"High Level Meeting on Economic Modelling Tools for Public Policy and Impact"
30 June 2021

Time:	12:00 pm – 01:00 pm (GMT+03:00, Beirut time)
	You can add you're your local time here:
	https://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/converter.html?iso=20200611T180000&p1=34&p2=87
Logistics:	The webinar will be conducted in Arabic on Zoom platform, Link below:
Speakers:	Experts from UNESCWA in the field of economic modeling and forecasting such as Computer General Equilibrium Modeling
Target audience:	Governmental representatives, policymakers and those with a general interest in economic policy forecasting and modelling
Background and relevance of the subject:	The Covid-19 pandemic has taken the world by a storm and has propagated immeasurable human suffering. It threatens to adversely affect the world's progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), plunging millions into extreme poverty and impeding the many from leading a dignified life. In the new normal brought on by the pandemic, it is ever more pressing for governments to bridge the gap between theory and practice to achieve the SDGs. This is particularly true for governments in developing countries that lack the necessary resources, social nets and fiscal space to mitigate the impact of the current crisis. However, governments worldwide are actively protecting their citizens and businesses by implementing policies that promote sustainable and inclusive economic prosperity.

In recent years, governing bodies have been revisiting the mechanisms behind the formulation of policies, the assessment of policy choices and their impact. This growing demand for more evidence-based decisions is enabling a thorough and systematic approach to policymaking. To put in simple terms, evidence-based policymaking is defined by the Overseas Development Institute as "a discourse or set of methods which inform the policy process, rather than aiming to directly affect the eventual goals of the policy" (Court, J. & Sutcliffe, S., 2005).

The leveraging end of economic models lies within the simplified representations of reality. Such models help us to better "visualize, predict,

optimize, regulate and control complex systems" (Calder, M. et al., 2018). Thus, integrating economic models in policy formulation and evaluation paves the way for strategic evidence-based policymaking.

Building on this notion, the use of evidence in policy dialogue and implementation can "save lives, reduce poverty and improve development performance in developing countries'" (Court & Sutcliffe, 2005).
As evidence-based policymaking is less well-established in developing countries, it has the potential to have far greater impact.

If the COVID-19 pandemic taught the world one thing, it is that the systems that we depend on to survive are more vulnerable than previously believed. Governments that were able to successfully cope with the crisis put evidence-based policymaking at the forefront of their response. Once the initial threat has passed, it is crucial for governments to continue with policies targeted at redressing the economy, which particularly support the most marginalized segments of the population.

This brief meeting aims to raise awareness on the tools out there that can provide guidance to governments and policymakers in creating more stable and resilient systems through the effective design of policies. This would serve as safeguards for unanticipated disruptions. Also, ESCWA's modelling toolbox will be presented, along with how these tools can guide us through a faster economic recovery from the present COVID-19 crisis with an emphasis on Computable General Equilibrium Modelling.

Agenda:

Opening Speech: (5 minutes):

Mr. Mounir Tabet, Deputy Executive Secretary, UNESCWA

Session 1: Introductory Remarks (10 minutes):

Explore what it means to adopt economic models to navigate through uncertainty, and improve public policy and dialogue

Objective: Recognize the benefits and challenges in the Arab Region regarding evidence-based policymaking.

Speaker: Mr. Mokhtar El Hacene, Shared Economic Prosperity Cluster Leader, UNESCWA

Session 2: ESCWA Modeling Toolkit (15 minutes)

Provide a non-technical overview of the ESCWA economic modeling toolkit (dimensions, basic function and ESCWA roadmap for developing national and regional technical capacities in economic modeling).

Objective: Encouraging member states to adopt a set of economic models and build technical capacities to improve the quality of decision-making and policy design.

Speakers:
Mr. Mohamed Hedi Bchir, Chief of the Modeling and Forecasting Section, UNESCWA

Session 5: Open Discussion/Q and A (20 minutes)

The session will be open to participants to engage and address their questions with the speakers