



Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Technical Committee
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Item 4 (c) of the provisional agenda

**STRENGTHENING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SECRETARIAT
AND ESCWA MEMBER COUNTRIES**

**FOLLOW-UP TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS ADOPTED AT
THE SECOND MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE**

Summary

The Technical Committee of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) holds its meetings every six months. It held its second meeting, which was attended by representatives of ESCWA member countries, at the United Nations House in Beirut, from 3 to 4 November 2008. The Technical Committee formulated a set of recommendations for promoting the work of the secretariat in the context of the proposed programme of work for the biennium 2010-2011. Other recommendations addressed other items on the agenda of the second meeting of the Technical Committee.

This document contains a review of the measures taken and activities carried out by the secretariat pursuant to those recommendations.

**RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
AT ITS SECOND MEETING AND ACTIONS
TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THEM**

At its second meeting held at the United Nations House in Beirut, from 3 to 4 November 2008, the Technical Committee of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) made a set of recommendations.¹ Some of these relate to the proposed programme of work for the biennium 2010-2011, while others concern other agenda items. This document presents the recommendations and the corresponding actions taken by way of their implementation.

FOLLOW-UP TO RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME
OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2010-2011

Recommendation (a)

Agree in principle to the programme of work while taking into account observations and comments made by member countries, provided that these comments are presented to ESCWA within two weeks of the meeting, by 17 November 2008 at the latest.

Implementation follow-up

On the basis of the agreement in principle, by the Technical Committee, to the proposed programme of work for the biennium 2010-2011, the secretariat is distributing the final version of the programme of work for the biennium 2010-2011, incorporating suggestions and comments made by member countries. The programme of work for the biennium 2010-2011 includes the goals and activities of each of the seven subprogrammes under ESCWA programme of work, in addition to the activities of the regular Technical Cooperation Programme and those funded by the United Nations Development Account and from extrabudgetary resources. The programme of work and proposed programme budget were submitted to the United Nations Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in June 2009 for final approval.

Recommendation (b)

Incorporate food security within ESCWA areas of concern and coordinate related activities between the subprogrammes, especially those promoting small and medium-sized enterprises.

Implementation follow-up

- (1) Since November 2008, the secretariat has been working towards incorporating the issue of food security in all its activities, meetings and studies. Indeed, the expert group meeting on Sustainable Land Management as a Best Practice to Enhance Rural Development in the ESCWA Region (Beirut, 25-27 March 2009) addressed the issue of food security and its relevance to agriculture and to land management. A study on how to increase the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises in the ESCWA region through the use of environmentally sound technologies is being prepared, addressing the use of agricultural waste as a second generation biofuel with a view to alleviating the food crisis;
- (2) To promote the activities of the ad hoc working groups formed under the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM), ESCWA prepared a working paper to implement the prospective activities of the ad hoc working group on food security, which included the following:

¹ ESCWA, *Report of the Technical Committee on its second meeting* (E/ESCWA/2008/C.2/9). Available at: www.escwa.un.org.

- (a) Conduct an analytical study of the situation and a needs assessment in order to identify the most important factors rendering member countries vulnerable to food crisis and food insecurity, and examine the repercussions of the food crisis and food insecurity at the national level;
- (b) Organize, in cooperation with the World Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), an expert group meeting to discuss the results of the analytical study and prepare a report on the outcome and recommendations of the meeting;
- (c) Submit the analytical study and report on the meeting to RCM;
- (d) Prepare a guide and a capacity-building programme aimed at improving the ability of middle management within the public sector to address the challenges posed by the food crisis and food insecurity. This interactive model lays out public policy options, clarifies the concept of urban services, and enhances the ability to act dynamically at the national level to improve natural resources management, formulate policy and create coordination mechanisms for addressing the repercussions of the food crisis;
- (e) Establish a regional coordination mechanism among member countries to promote the adoption and coordination of policies on food security.

Recommendation (c)

Combine the ad hoc expert group meeting on the participation of civil society in public policy formulation and the civil society forum on operationalizing recommendations for participation in public policy formulation.

Implementation follow-up

The secretariat took up this recommendation, effectively combining the ad hoc expert group meeting on the participation of civil society in public policy formulation and the civil society forum on operationalizing recommendations for participation in public policy formulation. This amendment was likewise incorporated in the proposed programme of work for the biennium 2010-2011.

Recommendation (d)

Coordinate between ESCWA and the League of Arab States on the youth strategy and expand the scope of the study on unemployment and youth to cover more than just the Arab Gulf countries and to address different aspects of such youth issues as freedoms and social security.

Implementation follow-up

- (1) Coordination between ESCWA and the League of Arab States can be summed up as a partnership at regional meetings dealing with youth issues and policies, as follows:
 - (a) ESCWA participated in the first Euro-Arab meeting on youth and the intercultural dialogue (Amman, 24-27 November 2008), called by the Arab Youth Forum of the League of Arab States. At a meeting devoted to coordination between youth organizations, the ESCWA Population and Social Development Team presented a report on the vision ESCWA pursues in its approach to youth issues as well as on other activities around youth issues and policies that ESCWA has either carried out or planned, in the context of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. This report will be incorporated in a publication reviewing the activities of various regional organizations working on youth issues and policies;

- (b) ESCWA organized the expert group meeting on Reinforcing Social Equity: Integrating Youth in the Development Process (Abu Dhabi, 29-31 March 2009), to which the League of Arab States contributed by presenting the role of its Pan-Arab Project for Family Health in providing data on youth trends and practices, with a view to exchanging expertise on preparing youth surveys and enhancing the capacity of decision makers to formulate appropriate policies;
- (2) With regard to expanding the scope of the study on unemployment and youth to cover more than just the Arab Gulf countries and to address different aspects of such youth issues as freedoms and social security, a set of studies on youth issues was presented at the expert group meeting on Reinforcing Social Equity, including: youth bulge in the Arab region and its political implications; role of youth in overall development and in human security and freedoms; demography of Arab youth; international migration of Arab youth in the context of globalization; Arab youth culture; gender gap among youth; and social exclusion and its effects on Arab youth employment. As for youth unemployment specifically, the studies included an explanation of youth unemployment in terms of supply and demand, an analysis of the factors leading to high youth unemployment rates in member countries and the strategies needed to address this problem. The latter included the implementation of strategies for employment-intensive economic growth and improving the quality of education and training in order to close the gap between manpower skills and the needs of the labour market;
- (3) ESCWA also released the YouthInfo² online database, which is an offshoot of the development information system DevInfo 5.0, and contains indicators compiled from national sources through the responses of member countries to a questionnaire prepared by ESCWA.

Recommendation (e)

Propose to conduct an analysis of the effect on employment of foreign investment value added, and to study the role of ESCWA in trade facilitation.

Implementation follow-up

- (1) ESCWA is exploring with the relevant divisions the possibility of conducting a joint analysis of the effects on employment of foreign investment value added in the ESCWA region, provided that it will be conducted in 2011, due to the unavailability of financial and human resources to conduct it earlier;
- (2) Transport and trade facilitation in the ESCWA region figures predominantly among ESCWA areas of concern. Following are some of the activities carried out by ESCWA in that regard:
 - (a) Incorporating in the programme of work for the biennium 2010-2011, under extrabudgetary technical cooperation, a workshop on the requirements for establishing Single Windows for handling export/import procedures and formalities in the ESCWA region;
 - (b) Conducting an expanded study of the requirements for establishing a Single Window for handling export/import procedures in member countries, provided that it is done in the third quarter of 2009;
 - (c) Holding an expert group meeting on transport and trade facilitation in the ESCWA region in the last quarter of 2009;
 - (d) Preparing a report on the national committees for the facilitation of transport and trade in the ESCWA region for submission to the eleventh session of the Committee on Transport, to be held in early 2010.

² YouthInfo database is accessible on ESCWA Statistics Division web page or at: <http://youthinfo.escwa.org.lb>.

Recommendation (f)

Invest in people by intensifying capacity-building activities organized by ESCWA, especially training-of-trainers to take on the task of national capacity-building in their turn, particularly in the light of the challenges faced by ESCWA in securing financial resources.

Implementation follow-up

- (1) ESCWA has worked to expand its individual and institutional capacity-building activities in countries afflicted by conflict and instability, as available funds and human resources permit. It developed and implemented a set of projects and initiatives aimed at institutional and individual capacity-building for effective participation in the development process in conflict and post-conflict settings, founded on the principles of good governance in public and civil society institutions as the basis for development and advancement. A number of projects and programmes are on hold, pending the availability of the financial and human resources needed for their implementation;
- (2) With funding from the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and the Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development, ESCWA has also carried out training workshops for small farmers and manufacturers in poor rural regions with a view to increasing their productivity and improving their market competitiveness. The workshops covered the following topics:
 - (a) Best agricultural practices;
 - (b) Increasing the cultivation of sumac (an aromatic herb);
 - (c) Using modern equipment in designing garment production patterns;
 - (d) Principles of computer operation;
 - (e) Principles of managing a small business (training-of-trainers followed by workshops led by the trainees themselves);
- (3) With regard to capacity-building in the field of statistics, the Programme for Statistical Literacy and Capacity-building to Monitor the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), carried out by the ESCWA Statistics Division and currently being rolled out at the national level in Jordan, Palestine and Tunisia, aims to improve access to statistics and reinforce the skills needed for using indicators and data for policymaking. It is also geared to improving the process of monitoring the MDGs through statistical capacity-building within Governments and civil society. Activities and outputs include setting up and maintaining a central data storehouse in each country; training-of-trainers on the MDGs, the fundamentals of statistical analysis and a more effective use of data; and running training sessions within countries to enhance user-producer dialogue about the content and development of the central data storehouse. In that regard, a practical guide has been prepared to strengthen the statistical capacity of public policymakers in order to effectively monitor the MDGs at the national level (available in Arabic and English);
- (4) ESCWA organized a regional training-of-trainers workshop on the development information system DevInfo 6.0, which was held at the United Nations House in Beirut, from 20 to 24 July 2009, to create a group of regional trainers as head DevInfo 6.0 trainers capable of conducting training activities at the national and regional levels.

Recommendation (g)

Endeavour to reconcile the ESCWA and United Nations statistical databases, which should be regarded as the official data sources at the national level, with emphasis on capacity-building among national statistical offices (NSOs).

Implementation follow-up

- (1) As part of its efforts to analyse the discrepancies in data and descriptive data between national and international sources, the ESCWA Statistics Division expressed in a report entitled Millennium Development Goals: Monitoring framework and proposals for improvement³ and submitted to the Statistical Committee at its eighth session (Beirut, 14-16 October 2008) its readiness to carry out continuous monitoring operations and to write a report on the MDGs, as part of the commitments ESCWA had made. The report contains an assessment of the main issues of data availability and data gaps, including discrepancies between national and international sources of statistical information on the MDG indicators. The report calls for strategic measures to enhance the capacity of the statistical systems in the region so that they can improve the MDG monitoring and reporting process and publish accurate and transparent descriptive data. It also calls for considering the recommendations made at the national and regional levels for statistical capacity-building in member countries, and guiding the work of the secretariat, especially as regards technical cooperation and statistical capacity-building in the biennium 2010-2011;
- (2) The ESCWA Statistics Division cooperated with the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) in the preparation of the 2008 Bulletin on Population and Vital Statistics in the ESCWA Region (E/ESCWA/SD/2009/4) by sending out to member countries questionnaires that complement those sent out by UNSD, thus avoiding duplication of effort and easing the burden of responding on the NSOs. The questionnaires aim to gather additional information from the NSOs in order to produce a clear picture of the characteristics of the region. To achieve comparability between the regions and maximize data convergence with the data published by UNSD at the regional and global levels, indicators were calculated using national data weighted by population projections obtained from the World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision prepared by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA);
- (3) In cooperation with the UNSD, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund and the International Labour Organization, the ESCWA Statistics Division is planning to organize a workshop on statistics that will deal with MDG indicators in order to build the capacity of member countries to adopt methodologies for the indicators by the end of 2009;
- (4) Pursuant to the recommendations made by a training seminar on the methodology for preparing and writing national reports on the MDGs in countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) (Muscat, 17-20 May 2009), and in coordination between the GCC executive office, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and ESCWA, the GCC executive office was charged with the preparation and drafting of a standard guide on MDG indicators, computing methods and relevant descriptive data, in cooperation with ESCWA, the League of Arab States and relevant United Nations agencies, and after convening a training workshop on the matter for the GCC countries in 2010.

Recommendation (h)

Promote national machineries for the advancement of women and provide them with technical support to enable them to mainstream women issues in development plans and programmes and in project implementation; raise awareness of Government decision makers on women issues; and give due attention to national legislation for the empowerment of women.

³ ESCWA, *Millennium Development Goals: Monitoring framework and proposals for improvement* (E/ESCWA/SD/2008/IG.1/4). Available at: www.escwa.un.org.

Implementation follow-up

- (1) ESCWA has continued to work with member countries for the advancement and empowerment of women at every level and for mainstreaming the gender concept in national policies, programmes and plans. Most of those countries have established national committees for women in accordance with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.⁴ ESCWA continues to devote urgent efforts to improving the capabilities of those committees, by providing such technical and technological assistance as preparing the requisite studies and organizing specialized workshops;
- (2) In that regard, ESCWA prepared guiding principles for enhancing the capacity of national committees for women to mainstream gender in policies, programmes and plans (E/ESCWA/ECW/2007/4), in which special attention is given to the Arab region particularities related to the ongoing work of those committees. The guiding principles were reviewed at an expert group meeting ESCWA organized in Amman, from 5 to 6 September 2008, where the experts introduced certain amendments to them. The guiding principles were subsequently submitted to the national committees and relevant ministries in member countries so that they could promote and start applying them. An evaluation form will be distributed to national committees for women in Arab countries in order to assess the impact of the guiding principles on the process of mainstreaming gender in policies, programmes and projects;
- (3) To improve the technical capabilities of the national committees for women, ESCWA prepared a study on mainstreaming gender issues in development policies and programmes: water resources and environment protection (E/ESCWA/ECW/2007/2). A specialized working group has been charged with reviewing and discussing the study;
- (4) Among ESCWA priorities is working with member countries to apply the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women⁵ and implement the Beijing Platform for Action. It has organized orientation workshops, training courses and advisory missions in most of the member countries, in order to increase knowledge about the importance of applying the Convention, reporting regularly on its implementation and removing the reservations about it placed by some countries. With assistance from the Division for the Advancement of Women of DESA, ESCWA also organized a workshop on the role of parliamentarians in applying the Convention (Beirut, 26-28 November 2008), in order to enhance the capacity of member countries to contribute to the administrative reform process;
- (5) As part of its efforts to help member countries implement the Beijing Platform for Action and in cooperation with the secretariat of the League of Arab States, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the Centre for Arab Women Training and Research, ESCWA organized a training session, attended by experts from national committees for women in the Arab countries, on how to prepare national Beijing + 15 review reports (Cairo, March 2009), in order to review the actions taken at the national level in implementing the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action;
- (6) Overall demand from member countries for technical assistance on gender issues has increased, with the number of such requests reaching around 70 in the period 2008-2009. Those requests cover assistance in preparing national reports on the Convention, mainstreaming the gender concept in national development plans, programmes and projects, gender-responsive budgeting and other issues related to the social, political and economic empowerment of women;

⁴ United Nations, *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women*, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995, A/CONF.177/20/Rev.1, Chapter I.

⁵ General Assembly resolution 34/180, adopted on 18 December 1979.

- (7) ESCWA also set up an online forum for dialogue⁶ accessible to all national committees for women, with a view to increasing communication between them, so that they can benefit from sharing their experiences, in order to achieve the MDGs;
- (8) ESCWA participated in the seminar Arab Women and Employment held during the proceedings of the thirty-sixth session of the Arab Labour Conference (Amman, 5-12 April 2009) by presenting a paper on developing the potential of poor rural and urban women. The paper focused on:
(a) providing the infrastructural elements needed for development in poor rural and urban areas in general and particularly for women; (b) providing a secure and suitable environment to enable rural women to participate in productive income-generating activities, while developing their capacity to set up and run small and medium-sized urban and rural enterprises; (c) achieving a balance between work in the home and employment for women; and (d) strengthening the role of women in rationalizing resource use and achieving efficiency in the home and the workplace;
- (9) Under the umbrella of its project entitled Development of National Gender Statistics Programmes in the Arab Countries, at the recommendation of RCM, the ESCWA Statistics Division issued in 2008 a booklet entitled Gender in the Millennium Development Goals: Information Guide for Arab Millennium Development Goal Reports,⁷ which contains the results of the collaborative efforts of international experts, statisticians, machineries for the empowerment of women and civil society organizations. The booklet aims to instill a shared understanding among the relevant parties on how to mainstream a gender perspective into the process of MDG monitoring and reporting. It also aims to identify regional priority gender issues and to develop gender-sensitive measuring methods in the Arab countries. The main output of the booklet is the G-IS-IN framework (Goals, Issues and Indicators), a measuring tool linking the MDGs and the Beijing Platform for Action. The G-IS-IN framework, which includes a list of priority issues and their corresponding gender-sensitive indicators, constitutes a first step for the Arab countries towards achieving the MDGs and implementing both the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action;
- (10) The second meeting of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Gender and MDGs in the Arab Region is scheduled to be held in October 2009, to discuss the methodology for producing guides to support planning and policy formulation.

Recommendation (i)

Expand the scope of the special programme on the impact of conflict on development so as to cover the impact of occupation, disasters and emerging crises, and offer the opportunity for those countries wishing to benefit from the project on peaceful coexistence and social cohesion.

Implementation follow-up

- (1) ESCWA prepared the annual report of the United Nations Secretary-General on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (E/2008/L.26). The report touched on the economic and social repercussions of the war waged on Gaza in December 2008 and other Israeli practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan on the living conditions of the Palestinian people and the Arab population in the Golan;

⁶ The online forum is accessible at: <http://www.escwa.un.org/divisions/forums/ecw/login.asp?target=default.asp>.

⁷ E/ESCWA/SCU/2007/Technical Paper.1. Available at: www.escwa.un.org/divisions/scu/GenderMDG/index.asp.

- (2) ESCWA launched a track for addressing the economic and social repercussions of conflict-driven displacement in the ESCWA region, which included the following:
- (a) A study on the socio-economic impact of conflict-driven displacement in the ESCWA region (E/ESCWA/ECRI/2009/2), which examines the patterns and causes of displacement and the resulting repercussions on the refugees, the displaced and the host countries. The study offers a number of recommendations for regional and international organizations and agencies, Governments and civil society in member countries;
 - (b) A consultative meeting (Beirut, 9 February 2009), with a number of representatives of international organizations and relevant experts, to discuss the recommendations proposed in the said study and future action and research that could contribute to resolving the displacement phenomenon;
- (3) With regard to rallying and rationalizing efforts to achieve development in conflict settings, and with a view to crystallizing a comprehensive vision resulting in programmes and projects that could contribute to reducing conflict and its repercussions, ESCWA organized the following activities:
- (a) Expert group meeting entitled Strengthening Private Sector Resilience under Conflict: Lessons Learned and the Way Forward (Beirut, 11-12 November 2008) (E/ESCWA/ECRI/2008/2), in which participants explored ways of enhancing the production ability of the private sector in conflict and crisis settings and examined ways of strengthening the development role of that sector and reducing the repercussions of crises, conflict and instability;
 - (b) Expert group meeting entitled Strengthening Good Governance Practices in Conflict-affected Countries: Current Priorities and Future Interventions (Beirut, 27-28 February 2009) (E/ESCWA/ECRI/2009/3), in which participants discussed the challenges hindering good governance in conflict-affected countries, the need to mobilize the capacity of public institutions to ensure delivery of essential services in conflict settings, as an important measure to mitigate the impact of conflict and even reduce conflict itself;
 - (c) A study in progress on public-private partnership for development in conflict-affected countries, which addresses the need to develop the role of the public sector in promoting the development process and ensuring a suitable environment for enhancing the resilience of the private sector. The study also presents an assessment of the post-conflict environment in the ESCWA region with an emphasis on Iraq and Palestine. It offers a number of recommendations addressed to Governments and international agencies in that regard;
- (4) In the light of the tension existing in a number of Western Asian countries, and its negative consequences for economic and social development, especially for youth, who make up the largest population band and who are most affected by conflict, ESCWA organized the following activities:
- (a) Fifteen dialogue workshops for youth (aged 18-25) in Lebanon on the issues of identity, sectarian tension, the political system and concepts of citizenship and State in Lebanon (Beirut, December 2008 - January 2009). The workshops offered an important opportunity to launch a constructive dialogue between youth from different regions and sects in Lebanon, and through the dialogue to study the youth attitudes and opinions and the basic motivation behind their perception of the others, the nation and such life priorities as education, job opportunities, safety and security, among others. Assistance was sought from experts to oversee the workshops, dialogues and resulting analysis in order to determine the key points that need to be addressed by whatever means;

- (b) A study in progress on unpacking the dynamics of ethno-sectarian tensions: a youth-focus group analysis, which examines the various social theories about the causes and dynamics of those tensions in the world in general, and in the ESCWA region in particular. The study also addresses the concept of identity and sense of belonging, and the economic, social and substantive factors of ethno-sectarian tensions in the ESCWA region and their repercussions. It elaborates on the situation of youth in Lebanon, relying on the above-mentioned dialogue workshops and their outcomes and associating those outcomes with social theories. The study offers a set of recommendations and proposals for addressing ethno-sectarian tensions at the Government, civil society and international body levels, with a focus on the role of development in that regard;
 - (c) A draft project document on enhancing the civic values and life skills of adolescents in Iraq, which is expected to be launched jointly with the Iraqi Ministry of Education and a number of United Nations agencies in the second half of 2009. The project aims to enhance the concepts of citizenship, national identity and human rights among adolescents (aged 12-19) in Iraq, through educational programmes and various capacity-building activities. The project is expected to contribute to consolidating peaceful coexistence of the different groups of Iraqi society, instilling stability, improving the functional, cultural and educational skills of adolescents and equipping them with a number of modern skills, especially job skills, in order to enhance opportunities to build a better life;
- (5) ESCWA began the process of consulting with potential partners in a number of member countries with a view to implementing projects for building peaceful coexistence and social cohesion, pending the availability of resources needed to begin implementing such projects;
 - (6) In addition to its current projects, ESCWA is preparing future activities suggested by the results and recommendations indicated above. Those activities would strengthen the role of ESCWA in building peace and peaceful coexistence in the region by achieving development, monitoring and addressing emerging patterns and issues, including the food crisis, and promoting good governance through public sector institutional capacity-building, with the aim of achieving the MDGs in conflict-affected countries. Expanding the scope of those activities is subject to the availability of funds.

FOLLOW-UP TO RECOMMENDATIONS ON OTHER AGENDA ITEMS

Recommendation (a)

Ensuring the participation of RCM member organizations in the identification of priorities for the ad hoc working groups recently created within RCM.

Implementation follow-up

- (1) ESCWA formed a working group to follow up on the MDGs in the Arab region with the aim of reviewing emerging global issues, especially the financial crisis, and the related challenges and impact for achieving the MDGs in the region. The working group is also devoted to ensure cooperation between the United Nations system and the League of Arab States in issuing a regional report jointly between UNDP and the League of Arab States, on achieving the MDGs in the Arab region in the period 2009-2010. The first meeting of the working group will be held at the United Nations House in Beirut on 23 July 2009 to study ways and means of strengthening regional cooperation between relevant agencies and determining an action plan and budget for achieving the MDGs in the Arab region;
- (2) ESCWA also held the first meeting of the Working Group on Climate Change (Cairo, 26 November 2008), which was attended by representatives of the regional UNDP offices, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and

the joint secretariat of agencies under the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the terms of reference of the working group and the areas of joint work, in addition to discussing an action plan for 2009. It was agreed that ESCWA would present a report to the High-level Committee on Programmes of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. ESCWA also organized the ninth sector-specific meeting between the League of Arab States, the United Nations and specialized agencies (Cairo, 17-18 June 2009) to discuss the effects of climate change on the region and adaptive and mitigation methods and measures;

- (3) ESCWA prepared a working paper for implementing the prospective activities of the Working Group on Food Security, in which the World Bank and FAO play a major role;
- (4) ESCWA is currently preparing to hold the RCM meeting in November 2009, and will specify the date in coordination with the office of the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, who will chair the meeting.

Recommendation (b)

Address correspondence to the focal points in member countries to propose the convening of a regional meeting of the Western Asian countries to prepare the 2009 annual ministerial review and consider the possibility of one country volunteering to host this meeting.

Implementation follow-up

In the context of considering the possibility of one member country hosting this meeting, the secretariat wrote to the focal points in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The regional meeting of Western Asian countries to prepare for the 2009 annual ministerial review was held under the title Addressing Non-communicable Diseases and Injuries: Major Challenges to Sustainable Development in the 21st Century, Doha, from 10 to 11 May 2009, generously hosted by Qatar, and at the joint initiative of ESCWA, DESA and the regional office of the World Health Organization.

Recommendation (c)

Stress the importance of finalizing a consolidated text of the Convention on International Multimodal Transport of Goods in the Arab Mashreq in cooperation between ESCWA and the League of Arab States, given that the Convention would not be confined to ESCWA member countries but rather will cover the 22 Arab countries members of the League of Arab States.

Implementation follow-up

A consolidated draft of the Convention with the adjusted title Convention on Multimodal Transport between Arab States was reached in coordination and cooperation between the secretariat of the League of Arab States and the ESCWA secretariat (Cairo, 9 October 2008) and was approved by the Council of Arab Transport Ministers at its 21st regular session (Port Said, 29 October 2008) in its resolution 315/21 of 29 October 2008. The Council also decided to submit the draft Convention to the relevant boards at the secretariat of the League of Arab States for their approval, preliminary to its endorsement by the Arab countries. The Convention is considered a model of cooperation and coordination between ESCWA and the League of Arab States, worthy of emulation, and a major step towards the facilitation and development of trade between Arab countries.

Recommendation (d) and Recommendation (e)

Ensure cooperation in the implementation of the resolutions adopted by ESCWA, create a mechanism for devising a schedule for the implementation of various measures stipulated in the resolutions and report on

the actions taken to implement those resolutions by disseminating clear information and data; take up the observations made by the delegates about setting deadlines and about the challenges in the way of implementing the resolutions, and improve follow-up through the Technical Committee and such other bodies as the ministerial session that is held every two years with a permanent item on its agenda concerning the follow-up to the implementation of resolutions taken at previous sessions.

Implementation follow-up

The secretariat took up both recommendations when preparing the agenda for the third meeting of the Technical Committee. In that agenda, under item 4, related to strengthening relations between the secretariat and member countries, sub-item 4(a) has been incorporated on follow-up to the implementation of resolutions adopted by ESCWA ministerial sessions. Under this sub-item, consideration will be given to the creation of a mechanism for implementing those resolutions, reporting on progress achieved in that regard and performing regular follow-up according to a set schedule.
