogues held in the context of the twenty-eighth ESCWA session. Six member States have adopted the ESCWA toolkit on participatory social protection policies. The number of committees and joint ventures between representatives of Governments, civil society organizations and other stakeholders involved in social policymaking increased from 14 in 2013 to 17 in 2015, thus meeting the set target. Government and civil society representatives formed national committees of practice in Iraq and Yemen, institutionalizing participatory processes in their countries. ESCWA and the League of Arab States have also worked on the establishment of a network of reform specialists, activists and government officials from selected Arab countries, in order to enhance participation and partnerships in the management of political transitions.

C. SUBPROGRAMME 3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION

Expected accomplishment 1: Strengthened national capacity of member States to develop inclusive and equitable socioeconomic conditions through pro-poor growth policies focused on employment generation and inclusive and equitable financial policies

Results achieved

39. ESCWA continued to follow-up on the implementation of outcomes of the Monterrey Consensus and the Doha Conference on Financing for Development in the Arab region. It assisted member States in mobilizing international resources, and increasing financial and technical cooperation for development. During 2014-2015, ESCWA organized nine workshops on investment dispute settlement, double taxation avoidance, and workers' remittances, during which more than 180 government officials from Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, the Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen benefited from training. Member States were helped in their preparations for the third International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Addis Ababa in July 2015, namely in reaching a unified Arab position on the subject. ESCWA also organised a training workshop on poverty for more than 50 ministry officials who work on poverty measurement and reduction.

Expected accomplishment 2: Enhanced capacity of member States to develop knowledge-based economies with a view to achieving sustainable economic growth and poverty alleviation through effective macroeconomics and promoting economic diversification and competitiveness for decent job creation

Results achieved

40. In 2014-2015, ESCWA helped member States to update their national development strategies through analytical outputs in the area of macroeconomic policies, and through support in the design and implementation of policies and strategies for sustainable economic growth, employment creation and poverty alleviation.

Expected accomplishment 3: Enhanced capacity of member States to coordinate their social and economic policies, and ensure the implementation of regional economic agreements to realize the potential for intraregional integration

Results achieved

41. ESCWA focused its work programme and interventions on deepening regional integration in three main areas: infrastructure and transport logistics; trade policies; and macroeconomic convergence and finance. The Arab Economic Integration Assessment report was launched on 23 November 2015; it provided a quantitative

analysis of economic integration efforts in the region, based on a composite system of indexes on trade, foreign direct investments and remittances, and made recommendations on furthering those efforts.

Expected accomplishment 4: Enhanced regional integration of member States by developing and harmonizing the physical and legislative regional infrastructure

Results achieved

42. Research has been initiated in 2014 on the links between transport and infrastructure efficiency on the one hand, and economic growth on the other hand. Documents presented to the fifteenth session of the Committee on Transport, held in Rabat on 27 and 28 January 2015, highlighted the importance of the full implementation of the international roads and railways agreements in the Arab Mashreq, which should be expanded and renamed so as to cover new ESCWA members in the Maghreb. The sixteenth session of the Committee on Transport, held in Cairo on 23 and 24 November 2015, concluded with a consensus on expanding those agreements and the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq to include the Arab Maghreb States that have joined ESCWA.

Expected accomplishment 5: Enhanced capacity of public institutions to create an enabling environment for development through nationally led and owned good governance practices for the implementation of enhanced macroeconomic management with the full engagement of civil society organizations and the private sector

Results achieved

43. In the context of global consultations on governance and the 2030 Agenda, ESCWA is devoting more attention to the issues of economic governance and institution-building and has organized an expert group meeting to discuss the region's priorities on the subject. Support was also extended in the area of national development planning for several countries.

D. SUBPROGRAMME 4. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY
FOR REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Expected accomplishment 1: Enhanced capacity of member States to develop and benefit from knowledge-based economies for sustainable economic growth and poverty alleviation

Results achieved

44. During the period under review, ESCWA facilitated regional discussions on challenges and opportunities in the field of information and communications technology (ICT). Global trends and good practices in e-government service integration were reviewed in a study titled "Integration of Service Delivery in the Arab Region: Role of Standards and Interoperability". ESCWA organized the seventh meeting of the Consultative Committee on Scientific and Technological Development and Technological Innovation, which underlined the role of technology in achieving the SDGs and discussed the priorities of the Arab region in that regard (Amman, 20 May 2015); and an expert group meeting on Innovation and Technology for Advancing the Knowledge-based Economy in the Arab Region (Amman, 3-4 June 2015). The seventh issue of the Regional Profile of the Information Society in the Arab Region 2003-2015 shed light on the progress made in moving towards an information society in the Arab region.

Expected accomplishment 2: Enhanced competitiveness of the ICT sector in the region on the production and service delivery levels with special focus on partnerships, research, development and innovation

Results achieved

45. ESCWA continued its work on expanding the digital Arabic content (DAC) by implementing its project on the “Promotion of digital Arabic content through incubation” in Egypt, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates, where capacity-building workshops and awareness-raising campaigns on the importance of the DAC industry were held . These events also featured the launch of national DAC competitions on the best project ideas, and the selected projects are being incubated by ESCWA in partnership with a local incubator. ESCWA organized a thematic workshop on digital content for an inclusive knowledge society to explore various aspects of digital content and multilingualism, discuss challenges and how to best address them, and share good practices and lessons learned from around the globe. A leaflet titled “Digital Arabic content: promoting innovation and entrepreneurship in the Arab region” was published. The project on the Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders in the ESCWA Region built the capacity of policymakers and promoted the application of ICTs to accelerate socioeconomic development. Finally, the Review of Information and Communications Technology for Development in the Arab Region published up-to-date articles on the latest issues in the areas of technology, ICT policies, applications, infrastructure, trends and initiatives in the Arab region.

Expected accomplishment 3: Enhanced capacities of member States to ensure the coordination of their socioeconomic policies, fully achieve the potential for intraregional integration and build a harmonized policy framework for Internet governance and the legislation required for intraregional e-trade, e-transactions and e-business

Results achieved

46. ESCWA formulated a procedural framework for combating cybercrime and enhancing cybersafety in the Arab region, based on a study issued in 2014 titled “Policy Recommendations on Cybercrime and Cybersafety for the Arab Region”. A capacity-building workshop was also organized on promoting a safer cyberspace in the Arab region. It was held in Muscat, on 8 and 9 December 2014.

E. SUBPROGRAMME 5. STATISTICS FOR EVIDENCE-BASED POLICYMAKING

Expected accomplishment 1: Improved provision of statistical data about member States through collection and dissemination of official statistics and indicators

Results achieved

47. During the period under review, ESCWA has simplified its data collection questionnaires and intensified follow up in case of non-response. Estimations were gradually and carefully introduced to make up for missing data. Data comprehensiveness was thus improved throughout the 2014-2015 biennium. A central data portal was created to widen dissemination. The number of queries remained stable after an initial increase during the period 2012-2013. ESCWA is exerting efforts to turn this portal into a high-quality database on the Arab region.

Expected accomplishment 2: Improved capacity of member States for official statistics in line with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

Results achieved

48. One of the most important initiatives in terms of official statistics is the migration towards the System of National Accounts (SNA) 2008. Most ESCWA member States have made progress in that regard, particularly in implementing the input-output tables and supply and use tables in line with the SNA 2008 methodology. The importance of official statistics in the context of the data revolution and the adoption of the 2030 Agenda was highlighted in Executive Committee meetings and at the twenty-eighth ESCWA ministerial session.

Expected accomplishment 3: Strengthened regional statistical system in support of regional integration, with an active coordination among major players, including regional and international organizations, and a more active participation by member States

Results achieved

49. Joint work between ESCWA and the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (AITRS) led to better coordinated statistical capacity-building actions in the region. Other partners also participated in strengthening the regional statistical system. Efforts and resources were combined to better implement international statistical standards and new methodologies, and improve statistical surveys and the dissemination of official statistics in the region.

F. SUBPROGRAMME 6. ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Expected accomplishment 1: Enhanced capacity of member States to adopt gender-sensitive policies, legislation and budgets in order to attain equal rights of women

Results achieved

50. A series of expert group meetings were organized, in cooperation with the League of Arab States and UN-Women, to build capacity in drafting national reports on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action twenty years after their adoption (Beijing+20). These meetings also served to discuss the regional report on the matter and emerging priorities for women in the Arab region. The Arab High-level Conference on Progress Achieved in the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 20 Years was held in Cairo, on 2 and 3 February 2015 and participants adopted the Arab Declaration Towards Justice and Equality for Women in the Arab Region.

51. ESCWA organized an expert group meeting on access to justice for women in Beirut, on 23 and 24 September 2014, and issued a study titled "Access to Justice for Women and Girls in the Arab Region: from Ratification to Implementation of International Instruments" in 2015. A study on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security was also issued in 2015, in the context of a Development Account project led by ESCWA on the subject. ESCWA actively worked with member States on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and organized a training workshop on drafting and discussing national reports before the CEDAW Committee, at the request of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs of Qatar. At the request of the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Palestine, ESCWA conducted a training workshop on gender mainstreaming in economic policies, programmes and budgets for senior officials from different economic institutions and administrations. ESCWA finally extended support to the Sudan to update the National Policy and Strategy on Women's Empowerment and the National Strategy on Family Development.

Expected accomplishment 2: Enhanced capacity of member States to combat gender-based violence through enactment of legislation and development of national action plans

Results achieved

52. In 2014-2015, ESCWA continued to support member States in the area of gender-based violence in times of peace and conflict. An expert group meeting was organized in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to discuss child marriage in humanitarian settings; it led to the publication of a study entitled “Child Marriage in Humanitarian Settings in the Arab Region: Dynamics, Challenges and Policy Options” in 2015. A training workshop held in Egypt discussed legislation to protect women and girls from all forms of violence. A toolkit for service provision entitled “Addressing gender-based violence in the Arab region” was developed, jointly with the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR).

Expected accomplishment 3: Enhanced capacity of member States to adopt and implement participatory governance and national development policies based on the equal participation of individuals, men and women, with a particular focus on enhancing the position of women in democratic decision-making processes

Results achieved

53. In 2014-2015, ESCWA provided technical assistance to develop national women’s machineries in Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, the Sudan and Tunisia. ESCWA also extended support to the League of Arab States in developing a strategic framework and action plan for the implementation of the Cairo Declaration on the Post-2015 Development Agenda for Women: Opportunities and Challenges, adopted on 23 February 2014.

G. SUBPROGRAMME 7. CONFLICT MITIGATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Expected accomplishment 1: Enhanced capacity of member States affected by conflict to adopt and implement participatory and inclusive governance and national development policies

Results achieved

54. ESCWA extended support to member States on the peaceful resolution of disputes, based on broadly accepted national institutions and citizen engagement. It worked on strengthening mediation capacity at the national and subnational levels. At the request of the Government of Yemen, national dialogue outcomes were analysed and discussed with the major stakeholders, and a way forward, particularly on how to operationalize the agreed-upon reforms, was proposed. A project concept note was developed to assess the impact of the conflict in Yemen, study recovery options and examine ways to pre-empt conflict relapse. Governance and public administration reform in Iraq was tackled.

Expected accomplishment 2: Enhanced capacity of member States to mitigate the negative impact of occupation, the ramifications of conflict and their spillover effects on human development in the region, particularly on Arab least developed countries

Results achieved

55. In 2014-2015, ESCWA reports were aimed at assessing the social and economic costs of conflict and instability in countries such as Mauritania, the Sudan and Yemen, which suffer from structural vulnerabilities and chronic poverty. Evidence-based reports on the impact of occupation in Palestine were also issued to assist decision makers, including from the United Nations General Assembly. The channels through which conflict may spread from one country to another and the likelihood of that happening were also examined. In 2015, the issue of forcible displacement was studied and development options for both refugees and host communities in Jordan and Lebanon were assessed.

Expected accomplishment 3: Enhanced capacity of public institutions of member States to create an enabling environment for development, pre-empting conflicts

Results achieved

56. ESCWA assisted Arab States that are facing large-scale changes in strengthening institutions, building national consensus and undertaking reforms. Through the provision of technical assistance, impartial ‘spaces’ for dialogue among key political actors were created. Agreement and coordination were fostered on major economic, social and governance issues across organized groups, such as political parties, trade unions, women and youth groups.

Annex**INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETINGS HELD IN 2014-2015**

| Subprogramme | Title of meeting | Venue | Date |
|-----------------------------------|---|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | Tenth session of the Committee on Energy | Amman | 22-23 March 2015 |
| | Eleventh session of the Committee on Water Resources | Amman | 26-27 March 2015 |
| 2 | Tenth session of the Committee on Social Development | Rabat | 8-9 September 2015 |
| 3 | Fifteenth session of the Committee on Transport | Rabat | 27-28 January 2015 |
| | Sixteenth session of the Committee on Transport | Cairo | 23-24 November 2015 |
| | Ninth session of the Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development | Amman | 7-8 April 2015 |
| | Tenth session of the Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development | Cairo | 22-23 November 2015 |
| 5 | Eleventh session of the Statistical Committee | Amman | 4-5 February 2015 |
| | Meeting of the Bureau of the Statistical Committee | Virtual (via webex) | 22 October 2015 |
| 6 | Seventh session of the Committee on Women | Muscat | 20-21 January 2016 |
| Office of the Executive Secretary | Twenty-eighth ESCWA session | Tunis | 15-18 September 2014 |
| | First meeting of the Executive Committee | Amman | 8-9 June 2015 |
| | Second meeting of the Executive Committee | Amman | 14-16 December 2015 |
