

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

Twenty-seventh session
Beirut, 7-10 May 2012

Item 6 (a) of the provisional agenda

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION****PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE REPORT
FOR THE BIENNIUM 2010-2011****Summary**

In line with the results-based management promoted by the United Nations system, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has continued to focus on the assessment of results achieved through the implementation of its programme of work for 2010-2011.

This report sets out the highlights of achievements and lessons learned at the programme level, and details the results achieved and lessons learned for each of the seven substantive subprogrammes.

The attention of the Commission is drawn to the fact that, in preparing the draft strategic framework for the biennium 2014-2015, which will be considered under provisional agenda item 8 of the twenty-seventh session, the Secretariat carried out an in-depth review of the mandates from its member countries, the United Nations Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, and of the lessons learned from the implementation of the programme of work for 2010-2011.

The Commission is invited to review this report and provide comments and guidance on the overall performance of the ESCWA programme of work and that of the individual subprogrammes.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	3
Highlights of programme results for the biennium 2010-2011	3
Challenges and lessons learned	7
Executive Direction and Management	7
SUBPROGRAMME 1. INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	11
SUBPROGRAMME 2. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT	13
SUBPROGRAMME 3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION	15
SUBPROGRAMME 4. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY FOR REGIONAL INTEGRATION	17
SUBPROGRAMME 5. STATISTICS FOR EVIDENCE-BASED POLICYMAKING.....	19
SUBPROGRAMME 6. ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN	20
SUBPROGRAMME 7. CONFLICT MITIGATION AND DEVELOPMENT	21
<i>Annex.</i> ESCWA Intergovernmental Meetings 2010-2011.....	23

Introduction

1. In line with the results-based management promoted by the United Nations system, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has continued to focus on the assessment of the results achieved through the implementation of its programme of work for 2010-2011.
2. This report sets out the achievements and a lesson learned at the programme level, and identifies the results and lessons learned as they relate to each of the seven substantive subprogrammes. It also includes an assessment of the performance of the executive direction and management component, including the work of the Office of the Executive Secretary, the Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Division (PPTCD) and the Administrative Services Division (ASD) of ESCWA, as well as that of the United Nations Information Service (UNIS). The report is intended to serve as an instrument for ESCWA member countries to assess the results and relevance of the overall work of the Commission, as well as the performance of individual subprogrammes.
3. The results have been self-evaluated by the managers responsible for each subprogramme and synthesized by PPTCD in its role as the central office responsible for coordinating programme planning, monitoring and evaluation. Performance has been verified using reports from intergovernmental sessions and expert groups; country papers and mission reports submitted to ESCWA; responses by participants to evaluation questionnaires for meetings, training workshops and seminars; feedback from stakeholders; media coverage; the number of hits on and downloads from ESCWA websites; and requests by member countries for technical assistance and advisory services.
4. The self-evaluation methodology adopted followed global methodologies for monitoring and evaluating programme performance for the biennium, and comprised: (a) the establishment of baselines for indicators of achievement at the start of the biennium; (b) regular data collection for indicators of achievement to measure progress against those baselines; (c) regular monitoring by ESCWA management of progress towards achieving results; (d) identification, from monitoring and evaluation, of lessons learned and areas requiring improvement for future programme planning; (e) formulation of the highlights of results for each subprogramme; and (f) identification of lessons learned, especially in terms of challenges, obstacles and unmet goals.
5. The Commission is invited to review the report and provide comments and guidance on overall ESCWA programme performance and individual subprogrammes.

HIGHLIGHTS OF PROGRAMME RESULTS FOR THE BIENNIUM 2010-2011

6. This report is based on the programme of work for 2010-2011 as approved by the General Assembly, and the amendments approved by the twenty-sixth session of the Commission (Beirut, 17-20 May 2010), which reflect the new mandates of the General Assembly and the United Nations Economic and Social Council, and those of ESCWA member countries.
7. During 2010-2011, ESCWA has shown a considerable improvement in programme performance moving from 82 per cent last biennium to 96 per cent in 2010-2011. ESCWA also reported 99 per cent budget implementation, which shows a significant improvement from the last reporting period. Additionally, ESCWA has taken considerable steps to improve the quality and breadth of its outputs. This is beginning to show in the response of our clients to our work. In order to accomplish this, ESCWA has taken steps to improve the effective management of its programme of work. In 2010 ESCWA launched a new evaluation policy requiring evaluations of the performance of each subprogramme in terms of delivery of programmed outputs as well as efficient use of human and financial resources. ESCWA also developed tools to monitor programme and budget implementation. ESCWA's Performance Monitor system merges IMDIS and IMIS information to create a full picture of ESCWA performance by enabling analysis of financial and output information and therefore considerably increasing the accountability of programme managers.

8. ESCWA has also introduced a new process of development of the 2014-2015 Strategic Framework in order to guarantee the integration and effectiveness of its workplan. This new approach framed within results-based management structures will ensure that ESCWA monitors implementation not only against what it does (outputs) but also measure progress on what it intends to accomplish in the form of specific outcomes and impacts. Overall, ESCWA has witnessed a marked improvement from the 2009 baselines in recruitment indicators and achieved the set targets for 2011. However, it must be noted that with the introduction of Inspira in April 2010, some delays were encountered. ESCWA has recorded a striking improvement in recruiting staff from underrepresented member countries during the biennium thus reaching a percentage that exceeded the biennium target. Similarly, an important milestone has been achieved in terms of ensuring gender balance in the recruitment process by surpassing the biennium target.

9. The outcome of the 26th Ministerial session of the Commission (Beirut, May 2010) was the adoption of 10 resolutions that addressed a number of emerging issues. During the biennium, 11 intergovernmental meetings were organized: 8 intergovernmental subsidiary specialized bodies and the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth meetings of the Technical Committee with the sixth meeting dedicated to ensuring the review by member countries of the proposed 2014-2015 Strategic Framework. The 14th, 15th and 16th meetings of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for the Arab States were also convened during the biennium. The Civil Society Advisory Board, an outcome of the 2009 RCM meeting was formed and presented its work to the 14th meeting. ESCWA has increased participation in the work of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) to the Arab States. In particular, representation at key policy events such as defining the Youth Strategy for the region 2010-13 and participation in 5 meetings of the Deputy Regional Directors. Substantive inputs have also been provided as members of the Peer Support Group (PSG) from the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) reviewed contributions provided by ESCWA during the biennium. ESCWA has also worked closely with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the league of Arab States to develop integrated and comprehensive 5 year working agreements.

10. Work focused on four regional priority areas, namely managing water and energy, social policies, managing globalization and managing technology; and on three cross-cutting issues, namely, statistical capacity-building, the advancement of women and assistance to countries emerging from conflict.

11. ESCWA initiated the first United Nations led effort to take stock of shared groundwater and surface water resources in Western Asia in a comprehensive, systematic and unified manner. Information was also collected on the institutional set-up for sustainable water resource management in the West Asia Region. In assisting member countries to assess the impact of climate change on the water sector, ESCWA prepared a study on “Assessing the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region: A Methodological Framework for Pursuing an Integrated Assessment” presented during an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) in July 2011, which provided an opportunity for Member Countries to share experiences and coordinate approaches for global and regional climate modeling. Furthermore, ESCWA contributed to increasing the competitiveness of small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) through undertaking regional and national advocacy and capacity-building activities in the Syrian Arab Republic, Jordan and Lebanon that increased SME awareness and understanding of green jobs and available opportunities in the production and use of environmental goods and services within a green economy context. ESCWA further organized a “Preparatory Meeting for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region” (Beirut, 26-27 May 2011). ESCWA proposed a mechanism for implementing the Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) project, which was endorsed by the Arab Water Ministerial Council during their 2nd Session (June 2010) for a series of projects on IWRM to support the implementation of the Arab Water Security Strategy formally approved by the AMWC at its 3rd Session (June 2011). ESCWA, the League of Arab States and the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources in Germany (BGR) convened an Intergovernmental Consultative Meeting on the Draft Legal Framework for SWR in the Arab Region (Beirut, 24-26 May 2011), which succeeded in securing agreement on a draft legal framework in the form of a convention on shared waters.

12. Advocacy and technical cooperation efforts made by ESCWA in the social field continue to generate interest and requests from member countries to assist them in integrating social policy priorities in their development plans. Such efforts are supported by social protection mapping and country profiles with the view of generating discussion in all member countries on integrated social protection mechanisms. ESCWA's normative and technical support activities contributed to the enhanced capacity of member countries to adopt relevant measures and policies to address the implications of demographic changes. As a result, ESCWA met the target for follow-up measures taken up by member countries indicating increased understanding of the socio-demographic implications of the youth bulge for migration and development. Moreover, the number of measures and policy provisions adopted by member countries to integrate demographic changes in development plans and programmes increased from 6 to 10. This is evidenced by the addition of a special policy section on youth education, health and employment to the national development plan in Iraq, as well as the signature of a pact with research centres and universities to instigate a national research agenda on youth; and by integrating youth unemployment into development plans in Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

13. "The Third Arab Report on the Millennium Development Goals 2010 and the Impact of the Global Economic Crises" was prepared in collaboration between the members of the Thematic Working Group on MDGs in the Arab Region, convened by ESCWA and includes the League of Arab States and the different United Nations agencies working in the region. The Summary of the Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region 2009-2010 was submitted to Economic and Social Council substantive session in July 2010 (as E/2010/20). Under the Executive Committee of Economic and Social Affairs (ECESA) macroeconomic and finance cluster coordination initiative, ESCWA made a substantive contribution to the preparation of a publication from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), "World Economic Situation and Prospects" (WESP) (December 2011). ESCWA focused on mobilizing both domestic and international resources for development and organized 10 national training workshops on: negotiations of bilateral investment agreements (6 workshops), agreements on double taxation avoidance (2 workshops) and Compilation of Foreign Direct Investment Abroad (2 workshops). These ten national training workshops contributed to upgrade the negotiation skills of around 245 government officials from these countries. As a result of the efforts of ESCWA, ten member countries ratified/accessed the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation, ten member countries ratified the Agreement on International Railways, 13 member countries ratified the Agreement on International Roads, and ten member countries established National Committees for Transport and Trade Facilitation.

14. ESCWA advocated for and supported member countries in improvements in the information and communications technology (ICT) production and service sectors by implementing ICT strategies and action plans. ESCWA and Jordan signed a Host Country Agreement for the regional ESCWA Technology Centre (23 December 2010), which is now fully operational. ESCWA continued the maintenance and the updating of the Information Society Portal for the ESCWA Region (ISPER). The EGM on Regional Road Map for Internet Governance reviewed and adopted the "Arab Roadmap for Internet Governance: Framework, Principles and Objectives". The EGM on Enabling Environment for the Development of Arabic e-services provided a platform for sharing experiences and best practices and discussed the requirements for catalyzing a culturally appropriate enabling environment to develop e-services. The two EGMs on Promotion of South-South cooperation in technology transfer, held at the ESCWA Technology Centre in Jordan, discussed the priority areas of cooperation in technology transfer, shared best practices for cooperation with successful technology transfer case studies and produced a collaboration framework for critical technology development, management, maintenance, and service. The study on promoting the ICT sector to meet the challenges of the knowledge economy discussed the various dimensions that affect the development of the ICT sector. The project on Development Arabic Domain Names System (ADNS) – Phase II continued to lead the region in the ongoing efforts to overcome the language barrier on the Internet through the development of an ADNS that is inter-operable with the global Internet name resolution scheme.

15. In relation to the first cross-cutting issue of statistics, ESCWA identified an overall improvement of the average availability of the MDG indicators in the countries of the region thereby indicating significant

progress at the national level in data compilation and dissemination to monitor MDGs. With support from ESCWA, six new and/or revised statistical standards/recommendations were implemented by at least seven ESCWA member countries. In addition, the System of Environmental Economic Accounting for Water (SEAAW) has been implemented in Jordan, Egypt and Oman. Taking into account the resource requirements and complexity of the SEAAW should be also considered as an extraordinary achievement. Regarding compliance with data dissemination standards the results show important progress, exceeding expectations. With support from ESCWA, 13 of 14 ESCWA member countries are now compliant with the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS) or Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

16. Regarding the second cross-cutting issue, the advancement of women, ESCWA organized capacity-building workshops and expert group meetings targeting parliamentarians in order to highlight the central importance of implementing CEDAW and withdrawing reservations to the agreements. In July 2010, subprogramme 6 co-organized a workshop with the Inter-Parliamentary Union on the role of parliamentarians in implementing CEDAW and combating violence against women by introducing gender-sensitive legislation. Regional advisory services were provided to National Women Machinery in Lebanon and Kuwait for drafting implementation reports to the CEDAW Committee. The subprogramme provided technical cooperation and advisory services to Qatar on ways forward to implement CEDAW and withdraw reservations. In addition, all member countries were trained throughout 2010-2011 on how to draft CEDAW national reports in accordance with the guidelines prepared by the United Nations CEDAW Committee. This support resulted in: (a) the amendment of national legislation in line with the Convention such as the amendment in nationality laws in the United Arab Emirates, whereby a woman married to a non-national can give her nationality to her children at the age 18; and (b) the amendment of elections laws in Saudi Arabia whereby women for the first time can run, vote and be elected in national municipal elections. ECW focused this biennium on assisting member countries in integrating a gender perspective in conflict resolution and post conflict reconstruction processes through the organization of a workshop on the full implementation of SCR 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security; and the introduction of "ESCWA-United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) guidelines on the protection of women living in conflict situations". Due to this assistance, the United Arab Emirates and Oman pledged to initiate action plans to activate Security Council Resolution 1325 at the national level.

17. In its commitment to the third cross-cutting issue, ESCWA continued its commitment to provide annual reporting to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council on the socio-economic conditions of Palestinians in the occupied territories and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan. Of noteworthy importance was the participation of ESCWA in the United Nations Least Developed Countries (LDCs) IV Conference in Istanbul where ESCWA succeeded in promoting the inclusion of "Conflict in LDCs" as one of the themes of the Conference's Declaration. ESCWA organized a series of events to observe the "International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People" with more than 1,000 persons attending the various activities. The observance received wide media coverage, manifested in a total of 32 news articles (print and online), which received 1,200,000 impressions from print exposure 3,300,000 hits on different websites, in addition to 18 TV airings as well as two radio airings, both of which occurred during peak times. In partnership with the Division for Sustainable Development of UNDESA, the subprogramme implemented the first phase of a project to assist the Lebanese government to create a path towards sustainable development and lasting peace by increasing its capacity to utilize sustainable development principles in policymaking. Also, subprogramme 7's ongoing support to Iraq continued during the reporting period to include, in the context of the Public Sector Modernization project, two study missions and a conference on decentralization that yielded a number of policy recommendations that would ultimately improve service delivery and local governance in Iraq. The valuable results were praised by the national press in June 2010. Finally, subprogramme 7 implemented a national assessment on existing perceptions and contributing factors undermining nation-building, citizenship and the adoption of tolerance, human rights values and gender equity in Iraq.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

18. Greater effort in the form of meetings, joint publications and technical cooperation is needed to increase interaction with regional organizations, regional development banks and funds future activities should focus on raising awareness in order to place priority issues on the political agenda of policymakers, including the ESCWA Commission and providing practical options for follow-up.
19. There is a need to better incorporate and harmonize substantive regular budget and extrabudgetary activities with training activities (Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation) for a more homogeneous capacity-building strategy.
20. More efforts are needed in supporting member countries to accede to, negotiate and/or implement trade agreements.
21. The implementation and compliance with new international standards is harmed by low availability of Arabic translations of the standards.
22. Translating findings and recommendations of expert group meetings into concrete steps to support decision makers in member countries continues to be a challenge.
23. Better outreach to civil society to ensure their input in normative activities is needed.
24. Travel restrictions in some countries of the region due to security constraints hindered needed field technical support and direct monitoring.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTION AND MANAGEMENT

25. The Executive Direction and Management work plan comprises work carried out by the Office of the Executive Secretary, the Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Division (PPTCD) and the Administrative Services Division at ESCWA, in addition to that of UNIS. Set forth below are the results achieved under each of the six expected accomplishments.

Expected accomplishment 1: ESCWA's programme of work is effectively managed and supported by human and financial resources.

Results achieved

26. In the 2010-2011 biennium, ESCWA continued its efforts to improve the effective management of resources and of its programme of work. Since December 2010, ESCWA has begun implementation of evaluations policy including the development of a standard methodology for subprogramme evaluations and completed the evaluation of subprogramme 5. ESCWA has improved the ESCWA Performance Monitor, which allows for joint management of programme and budget implementation and has launched it for region wide use. ESCWA also successfully launched the Publications Review Panels that serve as cross-sectoral internal quality review process for most ESCWA publications. ESCWA implemented a new process development of the 2014-2015 Strategic Framework and the design of 2012-2013 workplans that will focus additional attention to quality, breadth and impact of outputs. ESCWA has also volunteered to be a pilot in an initiative by the Department of Management on Enterprise Risk Management. The final report is close to completion. These efforts as well as other change management processes will enable ESCWA to considerably improve its rate of implementation and also the breadth and quality of services provided to member countries.

Lessons learned

27. Having addressed the systematic need for improved monitoring capacity through the ESCWA Performance Monitor, ESCWA has begun to look into the gaps that have consistently hindered its ability to measure impact and ensure quality of outputs. In this regard, we are forced to look beyond the instructions and guidance received from Headquarters and developed new tools and approaches that are specially tailored to our work and to the goals of providing quality and impact measurements of normative work using results-based management and results-based budgeting concepts. Close cooperation between the offices of Budget and Finance and Programme Planning has resulted in improved monitoring and management of both expenditures and programmed outputs.

Expected accomplishment 2: Timely recruitment and placement of staff

Results achieved

28. ESCWA has witnessed a marked improvement from the 2009 baseline and is working progressively towards achieving the set target for 2011. However, it must be noted that with the introduction of Inspira in April 2010, some delays were experienced as vacancies could neither be posted in Galaxy nor in Inspira since the Human Resources Management Section (HRMS) staff were not yet trained to use Inspira. The posting of vacancies began to pick up after HRMS staff received training in June 2010 and training sessions were organized for hiring managers and applicants in July/August 2010. Therefore, for several months during this transitional period it was not possible to issue job openings. Furthermore, technical difficulties in using Inspira also exacerbated recruitment delays. Since December 2010, ESCWA has made further progress towards meeting the recruitment timeline. This was achieved because of more focused attention by the head of office, as well as HRMS' enhanced partnership with client divisions, including provision of templates to facilitate screening, monitoring and timely intervention at various stages of the staff selection process.

Lessons learned

29. Monitoring the various stages of the recruitment process needs to be enhanced. Therefore, ESCWA has recently introduced a tracking tool which allows for monitoring the progress of recruitment cases at all stages of the Inspira process, thereby enabling an analysis of where delays frequently occur, in order to recommend solutions and to hold all players responsible for delays in recruitment that are under their control. As such, the involvement of senior management and close monitoring of the various stages of the recruitment process plays an integral part in ensuring improvement in the recruitment timeline.

Expected accomplishment 3: Improved geographical representation and gender balance of staff

Results achieved

30. ESCWA has recorded a striking improvement in recruiting staff from unrepresented and under-represented member countries during the biennium, thus reaching a percentage (62 per cent) that has far exceeded the 2009 baseline and the 2011 target. However, while ESCWA had exceeded the target for gender balance in the recruitment process in the interim performance reports, its final achievement of 42 per cent fell short of achieving the 47 per cent target. This decline in achievement of the gender targets is partly attributable to the separation of several female staff. Moreover, the number of suitable female candidates being screened in by Inspira is small.

Lessons learned

31. Intensive efforts were exerted from the screening stage of job openings to ensure that short listed candidates were geographically and gender balanced. These efforts will continue in the next reporting period.

Expected accomplishment 4: Identification of emerging issues that require attention by member countries

Results achieved

32. The 26th Ministerial session of the Commission (Beirut, May 2010) constituted another forum that brought regional priority policy issues to the attention of member countries, such as the challenges and opportunities of Youth in the Arab world, human and institutional capacity-building and information and communication technology. The outcome was the adoption of 10 resolutions that addressed, among others, these emerging issues. Since the Beginning of 2010, eight intergovernmental meetings were organized as follows: six intergovernmental subsidiary specialized bodies including the 8th session of the Committee on Energy (December 2010), the 9th session of the Statistical Committee (October 2010) and the 11th (March 2010) and Twelfth (May 2011) sessions of the Committee on Transport, the Ninth session of the Committee on Water Resources (March 2011), the 8th session of the Committee on Social Development (March 2011), the Seventh session of the Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for development in the Countries of the ESCWA region, the Fifth session of the Committee on Women (December 2011) and the Fourth (January 2010), Fifth (April 2011) and Sixth Meetings (December 2011) of the Technical Committee, which was established pursuant to the decision of the Commission at its twenty-fourth session and provides advice and assistance to the Secretariat on salient development issues. The eight intergovernmental subsidiary bodies of ESCWA culminated in the adoption of a total of 158 recommendations that identify prominent issues for implementation and follow-up by governments of member countries and the ESCWA Secretariat.

Lessons learned

33. Intergovernmental bodies constitute a good platform for discussion and sharing of experiences and good practices with member countries. Many areas of concerns for the region, which also have an impact on the socio-economic conditions of member countries, were brought up during the fora and therefore can be considered as potential issues for the focus of upcoming discussions. Moreover, in an effort to enhance cooperation and coordination between ESCWA and member countries, promote exchange of experiences and benefit from successful practices, improve the services provided by ESCWA to member countries, and implement activities commensurate with the development needs of member countries, during each meeting of the Technical Committee member countries were given the opportunity to present their views on the work of ESCWA, focusing on strengths and weaknesses and some suggestions for enhancing performance. It is hoped that the introduction of such practices will allow ESCWA to improve its efficiency and effectiveness in responding to the needs of member countries.

Expected accomplishment 5: Enhanced coordination in the management of economic and social activities by the United Nations and other regional actors

Results achieved

34. The 14th meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for the Arab States convened on 11-12 November 2010. Over 25 United Nations entities, and five external organizations were represented, with 65 participants (exclusive of ESCWA) attending the two days. For the first time, the Islamic Development Bank participated alongside the IMF and the World Bank. The Deputy Secretary-General chaired the meeting with the highest level participation to date by the League of Arab States and a delegation from

UNDESA headed by Assistant Secretary-General Thomas Steltzer. 19 United Nations Regional Directors and 4 Deputy Directors of United Nations agencies active in the region attended. The High-Level Committee on Programmes/ Chief Executives Board Chairman also participated by videoconference. The thematic focus of the meeting was Youth and Poverty Reduction, which reflected International Year of Youth and the high level mandate of the ESCWA Commission Session and League of Arab States Social Affairs Ministers. The Civil Society Advisory Board (CSAB), an outcome of the 13th RCM meeting, presented its work to the 14th meeting. In addition, the Taskforce for Statistical Coordination, a recommendation from the 14th meeting, convened with over 20 organizations represented and agreed upon its terms of reference. ESCWA convened the sixteenth meeting of the RCM (Beirut, 25-26 November 2011) under the chairmanship of United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Ms. Asha Rose Migiro and hosted by Dr. Rima Khalaf, Executive Secretary of ESCWA. The purpose of the meeting, which was attended by representatives of regional United Nations agencies and other regional organizations, was to: a) Review the Outcome of the Arab Preparatory Process for Rio+20 to assess potential directions and problematic areas; b) Agree on the components of a regional Guidance Note for sustainable development post Rio+20; c) Create a Joint Task Force to deliver a Guidance Note by November 2012. Additionally, the RCM members received reports concerning existing RCM thematic task forces.

Lessons learned

35. Substantive discussions of the RCM were greatly improved. Evaluation of the RCM was positive with overall ratings ranging from good to excellent. Eighty per cent of respondents indicated that the quality of the discussions, relevance and quality of presentations made, and the quality of outcomes and recommendations made, significantly improved. Dedicated resources are required to convene the RCM meetings, in particular to ensure that substantive experts can be engaged to provide a solid foundation for creating synergies in policy efforts and debates. Resources are also required for coordinating with United Nations agencies in the region. Enhanced efforts of building partnerships with the League of Arab States, the Islamic Development Bank, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Organization of the Islamic Conference will be pursued.

Expected accomplishment 6: Increased public awareness of the work of ESCWA in pursuing regional priorities and emerging issues

Results achieved

36. ESCWA managed to reach a wider base of clients than previously anticipated for 2010-2011 due to the provision of media services to a considerable number of activities and meetings, and the organization of press conferences and other media events. Moreover, the ESCWA twenty-sixth session, IGMs and participation in book fairs and exhibitions prompted even more visibility for the Commission. It is also important to highlight that circulation on the ESCWA website attracted almost 335 thousand visitors during 2010-2011, half of whom accessed it directly. ESCWA news is also appearing regularly in an average of five websites, five newspapers and two TV stations, with a high reach/viewership in Lebanon and the region. The end users, or indirect clients benefiting from these news items and televised reports also account for a large population. In addition, ESCWA and UNIS has ensured solid visibility for events, activities and meetings, and guided the media in promoting the work of the Commission. Within this context, a successful “client-oriented” policy and attitude were consistently maintained, therefore broadening the scope of media clients to properly publicize projects. The client database reached almost 6,000 clients, ranging from website visitors to information seekers and dissemination lists. ESCWA is also embarking on the social media scene, and UNIS is an active member of the “ESCWA Online Social Media Task Force”, which has been established to ensure that the Commission branches onto new platforms and reaches new clients.

Lessons learned

37. Focus is now placed on websites more than before, as they are the fastest developing and spreading news medium. The new social media platforms ESCWA is seeking will ensure it reaches a younger audience.

**SUBPROGRAMME 1. INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

38. The Sustainable Development and Productivity Division was responsible for implementing this subprogramme, which aims to improve the sustainable management and use of natural resources in the region, and to promote regional cooperation and harmonization in sustainable management of water, energy and the production sectors. The results achieved under each of the 3 expected accomplishments of this subprogramme are set out below.

Expected accomplishment 1: Enhanced capacity of member countries to formulate, adopt and implement policies and measures to improve the sustainable management of natural resources, with particular emphasis on fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals and addressing climate change challenges

Results achieved

39. By the end of 2011, ESCWA achieved the target of 8 responses and/or initiatives. The “MDG+ Initiative” is an outcome of several resolutions issued by the Arab Ministerial Water Council (AMWC) since July 2009 requesting ESCWA to establish a new monitoring and reporting scheme for water supply and sanitation in the Arab region. Based on this mandate, ESCWA identified indicators, developed a survey template, and secured funding from Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) to support the MDG+ Initiative over the coming 3 years in partnership with Arab Countries Water Utilities Association (ACWUA) and in collaboration with the Center (sic) for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE), Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED) and the World Health Organization (WHO). Within the framework of the “Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region,” ESCWA prepared “A Methodological Framework for Pursuing an Integrated Assessment.” The guidance document was reviewed during an ESCWA-League of Arab States- United Nations Environment Programme – Regional Office for West Asia (UNEP/ROWA) EGM in July 2011 and reviews global and regional climate models, hydrological models and vulnerability assessment tools. The ESCWA-Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR) Cooperation project prepared an inventory of shared water resources, which is the first United Nations led effort to take stock of shared groundwater and surface water resources in Western Asia. Consultative meetings were conducted on the inventory with experts and Governments. ESCWA supported the Lebanese Ministry of Energy and Water during 2010 in the preparation of their National Water Sector Strategy finalized by the Ministry in December 2010. ESCWA also organized a “Training Workshop on Partnerships between Private and Public Sectors in Renewable Energy Projects” (February 2011) for Syrian officials. ESCWA assisted the Ministry of Environment and Water in the United Arab Emirates in drafting a national policy for improving air quality.

Lessons learned

40. Efforts should be exerted towards obtaining a greater response from member countries on the measures they are adopting in the area of climate change mitigation and to evaluate progress achieved towards achievement of MDGs, namely Goal 7. Continuous coordination with assigned focal points in related member country ministries should be undertaken through their engagement in all communications and activities undertaken towards the implementation of the planned activities.

Expected accomplishment 2: Enhanced capacity of member countries to apply best practices and methods for improving sustainable agriculture and rural development, and increasing the productivity and competitiveness of small and medium-scale enterprises using appropriate and affordable environmentally sound technology

Results achieved

41. By the end of 2011, ESCWA achieved the set targets of 8 institutions as per Indicator 1 (two extra institutions) and 6 measures as per Indicator 2 (four extra measures). ESCWA contributed to the capacity of member countries to promote sustainable rural livelihoods through: 1) A pilot project which allowed a rural women support institution in Baalbek, Lebanon to adopt techniques for improving the quality of their produce and increasing the income of women entrepreneurs; and 2) An Expert Group Meeting and practical guide on the sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA), as evidenced by the agreement of member country representatives attending the meeting to develop a capacity-building initiative based on the guide, and a specific request from the Syrian Arab Republic to hold an SLA training workshop. Furthermore, ESCWA contributed to increasing the competitiveness of small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) through undertaking regional and national (Syrian Arab Republic, Jordan, Lebanon) advocacy and capacity-building activities that increased SME awareness and understanding of green jobs and available opportunities in the production and use of environmental goods and services within a green economy context, which led to the adoption by SME associations of four measures for increased competitiveness, namely: Green Help Desk (Lebanon), green economy action plan (Syrian Arab Republic), a measure for improving SME competitiveness (Jordan) and a measure for developing green jobs (Lebanon).

Lessons learned

42. Green jobs should entail decent work and therefore, future ESCWA activities supporting green employment should promote social aspects as well. Promotion of environmental goods and services (EGS) in the ESCWA region should focus on high impact sub-sectors (namely energy and water) and benefit from international and regional green value chains. Finally, the application of SLA requires sincere and heavy commitment by national governments if national planning and application is needed.

Expected accomplishment 3: Strengthened South-South cooperation in the integrated management of natural resources, with a focus on challenges related to water, energy and climate change

Results achieved

43. ESCWA achieved the target of 8 responses and/or initiatives by coordinating regional initiatives and managing the implementation and reporting of its activities. ESCWA launched two regional initiatives with partners in 2010 and 2011. The “Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region” was launched in response to resolutions adopted by AMWC, CAMRE and ESCWA at its twenty-fifth session. ESCWA leads the implementation of the initiative, with funding provided by SIDA. Two EGMs with Governments, partner organizations and experts were held in November 2010 and June 2011 resulting in the initiative methodology and work plan, along with side meetings. Based on resolution 20 issued by the Arab Ministerial Water Council (June 2010), ESCWA and the League of Arab States Center for Water Studies and Arab Water Security were mandated to prepare a Legal Framework for Shared Waters in the Arab Region. The first Intergovernmental Consultative Meeting on the Draft Legal Framework for Shared Water Resources in the Arab Region resulted in a consensus on a draft legal framework on shared waters (May 2011). The progress achieved was reported to the AMWC 3rd Session (June 2011) whereby the ministers adopted a resolution noting that the legal framework focus on shared groundwater resources and requesting Governments to provide comments on the draft. The 2nd Intergovernmental Consultative Meeting was held in December

2011 and an agreement was reached on a revised draft, which will be revisited by the Arab Ministerial Water Council in 2012. Assistance provided by ESCWA to the League of Arab States Arab Ministerial Council for Electricity contributed to the adoption of the Arab Strategy for Renewable Energy and the Arab Guiding Framework for Improving Energy Efficiency in the Electricity Sector at End Users Level, which became effective at the end of 2010. Joint efforts by ESCWA with AIDMO led to the development of the 2011-2014 Arab Plan of Action for the Development of Green Industries, to be adopted by Industry Ministers in Arab countries.

Lessons learned

44. In view of the long-standing and close collaboration between ESCWA and BGR on shared water resources through the ESCWA-BGR Water Project and the support provided by the project to the implementation of the regional initiative on shared waters in the Arab region, more efforts should be undertaken to formalize the involvement of BGR in the regional initiative that was requested by the League of Arab States Arab Ministerial Water Council. ESCWA should continue its efforts in enhancing regional cooperation to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy use and expand its outreach to non-technical stakeholders that could have a constructive role.

SUBPROGRAMME 2. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

45. The Social Development Division was responsible for implementing this subprogramme, which aims to strengthen coherent and integrated national social policies that are specific to the region and culturally sensitive, and to encourage community development action with a view to reducing social inequity and enhancing social stability in the region. The results achieved under each of the 3 expected accomplishments of this subprogramme are set out below.

Expected accomplishment 1: Enhanced capacity of national Governments to integrate social equity priorities and perspectives in public policies

Results achieved

46. Advocacy and technical cooperation efforts by ESCWA in the social field continue to generate interest and requests from member countries to assist them in integrating social policy priorities in their development plans. During 2010-2011, ESCWA supported Oman, Lebanon and Jordan in consideration of their social protection schemes with a view to promoting an integrated approach that mainstream an equity agenda across the existing programmes and reintegrates these schemes within the wider social policy framework. These efforts are being supported by devising social protection mapping and country profiles with a view to generating discussions in all member countries on integrated social protection mechanisms. In addition, ESCWA engaged in a field inquiry and active consultations with member countries to better understand the labour-related challenges facing governments in the region and to increase knowledge on the characteristics and impact of labour regulations and labour market policies. As a result, representatives from nine member countries expressed their interest to further collaborate with ESCWA in this area. Advocacy and outreach efforts by ESCWA also managed to increase the number of social policy instruments and mechanisms adopted by the governments and to exceed the target set for this biennium.

Lessons learned

47. Continuous and regular contacts with some governmental counterparts resulted in a reliable and productive work relationship, which allowed for a solid exchange of information and ideas. In other cases, cooperation and data collection required more time and effort, as data for evidence based policymaking was not always available. To address these challenges, the programme will continue to strengthen networking

mechanisms with national focal points and improve coordination and collaboration with the Statistics and other relevant Divisions within ESCWA.

Expected accomplishment 2: Enhanced capacity of member countries to address the implications of demographic changes with particular emphasis on the youth bulge, migration and good urban governance for national policymaking processes, and to adopt relevant policies

Results achieved

48. Normative and technical support activities from ESCWA contributed to the enhanced capacity of member countries to adopt relevant measures and policies to address the implications of demographic changes. As a result, the number of follow-up measures taken by member countries indicating increased understanding of the socio-demographic implications of the youth bulge for migration and development increased from 7 to 9, whereby Iraq established a youth parliament and Palestine took action to reinforce the analytical skills of policymakers to enable them to systematically publish a national youth report. Moreover, the number of measures and policy provisions adopted by member countries to integrate demographic changes in development plans and programmes increased from 6 to 10. This is evidenced by the addition of a special policy section on youth education, health and employment to the national development plan in Iraq, as well as the signature of a pact with research centres and universities to come up with a national research Agenda on Youth; and by integrating youth unemployment into development plans in Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

Lessons learned

49. As a result of normative and technical assistance work on Youth issues, one of the main lessons learned is that more capacity-building trainings should be organized for national counterparts, especially on writing assessment reports, as this represents an important step in the process of formulating youth development policies. In addition, it is important to build the capacity of national counterparts in order to plan programmes that target youth.

Expected accomplishment 3: Enhanced participation of civil society in social policy dialogue and in the formulation of Government social policy

Results achieved

50. Efforts by ESCWA towards enhancing the role of civil society in the development process and in promoting a dynamic public-civic relationship were successful and resulted in positive responses from end-users in both government and civil society institutions. This was evidenced by the 14 instances recorded during the current biennium in which 25 workshops and seminars were replicated and 1 research strategic plan formulated through assistance from ESCWA, and implemented in 4 beneficiary countries, namely Iraq (9), Palestine (8), Yemen (3) and Lebanon (6). In addition, initiatives from ESCWA to follow-up closely on the repercussions, causes, and dynamics of the Arab uprisings and to exchange knowledge with international experiences in this realm, had emanated remedying measures, action plans and technical input for a dynamic civic engagement in the process of change and transition towards democratization. Furthermore, in an effort to advancing the merits of integrating a participatory approach in national development policies, plans and strategies, ESCWA succeeded to surpass the set target by initiating 6 consultations, networks and agreements during the biennium.

Lessons learned

51. Online conferencing is both time and cost efficient, and providing incentives (i.e. an award-winning prize) to sensitize the contribution of participants makes a positive contribution to the outcome of discussions. The importance of investing in broad-based consultations with partners, securing political commitment and high-level participation, and setting in place appropriate monitoring and follow-up mechanisms for project-related activities, have proven to be instrumental to the success of development initiatives.

SUBPROGRAMME 3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION

52. The Economic Development and Globalization Division was responsible for the implementation of this subprogramme, which aims to strengthen macroeconomic policymaking for short-term economic growth and sustainable economic development in member countries, negotiation of trade and investment agreements, and facilitation of trade. The results achieved under each of the 4 expected accomplishments of this subprogramme are set out below.

Expected accomplishment 1: Increased knowledge among stakeholders in the region of the issues that should be taken into account in designing and implementing suitable macroeconomic policies and strategies for sustainable economic growth, employment creation and poverty alleviation in line with the Millennium Development Goals

Results achieved

53. During the biennium 2010-2011, three parliamentary documentations were presented at the 26th ESCWA Ministerial Session (May 2010) and to the 15th RCM (1 June 2011). The publication of the League of Arab States-United Nations Arab MDG Report “The Third Arab Report on the Millennium Development Goals 2010 and the Impact of the Global Economic Crises” was prepared in collaboration between the members of the Thematic Working Group (TWG) on MDGs in the Arab region which include the League of Arab States and the different United Nations agencies working in the region, with ESCWA being the convener of the TWG. This report was launched during the opening session of the 30th Session of the Arab Ministers of Social Affairs (12-13 December 2010). The launch was followed by an open dialogue session between the members of the TWG of the MDGs and the Arab ministers of Development and Social Affairs. A decision on formulating the recommendations of the report into a resolution for action was taken by the Council of Arab Ministers for Social Affairs and was presented to and adopted by the second Arab Economic and Social Summit (Sharm El-Sheikh, 19 January 2011). “The Summary of Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region 2009-2010” was submitted to Economic and Social Council substantive session in July 2010 (as E/2010/20). The full survey was published in December 2011. Under the ECESA macroeconomic and finance cluster coordination initiative, ESCWA made a substantive contribution to the preparation of DESA’s publication “World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) December 2011”.

Lessons learned

54. The challenge of the activities under this expected accomplishment shows a serious number of regular budget vacancies that need to be filled. Moreover, an effective modality for output delivery must be considered on a continuing basis. The feedbacks from such regional and national stakeholders are essential in achieving the expected accomplishment.

Expected accomplishment 2: Enhanced capacity of member countries to formulate and/or implement policies and measures recommended by the Monterrey Consensus, taking into consideration the outcomes of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development, which was held in Doha in 2008

Results achieved

55. ESCWA continued to follow-up on issues related to the Monterrey Consensus and the Doha Conference on Financing for Development. In this regard, ESCWA focused on mobilizing both domestic and international resources for development and organized 10 national training workshops on negotiations of bilateral investment agreements (6 workshops), agreements on double taxation avoidance (2 workshops) and Compilation of Foreign Direct Investment Abroad (2 workshops). These ten national training workshops (in Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Arab Emirates) contributed to upgrade the negotiation skills of around 245 government officials in these countries. In 2010, Oman passed a new tax law that unified tax rates among establishments and provided more tax incentives which intends to attract more investments. Qatar amended a previous law regulating foreign investments, opened up new sectors to foreign investors and allowed complete ownership. Kuwait passed the long-awaited privatization law increasing the role of the private sector in economic development. ESCWA also focused on the role of remittances in development finance, the role of small and medium sized enterprises and the development of database on foreign direct investment (FDI) statistics.

Lessons learned

56. Greater effort in the form of meetings, joint publications and technical cooperation is needed to increase interaction with regional organizations, regional development banks and funds.

Expected accomplishment 3: Enhanced capacity of member countries to implement the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM) and other measures promoted by ESCWA in order to improve regional and international transport linkages, with due consideration to environmental issues

Results achieved

57. During the 11th session of its committee on transport (Beirut, 22-24 March 2010), ESCWA prepared for the member countries the terms of references (TOR) for the working group on the harmonization of institutional frameworks and legislation in the transport sector in the ESCWA region. Moreover, the 11th session of transport committee agreed on a set of recommendations that call on all member countries to start, accelerate and proceed with the adoption of the ESCWA International agreements on transport, in addition to other recommendations related to transport and trade facilitation in the region. The 12th session of transport committee (Beirut, 17-19 May 2011) discussed the progress achieved in the field of transport in implementing the components of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM) with a focus on the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 that was launched at the inauguration session of the meeting (17 May 2011). As a result of efforts made by ESCWA, 10 member countries ratified/accessed the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq (Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates and Yemen), 10 member countries ratified the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq (Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates and Yemen), 13 member countries ratified/accessed the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq (Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates and Yemen) and 10 Member countries established National Committees for Transport and Trade Facilitation (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, and Yemen).

Lessons learned

58. More efforts should be made to support member countries, mainly the least developed countries, in implementing ITSAM components such as training and awareness workshops, field studies, technical

support for governmental concerned parties. Regional development banks and funds are to be called upon and involved in providing financial support.

Expected accomplishment 4: Enhanced capacity of member countries to negotiate and implement subregional, regional and multilateral trade agreements designed to increase intraregional and international trade

Results achieved

59. The contribution made by ESCWA to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Annual Report (STAT (2010) 34 - Aid for Trade - 2010 data request on 2009 flows) reflects the efforts and cooperation made by ESCWA and member countries to support intraregional trade. The indicators increased by two due to a request from the Syrian Arab Republic on trade facilitation and a joint request by Egypt and Jordan to establish unified customs on road border. On the other hand, ESCWA organized an expert group meeting on Transport and Trade Facilitation, at the United Nations House in Beirut, during 1-2 March 2011. The meeting called on member countries that have established National Transport and Trade Facilitation Committees to activate them through executive work plans with clear goals and priorities and to draw on technical support available from ESCWA in this field. Member countries were called upon to adopt a clear policy for small and medium enterprises, assisting them in benefiting from trade liberalization and regional integration. Another recommendation tackled the need for member countries to enhance their competitiveness in external trade. In addition, ESCWA organized a Regional Workshop on "Requirements for the Establishment of Single Windows for Handling Export/Import procedures and formalities in the ESCWA Region" (3-4 March, 2011). The workshop focused on enhancing and improving the knowledge on Single Window concept, benefit and relationship to trade facilitation, enhancing the capacity of member countries on Single Window for international trade requirements: formalities and procedures. It discussed and updated the study on "Single Window for Handling export/Import Procedures and formalities in ESCWA member countries". As set of related recommendations were approved by the participants.

Lessons learned

60. More efforts are needed in the area of supporting member countries to accede to, negotiate and/or implement trade agreements. Training workshop and seminars are to be conducted in various member countries to enhance the capacity of officials in trade agreement negotiations.

**SUBPROGRAMME 4. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY
FOR REGIONAL INTEGRATION**

61. The Information and Communication Technology Division was responsible for implementing this subprogramme, which aims to narrow the digital divide to build an inclusive development-oriented information society and knowledge-based economy. The results achieved under each of the two expected accomplishments of this subprogramme are set out below.

Expected accomplishment 1: Perceptible improvements in the region's information and communications technology (ICT) production and service sectors, substantiated by the implementation of ICT strategies and action plans, with special focus on the provision of e-services in Arabic

Results achieved

62. ESCWA assisted member countries for accelerating ICT development. It advocated for and supported member countries in improvements in the ICT production and service sectors by implementing ICT strategies and action plans. The regional ESCWA Technology Centre located in Amman, Jordan is now fully operational. ESCWA continued the maintenance and the updating of the Information Society Portal for the ESCWA Region (ISPER). The four issues of the Review of ICT and Development highlighted the impact of ICT for development, and the regional initiatives aimed at creating an integrated Arab network and addressed the reality and prospects of the Free and Open Source Software in the region and the children online safety and protection and the social networking and social media and their effect on the Arab spring. The Fifth Meeting of the Consultative Committee resulted in recommendations relating to the ICTD work programme. The EGM on a Regional Road Map for Internet Governance reviewed and adopted the “Arab Roadmap for Internet Governance: Framework, Principles and Objectives,” and resulted in a “Call for Arab Stakeholders”. The EGM on Enabling Environment for the Development of Arabic e-services provided a platform for sharing experiences and best practices and discussed the requirements for catalyzing a culturally appropriate enabling environment to develop e-services. The two EGMs on Promotion of South-South cooperation in technology transfer discussed the priority areas of cooperation in technology transfer, shared best practices for cooperation with successful technology transfer case studies in water, energy, agriculture, and ICT, and produced a collaboration framework with multi owners for critical technology development, management, maintenance, and service.

Lessons learned

63. Efforts should be exerted towards obtaining more response from member countries on their current status in implementation of ICT strategies and action plans. This could be done through focused short questionnaire to be filled by ministries and organizations in member countries dealing with ICT production and service sectors.

<p>Expected accomplishment 2: Enhanced capacity of member countries to measure and benchmark their progress towards the realization of the information society, and realign policies and strategies accordingly, giving due consideration to gender dimensions</p>

Results achieved

64. ESCWA monitored progress towards the information society of its member countries and provided indicators for measurement. Wider dissemination of information on ICT issues contributed to increasing awareness and knowledge on ICT developments for all stakeholders. The EGM on Standardizing Information Society measurements in the ESCWA region examined the data collection methodologies and measurement models presently available to the ESCWA region, with particular emphasis on regional and trans-national comparability. ESCWA prepared Regional Profile of the Information Society in Western Asia, 2011, which is the fifth in a series on the information society in Western Asia that provided essential information on the status of the information society in ESCWA member countries. The study on “Information Society Measurement: Building a common benchmarking model for the ESCWA region” explored the interplay between the value of evidence-based decision making, the limitations of available data, evaluation of existing models and the diverse contexts throughout the region. The project on workshop on delivery of e-services in civil society provided participating non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with a platform to share knowledge, experiences and best practices for applying ICTs and delivering e-commerce services in civil society. The project on Development Arabic Domain Names System (ADNS) – Phase II aimed at continuing efforts to overcome the language barrier on the Internet through the development of an ADNS that is inter-operable with the global Internet name resolution scheme. The project on Knowledge Networks through ICT Access Points for Disadvantaged Communities established regional and global knowledge networks.

Lessons learned

65. Improvements are needed for enhancing the capacity of member countries through establishment of mechanisms to exchange information and to share knowledge with regional and international players. This enhances efforts to bridge the digital divide between the rural and urban communities, as well as between developed and developing countries.

SUBPROGRAMME 5. STATISTICS FOR EVIDENCE-BASED POLICYMAKING

66. The Statistics Division was responsible for implementing this subprogramme, which aims to improve the production and use of harmonized and comparable economic, social and sectoral statistics, including gender-disaggregated data, thereby allowing for informed and evidence-based decision-making. The results achieved under each of the two expected accomplishments of this subprogramme are set out below.

Expected accomplishment 1: Progress in improving the national institutional framework for official statistics, in particular in conflict-affected countries and those that are less statistically developed

67. With respect to the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, the results show progress overall but there are still reserves with respect to Principles 1 (relevance, impartiality and equal access), 6 (Confidentiality), 9 (International standards) and 10 Bilateral and multilateral cooperation in statistics). With respect to the compliance with data dissemination standards of the International Monetary Fund, the results show an important progress, which exceeds expectations. Thirteen out of 14 ESCWA member countries are compliant with the GDDS or SDDS standards of the IMF.

Lessons learned

68. The future focus should be on implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, in particular with respect to Principles 1 (relevance, impartiality and equal access), 6 (Confidentiality), 9 (International standards) and 10 Bilateral and multilateral cooperation in statistics). This is not only in hands of statisticians, and it is important to reach policy makers and legislators.

Expected accomplishment 2: Enhanced capacity of national statistical offices to produce and disseminate relevant, timely, reliable and comparable economic and social statistics and indicators, including Millennium Development Goal indicators and gender-disaggregated data, in compliance with international standards and recommendations

69. There is an overall improvement in the average availability of the MDG indicators in the countries of the region of about 17 per cent since 2008, thereby indicating significant progress at the national level in data compilation and dissemination to monitor MDGs. Six new and/or revised standards/recommendations were implemented by at least 7 ESCWA member countries: SNA'93; ISIC Rev. 2; ISCED; ISCO; SITS Rev. 3 or HS (SITS/HS choice depends on individual country preferences); Recommendations for the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses. In addition, the System of Environmental Economic Accounting for Water (SEAAW) has been implemented in Jordan, Egypt and Oman, and taking into accounts the resource requirements and complexity of the SEAAW, this should also be considered as an achievement. According to evaluation questionnaires, between 79 and 83 per cent of participants found the knowledge acquired at the workshop useful for their further work, resulting in average satisfaction of 79.5 per cent.

Lessons learned

70. With respect to MDG indicators, more attention should be given to quality, rather than simple availability. Countries signaled numerous discrepancies between national and international data. The

implementation and compliance with new international standards is harmed by the low availability of Arabic translations.

SUBPROGRAMME 6. ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

71. The ESCWA Centre for Women was responsible for implementing this subprogramme, which aims to increase the focus on women and gender issues with a view to reducing the gender imbalance and empowering women. The results achieved under the 2 expected accomplishments of this subprogramme are set out below.

Expected accomplishment 1: Enhanced capacity of national mechanisms, especially those in conflict-affected countries, to be effective agents for mainstreaming gender into national policies, plans and programmes

Results achieved

72. National Women Machineries (NWM) are entrusted with monitoring the status of women including gender mainstreaming with national bodies. ECW is mandated to enhance the capacity of NWM. Towards this end, ECW is serving as a forum for exchange of good practices and providing technical assistance and advisory services for gender mainstreaming. ECW organized two workshops for participants from NWMs and gender focal points from Ministries of Labour (from Bahrain, Lebanon, Kuwait, Palestine, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic) in order to provide guidelines for formulating gender mainstreaming strategies within these Ministries in order to build the capacity of participants for (1) gender audits and assessments, and (2) formulating gender mainstreaming strategies. In 2011, ECW released a publication on “Progress in achievement of the MDG in the ESCWA region: a gender perspective” and organized an expert group meeting on the same topic to assist member countries in integrating a gender perspective in MDG implementation, reporting, monitoring and evaluation processes. Furthermore, ECW focused this biennium on assisting member countries in integrating a gender perspective in conflict resolution and post conflict reconstruction processes through the organization of a workshop on the full implementation of SCR 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security; and the introduction of “ESCWA-UNHCR guidelines on the protection of women living in conflict situations”. Due to this assistance, the United Arab Emirates and Oman pledged to initiate drafting action plans to activate SCR 1325 at the national level.

Lessons learned

73. Future activities should focus on raising awareness in order to place gender mainstreaming on the political agenda of policy-makers (political will) and providing practical tools. Also, continuous follow-up and provision of advisory services in implementation are needed.

Expected accomplishment 2: Enhanced capacity of member countries to implement and monitor the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

Results achieved

74. ECW organized capacity-building workshops and expert group meetings targeting parliamentarians in order to highlight the central importance of implementing CEDAW and withdrawing reservations to the agreements. In July 2010, ECW co-organized a workshop with the Inter-Parliamentary Union on the role of parliamentarians in implementing CEDAW and combating violence against women by introducing gender-sensitive legislation. Regional advisory services were provided to National Women Machineries (NWMs) in Lebanon and Kuwait for drafting reports to the CEDAW Committee regarding implementation of CEDAW. To enhance the capacity of member countries to implement the Convention, ECW focused through its

publications and reports on the exchange of good practices and success stories in the area of CEDAW implementation. Furthermore, during the fifth session of the Committee on Women, a special session assessed progress achieved and remaining gaps and challenges in implementation of CEDAW in the region. In addition to normative work, ECW provided technical cooperation and advisory services to Qatar on ways forward to implement CEDAW and withdraw reservations. In addition, all member countries were trained in 2010-2011 on how to draft CEDAW national reports in accordance with the guidelines prepared by the United Nations CEDAW Committee.

Lessons learned

75. More coordination and alliances with other stakeholders (NGOs) must be established for effective implementation of CEDAW. Better dissemination of CEDAW in the media and the general public.

SUBPROGRAMME 7. CONFLICT MITIGATION AND DEVELOPMENT

76. The Section for Emerging and Conflict-related Issues was responsible for implementing this subprogramme, which aims to increase understanding by member countries of the impact of conflict and enhance their capacity to identify, assess, predict and respond to challenges posed by conflict with a view to reducing its impact on development. The results achieved under each of the two expected accomplishments of this subprogramme are set out below.

Expected accomplishment 1: Increased understanding by member countries of the political and socio-economic dynamics, sources and root causes of instability and their long-term consequences

Results achieved

77. The demand for subprogramme 7 and its impact on addressing the root causes of instability and its spillover effects at both at the normative and operational fronts was evident during the formulation and presentation to the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council of the Secretary-General Report on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli Occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan, reconfirming the subprogramme and the commitment by ESCWA to providing annual reporting to the Assembly and the Council on the socio-economic conditions of Palestinians in the occupied territories and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan. Of noteworthy importance was the participation of ESCWA in the context of the United Nations Least Developed Countries IV Conference in Istanbul entitled “Delivering for Development in Conflict Affected LDCs: The Role of Governance and Statebuilding”. ESCWA, in collaboration with the World Bank and the International Dialogue on Peace-building and Statebuilding organized a side event that brought together 45 people. Owing to this event, ESCWA was instrumental in having “Conflict in LDCs” included as one of the themes in the declaration of the Conference. Among the publications that subprogramme 7 produced in the reporting period, the publication “The Impact of the Food Security in the ESCWA countries” was one of the publications with the highest number of “hits” on the ESCWA website. Finally, ESCWA organized a series of events to observe the “International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People”. ESCWA also organized a series of cultural activities at the UNESCO Cultural Palace and at the American University of Beirut.

Lesson learned

78. Translating findings and recommendations of Expert Group Meetings into concrete steps to support decision makers in member countries continue to be challenging. Better outreach to civil society to ensure their input in normative activities is needed. Need to better incorporate and harmonize substantive regular budget and extrabudgetary activities with training activities (RPTC) for a more homogeneous capacity-

building strategy. Mobilize and solicit United Nations and other relevant entities for inputs, which would increase the credibility and scope of normative activities.

Expected accomplishment 2: Enhanced capacity of member countries to formulate and/or implement development policies and measures, including good governance practices, that aim to mitigate conflict and address sources of instability

Results achieved

79. ESCWA continued to focus on strengthening national capacities in assessing and mapping governance limitations and priority/focus areas, identifying policy recommendations and developing action plans for the establishment of a more efficient distribution of power and competencies between the central and local levels of government to achieve equitable access to essential services. In partnership with United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), Division for Sustainable Development, ESCWA implemented the first phase of a project to assist the Lebanese government to create a path towards sustainable development and lasting peace by increasing its capacity to utilize sustainable development principles in policy-making, including in collaboration with UNDESA, subprogramme 7 organized a stakeholder workshop where Lebanese officials and representatives for various CSOs attended (18 in total). Also, the ongoing support from ESCWA to Iraq continued during the reporting period to include, in the context of the Public Sector Modernization project, 2 study missions and a Conference on Decentralization that yielded a number of policy recommendations that would ultimately improve service delivery and local governance in Iraq. The valuable results were praised by the national press in June 2010. Finally, ESCWA implemented a national assessment on existing perceptions and contributing factors undermining nation-building, citizenship and the adoption of tolerance, human rights values and gender equity in Iraq. The assessment was piloted in four Iraqi governorates and the survey was administered to more than 600 youth, with 16 focus groups. ESCWA is currently engaged in devising a National Action Plan based on the performed assessment to be presented to concerned stakeholders for enactment.

Lessons learned

80. Travel restrictions to Iraq due to security constraints hindered needed field technical support and direct monitoring. Engagement of national counterparts in early stages ensures ownership and active participation in programmes.

Annex**ESCWA INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETINGS 2010-2011**

Subprogramme	Title of meeting	Venue	Date
Subprogramme 1	Ninth session of the Committee on Water Resources	Beirut	23-25 March 2011
	Eighth Session of the Committee on Energy	Beirut	13-14 December 2010
Subprogramme 2	Eighth session of the Committee on Social Development	Beirut	24-25 March 2011
Subprogramme 3	Seventh Session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development	Beirut	4-5 October 2011
	Eleventh Session of the Committee on Transport	Beirut	22-24 March 2010
	Twelfth Session of the Committee on Transport	Beirut	17-19 May 2011
Subprogramme 5	Ninth Session of the Statistical Committee	Beirut	13-15 October 2010
Subprogramme 6	Fourth Session of the Committee on Women	Beirut	19-21 December 2011
OES	Twenty-sixth Commission session	Beirut	17-20 May 2010
OES	Fourth Technical Committee meeting	Beirut	26-27 January 2010
OES	Fifth Technical Committee meeting	Beirut	6-7 April 2011
OES	Sixth Technical Committee meeting	Beirut	1-2 December 2011
