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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Technical Committee
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Amman, 18-19 March 2013

Item 7 (b) of the provisional agenda

**PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN THE WORK OF THE SECRETARIAT
IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE
TECHNICAL COMMITTEE AT ITS SIXTH MEETING**

Summary

The Technical Committee of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) holds three meetings during the biennium. It may hold a fourth meeting, if necessary, upon consultation between the ESCWA secretariat and the Committee bureau. Thus it convenes one meeting in the years when ESCWA holds its sessions, and two meetings in other years.

The Technical Committee held its sixth meeting at the United Nations House in Beirut, on 1 and 2 December 2011 with the participation of representatives of ESCWA member countries. It made a set of recommendations and proposals concerning the agenda items and the work of the Committee and ESCWA, and ways to enhance it.

The present document reviews actions and activities undertaken by the secretariat to implement those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE AT ITS SIXTH MEETING AND ACTIONS TAKEN FOR THEIR IMPLEMENTATION

The Technical Committee of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) held its sixth meeting at the United Nations House in Beirut, on 1 and 2 December 2011. It issued a set of recommendations and proposals concerning the agenda items and the work of the Committee and ways to enhance it. This document reviews the recommendations of the Committee and actions taken to implement them.

Recommendation (a)

To take into account the observations made by member countries and integrate them into the final strategic framework for the biennium 2014-2015, in the light of the regulations governing the preparation of the framework at the United Nations, and providing members of the Technical Committee with the revised version before discussing it at the twenty-seventh session of the Commission.

Action taken

The secretariat incorporated the observations of member countries into the strategic framework for the biennium 2014-2015, and provided member countries with the revised version prior to its discussion and approval at the twenty-seventh session of the Commission.

Recommendation (b)

To hold the twenty-seventh session of the Commission in Beirut from 7 to 10 May 2012.

Action taken

The Commission held its twenty-seventh session at the United Nations House in Beirut, from 7 to 10 May 2012. The session was held in two segments, one for the senior officials and the other for ministers. At the senior officials segment, the Commission considered the report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Commission, management issues and the draft strategic framework for the biennium 2014-2015. It also considered the requests from Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, to become members of the Commission. During the ministerial segment, three round tables were held to discuss the main themes of the session, namely: (1) the role of participation and social justice in achieving sustainable and balanced development; (2) preparations for Rio+20 Conference in the Arab region; and (3) the current situation and future prospects for inclusive financing in the ESCWA region. At the end of the session, the Commission adopted a number of recommendations made by the senior officials' segment, and a series of resolutions which were later submitted to the Economic and Social Council for action or brought to its attention.

Recommendation (c)

To agree that the main theme of the twenty-seventh session of the Commission will be the role of participation and social justice in achieving sustainable and balanced development.

Action taken

The role of participation and social justice in achieving sustainable and balanced development was adopted as a key theme for the twenty-seventh session of the Commission and a round-table discussion at the ministerial level was held on the subject. The round table produced resolution 304 (XXVII) concerning the role of participation and social justice in achieving sustainable development, which was adopted by the Commission and brought to the attention of the Economic and Social Council (resolution 304 (XXVII) can

be found in the report on the twenty-seventh session, E/2012/41-E/ESCWA/27/9/Report, available at <http://documents.un.org>).

Recommendation (d)

To hold two round tables during the session on the preparations for the Rio+20 Conference in the Arab region and on inclusive financing for small and medium-sized enterprises and creating job opportunities.

Action taken

The Commission held two round tables on the two subjects during the ministerial segment of its twenty-seventh session. The round table on the preparations for Rio+20 Conference in the Arab region highlighted the position of Arab countries regarding the themes and objectives of the Conference, as set out in the Arab Ministerial Declaration on the Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) issued by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (18 April 2012). A presentation was given at the round-table panel on the preparations for Rio+20 Conference in the Arab region and their results, the expected outcomes of Rio+20, issues of special importance for the Arab region, the post-Rio+20 expected action, and a set of recommendations to help member countries bring to the Conference a harmonized position that would serve their interests and those of the region at this important event.

Furthermore, the round table reviewed the content of the Zero Draft or the draft outcome document expected to be issued by Rio+20 and which was being negotiated by Governments. It provided a summary of the views of member countries and groups of countries, in order to identify a harmonized view on the green economy, the institutional framework for sustainable development and available implementation mechanisms. The round table also addressed the proposal being discussed at the international level to define sustainable development goals in order to complement the Millennium Development Goals beyond 2015.

The second round table addressed the current situation and future prospects for inclusive financing in the ESCWA region. It underlined the importance of such financing for Arab countries as a strategic means to combat unemployment, alleviate poverty, improve standards of living and reduce income disparities. Discussions covered obstacles faced by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and financial institutions, including lack of appropriate strategies to manage inclusive financing as SME projects were proposed without sound feasibility studies and projects seeking funding were poorly presented. Representatives of member countries referred to successful stories and initiatives in the enactment of laws, establishment of funds, and development of administrative and financial controls and incentives which encourage SME financing. They also pointed to the need to provide these projects with full support and protection in order to prevent their failure, and ensure their continuity and sustainability through cooperation with specialized institutions as sponsors.

Participants underlined the need to adopt plans to encourage innovation, creativity, and pilot projects in the Arab countries, which, in turn, would enhance their success and remove obstacles. They recommended to strengthen cooperation among Arab countries and to enhance contribution of Arab funds in the development of SMEs including knowledge-based projects.

Recommendation (e)

To stress the need to set the dates of meetings and send related documents by e-mail to member countries four weeks in advance, in order to give delegations sufficient time to review them, make observations and download them from the ESCWA website.

Action taken

The secretariat took this recommendation into account when preparing for all its meetings, and made every effort to send documents related to those meetings by e-mail, when possible, no less than four weeks prior to the date of the meetings. It stepped up its efforts recently in order to post, periodically and continuously, all information and documentation related to its meetings on ESCWA website, and to allow representatives of member countries to review them prior to their discussion at the meetings.

Recommendation (f)

To reiterate the recommendation made at the fifth meeting of the Technical Committee on the need to limit ESCWA membership to Arab countries for the purpose of enhancing cooperation with the League of Arab States, the Gulf Cooperation Council and other regional organizations, in accordance with ESCWA procedures.

Action taken

With a view to improving its ability to support Arab countries, contributing to their economic and social development, responding to their needs in various development areas, reinforcing coordination and integration among Arab countries, and enhancing consistency between the objectives, activities and projects of ESCWA with those of the League of Arab States, the United Nations Development Programme/Regional Bureau for Arab States, the Gulf Cooperation Council and other regional organizations, the Commission considered, at its twenty-seventh session, the requests from Libya, Morocco and Tunisia to become members of ESCWA.

A recommendation was made to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations to approve the membership of these countries. In that regard, the Council, at its substantive session held in New York in July 2012, adopted the resolution on the request of Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, to become members of the Commission.

Recommendation (g)

To coordinate with stakeholders in member countries in order to present a draft resolution at the twenty-seventh session on sustainable development in the Arab region and follow up the implementation of Rio+20 outcomes.

Action taken

The secretariat prepared a draft resolution on sustainable development in the region and follow-up and implementation of the decisions of the Rio+20 Conference, which was adopted by the Commission at its twenty-seventh session as resolution 305 (XXVII) which can be found in the report of the twenty-seventh session (E/2012/41-E/ESCWA/27/9/Report, available at <http://documents.un.org>).

Recommendation (h)

To call upon the secretariat to coordinate with member countries hosting ESCWA meetings and activities in order to facilitate the participation of delegations from all member countries, and to provide representatives with timely visas and facilitation to ensure their participation in all the activities of the Commission.

Action taken

The secretariat has continued to undertake initiatives aimed at adopting arrangements and bilateral agreements to identify appropriate coordination mechanisms with member countries hosting meetings and activities organized by the Commission on management, financial, logistical and substantive issues. The goal is to facilitate and ensure the participation of the delegations of all ESCWA member countries in those activities.
