

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

Committee on Social Development
Fourteenth session
Beirut, 8 June 2023

Item 8 of the provisional agenda

Inequality in the Arab region

Item 8 of the provisional agenda contains three sub-items for discussion by the Committee on Social Development, with reference to the following documents:

1. The Arab inequality pandemic (E/ESCWA/C.2/2023/7(Part I)).
2. Inequality in employment (E/ESCWA/C.2/2023/7(Part II)).
3. Practical initiatives to increase social and economic equality (E/ESCWA/C.2/2023/7(Part III)).

These sub-items represent the substantive focus of the current session, namely inequality in the Arab region.

The region registers the highest rate of income inequality worldwide, and the second highest rates of gender and wealth inequality. However, inequality is not only limited to income, wealth and gender, but is multifaceted and exists, for example, between population groups and between geographic locations. It can take many forms, including unequal access to resources and opportunities, or unequal benefits from development outcomes. Inequality unravels the fabric of societies and fuels social and political instability, which can potentially lead to violent conflict and mass displacement.

Given the multidimensional nature of inequality, it is difficult to capture it in one indicator. However, employment dynamics can highlight the extent of inequality by reflecting the opportunities (or lack thereof) that individuals have to live their desired lifestyle, while also being indicative of social mobility levels within a society.

The Committee on Social Development will discuss the issue of inequality with reference to the three abovementioned documents. The first document provides an overview of inequality in the region; the second focuses on youth unemployment as a pertinent type of inequality therein; and the third presents a three-pronged approach for policies to successfully reduce inequality, namely by promoting solidarity, delivering visible impact, and securing credibility and trust. The third document also presents concrete policy tools and initiatives produced and implemented by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

Representatives of member States are invited to participate actively in the discussion, and propose means to reduce employment inequality and other forms of inequality in the Arab region.
