



**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION
FOR WESTERN ASIA**

REPORT OF THE THIRTY-FIRST SESSION
16-18 December 2023

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
OFFICIAL RECORDS: 2023

SUPPLEMENT No. 21



United Nations

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Summary

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), pursuant to its resolutions 158 (XIV) of 5 April 1987 on holding its sessions on a biennial basis and 196 (XVII) of 31 May 1994 on the frequency of these sessions, held its thirty-first session in Cairo from 16 to 18 December 2023.

Session meetings were divided into two segments, one for senior officials and the other for ministers. The senior officials' meetings tackled the issue of governance, including natural resource governance, economic governance and conflict prevention. They also included an extensive discussion on the social and economic repercussions of the war on Gaza and the essential elements for recovery.

The Commission reviewed some of the activities undertaken by its secretariat, such as the 2023 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, and the reports of its subsidiary bodies. It also addressed the performance of its programme plan in the period 2020–2023, the proposed programme plan for 2025 and its financial status.

The ministerial meeting included two round-table discussions on the Arab Vision 2045, which was developed by ESCWA in cooperation with the League of Arab States. The Commission explored the vision's premises and pillars, and the initiatives and projects that could be implemented within its framework in the first and second round-table discussions, respectively.

At the close of its session, the Commission adopted a series of resolutions to be submitted to the Economic and Social Council for its attention. The present report sets out the resolutions adopted by the Commission and a summary of the main points raised in the discussions under each agenda item.

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Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) held its thirty-first session, pursuant to its resolutions [158 \(XIV\)](#) of 5 April 1987 on holding its sessions on a biennial basis and [196 \(XVII\)](#) of 31 May 1994 on the frequency of these sessions.
2. The present report sets out the proceedings of the thirty-first session of the Commission, held in Cairo from 16 to 18 December 2023, which consisted of six plenary meetings, including four senior officials' meetings and two ministerial round-table discussions, as well as a seventh closed meeting to adopt the resolutions.

I. Issues for attention by the Economic and Social Council

3. The Commission adopted a set of resolutions to be submitted to the Economic and Social Council for its attention.

Resolution 342 (XXXI) Adoption of the reports of the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Affirming the important role of its subsidiary bodies in developing, coordinating and following up on its programme of work in their respective competences, so as to secure optimal benefits for member States,

Recognizing the importance of implementing the recommendations of the subsidiary bodies to enable the Commission to undertake its duties in the competences falling within the bodies' remits,

Having considered the reports of the subsidiary bodies on their sessions held in the period between the thirtieth and thirty-first sessions of the Commission, which were not presented to the Executive Committee, namely the report of the twenty-third session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics (Alexandria, Egypt, 20–21 October 2022, [E/ESCWA/C.5/2022/9/Report](#)); the report of the fourth session of the Committee on Technology for Development (Beirut, 14–15 November 2022, [E/ESCWA/C.8/2022/11/Report](#)); the report of the fifteenth session of the Statistical Committee (Beirut, 16–17 November 2022, [E/ESCWA/C.1/2022/7/Report](#)); the report of the third session of the Committee on Trade Policies in the States Members of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (Tunis, 7–8 March 2023, [E/ESCWA/C.6/2023/11/Report](#)); the report of the fourteenth session of the Committee on Social Development (Beirut, 8 June 2023, [E/ESCWA/C.2/2023/7/Report](#)); the report of the fifteenth session of the Committee on Water Resources (Beirut, 19–20 June 2023, [E/ESCWA/C.4/2023/9/Report](#)); the report of the fourteenth session of the Committee on Energy (Beirut, 20–22 June 2023, [E/ESCWA/C.3/2023/9/Report](#)); and the report of the eleventh session of the Committee on Women (Beirut, 10–11 October 2023, [E/ESCWA/C.7/2023/8/Report](#)),

Having also considered the reports of the Executive Committee related to its meetings held in the period between the thirtieth and thirty-first sessions of the Commission, namely the report of the fifth meeting of the Executive Committee (Beirut, 18–19 December 2018, [E/ESCWA/EC.5/2018/14/Report](#)); the report of the sixth meeting of the Executive Committee (Marrakech, Morocco, 15–16 June 2019, [E/ESCWA/EC.6/2019/16/Report](#)); the report of the seventh meeting of the Executive Committee (Online, 21 December 2020, [E/ESCWA/EC.7/2020/5/Report](#)); and the report of the eighth meeting of the Executive Committee (Amman, 23–24 December 2021, [E/ESCWA/EC.8/2021/13/Report](#)),

1. *Adopts* the abovementioned reports of the subsidiary bodies, and calls upon the secretariat of the Commission to follow up on the implementation of recommendations;

2. *Emphasizes* the importance of supporting the participation of the least developed member States in the meetings of the sessions;

3. *Stresses* the importance of holding regular Executive Committee meetings in accordance with its rules of procedure, and the importance of member States' participation in these meetings;

4. *Calls upon* member States to take the necessary measures to ensure the implementation of the recommendations set forth in these reports.

Third plenary session
18 December 2023

**Resolution 343 (XXXI) Programme plan of the Economic and Social
Commission for Western Asia for 2025**

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Aware that achieving all aspects of sustainable development requires concerted efforts underpinned by global principles and evidence-based analyses,

Emphasizing that the Arab region has the necessary human capital and resources to achieve prosperity and a dignified life for all, but is burdened by conflicts, occupation, and dangerous social, economic and environmental challenges that threaten its progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

Noting the role of the secretariat of the Commission in supporting national and regional efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda, especially by providing evidence, holding intergovernmental decision-making meetings, organizing dialogues on key development issues, providing policy advice, and building capacities for the use of available tools to support the drafting and implementation of policy frameworks to achieve the identified goals,

Having reviewed the proposed programme plan for 2025 ([E/ESCWA/31/15](#)),

1. *Adopts* the proposed programme plan for 2025 set forth in document [E/ESCWA/31/15](#);
2. *Calls upon* the Executive Secretary to take the necessary measures to ensure the full implementation of the programme and the periodic reporting thereon.

Third plenary session
18 December 2023

**344 (XXXI) Frequency of the sessions of the Committee on Social Development
of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia**

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Aware of the gravity of the accelerating and multiple social challenges faced by the Arab region, including the exacerbation of social and economic inequality, the increase in unemployment, especially among young people, and the weakness of social protection systems,

Recognizing the importance of strengthening communication and coordination between member States to exchange experiences and best practices in dealing with these challenges,

Recalling its resolution [198 \(XVII\)](#) on the establishment of a committee on social development within the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Having reviewed the report of the fourteenth session of the Committee on Social Development ([E/ESCWA/C.2/2023/7/Report](#)), especially recommendation (j) made to the secretariat of the Commission to work towards holding annual meetings of the Committee on Social Development and take the necessary measures, in accordance with United Nations rules and procedures, to intensify regional efforts to address the accelerating and multiple social challenges faced by member States,

1. *Decides* that the Committee on Social Development shall hold its sessions annually rather than biennially, taking effect in 2025.

Third plenary session
18 December 2023

Resolution 345 (XXXI) War on Gaza and support for the Palestinian people

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Referring to United Nations General Assembly resolutions [67/19](#) of 29 November 2012 on the status of Palestine in the United Nations, [77/208](#) of 15 December 2022 on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, and [ES-10/21](#) of the tenth Emergency Special Session of 27 October 2023 on the protection of civilians and upholding legal and humanitarian obligations,

Referring also to Economic and Social Council resolution 2023/34 on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan,

Recalling its resolutions [330 \(XXX\)](#) of 28 June 2018, [326 \(XXIX\)](#) of 15 December 2016, and [316 \(XXVIII\)](#) of 18 September 2014, all of which reaffirm the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, the need to support their efforts and those of their institutions towards attaining those rights in accordance with United Nations resolutions, and intensifying efforts to raise awareness on the rights of the Palestinian people and the violations of those rights,

Acknowledging the [resolution](#) of 11 November 2023 issued by the Joint Arab Islamic Extraordinary Summit on Israeli Aggression against the Palestinian People,

Taking note of the two reports submitted by the secretariat to the Commission at its thirty-first session under the item “War on Gaza”, which addressed the social and economic repercussions of the war, and the tenets and essential elements for sustainable recovery,^{1,2}

Noting the activities of the secretariat to support the Palestinian people and their institutions, including those funded through the grant provided by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development to the ESCWA Resource Platform to Support the Palestinian People,³

1. *Emphasizes* the necessity of stopping the war on the Gaza Strip, and ending the siege imposed on it and on all the Palestinian territory;
2. *Highlights* the unprecedented scale of death, destruction and displacement, coupled with measures to block the entry of humanitarian relief and aid, thus necessitating exceptional efforts to provide and deliver sufficient emergency relief aid;
3. *Stresses* the need to end the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory in accordance with international resolutions as a basis for sustainable recovery, which must be owned by the Palestinian people and their institutions during all its stages;
4. *Emphasizes* the need to end all Israeli measures and practices in the occupied Palestinian territory that undermine productive sectors, cause de-development, deepen economic dependency, and increase

¹ [E/ESCWA/31/8](#).

² [E/ESCWA/31/9](#).

³ The ESCWA Fund to Support Palestine was established pursuant to a recommendation made by the Executive Committee at its sixth meeting ([E/ESCWA/EC.6/2019/16/Report](#)). The concept of the Fund was further developed into the ESCWA Resource Platform to Support the Palestinian People, allowing the mobilization of in-kind and knowledge resources contributing to the implementation of activities that assist Palestinian institutions in planning and implementing policies and programmes that limit the effects of Israeli policies and practices on the Palestinian people, and support sustainable development in the occupied Palestinian territory ([E/ESCWA/EC.8/2021/3](#)).

dependence on foreign aid, including restrictions imposed on the movement of Palestinians within the occupied territory, their economic activity, and their ability to exploit their natural resources;

5. *Also emphasizes* the need to restore economic links between the regions of the occupied Palestinian territory and economic ties with its Arab surroundings, as this constitutes a key prerequisite for reducing de-development in the occupied Palestinian territory and decreasing Palestinian economic dependency on Israel;

6. *Calls on* ESCWA member States to provide support to the ESCWA Resource Platform to Support the Palestinian People to implement activities that contribute to strengthening Palestinian capacity to confront and overcome the economic and social impact of the occupation;

7. *Requests* the ESCWA secretariat to intensify activities that contribute to supporting the Palestinian people and their institutions through the following:

(a) Develop and operationalize the guiding tenets for the recovery and development process in the Gaza Strip, in collaboration with United Nations institutions, to rationalize international humanitarian and development assistance and enhance coordination and collaboration with relevant Palestinian stakeholders in this context;

(b) Support Palestinian institutions in assessing damages, losses and needs resulting from the repercussions of the war, in collaboration with other international and regional organizations;

(c) Strengthen the nexus approach between humanitarian, recovery and development processes;

(d) Strengthen Palestinian institutional capacity to lead the recovery process in the Gaza Strip, including the capacity to provide basic services;

(e) Forge partnerships with international, regional and local bodies to support the recovery and development process in the Gaza Strip;

8. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to follow up on the implementation of the present resolution, and to report on progress to the Commission at its thirty-second session.

Third plenary session
18 December 2023

Resolution 346 (XXXI) Effective economic governance and modernization of public administration

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Being guided by United Nations General Assembly resolution [70/1](#) of 25 September 2015 on Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which adopted the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Goals, in particular Goal 16 on building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels,

Referring to United Nations General Assembly resolution [69/228](#) of 19 December 2014 on promoting and fostering the efficiency, accountability, effectiveness and transparency of public administration by strengthening supreme audit institutions,

Recalling General Assembly resolution [58/4](#) of 31 October 2003 on the United Nations Convention against Corruption,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution [35/63](#) of 5 December 1980 on restrictive business practices, aimed at supporting States in addressing anti-competitive behaviour in business operations and taking measures to promote fair competition and prevent monopolistic business practices,

Recalling further General Assembly resolution [39/248](#) of 9 April 1945 on consumer protection, which endorsed guidelines to protect the rights and interests of consumers worldwide, by adopting fair trade practices, ensuring product safety and access to information, and introducing dispute resolution mechanisms,

Taking note of the reports submitted by the secretariat to the Commission at its thirty-first session on the [issue of governance](#), and the various aspects they addressed and the recommendations they made, especially “[Economic governance: market competition challenges in the Arab region](#)”,

1. *Emphasizes* that one of the main pillars for achieving sustainable development is following a governance approach based on transparency, participation, answerability, accountability, and fighting corruption;

2. *Also emphasizes* that modernizing and developing public institutions and increasing their resources is a continuous and renewable process that leads to improving performance in development fields and raising the level of services provided to citizens;

3. *Calls for* adequate attention to be given to enhancing the resilience of national institutions in times of crises, wars, conflicts and occupation, and during periods of recovery from them, and in the least developed countries;

4. *Stresses* the importance of supporting countries that are experiencing fragility, conflict or disaster, or are affected by them, in governing the recovery and reconstruction process and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals;

5. *Calls for* investment in capacity-building and training programmes to enhance the skills of stakeholders involved in the mining sector, including Governments and regulatory bodies, so as to support the implementation of sustainable and responsible governance practices;

6. *Emphasizes* that economic governance and effective management of relevant institutions are closely linked to enhancing the efficiency of expenditure, government revenues and private investment, increasing economic growth, and reducing inequality;

7. *Also emphasizes* the importance of reforming antitrust laws and enhancing competition and consumer protection, and the need for independent, specialized regulatory bodies to implement laws and monitor and regulate markets to strengthen business environments, encourage investment, improve economic performance, and drive growth;

8. *Encourages* the growing interest of member States in developing national programmes for strengthening competition and consumer protection policies, and reforming and modernizing public administration and the public sector institutions that implement those programmes;

9. *Also encourages* continued capacity-building, benefiting from technical support, and enhancing knowledge exchange and learning from peers and best practices in the field of economic governance, including competition, consumer protection, and the legislative and regulatory structure for investments;

10. *Calls for* strengthening bilateral and regional collaboration between organizations concerned with competition and consumer protection in member States, and harmonizing competition and consumer protection laws and policies;

11. *Requests* the ESCWA secretariat to undertake the following activities:

(a) Continue documenting successful initiatives at the international and regional levels in the areas of competition policies, consumer protection, and modernizing the legislative and regulatory structure for investments, and sharing them with member States;

(b) Support the modernization of public administration by using international indices and their pillars in simulating optimal policies;

(c) Strengthen technical support to member States in developing economic governance institutions and applying effective governance principles related to them, especially in the least developed countries and those affected by conflict, war and occupation;

(d) Strengthen collaboration with international and regional organizations and South-South cooperation in the field of economic governance;

(e) Continue organizing the Arab Competition Forum annually to build knowledge and capacity, and exchange experiences and best practices, and seek to organize a forum on consumer protection periodically;

12. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to follow up on the implementation of the present resolution, and to report on progress to the Commission at its thirty-second session.

Third plenary session
18 December 2023

Resolution 347 (XXXI) Arab Vision 2045

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Recognizing the importance of planning for a better future in which all peoples of the region enjoy security, stability, prosperity and sustainable development that leaves no one behind, and of the existence of a long-term regional development vision similar to that of other regions,

Cognizant of the grave challenges facing the Arab region, including war, conflict, fragility and occupation, and their repercussions for achieving sustainable development,

Having reviewed the “Arab Vision 2045: striving to fulfil aspirations through deliberation, determination and action”, which was prepared by the secretariat of the Commission in partnership with the League of Arab States, and launched at the ministerial segment of its thirty-first session,

Welcomes the “Arab Vision 2045: striving to fulfil aspirations through deliberation, determination and action” as an ambitious development vision that supports Arab countries in their national development paths and in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, after taking into account the comments received from member States within three months of this date, and updating it with a view to adopting it.

Third plenary session
18 December 2023

II. Session theme: Arab Vision 2045: striving to fulfil aspirations through deliberation, determination and action

4. ESCWA and the League of Arab States developed the Arab Vision 2045 to reinforce the confidence of the people in the region in a secure, just and prosperous future, founded on knowledge, action and cultural renewal.

5. The Arab Vision 2045 was the main theme of the ministerial segment of the thirty-first session of the Commission. The vision was discussed at length by State representatives in two round-table discussions, under the following headings: (a) premises and pillars of the Arab Vision 2045 ([E/ESCWA/31/16/CRP.1](#)) and (b) initiatives and projects of the Arab Vision 2045 ([E/ESCWA/31/16/CRP.2](#)).

A. Premises and pillars of the Arab Vision 2045

(Agenda item 18(a))

6. ESCWA dedicated the first ministerial round-table discussion to explore the premises and pillars of the Arab Vision 2045. Mr. Al-Tayeb Al-Dajani, head of the team responsible for developing the vision, moderated the discussion among representatives of States that were economically, socially and environmentally diverse and had different experiences in development planning, technology and capacity-building.

7. Mr. Al-Tayeb Al-Dajani began with a brief overview of the Vision, which captured the Arab region as a whole and was developed in response to the world's major waves of change and their impact on the Arab region. He explained that the Vision's indicators were based on today's reality, as demonstrated by national, regional and international evidence and adopted standards, and referred to different ways to determine whether that reality was improving. He stated that modern technology was used in the development of the Vision to survey young people and women in the region. Mr. Al-Dajani also shed light on the projects and initiatives that were launched as part of the Vision development process, and whose success could be measured using the Vision's adopted indicators.

8. Mr. Waed Abdullah Abdul Razzaq Badhib, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation in Yemen, addressed the political, security and economic challenges faced by his country and the losses incurred as a result of the conflict, highlighting the need for a new development approach. He said that the Vision mapped some features of that approach and shed light on what Yemen needed to emerge from the conflict. He also noted that the Vision's pillars complemented one another. The Minister then noted that his country was cooperating with ESCWA on some areas of recovery, and highlighted their linkage to the pillars of the vision.

9. Mr. Fadi Salti Al-Khalil, Chairman of the Planning and International Cooperation Commission of the Syrian Arab Republic, highlighted the interlinkages between the security and safety pillar and other pillars of the vision which could not be achieved without stability. He said that his country had seen a decline in development indicators because of the conflict and asked how certain aspects of the Vision could be achieved, such as early warning systems for crises. He noted that the unpredictability and accelerating changes in international economic and political relations might prevent crises from being resolved. He also stressed the importance of regional cooperation and the exchange of experiences among Arab countries to set practical and realistic development goals in the region.

10. Mr. Said bin Mohammed bin Ahmed Al-Saqri, Minister of Economy of Oman, touched on some of the major trends shaping the future, such as climate change, its high cost, and its repercussions on Oman, including the increased frequency of hurricanes, the instability in the conflict-ridden region, and the gradual shift to non-fossil energy sources, which was an important change for the region's oil exporters. He said, however, that those challenges presented an opportunity for the region, which was rich in renewable energy resources, and paved the way for alternative economic structures. He added that the high proportion of young people in the region meant that they could lead this transition. Mr. Al-Saqri discussed the interlinkages between the six

pillars of the Arab Vision 2045 and the Oman Vision 2040, and reviewed the main themes and priorities set forth in the national vision, the goals it sought to achieve, and the progress made in implementing them.

11. Mr. Ahmed Kamali, Deputy Minister of Planning and Economic Development in Egypt, stressed the importance of aligning the Arab Vision 2045 with national development plans and strategies, such as the Egypt Vision 2030, and with the 2030 Agenda and other international instruments. He emphasized the essential role of technology and digital transformation in the development process, underlining the constraints posed by digital divides within and between countries. Mr. Kamali referred to the dimensions included in the Egypt Vision, and to the National Information and Communication Technology Strategy developed by the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology in implementation of the national vision. He also mentioned that Egypt had launched the first national strategy for artificial intelligence in 2021, showcasing its pillars and the enablers of its implementation. He explored efforts undertaken by the Egyptian Government to digitize services in various sectors, and concluded by commending the Arab Digital Agenda initiative developed by ESCWA in cooperation with the League of Arab States and other partners as a platform for regional cooperation, emphasizing the importance of concerted efforts by all stakeholders to achieve the Arab Vision.

12. During discussions, the representative of the State of Palestine said that the launch date of the Vision developed by ESCWA was very important as the 2030 date for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) approached. He emphasized that the existing regional system's ineffectiveness in achieving safety and security, especially amid the ongoing war on Gaza, hindered the realization of the Vision, which required working mechanisms capable of setting practical steps, as well as a political will for cooperation and integration. He asked how regional security could be strengthened in the current situation and what elements conflict-affected countries needed to achieve the Vision. Mr. Mohammed Ahmed Al-Hawari, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Planning in Yemen, asked about the experience of Egypt in digital and technological transformation, and the challenges it faced in the process. He also wanted to know how to transform the Vision's projects and initiatives from theory into reality.

13. The representative of Oman emphasized the importance of developing regional measures of progress, rather than using global metrics, to gain a better picture of development in the region's areas of interest. He also asked about the ability of Arab countries to reach the goals aspired to in the Vision. The representative of Morocco said that the Vision was very ambitious. He added that conflicts, in particular, should remain within the competence of the League of Arab States, and hoped that more time would be given to consult the various ministerial sectors in Morocco and obtain their comments on the Vision. The representative of Bahrain said that it would be useful for the vision to include the themes of coexistence and tolerance and the rejection of terrorism, especially since the region was facing several challenges in that regard. She also wondered whether countries could achieve the vision in the light of the challenges they were facing.

14. Ms. Rola Dashti, Executive Secretary of ESCWA, affirmed that the Vision was developed in response to concerns about young people's frustration in the Arab region to instill hope for a promising future that could be attained through Arab cooperation. She explained that the Vision allowed people to dream, and based on consultations with various stakeholders, namely young people, the pillars that could turn the vision into reality were adopted. She pointed out that ESCWA was able to contribute to many, but not all, pillars of the Vision, and that partner organizations, such as the League of Arab States, and different countries had a major role to play in implementing the Vision's projects. What was needed now was to give priority to the Vision and begin its implementation. The Executive Secretary said that ESCWA would take note of member States' observations and allow them time to consult on what they wanted to add to the Vision. With regard to tolerance, coexistence and the rejection of terrorism, she replied that they were included under the pillars of diversity and cultural renewal, and security and safety. She concluded by mentioning that the Arab Vision was developed in line with the 2030 Agenda and the national visions for development, given that it combined the visions of member States. She added that since all countries had developed ambitious plans, ESCWA should be just as ambitious.

15. Mr. Mounir Tabet, Deputy Executive Secretary for Programmes, said that the world would be revisiting the 2030 Agenda in a few years, so the Vision represented the beginning of thinking beyond 2030. He added that it was important to capitalize on the major technological strides that could facilitate development work. Mr. Tabet also mentioned that ESCWA was monitoring megatrends and had presented the Vision as a starting point, adding that member States' views were the basis for crystallizing and improving the Vision.

16. In response, Mr. Waed Abdullah Abdul Razzaq Badhib said that security and safety was a fundamental pillar for achieving development. Mr. Fadi Salti Al-Khalil added that the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic required joint Arab action and the activation of joint Arab agreements at the very least, but that the Vision was centred around hope. He referred to the National Development Programme for Post-War Syria, which was aimed at achieving the SDGs, as an example of ambitious visions emanating from hope. He explained that the first phase of the programme focused on relief before reaching early recovery, but weak components and persistent water security crises and climate change hindered the required progress. He concluded that attaining the Vision's hope required programmes that took into account countries with different circumstances, such as the State of Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic, and pointed to the weak performance of Arab countries in the technological field, which required a rapid change.

17. Mr. Saeed bin Mohammed bin Ahmed Al-Saqri said that Arab countries should agree on ways to resolve the Palestinian issue, and that the League of Arab States had good frameworks that could serve as starting points for achieving the Vision. Mr. Ahmad Kamali discussed two major challenges that Egypt was facing in its technology sector, namely investment, which required close partnership with the private sector to establish a technology infrastructure, and the digital divide between different segments of society, which required government action to bridge it. He presented an approach to the development and reformulation of the Vision, stressing the importance of participation in that regard, including with Governments and the private sector.

B. Initiatives and projects of the Arab Vision 2045 (Agenda item 18(b))

18. The Arab Vision 2045, prepared by ESCWA in partnership with the League of Arab States, includes strategic initiatives and projects that contribute to safety and security, justice and inclusive sustainable development at national and regional levels. The ESCWA secretariat dedicated the second ministerial round-table discussion to review some of these initiatives and projects, highlight potential challenges during the implementation process, and discuss necessary steps to achieve the vision. Ms. Nada Al-Agizy, Minister Plenipotentiary and Director of the Department of Sustainable Development and International Cooperation at the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States, moderated the session, starting with an introduction of participants, who were expected to propose practical ways to implement the vision.

19. Mr. Al-Fateh Abdullah Yusuf, Minister of Trade of the Sudan, highlighted the importance of benefiting from digital technologies and exploiting the resources of the Arab region. He said that if Arab countries benefited from their untapped resources, they would have significant international recognition and a strategic reserve. He also addressed climate diversity in the region, which may contribute to its prosperity if Arab countries put in place effective mechanisms to share their resources. He said that the Sudan had about 200 million feddans that, if exploited in complementarity with other Arab countries, would contribute to promoting sustainable development, adding that this required a climate risk early warning mechanism. He mentioned that the Vision put forward by ESCWA needed some time to be further developed and implemented, and that a matrix could be proposed to establish a timeline for its implementation. He wondered why a link between innovation and education was not included in the Vision. He underlined the dangers of instability and conflict on development outcomes in the region, suggesting the use of regional economic blocs to address their repercussions, and referring to the Arab Food Security Initiative proposed by the Sudan in 2013 and approved by the countries of the region. He concluded by reviewing some challenges, such as monitoring progress which required a regional mechanism that ESCWA could oversee.

20. Ms. Wafa Bani Mustafa, Minister of Social Development in Jordan, addressed the obstacles to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda owing to pandemics and wars, which confirmed the need to act proactively to absorb shocks, and to link the Vision to international and national development plans. She outlined some of the national reform plans of Jordan, and wondered why the topic of political and administrative reform was not included in the Vision despite its importance. She stressed that every Arab citizen's dream was to attain better living, which meant that Governments had to focus on social welfare and adopt a rights-based approach to multiple aspects of development. She said that although the Vision focused on improving indicators, it should not neglect people and the impact of transformations on them, nor should it ignore the national and regional contexts and countries' different priorities. She emphasized the importance of social protection for vulnerable groups in society, noting that it would contribute to promoting justice. She also stressed that it was imperative for the vision to include solutions to the prevalent issue of refugees and displaced persons, and proactive solutions to climate change and its impact on extreme poverty, as well as the governance of social assistance to maximize its benefits. She concluded by requesting more in-depth consideration of the Vision's aspects relating to the right of return of Palestinians so as to take into account the situation of the people in the occupied Palestinian territory, who were severely deprived and facing the threat of genocide.

21. Ms. Heba Shama, Development Specialist and Youth Representative, referred to the Arab Vision 2045 as a road map for development. She reviewed proposed youth-focused initiatives that could be adopted to achieve the vision, such as the establishment of funds to support small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) established by young people, especially in less developed regions; the development of mechanisms to support and protect displaced persons and develop economic programmes for them; the activation of an early warning system for climate disasters; the establishment of an Arab cybersecurity authority; the development of mechanisms to link education approaches to the labour market; the protection of biodiversity in the region; the establishment of student exchange programmes between Arab countries; and the establishment of a digital repository for the preservation of Arab heritage.

22. ESCWA Executive Secretary Rola Dashti explained that the team responsible for developing the Vision used positive, non-controversial terminology, which meant that some concepts were implicitly mentioned. She explained that the Vision did not provide for political reform, for example, but that it addressed the need to rebuild the social contract, which involved political and social rights and citizen participation. She said that countries' interventions were aimed at identifying the dimensions that were not covered by the Vision in order to finalize it, and that the coming period would encompass close cooperation by relevant ministries to agree on its implementation at the local level, and to set priority pillars for each country, noting that the identification of implementation mechanisms required an exchange of national, regional and global experiences. She reviewed some of the important issues that required Arab countries to unite in addressing them, such as the carbon emissions market and its impact on Arab fossil fuel exporting countries; regional connectivity to the Internet; accelerating electricity grid connectivity; and cross-border synergy between supply and demand for SME products and services. With regard to cultural renewal, she stressed the importance of agreeing on a curriculum for Arab culture, highlighting the launch of an Arab creativity platform by ESCWA to encourage young people's initiatives.

23. During discussions, the representative of Yemen said that the challenges in the Arab region made it difficult to be optimistic. He recalled that economic integration and trade exchange in the Arab region did not achieve the desired outcome. He called for a new and expanded approach to integration, taking into account the existing obstacles in order to avoid the problems of the past. He requested further clarification of the new approaches adopted in Jordan for political and economic reform and of the Sudan's aspirations to overcome the obstacles posed by war. The representative of the State of Palestine stressed the need for political and administrative reform, and said that the document should elaborate on this topic. He believed that the safety and security pillar focused on the internal conflict and neglected external threats. He added that the regional initiatives included in the Vision required effective regional cooperation, unlike past initiatives that were not achieved. He said that the Vision's indicators called for mechanisms to monitor progress in implementation, provide funding and assign responsibilities for initiatives.

24. The representative of Oman stressed the importance of partnerships with the private sector in implementing the vision and called for this element to be strengthened and clarified further. Since the vision called for the establishment of new specialized banks, he wondered whether that recommendation was made following an assessment of the existing financial institutions and their effectiveness and role. The representative of Libya pointed out that the vision needed an operational mechanism to be determined in consultation with member States, suggesting that ESCWA develop an operational programme with a timeline for implementation. The representative of Algeria said that the short time that was given to review the Vision, in addition to its broad scope and its extensive areas, did not allow for consultations to be carried out with the national stakeholders. He agreed with other representatives on the need to agree on implementation and funding mechanisms. He said that there were many important Arab institutions concerned with culture, and asked how the Vision could support them.

25. In response, Ms. Wafa Bani Mustafa reviewed some of the recent political reforms in Jordan, such as allocating seats for party-affiliated MPs and setting a quota for women and young people on electoral lists. She noted that those reforms would come into effect in the summer of 2024, adding that the new path was constitutionally and legislatively guaranteed for ten years. As for economic reform, she explained that it included financial and digital inclusion, and that the Jordanian national vision was developed within a specific timeframe and with allocated budgets. She also discussed administrative reform, which included identifying a human resources authority and linking public service to productivity. She stressed the critical role of the private sector, noting that Jordan had developed a framework for social responsibility to enhance resource management and the contribution of the sector to the implementation of national priorities.

26. Mr. Al-Fateh Abdullah Yusuf believed that there were internal and external causes for the situation in the Sudan, which underscored the importance of renewing the social contract. He stated that the implementation of the Vision was based on complementarity, particularly in terms of early warning, noting that technological progress facilitated integration and partnerships. He addressed the importance of record security and electronic filing, especially since the Sudan had lost many records during wars. He also noted the importance of networking between Arab countries.

27. Ms. Rola Dashti affirmed that the initiatives set forth in the Vision foresaw a prosperous Arab region, but they addressed the region as a whole. She agreed that there were certain initiatives that needed to be activated, and that many of them were meant to be implemented at the national level, while others were entirely new, such as the Arab carbon market, which required looking into ways to establish, implement and finance it, and building consensus among the concerned Arab authorities. She noted that the Vision's goal was not to assess costs, but to determine the direction in which things needed to proceed, agree on priorities and then explore funding means. She indicated that the next meeting of the ESCWA Executive Committee would include a review of the progress made in setting the vision on the implementation track.

28. Ms. Heba Shama expressed hope for the achievement of the Vision, noting that many opportunities were wasted in the past but could be recovered with consensus, cooperation and will.

III. Topics of discussion

A. Governance in the light of global and regional developments

29. The Commission identified two main themes for the senior officials' meetings: governance in the light of global and regional developments, and the war on Gaza. As part of governance discussions, participants addressed pressing substantive issues, such as the governance challenge of the Arab region and various governance aspects and dimensions.

1. *The governance challenge of the Arab region*
(Agenda item 5)

30. On the basis of document [E/ESCWA/31/4](#), the representative of the ESCWA secretariat presented a comprehensive index to measure deficiencies in development achievements in the areas of quality-adjusted human development (health, education and income level); environmental sustainability; and governance. He said that the index was created for several reasons, including the regional vision of ESCWA to contribute to the establishment of measures of developmental progress beyond gross domestic product (GDP), the integration of governance into the development measurement system, and the improvement of the quality of governance. He then mentioned the framework for measuring development challenges and described its various dimensions, noting that it considered development a challenge rather than an achievement.

31. The representative of the secretariat then provided an overview of indicators that measured the governance challenge, which included rule of law, accountability, participation and efficiency of institutional performance. He said that the results indicated that Arab countries recorded a high level of development challenges, as no single Arab country scored low or very low on the relevant scale. He explained that the governance component was the largest contributor to development challenges, and that those challenges were much greater than expected compared to countries' income levels.

32. The representative of the secretariat then proposed ways to bridge the governance gap, emphasizing the importance of public administration reform and the need for efficiency and effectiveness, especially in poor and conflict-affected Arab countries. He concluded that real human development could not be achieved without effective and accountable public administration. He then referred to the efforts of ESCWA in supporting member States in this regard, including by issuing reports on development challenges in three countries, conducting an extensive study to localize the measurement of governance challenges in Egypt, and holding training courses for ministerial cadres on the use of ESCWA indices to measure development.

33. The representative of the United Arab Emirates asked how the percentages in the document were calculated, emphasizing the need to take into account the different experiences of countries in the areas of governance, and noting his country's experience in developing the government system. He said that governance had become a challenge even in developed countries, adding that it could not be linked to countries' income levels or to problems specific to Arab countries only. The representative of Oman agreed on the disparity between country outcomes, and suggested calculating the index not only by considering the overall regional perspective, but also by taking into account country groups to capture the value of the index in a way that was closer to reality.

34. The representative of Egypt asked how the priorities on which the index was based were classified, including information technology. The representative of Yemen referred to this new method of calculating the level of development in the region, and believed that the prevailing opinion was that the lack of resources was the main reason behind the delay in development, rather than governance. He asked about the possibility of adding other governance-related elements in the measurement, namely corruption and political instability, so that it could be comprehensive.

35. The representative of the State of Palestine praised the presented document and the role of governance in achieving development, and asked that the dimensions of the governance challenge and its indicators be represented more. He believed that the existing framework, despite its importance, required greater depth and a more detailed description of measurement methods, as well as of the causes and factors that increased the level of challenges. He said that a vision needed to be developed to deal with the governance challenge during the next stage. He then emphasized the importance of improving the document presented by the secretariat, and suggested forming a working group to cooperate with ESCWA in carrying out these improvements.

36. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic asked about the next steps that needed to be taken following the findings of the report, in particular the practical steps that could be implemented in this regard. He expressed his country's interest therein, given the urgent need for capacity-building after years of conflict. The representative of the Sudan talked about the role of governance in the parallel or informal economy.

37. In response, the representative of the secretariat said that there were already disparities between the findings of different groups of countries in terms of development challenges and the contribution of governance thereto. He added that a future study on development challenges in the region would capture these disparities in more profound detail. He emphasized that the adopted set of indicators were chosen to avoid bias in the findings of any group of countries, explaining that the index combined the results of expert opinions with quantitative measurements. He also said that ESCWA had an economic resilience index whose components included information technology, but that this index had different determinants from the development challenges index.

38. The representative of the secretariat explained that the components of the measurement could lead to enhanced political stability, if their results were positive, which is why political stability was not included therein. He emphasized that the scales assigned to the measurement components were equal, and that the components were selected based on the drivers of transformational growth. He explained that the next steps could be determined through a dialogue to localize the index, similar to what was being done in Egypt, and that the role of governance in the parallel economy should be addressed by national studies.

*2. Governance of natural resources: extractive industries as an engine
for sustainable development
(Agenda item 6)*

39. On the basis of document [E/ESCWA/31/5](#), the representative of the secretariat addressed the current situation of extractive industries in the Arab region and the challenges in transforming these industries into engines for sustainable development. In her presentation, she mentioned that the aim of raising this topic was to make a regional contribution to the global dialogue on the just and inclusive transition of energy systems, and to lay the foundations of a strategy to align the governance of extractive industries with the SDGs and the requirements of climate action and enhance regional cooperation. She emphasized the importance of finding integrated solutions to the overlapping crises in the region to achieve a just energy transition, especially since extractive industries were still the basis of economic development in the Arab region, despite the fact that the region's orientation towards the production of non-oil minerals was still below the level that it could achieve.

40. The representative of the secretariat underlined the technological areas in which critical minerals were used for energy transition. She discussed transition opportunities in the region, including the diversity of geological environments, the abundance of mineral deposits, the ability to produce large quantities of renewable energies, and the potential for economic diversification and increased revenues. The representative of the secretariat said that weak governance threatened supply chains of vital minerals in the region, noting that this weakness was attributed to corruption, lack of financial transparency, inconsistencies in policies and environmental and social frameworks and illicit financial flows. She put forward some recommendations to improve mineral value chains, which included environmental, technical and governance solutions, before reviewing some of the activities of ESCWA in knowledge production, capacity-building and State support.

41. The representative of the United Arab Emirates said that the study was limited to extractive industries and did not address natural resources in their broader context, recalling that oil States in the region, especially the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, had plans to shift from traditional hydrocarbon energy sources to renewable energy. He also questioned the link between stable tax systems and the governance of extractive industries. The representative of Oman suggested adding data-related recommendations, such as developing statistical databases to meet the needs of planners and researchers, and carrying out multi-purpose surveys to update databases on productive sectors. The representative of Yemen believed that the extensive

recommendations contained in the paper might be impractical and that including only a few recommendations could help countries focus on specific topics. The representative of the State of Palestine said that the main challenge in his country in relation to resource governance was the loss of control and sovereignty over those resources, and the inability to benefit from them. He hoped that the paper would address this aspect of governance.

42. In response, the representative of the secretariat said that the term extractive industries did not only encompass minerals but also oil and gas, and that ESCWA had conducted studies on the specific conditions of the energy sector in the region's countries to achieve a smooth, equitable and inclusive energy transition. She stressed that the paper submitted by ESCWA did not neglect the efforts of Arab countries to switch to renewable energy sources, but was rather developed as a result of these efforts. She added that the fact that Arab countries imported all renewable energy generation equipment even though they had the raw materials needed to manufacture them was problematic and could hinder the full utilization of resources. She said that the paper focused on governance rather than data, adding that ESCWA would undertake activities in the near future to develop a road map for the utilization of minerals. She emphasized the importance of technology localization, and suggested focusing on the recommendations related to investment, data and capacity-building, and selecting countries to pilot their implementation.

3. *Economic governance: market competition challenges in the Arab region*
(Agenda item 7)

43. On the basis of document [E/ESCWA/31/6](#), the representative of the secretariat addressed the challenges to effective market competition and related policy implementation. After briefly outlining the importance of competition for both macro- and micro-economies, she noted that rapid technological development had made it difficult to monitor markets as prices and costs were no longer sufficient to measure the level of competition. She addressed particular competition-related challenges in the Arab region, including a strong public sector and the control of State-owned enterprises over vital sectors; a weak private sector, which was mostly represented by small and medium-sized enterprises; and the expansion of the informal sector. She said that the market structure in the region required strong competition management institutions, and briefly touched on their role, before noting that 17 Arab countries had established competition institutions, 10 of which were independent. She reviewed an ESCWA assessment of competition legislation in the region for the period 2020–2023 and cited examples of decisions taken by competition authorities in the region.

44. The representative of the secretariat then discussed consumer protection and reported that 18 Arab States had established related authorities. She then reviewed the challenges those authorities were facing, which included institutional weakness at the regulatory and technical levels, and the emergence of digital platforms that had changed the idea of consumption and with it the risks to consumers, requiring new ways to protect them. The representative of the secretariat presented an ESCWA assessment of legislative reforms related to consumer protection in the region during the period 2020–2023, and then gave examples of decisions taken by consumer protection authorities in different countries of the region. She outlined the interlinkages between competition, anti-corruption and governance legislation, as well as the gains and losses of effective legislation. She concluded with recommendations to strengthen competition legislation, including the adoption of the concepts of competitive neutrality and fair treatment, the harmonization of competition laws and legislation in Arab countries, and the revision of some support policies in an effort to liberalize markets.

45. The representative of the United Arab Emirates mentioned the study and hoped that it would include a comparison between Arab countries and the rest of the world rather than just comparing the performance of Arab countries. He noted that the varying performance of Arab countries underscored the need to exchange experiences. The representative of Oman said that greater attention should be given to capacity-building and knowledge sharing among competition authorities, and that more work should be undertaken to promote e-commerce policies to enable competition authorities to obtain accurate information on market trends and

barriers to competition. He added that cooperation should be expanded among Arab countries in relation to competition in the services sector.

46. The representative of Egypt stressed the importance of cooperation among Arab countries, and globally, in building the capacity of competition authorities, and underlined the need to continue to hold the Arab Competition Forum as a platform for knowledge sharing among Arab competition authorities. He shed light on the use of information technology in linking farmers to markets, as the large number of intermediaries posed a problem in some Arab countries. He explained that enabling farmers to use technology increased their direct link to markets, enhanced competition and increased their profits. He hoped that a future study would address this issue and suggested that ESCWA establish an electronic platform containing information from Arab producers so as to facilitate cooperation among them and promote competition at the regional level.

47. The representative of the State of Palestine said that the Council of Ministers in his country had ratified a competition law, which was referred to the President of the State for final approval. He added that the Palestinian Ministry of Economy had a General Competition Department that was currently undertaking the supervisory role. He wondered whether competition always contributed to an economy's development or if it actually hindered the development of certain economies, particularly the Palestinian economy, where the country's special circumstances required local products to be protected from major industries. He believed that competition might harm small enterprises that could not survive in the face of larger enterprises, stressing the need to address the disadvantages of competition in some economies where small and entrepreneurial enterprises prevail and cannot thrive without protection measures.

48. The representative of the Sudan referred to the role of civil society organizations in consumer protection, explaining that they played a very significant role in the Sudan before the adoption of the competition law. He said that this called for a broader reference to the role of organizations in the study, and noted the role of e-commerce in improving the competitiveness of small businesses. The representative of Yemen asked about competition opportunities on the ground, especially since the laws that provided for open competition ended up paving the way for the dominance of giant companies that easily provided goods and services at competitive prices. He added that the study needed to accommodate the differences between competition laws of different countries owing to their different trade and economic statuses.

49. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic emphasized the interdependence between competition and consumer protection, adding that there was a division within the League of Arab States dedicated to those two areas. He hoped for greater coordination between ESCWA and the League of Arab States in the field of competition. He said that customs procedures were an important aspect of competition because of their contribution to reducing it and facilitating trade among Arab countries. The representative of Morocco requested clarification on regional competition authorities referred to in the document submitted by ESCWA.

50. In response, the representative of the secretariat said that the law was a double-edged sword that could promote competition among all entities or tilt it in favour of some, but that competitive neutrality should be adopted within the laws. She stated that competition laws incentivized small and medium-sized enterprises, but added that it all depended on how the laws were used within the country's economy and trade standards. She said that the rapid progress of technology was causing all countries, not just Arab countries, to face problems in collecting data on companies to determine whether they had a dominant position or not. She added that it was important for future studies to address competition of large companies, especially in e-commerce. She indicated that competition laws were intended not only to protect consumers, but also to encourage companies to invest and innovate, and that competition authorities should consider a balance between the two.

51. The representative of the secretariat confirmed that ESCWA and the League of Arab States were continuously cooperating. She referred to the Arab Competition Network launched by the League of Arab States and to the forums held by ESCWA to exchange information with various stakeholders, including the League of Arab States. She explained that, during the evaluation of country performance, ESCWA had focused

on legislation rather than enforcement, since the evaluation of legislation enforcement was conducted within a sector or market. She said that the ESCWA evaluation represented a first step and agreed that customs procedures were an important dimension of competition and should be taken into account when balancing the promotion of domestic industries and the compliance with regional and international trade agreements.

4. *Governance of recovery and prevention: essential State functions and processes*
(Agenda item 8)

52. On the basis of document [E/ESCWA/31/7](#), the representative of the secretariat outlined a set of recommendations on the reform of the public sector to promote social cohesion, inclusion and investment in human capital and achieve sustainable development. He began by mentioning the human and economic costs of war, and how it had led to the continued fragility of countries and the shift in focus from achieving sustainable development to cushioning the effects of war. He said that the most important challenges facing the conflict recovery governance system included corruption, lack of provision of basic services, lack of equitable distribution of resources, weak rule of law and marginalization of some social groups.

53. The representative of the secretariat reviewed institutions' needs in conflict-affected countries and stressed the importance of restoring the role of the public sector in providing public services, improving living conditions and achieving sustainable prevention. He then presented a simplified approach to conflict prevention developed by ESCWA, which emphasized the importance of promoting the role of the public sector, building institutional capacities by strengthening public administration, building consensus, mainstreaming interdependence and addressing the war economy. He also addressed the importance of improving prevention and social cohesion through decentralized development and a social contract based on reconciliation, and of enhancing human development through education, nutrition and health services. He then presented a triple nexus approach developed by ESCWA to strengthen the public sector in the face of crises, which was based on understanding the background of the crisis, mainstreaming approaches to addressing it on a national basis, and developing capacities to absorb it. He concluded by noting that the triple nexus approach had been developed in cooperation with nine Arab countries and in partnership with the League of Arab States.

54. Representatives discussed the ESCWA approach to conflict prevention. The representative of the United Arab Emirates said that the concept of recovery and prevention governance did not only apply to conflict-affected countries, but was rather an important concept for all countries, which meant that recommendations and practices should be provided to other countries. He added that there were countries from other regions that had also witnessed certain crises, and their experiences could be utilized to develop a system for Arab countries. The representative of the State of Palestine stressed that the governance of recovery was a goal shared by all countries, adding that crises that might exacerbate the impact of conflicts also included the war on Gaza, the repercussions of which affected the entire region. He said that the relationship between the public sector and human development was not a one-way relationship, and explained that human capital development also enhanced governance.

55. In response, the representative of the secretariat said that the secretariat had taken note of the representatives' suggestions and that ESCWA had cooperated with the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security and the League of Arab States to link the recovery process to sustainable development.

B. The war on Gaza

1. *War on Gaza: social and economic repercussions*
(Agenda item 9)

56. On the basis of document [E/ESCWA/31/8](#), the representative of the secretariat addressed the social and economic repercussions of the war on Gaza and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory. He began by presenting a matrix of hegemonic policies in the occupied Palestinian territory, which included control over

land through military zones, denial of access to natural resources and confiscation, and control over the population through movement restrictions, violence, arrest, displacement and denial of services. He said that those policies, implemented by the Israeli authorities, had reduced the per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of the Gaza Strip, adding that even before the war, a large proportion of the population of the Strip was suffering from poverty and food insecurity.

57. The representative of the secretariat touched on some of the losses resulting from the war that erupted in October 2023, and the scale of destruction that had exceeded all previous wars. He said that even before the war, the Gaza Strip was suffering from the long-term effects of the occupation and that the ongoing war would exacerbate these effects, calling for a new approach to reconstruction.

58. In the course of the discussion, the representative of the State of Palestine praised the efforts of ESCWA in showing the repercussions of the war on Gaza and the impact of the occupation on Palestinian people. He said that the repercussions of the war were much greater than the numbers had shown, and that there was no methodology that captured a complete picture thereof. He added that the events were more than a war; they were a genocide, a mass destruction of the Strip and a displacement of its population. He believed that the international community was powerless in the face of what had happened and that its responses did not match the scale of the tragedy in Gaza. The representative of Lebanon strongly condemned the war and expressed full support for the population of the Gaza Strip and for any decision of the session in this regard. She hoped for a total and immediate ceasefire, noting that Lebanon was experiencing daily attacks that threatened people's peace and security. She called for a solution to the Palestinian Question through peaceful and diplomatic means based on the Arab Peace Initiative in 2002.

59. The representative of Yemen said that the numbers in the paper, while significant, did not include much about the long-term effects, especially since the scale of the war would affect an entire generation or more, threatening the future of development and of the economy in Palestine. He also wished to see a preliminary assessment of the magnitude of recovery needs.

60. In response, the representative of the secretariat stated that the secretariat had taken note of the representatives' suggestions. He added that assessing the long-term impact of the war required action on the ground, and that estimating needs required collective efforts to calculate the scale of destruction to the people, infrastructure, society and the economy.

2. *War on Gaza: tenets and essential elements for sustainable recovery* (Agenda item 10)

61. On the basis of document [E/ESCWA/31/9](#), the representative of the secretariat reviewed sustainable recovery guidelines in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territory in general. In his presentation, he emphasized the occupation's role in obstructing recovery and development, and the essential role of Palestinian ownership in the development process. He noted that previous efforts had often failed to achieve economic development, primarily because of disregard for the special circumstances of the State of Palestine and the reality of the Israeli occupation, the unwillingness to clash with Israeli interests, the adoption of approaches that might not take into account Palestinian priorities, and the separation of development from international law. He concluded that planning for recovery and development required a new approach.

62. The representative of the secretariat presented guidelines that included supporting the stages of recovery, linking recovery to the process of addressing the impact of the Israeli occupation, and restructuring the internal Palestinian economic interdependence with the Arab region. The representative of the secretariat also touched on key elements of recovery in Gaza, which included supporting Palestinians in developing a comprehensive assessment of damage, loss and needs, integrating relief operations and recovery mechanisms, and focusing on human capital.

63. In the course of the discussion, the representative of Egypt stressed that the next phase required all United Nations organizations, including ESCWA, and countries supporting the Palestinian cause, to adopt a unified plan to support the Palestinian people because the dispersion of efforts would squander results. He added that lack of post-war political clarity made it difficult to identify repercussions, necessitating the development of several alternative plans to deal with various scenarios. The representative of Oman supported the representative of Egypt's statement, stressing the need for clear initiatives that could be implemented, especially in the humanitarian and social sectors which required rapid intervention. The representative of Yemen said that it was possible to benefit from his country's experience, and believed that focusing on the relief and humanitarian aspect harmed development issues. It was thus necessary to adopt the relief, development and peace nexus approach. He asked why the guidelines did not clearly call for the establishment of a Palestinian State as a radical solution to the conflict.

64. The representative of the State of Palestine stressed the impossibility of sustainable recovery without a stable political reality, noting that recovery was not possible without putting an end to occupation, and that securing the political context after ending the occupation would facilitate sustainable recovery. He added that previous procedures have proven to be ineffective, as only a small number of houses were rebuilt after previous rounds of conflict due to the politicization of aid. He indicated that the State of Palestine had previously made efforts to disengage from occupation authorities and shift to economic engagement with the countries of the region, but occupation authorities had obstructed these efforts. He said that the Palestinian Government had a humanitarian relief team working in coordination with international organizations.

65. The representative of Jordan believed that what was stated in the paper was applicable under stable conditions, not under catastrophic conditions such as those in Gaza today, stressing the need to focus on what could be applied to the current reality. He said that the mass destruction in Gaza called for a focus on relief, and recognized the importance of development dimensions. He added, however, that the discussion should be postponed until the current situation was resolved. He proposed a short-term plan that would take into account the urgent needs in Gaza.

66. In response, the representative of the secretariat affirmed that what ESCWA had presented was not a plan but rather guidelines that should be taken into account in the development of any Gaza Strip recovery plan.

IV. Work of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies

A. Outcomes of the 2023 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development (Agenda item 11)

67. On the basis of document [E/ESCWA/31/10](#), the representative of the secretariat presented the outcome of the 2023 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, organized by ESCWA in partnership with the League of Arab States and the United Nations system working in the Arab region. The ninth session of the Forum was held virtually and in person in Beirut from 14 to 16 March 2023, and its work programme included sessions to review the implementation of SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17. The representative of the secretariat underlined that the Forum was a high-level regional platform for dialogue and coordination on mechanisms to implement, follow up on and review the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region.

68. The representative of the secretariat stated that the Forum had concluded with a series of messages that were presented to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, held in New York from 10 to 19 July 2023 under the theme "Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels". These messages addressed development priorities for the Arab region, such as a focus on financing, partnership with the private sector, water security, innovative means of data collection, and security and stability. He added that the next forum in 2024 would focus on reviewing the implementation of SDGs 1, 2, 13, 16 and 17, noting that the events planned

within the framework of the Forum included an Arab business round table on the SDGs, which was intended to respond to messages related to enhancing the role of the private sector in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

69. In the course of the discussion, the representative of the United Arab Emirates asked about the next steps, as well as how to put the outcomes of the Forum into action at the national level, and whether the Arab business round table at the next Forum would include representatives from the government sector. The representative of Oman suggested conducting a regional review of the progress made in implementing the SDGs, whereby key information and recommendations from the voluntary national reviews (VNRs) would be collected to develop a regional road map showing development achievements. The representative of Yemen stressed the need to develop a mechanism to follow up on the implementation of the messages resulting from the forum to review the extent of their benefit.

70. In response, the representative of the secretariat explained that the Arab business round table would be attended by representatives of the government sector, but would be devoted to listening to the views and perspectives of representatives of the private sector, in response to the Forum's messages which requested a greater role for the private sector. He affirmed that the secretariat was constantly undertaking follow-up processes, and that its modalities were determined during the Forum itself. He said that ESCWA was in the process of developing a platform on best practices for regional reviews.

**B. Implementation of resolutions and recommendations made by the Commission
at its seventh special session and adoption of reports on Executive Committee
meetings held since the thirtieth session
(Agenda item 12)**

71. On the basis of document [E/ESCWA/31/11](#), the representative of the secretariat presented actions taken to implement the resolutions and recommendations made to the secretariat and issued by the Commission at its seventh special session, held in Amman on 20 and 21 December 2022. He referred to the most important activities undertaken by the secretariat in this regard, such as continuing to develop a set of interactive tools related to financing for development and informing decision makers of these tools to mainstream their use; holding the second Arab SMEs Summit; undertaking activities under the Climate/SDGs Debt Swap Initiative; publishing the regional guide to improve disability data collection; supporting seven member States in issuing handbooks on gender statistics; supporting the development of a common Arab regional job competencies framework for senior public servants in Palestine; developing the Arab Digital Agenda for the period 2023–2033 and supporting its adoption and following up on its implementation; and issuing a study on skill trends in the Arab region after the pre-trained ChatGPT.

72. In the course of the discussion, representatives commended efforts made in implementing the resolutions and recommendations. The representative of Jordan addressed the cooperation efforts between the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation in his country and ESCWA within the framework of the Climate/SDGs Debt Swap Initiative, whereby both parties agreed on a conceptual framework for the project that would be presented to creditors, especially Germany, and identified activities related to climate issues that Jordan could undertake in partnership with the German Government. In this context, he mentioned existing cooperation efforts between ESCWA and the Jordanian Government in the design of these activities and their presentation to Germany. The representative of Tunisia stressed the importance of the debt swap project, noting the experience of Jordan in cooperating with ESCWA. He said he was looking forward to benefitting from this experience, and noted that his country had also been involved in the implementation of the Initiative and that the project was under follow-up.

73. The representative of the Sudan addressed the recommendation on displacement, explaining that his country was witnessing a vicious war that had caused massive displacement, and that the people in the Sudan and in neighbouring countries, especially Egypt, had dealt with it in a commendable manner. He said that those events deserved to be studied as an example of how to absorb waves of displacement. The representative of

Egypt stressed the need to focus on the events happening in the Sudan, given the difficult conditions experienced by the population there, and to dedicate part of the ESCWA studies and activities thereto. The representative of the State of Palestine asked if it was possible to see the Arab Sustainable Development Report before it was finalized to ensure that the results were consistent with national statistics. He also inquired about the reason for the irregular sessions of the ESCWA Executive Committee, especially since the regularity of the sessions allowed for closer follow-up on the implementation of recommendations and the identification of needs. He stressed the importance of returning to regular meetings as stipulated in the Committee's terms of reference.

74. The representative of Yemen addressed the recovery vision, which his country had developed with the support of ESCWA. He praised the efforts of ESCWA in this regard, adding that it helped transform the vision from a dream into a reality through the development of an initial version that was currently under discussion. He also noted that there were arrangements to discuss this version more broadly. The representative of Yemen also referred to the efforts made to re-establish the national statistical system, noting that it needed intensive technical support, and expressed hope that ESCWA would cooperate with his country in that regard. The representative of Morocco highlighted the entrepreneurship forum organized by ESCWA in his country. He also referred to the progress made in establishing the ESCWA Arab Integrated Road Safety Observatory, noting that ESCWA had sent the hosting agreement to the Moroccan Government, and it was currently under consultation and study. The representative of Libya suggested holding periodic meetings between trade ministers and planning ministers to deepen the economic dimension of the Commission's work.

75. In response, the representative of the secretariat stressed the importance of the displacement issue, adding that it would be the subject of future events and studies. He said that ESCWA was the only regional commission whose programme of work linked development and security issues, noting that the governance and conflict prevention programme had evolved over the years to include multiple dimensions and many countries in the region. The representative stressed that ESCWA was closely and attentively following the events in the Sudan, but that the magnitude of what was happening in Gaza and its unprecedented danger to the security of the region as a whole was what prompted the focus on it at this session. With regard to the regularity of the Executive Committee's sessions and meetings, he replied that the past period was an exception due to the witnessed crises. He stressed that the regularity of meetings was in the interest of ESCWA, but that it also depended on the support of member States in terms of attendance and the creation of appropriate conditions for the meetings.

76. The Commission took note of and adopted the reports of the Executive Committee on its meetings held since the thirtieth session. The secretariat also took note of the representatives' requests and proposals.

C. Reports of the Commission's subsidiary bodies (Agenda item 13)

77. Under this item, the Commission reviewed the reports of the ESCWA subsidiary bodies that had not been presented to the Executive Committee. These included:

- (1) Report of the twenty-third session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics (Alexandria, Egypt, 20–21 October 2022, [E/ESCWA/C.5/2022/9/Report](#));
- (2) Report of the fourth session of the Committee on Technology for Development (Beirut, 15–14 November 2022, [E/ESCWA/C.8/2022/11/Report](#));
- (3) Report of the fifteenth session of the Statistical Committee (Beirut, 16–17 November 2022, [E/ESCWA/C.1/2022/7/Report](#));

- (4) Report of the third session of the Committee on Trade Policies in the States Members of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (Tunis, 7–8 March 2023, [E/ESCWA/C.6/2023/11/Report](#));
- (5) Report of the fourteenth session of the Committee on Social Development (Beirut, 8 June 2023, [E/ESCWA/C.2/2023/7/Report](#));
- (6) Report of the fifteenth session of the Committee on Water Resources (Beirut, 19–20 June 2023, [E/ESCWA/C.4/2023/9/Report](#));
- (7) Report of the fourteenth session of the Committee on Energy (Beirut, 20–22 June 2023, [E/ESCWA/C.3/2023/9/Report](#));
- (8) Report of the eleventh session of the Committee on Women (Beirut, 10–11 October 2023, [E/ESCWA/C.7/2023/8/Report](#)).

78. The Committee took note of the reports of the Commission's subsidiary bodies and announced the adoption of the recommendations contained therein.

V. Management issues

A. Programme performance in the period 2020–2023

(Agenda item 14)

79. On the basis of document [E/ESCWA/31/13](#), the representative of the secretariat made a presentation on the performance of the programme, which he began by noting that the period referred to had seen the membership of the Commission expanding to include Algeria, Somalia and Djibouti, and that important steps had been taken to implement the flexible and agile working strategy to enhance results, transparency and good management of resources. He added that ESCWA had reconfigured its programme plan since 2020 under six subprogrammes and provided an overview of the general trends of its efforts and its experience in adaptive management approaches. The representative of the secretariat said that this approach allowed ESCWA to divert its available resources to emerging priorities, and to adopt alternative methods in the implementation of programmes, which enabled it to keep abreast of developments and issue studies and policy briefs on the different ways in which the Arab region was being affected by the successive crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the war on Gaza. Finally, he touched on the main findings of the six ESCWA subprogrammes, with a focus on the results achieved in 2023.

80. In the course of the discussion, representatives highlighted the results achieved by the secretariat during the previous period. The representative of the United Arab Emirates asked about progress in achieving the subprogrammes' targeted results, and the challenges faced during implementation. The representative of Libya praised the support provided by ESCWA after the cyclone that hit the city of Derna in September 2023, highlighting his country's need for more support and assistance. The representative of Yemen called for urgent support to be provided to member States in using the tools developed by ESCWA to improve access to data and create simulation models.

81. In response, the representative of the secretariat confirmed that ESCWA conducted a periodic evaluation of each of its programmes, and that the evaluation was carried out by a working group from outside ESCWA. He explained that the results of the evaluation were accessible to everyone and showed compatibility between the desired results and the achieved results. He added that ESCWA built on those results in the formulation of its subsequent programmes. He also stressed that ESCWA was striving to follow up on the successive crises, and suggested holding a dialogue, in partnership with concerned United Nations organizations, to discuss lessons learned from previous crises, in order to develop an integrated vision for Arab countries to face each type of crisis. He pointed out that the success of the tools developed by ESCWA required a significant amount of data that might not be available, which sometimes called for the use of alternative indicators.

B. Financial status of the Commission
(Agenda item 15)

82. On the basis of document [E/ESCWA/31/14](#), the representative of the secretariat gave a presentation on the financial status of the Commission in 2022, which included information on budget allocations and expenditures for programmes and activities financed through the regular budget and extrabudgetary sources. He affirmed that ESCWA was committed to achieving greater budgetary efficiency, pursuant to a request by the General Assembly, and was confident that member States would increase their extrabudgetary contributions.

83. In the course of the discussion, the representative of Egypt praised the high percentage of female ESCWA workers, which exceeded the proportion of male workers. The representative of the State of Palestine asked why expenditures exceeded allocations, and inquired about the strategy used to deal with this gap. He asked for clarifications regarding the rationale for allocating budgets to technical cooperation programmes, noting that they might not correspond to the number of requests for such cooperation.

84. In response, the representative of the secretariat explained that the fact that expenditures exceeded allocations was not surprising, especially since one of the success measurements of an organization was financial expenditure compared to budget. He added that expenditure was not only examined yearly, but rather viewed over several years. He said that budget allocations to technical cooperation programmes were not based on the number of requests, but on the size of the allocations required by each request.

C. Proposed programme plan for 2025
(Agenda item 16)

85. On the basis of document [E/ESCWA/31/15](#), the representative of the secretariat made a presentation on the proposed programme plan for 2025, which addressed the initial and strategic underpinnings for the development of the plan. He touched on some of the main proposed outcomes, such as transitioning to sustainable food systems, adopting a multidimensional poverty approach by member States, improving debt management capacity to increase investment in sustainable development priorities, strengthening decision-making and development planning through the use of geostatistical evidence, increasing private sector investment in regional and national sustainable development priorities, and modernizing public administration systems for effective and transparent governance. He concluded by referring to some of the assumptions adopted by ESCWA on external factors in the development of its programme plan.

86. The representative of Egypt hoped that the programme plan would cover artificial intelligence (AI) from more than one perspective, namely keeping pace with technology development, promoting good uses of AI in various areas of development, looking at ways to accommodate the job loss that the move to AI would cause, and addressing the risks posed by AI to cybersecurity. The representative of the United Arab Emirates believed that the pillars of the programme plan should be centred around achieving the SDGs and the Arab Vision 2045. He stressed the importance of addressing challenges that caused discrepancies between targeted and achieved results, and the importance of designing programmes for young people.

87. The representative of the State of Palestine asked about the impact of lessons learned from previous sessions on implementation in the next phase. He hoped that the submitted documents would include a summary of these lessons learned, and asked why water security was not included in the programme plan, and why there were no clear results on gender equality. He mentioned the approach of supporting countries on an annual basis, adding that he felt that it might not be effective because it would require a long period of time. The representative of Libya addressed the issue of food security in the context of the war in Ukraine, and said that the repercussions of that crisis would affect food security in all countries, an issue which demanded more attention thereto.

88. The representative of the secretariat explained that ESCWA had sought to use AI technology in its work two years ago, but that much effort was still required, particularly with regard to cybersecurity. He said that technological progress was not so much country-specific as much as it was now related to companies, adding that this called for building cooperation and partnerships with those companies. He stressed that the Arab Vision 2045 was developed in line with the SDGs. The representative of the secretariat also stressed that future plans were not developed without taking into account the lessons learned, and that the programme plan included projects related to water security and gender equality. He added that ESCWA made recommendations and proposals but did not always have sufficient funding to cover all States and topics, and that the possibility of expanding its scope of work depended on member States' efforts with donors.

89. In the end, participants adopted the proposed programme plan for 2025.

VI. Adoption of the resolutions of the Commission at its thirty-first session

90. At its closing meeting, held on 18 December 2023, the Commission adopted the proposed draft resolutions as amended following the discussions, which will be sent to member States in the final report.

VII. Procedural and organizational matters

A. Date and venue

91. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia held its thirty-first session in Cairo from 16 to 18 December 2023. It convened seven plenary meetings wherein it discussed its agenda items covering issues of concern to member States.

B. Consideration of requests by States Members of the United Nations and/or its specialized agencies that are not members of ESCWA to participate as observers in the thirty-first session of the Commission (Agenda item 4)

92. Rule 63 of the ESCWA rules of procedure states that the Commission may invite any Member State of the United Nations or of a specialized agency that is not a member of the Commission to participate in its deliberations on any matter that the Commission considers to be of particular concern to that State. A State thus invited shall not have the right to vote, but may submit proposals which may be put to the vote at the request of any member of the Commission. In accordance with that rule, the secretariat, at the thirty-first ESCWA session, reviewed requests by member States and took the necessary decisions.

93. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Coordination Office (UNDA), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP) participated as observers in the thirty-first ESCWA session. The League of Arab States participated in the ministerial meetings to launch the Arab Vision 2045. Other regional organizations and bodies, which are listed in annex 1 to the present report, also participated in these meetings.

C. Opening of the session

94. The session was opened in two stages. The senior officials segment was opened on the morning of Saturday, 16 December 2023. The ministerial segment was opened on the morning of Monday, 18 December 2023.

1. *Senior officials segment*

95. At the opening of the senior officials segment, the representative of Tunisia, Chair of the previous session, Mr. Ali bin Saeed, Minister Plenipotentiary at the General Directorate for International Organizations and Conferences at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, commended the ESCWA secretariat for its efforts and member States for their participation and cooperation with Tunisia during its time as Chair. He reviewed the sensitive circumstances that coincided with the session as a result of the repercussions of conflicts and the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting crises in food and energy security. He called on countries of the region to make concerted efforts towards an immediate and sustainable ceasefire in the occupied Palestinian territory and to facilitate humanitarian assistance and recovery. He said that global conflicts that threatened food and energy supply chains highlighted the priority and importance of their security in Arab countries, adding that water security was also a priority in the region owing to the scarcity of water resources in the majority of member States. He said that those challenges required structural reforms from member States and from international and donor organizations to support new mechanisms that could address challenges of that magnitude. In conclusion, he expressed his country's appreciation for the technical support efforts and advisory services provided by ESCWA to its member States in various fields, noting the expansion of the ESCWA support framework, and calling for greater cooperation with the League of Arab States and more coordination with other international organizations.

96. Mr. Mounir Tabet, Deputy Executive Secretary for Programmes, delivered the ESCWA speech. He began by expressing his concern over the dire situation in the Gaza Strip, stressing the close interlinkage between development and peace. He said that development achievements were at stake if crises persisted, as was the case in Arab countries that had witnessed or were witnessing conflict or occupation. He added that those countries were preoccupied with managing those crises and thus missed important development and technological opportunities. He compared their conditions with the accumulated successes achieved by other countries in the region as a result of their investment in development paths. He also stressed the full commitment of ESCWA to supporting all countries of the region in achieving their development goals, and said that the crises in the region required new means and alternative analytical frameworks to find creative and sustainable solutions using the latest technologies to complement the progress of member States on their development paths. He hoped that the discussions set to take place at the session would be fruitful and successful.

2. *Ministerial segment*

97. Ms. Rola Dashti, Undersecretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCWA, delivered the speech of the secretariat. She began by noting that 2023 was the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of ESCWA and praised its journey in the Arab region during this period and its ability to keep up with the crises, the latest of which was the war on Gaza. She stressed, however, that the role of ESCWA was not limited to keeping up with everything that was going on; it also played an active role in supporting development and achievements in its member States. In this context, she mentioned some of the efforts made by ESCWA and the expansion of its role over the years. The Executive Secretary of ESCWA welcomed the ministerial meeting in order to launch the Arab Vision 2045, prepared by ESCWA using a methodology based on expanded dialogue between experts, young people and Arab research centres, and based on the rich experiences accumulated by ESCWA and the League of Arab States. She affirmed that the Vision reflected the collective ambition of the region, and represented a stepping stone towards a future characterized by diversity and cultural richness, stimulating innovation, regional cooperation and a sustainable economy, and paving the way for a strong and responsible path. She reviewed the vision's six pillars, highlighting their interlinkage and synergy in achieving prosperity for the region. She said that the Vision, and its six pillars, held the promise of a bright future and a better world for its peoples. She concluded by inviting participants to contribute to building the Vision and to cooperate in finding ways to implement it.

98. Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, delivered a speech in which he welcomed the ESCWA ministerial meetings at the headquarters of the League of Arab States, and highlighted the increasing and expanded cooperation between ESCWA and the League of Arab States, and the joint initiatives between the two organizations, the latest of which was the Arab Vision 2045. He said that peace was critical to achieving the desired goals, and affirmed that there could be no development without peace and stability. He referred to the serious crises in the region, which had hindered the development process, the latest of which was the war on Gaza. He said that the recent events of the war showed that the goal of the occupation forces was to destroy the Palestinian community in Gaza and eliminate the possibility of life in the Gaza Strip, leading to the liquidation of the Palestinian cause. He denounced the silence of the international community in the face of these events. He added that the continued fighting eluded the possibility of achieving the two-State solution, which was accepted by the entire world except Israel, and repeated the call for an urgent ceasefire. He considered that the Arab Vision 2045 came as an expression of the region's desire for security, peace and prosperity, and that it aimed to achieve development from an integrated perspective, based on the requirements of Arab integration, consensus among the countries of the region, and the 2030 Agenda. He concluded that the ministerial meetings aimed to develop initiatives to achieve this Vision and mentioned the modalities of its integration with the plans of ESCWA and the League of Arab States, as well as the national development visions in the Arab countries, adding that the League of Arab States was ready to support countries in this regard.

D. Participants

99. The session was attended by representatives of 16 ESCWA member States. It was also attended by the agencies and bodies mentioned in paragraph 93 of the present report as observers. The list of participants is contained in annex 1 of this report.

E. Election of officers

100. Rule 12 of the rules of procedure of the Commission states that member States shall chair the sessions of the Commission on a rotating basis, in Arabic alphabetical order. Moreover, the Commission shall elect, from among the representatives of its members, two vice-chairs and a rapporteur, who shall remain in office until such time as their successors shall be elected, and shall be eligible for re-election.

101. Pursuant to this article, Algeria was supposed to preside over the session, but it did not participate therein. After coordination with Djibouti, which is the successor to Algeria but was participating for the first time in the meetings of the session, the members proposed that the Syrian Arab Republic should assume the presidency of the thirty-first session. The representatives agreed to the proposal. Tunisia and Djibouti served as first and second vice-chairs, respectively, and the Sudan as rapporteur.

F. Agenda

102. At its first meeting, the Commission adopted the agenda as presented in document [E/ESCWA/31/L.1](#), and expanded the discussion to include energy governance under item 6 and consumer protection under item 7, as suggested by the representative of the United Arab Emirates. The agenda was adopted as follows:

A. Senior officials segment (16–17 December 2023)

1. Opening of the thirty-first session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.

4. Consideration of requests by States Members of the United Nations and/or its specialized agencies that are not members of ESCWA to participate as observers in the thirty-first session of the Commission.

Governance in the light of global and regional developments

5. The governance challenge of the Arab region.
6. Governance of natural resources: extractive industries as an engine for sustainable development.
7. Economic governance: market competition challenges in the Arab region.
8. Governance of recovery and prevention: essential State functions and processes.

War on Gaza

9. War on Gaza: social and economic repercussions.
10. War on Gaza: tenets and essential elements for sustainable recovery.

Work of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies

11. Outcomes of the 2023 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development.
12. Implementation of resolutions and recommendations made by the Commission at its seventh special session and adoption of reports on Executive Committee meetings held since the thirtieth session.
13. Reports of the Commission's subsidiary bodies:
 - (a) Report of the twenty-third session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics (Alexandria, Egypt, 20–21 October 2022, [E/ESCWA/C.5/2022/9/Report](#));
 - (b) Report of the fourth session of the Committee on Technology for Development (Beirut, 15–14 November 2022, [E/ESCWA/C.8/2022/11/Report](#));
 - (c) Report of the fifteenth session of the Statistical Committee (Beirut, 16–17 November 2022, [E/ESCWA/C.1/2022/7/Report](#));
 - (d) Report of the third session of the Committee on Trade Policies in the States Members of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (Tunis, 7–8 March 2023, [E/ESCWA/C.6/2023/11/Report](#));
 - (e) Report of the fourteenth session of the Committee on Social Development (Beirut, 8 June 2023, [E/ESCWA/C.2/2023/7/Report](#));
 - (f) Report of the fifteenth session of the Committee on Water Resources (Beirut, 19–20 June 2023, [E/ESCWA/C.4/2023/9/Report](#));
 - (g) Report of the fourteenth session of the Committee on Energy (Beirut, 20–22 June 2023, [E/ESCWA/C.3/2023/9/Report](#));
 - (h) Report of the eleventh session of the Committee on Women (Beirut, 10–11 October 2023, [E/ESCWA/C.7/2023/8/Report](#)).

Management issues

14. Programme performance in the period 2020–2023.
15. Financial status of the Commission.
16. Proposed programme plan for 2025.

Ministerial segment (18 December 2023)

17. Opening.
18. Arab Vision 2045: striving to fulfil aspirations through deliberation, determination and action.
 - (a) First round-table discussion: premises and pillars of the Arab Vision 2045.
 - (b) Second round-table discussion: initiatives and projects of the Arab Vision 2045.
19. Date and venue of the thirty-second session of the Commission.
20. Other matters.
21. Adoption of the recommendations and resolutions of the Commission.

103. At the same meeting, the Commission adopted the proposed organization of work for its thirty-first session, presented in document [E/ESCWA/31/L.2](#).

G. Date and venue of the thirty-second session of the Commission (Agenda item 19)

104. The thirty-second session of the Commission will be held in the second half of 2025 in Beirut if no other member State proposes to host it.

H. Other matters (Agenda item 20)

105. No issues were raised under this item.

Annex I

List of participants

A. ESCWA member States

Algeria

Mr. Abdul Aziz Ali Al-Sharif
Permanent Representative of Algeria to the League
of Arab States

Mr. Amine Sid
Minister Counsellor
Embassy of Algeria in Egypt

Ms. Wahiba Fanouh
Counsellor
Embassy of Algeria in Egypt

Bahrain

Ms. Fawzia bint Abdullah Zainal
Ambassador of Bahrain in Egypt

Mr. Abdulla Abdulrahman Al-Rayes
Consul
Embassy of Bahrain in Egypt

Djibouti

Mr. Samir Aden Sheikh
Principal Adviser
Ministry of Economy and Finance, responsible for
Industry

Mr. Mohamed Ibrahim Robleh
Adviser
Permanent Delegation of Djibouti to the League of
Arab States

Egypt

Mr. Ahmed Kamali
Deputy Minister of Planning and Economic
Development

Mr. Hazem Zaki
Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for
Regional Economic Organizations and
Communities
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ms. Sharifa Sharif
Chief Executive Officer of the National Institute
for Governance and Sustainable Development
Ministry of Planning and Economic Development

Mr. Ahmed Rafat Abdul Rahim
Second Secretary
Deputy Head of Sustainable Development Unit
Ministry of Planning and Economic Development

Mr. Tarek Ghanim
Second Secretary
Office of the Foreign Minister Undersecretary for
International and Regional Multilateral
Economic Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ms. Alia Khaled Effat
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Sustainable Development Unit
Ministry of Planning and Economic Development

Mr. Nader Nouredine Salem
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National Institute for Governance and Sustainable
Development

Ms. Nour Al-Badawi
International Relations Specialist
Ministry of Planning and Economic Development

Ms. Nada Mahran
International Cooperation Officer
Ministry of Local Development

Ms. Nourhan Issam
Media Editor
Ministry of Planning and Economic Development

Jordan

Ms. Wafa Bani Mustafa
Minister of Social Development

Jordan (continued)

Mr. Marwan Al-Refai
Secretary-General at the Ministry of Planning and
International Cooperation

Mr. Malek al-Breazat
Head of Arab Relations
Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation

Ms. Aroub Nawfan Al-Salaheen
Acting Director of the Directorate of
Communication and Information
Ministry of Social Development

Lebanon

Ms. Rehab Abou Zein
Deputy Head of Delegation
Embassy of Lebanon in Egypt

Libya

Mr. Hisham Ahmad Buweddin
Adviser to the Undersecretary of the Ministry of
Economy for Trade Affairs
Ministry of Economy and Trade

Mr. Mahmoud Ahmad Milad Ramadan
Head of International Organizations Division
Department of Foreign Trade and International
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Ministry of Economy and Trade

Mr. Salaheddine Salem Merjin
Permanent Delegation to the League of Arab States

Ms. Nora Bashir Abu Bakr Muftah
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Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International
Cooperation

Mr. Mohammed Massoud Saeed Al-Hofari
Department of Foreign Trade and International
Cooperation
Ministry of Economy and Trade

Mr. Ezzedine Mabrouk Mossadeq
Department of Foreign Trade and International
Cooperation
Ministry of Economy and Trade

Mr. Mohamed Massoud Al-Qadim
Legal Researcher
Department of Legal Affairs
Ministry of Economy and Trade

Mauritania

Mr. Muhammad Abdul Rahman Al-Didi
Assistant Director-General of Development
Strategies and Policies
Ministry of Economy and Sustainable
Development

Mr. Ahmadou Mohamed
Head of Department
Department of the Strategy for Accelerated Growth
and Shared Prosperity
Ministry of Economy and Sustainable
Development

Morocco

Mr. Youssef El Karni
Head of the Financial Institutions Authority
Directorate of Multilateral Cooperation and
International Economic Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation
and Moroccan Expatriates

Mr. Lahcen Badri
Deputy Ambassador of Morocco to Lebanon

Mr. Mohsen Nouri
Minister Plenipotentiary
Embassy of Morocco in Egypt

Oman

Mr. Said bin Mohammed bin Ahmed Al Saqri
Ministry of Economy

Mr. Said Ben Rached Ben Said Al Qatbi
Director General of Social Sectors
Ministry of Economy

Mr. Ali bin Saeed Al-Jabri
Director of International Institutions Department
Ministry of Economy

Oman (continued)

Mr. Yousef bin Abdullah Al Rawahi
Assigned Director of the Coordination and
Follow-up Department
Office of the Minister of Economy

State of Palestine

Mr. Mahmoud Ataya
Director-General of Planning
Aid Planning and Coordination Unit
Office of the Prime Minister

Mr. Ahmad Ibrahim Qabaha
Head of Administrative Affairs Unit
Office of the Prime Minister

Qatar

Mr. Shaheen Ali Al-Kaabi
Director of International Cooperation Department
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ms. Wasmiah Abdullah Muhamed Al-Dhidah
Second Secretary
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Saudi Arabia

Mr. Hattan bin Samman
First Adviser
General Supervisor of International Organizations
and External Relations
Ministry of Economy and Planning

Mr. Khaled Al-Ghafis
Adviser
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mrs. Monia Zagzoug
Adviser
International Organizations Unit
Ministry of Economy and Planning

Mr. Rashaid Salem Bakarman
Second Secretary
Permanent Delegation of Saudi Arabia to the
League of Arab States
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ms. Noura Almazrou
Administrative Officer
International Organizations Unit
Ministry of Economy and Planning

Somalia

Mr. Ishaq Mohammed Mersal
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and
International Cooperation

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

Ms. Hodma Salad
Deputy Ambassador
Embassy of Somalia in Egypt

Sudan

Mr. Alfateh Abdulla Yousef
Minister of Trade and Supply

Mr. Mohamed Abdullah El-Tom
Chargé d'Affaires
Permanent Delegation of the Sudan to the League
of Arab States

Mr. Abdul Baqi Issa Abdullah
Undersecretary of the Ministry of Trade and
Supply

Mr. Omar Mustafa Hassan
Director of International Organizations Department
Ministry of Trade and Supply

Ms. Hajar Mohammed Mohieldin
First Secretary
Permanent Delegation to the League of Arab States

Syrian Arab Republic

Mr. Fadi Salti Al-Khalil
Head of Planning and International Cooperation
Commission

Ms. Thuraya Edlibi
Deputy Head of Planning and International
Cooperation Commission

Syrian Arab Republic (continued)

Mr. Nader al-Sheikh Ali
Head of Cooperation with International
Organizations
Planning and International Cooperation
Commission

Mr. Mohammed Abu Seriya
Minister Counsellor to the Syrian Arab Republic
Delegation

Tunisia

Mr. Ali bin Saeed
Minister Plenipotentiary
General Directorate for International Organizations
and Conferences
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Migration and
Tunisians Abroad

Mr. Lotfi Talbi
Minister Plenipotentiary
Deputy Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the
League of Arab States

Ms. Haifa al-Imam
First Secretary
Embassy of Tunisia in Egypt

United Arab Emirates

Mr. Ahmad Mohammad Alastad Al-Hammadi
Director of Information and Economic Studies
Department
Ministry of Economy

Ms. Sumaya Mohammed Ahmed Yousef Janahi
Lead Economic Researcher
Information and Economic Studies Department
Ministry of Economy

Yemen

Dr. Waed Abdullah Abdul Razzaq Badheeb
Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation

Mr. Mohammed Ahmad al-Hawri
Undersecretary of the Ministry of Planning
Economic Studies and Forecasts Sector
Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation

Mr. Abdul Aziz Ali Hadi Qasem
Director-General of the Legal Affairs Department
Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation

Mr. Ayman Mohammed Haitham Qasim
Director-General of Follow-up
Office of the Minister of Planning and
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Ms. Najwa Abdullah Al-Serri
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B. Regional and International Organizations

League of Arab States

Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit
Secretary-General

Mr. Houssam Zaki
Assistant Secretary-General of the League of Arab
States

Ms. Nada El Agizy
Minister Plenipotentiary
Director of the Sustainable Development and
International Cooperation Department

United Nations Development Coordination Office

Ms. Barbara Manzi
Acting Regional Director for Arab Countries

United Nations Population Fund

Ms. Hala Youssef
Regional Director for Sexual and Reproductive
Health

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
(UNHCR)

Ms. Hagir Musa
Senior Liaison Officer to the League of Arab
States and Arab Specialized Arab Organizations

World Food Programme

Ms. Rawad Halabi
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Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry
Lands (ACSAD)

Mr. Sayed Ali Khalifa
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Mr. Mohamed Abdullah Qasim Zaghloul
Agronomist
ACSAD Office in Cairo

Union of Arab Banks

Mr. Abdul Jalil Muhammad Khair Abdul Qadir
Coordination Officer

Arab Water Council

Mr. Hussein Ihsan Al-Atfi
Secretary-General

Mr. Tareq Ahmad El-Samman
Aquatic Expert and Board Member
Professor of Water Resources at the National
Water Research Centre

Arab Network for Environment and Development
(RAED)

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General Coordinator

Union of Arab Chambers

Mr. Khaled Hanafi
Secretary-General

Arab Academy for Management, Banking and
Financial Sciences

Mr. Safi Elessawy
Environmental and Social Governance and
Strategic Partnerships

Arab Youth Platform for Sustainable Development

Mr. Ahmed Nasser Rajab Mohamed
Chair of Human Resources Committee

Mr. Ahmad Abdulrahman Abou Douma
Chair of Legal Committee

Mr. Fadi Karam Kamel
Vice Chair of Media Committee

Experts

Ms. Heba Shama
Development Specialist

Annex II

List of documents

Symbol	Item	Title
E/ESCWA/31/L.1	3	Provisional agenda and annotations
E/ESCWA/31/L.2	3	Organization of work
E/ESCWA/31/3	4	Consideration of requests by States Members of the United Nations and/or its specialized agencies that are not members of ESCWA to participate as observers in the thirty-first session of the Commission
E/ESCWA/31/4	5	The governance challenge of the Arab region
E/ESCWA/31/5	6	Governance of natural resources: extractive industries as an engine for sustainable development
E/ESCWA/31/6	7	Economic governance: market competition challenges in the Arab region
E/ESCWA/31/7	8	Governance of recovery and prevention: essential State functions and processes
E/ESCWA/31/8	9	War on Gaza: social and economic repercussions
E/ESCWA/31/9	10	War on Gaza: tenets and essential elements for sustainable recovery
E/ESCWA/31/10	11	Outcomes of the 2023 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development
E/ESCWA/31/11	12	Implementation of resolutions and recommendations made by the Commission at its seventh special session and adoption of reports on Executive Committee meetings held since the thirtieth session.
E/ESCWA/31/12	13	Reports of the Commission's subsidiary bodies
E/ESCWA/31/13	14	Programme performance in the period 2020-2023
E/ESCWA/31/14	15	Financial status of the Commission
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Symbol	Item	Title
E/ESCWA/31/16	18	Arab Vision 2045: striving to fulfil aspirations through deliberation, determination and action
E/ESCWA/31/16/CRP.1	18 (a)	First round-table discussion: premises and pillars of the Arab Vision 2045.
E/ESCWA/31/16/CRP.2	18 (b)	Second round-table discussion: initiatives and projects of the Arab Vision 2045
E/ESCWA/31/INF.1		List of documents
