

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

Twenty-seventh session  
Beirut, 7-10 May 2012

Item 6 (b) of the provisional agenda

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION****IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY  
THE COMMISSION AT ITS TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION****Summary**

This report presents the actions taken by the secretariat to implement the resolutions that were adopted at the twenty-sixth session of the Commission on the various issues of interest to the member countries of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and on which the work of the Commission is focused. The resolutions are as follows:

- 292 (XXVI) Upgrading the Section for Emerging and Conflict-Related Issues to the level of a division and establishing a governmental committee on emerging issues and development in conflict settings;
- 293 (XXVI) Upgrading the ESCWA Centre for Women to the level of a division and follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the Arab countries after fifteen years: Beijing+15;
- 294 (XXVI) Establishment of the ESCWA technology centre;
- 295 (XXVI) Guiding declaration of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on giving greater attention to youth policies: An opportunity for development;
- 296 (XXVI) Enhancing public sector institutions and resources to attain national development goals;
- 297 (XXVI) Arab MDG monitor for societal progress;
- 298 (XXVI) Social development;
- 299 (XXVI) Adoption of the amendments introduced to the programme of work for the biennium 2010-2011;
- 301 (XXIV) Adoption of the draft strategic framework for the biennium 2012-2013.

**292 (XXVI) Upgrading the Section for Emerging and Conflict-Related Issues  
to the level of a division and establishing a governmental committee  
on emerging issues and development in conflict settings**

A. THE RESOLUTION

1. At its twenty-sixth session, the Commission adopted resolution 292 (XXVI) requesting the secretariat to provide the necessary support for ESCWA's subprogramme 7 Conflict mitigation and development of Programme 18, in terms of financial and human resources and upgrade the section responsible for its implementation to the level of a division similar to other subprogrammes, with a view to meeting the needs of member countries and intensifying its activities in the following areas: emerging issues, development in situations of conflict and instability, development in the least developed countries (LDCs) and development of public sector institutions. The resolution came in the light of the fact that while subprogramme 7 has a fully fledged work programme similar in scope and size to other ESCWA subprogrammes, it has significantly less human resources.

B. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

2. The resolution 292 (XXVI) adopted by ESCWA was endorsed by the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session on 23 December 2011. It has been decided that the Section for Emerging and Conflict-Related Issues be upgraded to the level of a division encompassing two sections, the Section for Emerging Trends and Conflict Mitigation and the Section for Governance, Instability and Development.

3. It is noteworthy to mention that the nature of requested interventions by ESCWA member countries, leading to the change in the structure of the Section for Emerging and Conflict-Related Issues, are not only increasing, but new to ESCWA which require specialization such as the need for development and institution building professionals that are well versed in conflict settings and recovery efforts, spillover effects, crisis response and public sector reform. The secretariat started to adopt administrative measures to create the new posts and make necessary functional changes to upgrade the section and assume the new responsibilities. Main arrangements include:

(a) The establishment of a P3 post for the Governance, Instability and Development Section. The related tasks will revolve around drafting inputs for governance studies, institutional development, public sector modernization and preparation of meetings, conferences including the sessions of the intergovernmental committee on emerging issues and development in conflict settings;

(b) The creation of a P5 post to lead the Governance, Instability and Development Section. The related tasks will revolve around designing the work programme of the section and supervising its timely implementation; supervising the work of staff members and consultants in the section; orienting research as well as analytical and empirical works in cooperation with other United Nations partner agencies; conducting fact finding and advisory missions; and advising member countries on strengthening and modernizing public institutions to enhance their capacity for development;

(c) Reassigning the existing P5 post, held currently by the chief of section that will be upgraded to a division, to lead the Emerging Trends and Conflict Mitigation Section in the new Division. This post would serve to strengthen the capacity of the analytical component of the section, focusing on identification of regional domestic policies geared to address conflict, its spillover effects as well as emerging global trends. The incumbent would provide policy advice on regional trends and the manner global emerging issues impact the ESCWA region; supervise drafting correspondence, reports and notes on emerging trends and the ramifications of conflict on ESCWA member countries; ensure coherence with United Nations system wide policies; contribute to United Nations system wide publications in concerned areas; establish and maintain working relations with senior-level counterparts of member countries and within the United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs), and in regional/intergovernmental organizations; and coordinate the

provision of substantive support to the director of the division and the Executive Secretary on issues related to the ramifications of conflict and political tensions;

(d) Creating of a D1 post to manage the division, and for the managerial oversight of the subprogramme. More specifically, the director will lead and supervise the formulation and implementation of the work programme related to conflict mitigation and development as well as institutional development issues; oversee the management of activities undertaken by the subprogramme; ensure that programmed activities are carried out in line with the overall strategic vision and mandate of ESCWA; coordinate work within ESCWA and with other United Nations, regional and international organizations, with particular emphasis on ensuring synergy with UNCT strategies and work plans; coordinate and oversee the preparation of reports for presentation to the Secretary-General as well as finalize the terms of reference of the intergovernmental committee on emerging issues and development under crisis; assist the Executive Secretary in preparing the conflict mitigation and development work programme of the division; and represent the Division at international, regional or national fora.

4. The secretariat prepared the technical specifications of the posts, and launched the recruitment process. The Division team of work is expected to be completed by the end of June 2012. Upon the completion of this endeavour, the division will embark on a consultation process with member countries. Consultations will focus on identifying and finalizing the mandate and functions of the envisioned intergovernmental committee on emerging issues and development in conflict settings, as stipulated by the twenty-sixth session of the Commission. Consultations will be based on the terms of reference that was circulated to member countries at the twenty-sixth session. It is expected that the intergovernmental committee will convene its first meeting in 2014, prior to which a preparatory meeting will be held early 2013.

**293 (XXVI) Upgrading the ESCWA Centre for Women to the level of a division and follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the Arab countries after fifteen years: Beijing+15**

A. THE RESOLUTION

5. At its twenty-sixth session, the Commission adopted resolution 293(XXVI) on upgrading the ESCWA Centre for Women to the level of a division and follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the Arab countries after fifteen years: Beijing +15. In this resolution, the Commission requested the secretariat to support and provide the ESCWA Centre for Women (ECW) with additional human resources in order to raise it to the level of a division. The Commission also requested the secretariat to double its efforts in empowering women through building the capacity of national machineries for the advancement of women to integrate women into national policies and implement international conventions and other relevant international resolutions, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Furthermore, the Commission also requested the secretariat to study the feasibility of creating an observatory for Arab women and developing an index of gender and development specific to the region in order to identify and analyse the nature of the gender gap, with the aim of making specific policies and strategies for the advancement of women. The Executive Secretary was requested to present a report to the Commission at its twenty-seventh session on the progress achieved in implementing this resolution.

B. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

6. Pursuant to the provisions of the resolution, ECW has been upgraded to the level of a division, similar to other divisions of ESCWA, with the aim of increasing its efforts in assisting member countries in the area of empowerment of women and the Centre has also been endowed with additional human resources.

(a) *Enhancing the capacity of national machineries for the advancement of women*

7. ESCWA pursued its efforts in strengthening the capacity of national machineries for mainstreaming the gender perspective in policies, plans and programmes, through preparation of studies, provision of possibilities for intercommunication, and the exchange of experiences and lessons of successful experiences. In 2010, ESCWA issued two studies, one pertaining to the “Review of the Performance Assessment of National Machineries for the Advancement of Women in Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in the Arab Countries” and another pertaining to the “Progress in Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the ESCWA Region: A Gender Lens”. In addition, ESCWA prepared an important guide on “Gender Mainstreaming in the Policies, Programmes and Activities of Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs in ESCWA Member Countries” in 2011. ESCWA further organized, in cooperation with the National Commission for Lebanese Women, a workshop on Integrating a Gender Perspective into National Budgets (Beirut, 19 July 2011), as well as an Expert Group Meeting on “Mainstreaming Gender in the Plans and Programmes of the Ministries of Labour in Selected ESCWA Member Countries” (Beirut, 29-30 March 2011).

(b) *International conventions and resolutions*

8. ESCWA pursued its efforts in strengthening the capacity of member countries to implement and monitor the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). During the past biennium, ESCWA implemented a number of activities aimed at the capacity-building of national mechanisms, exchange of experiences and lessons of successful experiences, and raising the awareness of decision makers of the Convention. ESCWA issued a study in 2011, as part of the “Women and Development” series on “Good Practice and Successful Experiences in the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in Arab States”. Two regional workshops were also held, one on the Role of Women National Machineries in Promoting the Full Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in the ESCWA Region, in cooperation with the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), (Beirut, 28-29 April 2010) and the second one, which was also organized in Beirut, from 27 to 29 July 2010, in cooperation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Lebanese Parliament and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), was dedicated to exploring the Role of Arab Parliaments in Implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and Ending Violence against Women.

9. Within the context of the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and supporting the application of ESCWA guidelines, developed in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on the protection of the rights of women living in conflict areas, ESCWA organized, in cooperation with OHCHR, a training workshop on the Protection of Women in Conflict Situations: United Nations Security Council 1325 (Beirut, 8-9 December 2011).

10. In cooperation with the Hariri Foundation for Sustainable Human Development in Lebanon, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the World Bank, ESCWA is also currently implementing a project on “Creating an Observatory for Arab Women”, including a gender indicator. The main goals of this project are to develop a gender-disaggregated database, covering all Arab countries and regularly updated on the Internet, in order to create an “Arab gender indicator” to monitor progress of gender equality; to develop national briefs including an analysis and evaluation of limitations to gender equality at the national level; to raise awareness of the Arab women’s affairs; and to strengthen cooperation and exchange of expertise to promote the status of Arab women. This project will be implemented over a couple of years and in the first stage a “Pilot Project for Lebanon” will be launched as of December 2011.

## 294 (XXVI) Establishment of the ESCWA technology centre

### A. THE RESOLUTION

11. At its twenty-sixth session, ESCWA adopted resolution 294 (XXVI) on the establishment of the ESCWA technology centre (ETC). In this resolution, the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to take all necessary steps for the prompt establishment of the Centre, including the conclusion of a headquarters agreement between the host country and the United Nations. It also requested the Executive Secretary to establish the first founding board of governors by soliciting nominations from member countries. Finally, the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to report to the Commission at its twenty-seventh session, the implementation of this resolution, including a presentation on the phase reached in establishing and operating the Centre.

### B. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

12. In July 2010, the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2010/5 at its forty second plenary meeting, endorsed ESCWA resolution 294 (XXVI) on the establishment of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia Technology Centre (ETC) and the statute of the Centre. ESCWA concluded the headquarters agreement with Jordan and both sides signed the Host Country Agreement on 23 December 2010. ESCWA and the institutions in the host country implemented the various components of the hosting agreement, especially the items related to financial commitments, human resources appointments and facilities allocation.

13. The formal inauguration of ETC took place in November 2011 under a royal patronage, represented by the Prime Minister of Jordan. Around 100 delegates represented the various government stakeholders and international organizations in Amman. In addition, seven members of the Board of Governors attended the opening and the first meeting held. The ESCWA Executive Secretary solicited nominations from the member countries during 2011. The first Board of Governors for the Centre was established from representatives of 10 member countries. One country apologized (United Arab Emirates) and three countries have not replied (Kuwait, Egypt and Yemen). The first Board meeting took place in the Centre in Amman on 15 November 2011 and elected the president and vice president of the Board according to the ETC Statute which is annexed to ESCWA resolution 294 (XXVI).

14. A progress report prepared by the Information and Communication Technology Division on the ESCWA Technology Centre, will be submitted to the Commission as a background paper. It provides an overview of the legislative background leading to the setup of the Centre, as well as progress made, and implemented activities.

## 295 (XXVI) Guiding declaration of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on giving greater attention to youth policies: An opportunity for development

### A. THE RESOLUTION

15. At its twenty-sixth session, ESCWA adopted Resolution 295 (XXVI) on the Guiding declaration of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on giving greater attention to youth policies: An opportunity for development. In this resolution, the Commission requested the secretariat to continue its role as a regional hub in the areas of strengthening the national capacity of member countries in the formulation of national policies and strategies targeting youth, activating the role of national coordination mechanisms and expanding them to include national organs concerned with youth issues in member countries, preparing periodical regional reports on developments regarding the conditions of youth in the region, enhancing the role of national statistical offices in member countries in relation to data on youth, as well as exchanging expertise between countries of the region. It also requested the secretariat to address youth policies as a main

theme during the fourteenth meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism in 2010, as well as to enhance coordination between ESCWA, the League of Arab States and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in the context of encouraging governments in the region to formulate national youth policies and with regard to incorporating youth issues into the Pan Arab Project for Family Health.

#### B. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

16. During the biennium 2010-2011, the secretariat undertook various activities pursuant to this resolution:

(a) *Strengthening the capacities of member countries in policymaking*

17. ESCWA launched a regional project on “Strengthening capacities of policymakers in the ESCWA region to formulate national youth policies and plans of action: Responding to the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY)”. The Project received funding from the Development Account, 7<sup>th</sup> Tranche. ESCWA will be implementing this project in partnership with the Pan Arab Project for Family Health (PAPFAM) implemented by the League of Arab States, selected United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) country offices, as well as ministries and national institutions concerned with youth policies and plans of action. The Project will benefit all member countries, particularly Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen (countries currently having and/or designing youth policies and plans of action). It aims at strengthening the capacity of policymakers to formulate or revise and upgrade existing national youth policies in line with the identified priorities in the WPAY; as well as their capacity to formulate a national plan of action for youth or to revise and upgrade an existing national plan of action for youth to include a national list of indicators to monitor progress in WPAY priorities. In this regard, ESCWA is collaborating with PAPFAM in conducting a regional survey on the availability and gaps in youth indicators, as well as preparing a proposed regional list of indicators to monitor WPAY priorities.

18. ESCWA also held an Expert Group Meeting on the Positions of ESCWA Member Countries towards the Development of a National Policy for Youth (Beirut, 29-30 March 2011). The meeting highlighted the principles, priorities and conditions for the successful implementation of WPAY. It also reviewed the positions of member countries towards the development of a national youth policy and its integration into the process of development planning. It discussed the institutional, gender, political and technical dimensions of a national youth policy, providing an opportunity for countries to present and discuss their experiences in the formulation of national youth policies and plans of action. This meeting revealed a considerable progress in the knowledge of member countries towards contemporary concepts and approaches to youth issues within the framework of WPAY. However, it highlighted persisting structural, institutional and circumstantial constraints impeding the responses of countries to WPAY and their formulation of national youth policies and plans of action.

(b) *The role of youth in regional coordination*

19. The theme of youth was also a main theme discussed during the fourteenth Meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) for the Arab States (Beirut, 11-12 November 2010), in line with the International Year of Youth declared by the United Nations and focusing on dialogue and mutual understanding. The emphasis of the meeting was to enhance multi-stakeholder engagement, both within and between the United Nations system and strategic regional stakeholders, in addressing the development challenges of youth. In addition to all United Nations agencies in the region, the League of Arab States, the Bretton Woods Institutions, and other invited guest organizations have participated in this meeting. ESCWA presented a paper on integrating youth in the process of development planning and highlighted the need for strengthening national capacities to approach youth issues and to formulate national youth policies and plans of action in the context of WPAY.

(c) *The theme of youth in brochures and publications*

## 20. ESCWA issued several publications related to youth, including:

(a) The fourth issue of the Population and Development Report, issued in 2010, was entitled “Youth in the ESCWA Region: Situation Analysis and Implications for Development Policies”. This report offered a definition of “youth” as the population aged 15-24 years and provided an overview of the contemporary approaches to youth issues, including the United Nations approach and particularly WPAY framework. The report also analyses the situation of youth in the ESCWA region in the domains of education, employment, health and participation in public life. It identifies the challenges facing youth in these domains, such as the low quality of education and the disparity between educational outputs and labour market requirements, the high levels of youth unemployment, the spread of unhealthy and high-risk lifestyles, and the low level of youth participation in public and political decision-making. It also tackles the policy implications of development, and provides an overview of the current policies and strategies related to youth in ESCWA member countries. Finally, it reiterates the importance of adopting policies targeting youth as a distinct socio-demographic group, as well as the need to empower youth and to provide them with necessary opportunities to reach their full potentials;

(b) The fifth issue of the Population and Development Report, issued in 2011, was entitled “Youth Exclusion in the ESCWA Region: Demographic, Socio-cultural and Economic Dimensions”. The report proceeds by providing a theoretical background on the concept of exclusion, particularly youth exclusion. It analyses the demographic dimension of youth exclusion, highlighting the unprecedented increase of youth, and the socio-cultural dimension of youth exclusion, discussing factors such as cultural norms and traditions, education, and participation in public life. The report explores the economic dimension of youth exclusion, examining such issues as high youth unemployment rates as well as the disparity between the outputs of the educational system and the requirements of the labour market. It concludes by providing policy recommendations to overcome youth exclusion and to ensure the participation of youth in the process of development and their ability to benefit from its returns.

**296 (XXVI) Enhancing public sector institutions and resources  
to attain national development goals**

A. THE RESOLUTION

21. Based on the growing interest of member countries in supporting the development and ensuring the efficiency of their public sector institutions, resolution 296 (XXVI) called upon ESCWA to pursue and expand its interventions in the field of public sector modernization (PSM) as a tool for development and as a vehicle to facilitate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In addition, PSM was also identified as a major conflict mitigation strategy supporting post-conflict countries in addressing developmental challenges and limiting popular unrest that may arise from the lack of or back quality service provision.

B. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

22. During the biennium 2010-2011 and in response to the recommendations of the resolution, ESCWA expanded its existing interventions in public sector development through policy recommendations and technical assistance provision. Moreover, ESCWA sought to identify and propose new interventions deepening modernization strategies as a tool for development and peacebuilding. Measures adopted by the secretariat for the implementation of this resolution covered various fields.

(a) *Supporting initiatives aimed at improving local governance*

23. The secretariat presented a number of policy recommendations to the Iraqi Government pursuant to the outcomes of the Situation Analysis on Decentralization, Local Governance and e-Readiness performed in Iraq. Recommendations were discussed during a National Conference on Decentralization and Local Governance (Irbil, Iraq, June 2011), which was attended by 120 concerned, national stakeholders. A specific recommendation was issued to amend the Provincial Powers Act in Iraq (Law 21 of 2008), which is the legislation governing decentralization within the Iraqi governorates not grouped into a region. The recommendation included changes to better reflect the decentralized structure that should be prevalent, in addition to specific recommendations enhance e-governance as a means to ensure adequate and efficient services to Iraqi citizens, and therefore allowing a greater level of transparency and accountability.

24. ESCWA engaged, alongside seven other United Nations agencies, in the implementation of Phase I of the “Iraq Public Sector Modernization Programme” (I-PSM), which is a diagnostic phase of the status of the Iraqi public sector that is expected to yield a specific action plan that would guide the modernization strategies and endeavours undertaken by the Government. ESCWA focused on participation mechanisms and public-private partnerships (PPP) initiatives in support of the modernization of the public sector. ESCWA performed nation-wide assessments and surveys on participation and inclusiveness mechanisms within different tiers of government. A series of recommendations ensued for the improvement of planning and prioritizing approaches, better adaptability of public service and better reflection of the needs of citizens, and the enhancement of transparency and accountability through public participation. Moreover, the PPP component of the assessment identified limitations and obstacles hindering the involvement of the private sector in the public arena in Iraq, and identified a series of legislative and policy recommendations that were presented to the Government.

25. Building on the successes of the transfer of knowledge methodology and in the prospect of facilitating the exposure of Iraqi officials to PSM success models and best practices, ESCWA organized three study missions attended by senior level public officials in Iraq. The first, on the Senior Executive Service (SES) Model in Ottawa in Canada, aimed at exposing senior Iraqi decision makers to the Canadian success model in SES and instigating a modernized strategy for the public sector within the Government of Iraq. The second, on Participation and Local Governance for Enhanced Service Delivery in the Piedmonte and Trento Regions in Italy, aimed at introducing Iraqi delegates to best practices of participatory planning and fiscal/financial management for enhanced service delivery. The third, on Public-Private Partnerships in Istanbul in Turkey, aimed at sharing the experience and best practices of public-private partnership strategies and implemented projects in Turkey, as well as informing participants on the legal background and application procedures of the PPP model.

(b) *Studies and researches*

26. ESCWA issued a publication on “The Governance Deficit and Conflict Relapse in the ESCWA Region: An Overview”, which analyses the driving forces behind the vicious cycle of governance deficit, conflict relapse and de-development in the ESCWA region. The study concludes by highlighting the importance of a concerted, coordinated international assistance with a long-term commitment from national actors, donors and development practitioners that aims at building effective and efficient state institutions that are in line with the national development vision and aspirations and ensure the development of indigenous good governance practices that are tailored to local needs and aspirations.

(c) *Capacity-building for the development of institutional capacities*

27. ESCWA implemented a number of capacity-building activities for the development of institutional capacities, in line with the specific requests and needs of member countries, namely Iraq, Palestine, Yemen and the Sudan. The activities included four consultative missions by ESCWA staff and eight training workshops and included good governance techniques and practices in food security, public finance reform



and decentralization through local governance. In addition, activities focused on enhancing capacities in public institutions and civil society in project design and formulation, results-based monitoring and evaluation, and mainstreaming human rights. The results of the technical cooperation activities included the training of around 175 civil servants and civil society activists, and the dissemination of best practices and tool kits on public finance reform and modernization to officials in 12 member countries.

28. Finally, ESCWA engaged in a capacity-building initiative with the Government of Lebanon in the framework of the project “Strengthening National Capacity for the Integration of Sustainable Development Principles into Development Strategies in Countries Emerging from Conflict”, carried out in partnership with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Within this project, ESCWA produced the report “Review and Assessment of Capacity for Sustainable Development in Lebanon” to highlight the achievements and challenges of planning, drafting and implementing national strategies and policies that would integrate sustainable development and peacebuilding approaches in the political context of Lebanon. ESCWA also organized a stakeholder consultation workshop that gathered 18 key stakeholders from government and civil society to promote trans-sectoral dialogue on national sustainable development policymaking.

### **297 (XXVI) Arab MDG monitor for societal progress**

#### **A. THE RESOLUTION**

29. At its twenty-sixth session, the Commission adopted resolution 297 (XXVI) on the Arab MDG monitor for societal progress. The secretariat was requested to develop an MDG monitor for societal progress towards realization of MDGs, including gender equality and youth. In addition, the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to submit at its twenty-seventh session a report on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution, including on improving gender and youth statistics at the regional level, and the achievements of ESCWA in this regard.

#### **B. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES**

30. Pursuant to the provisions of this resolution, the secretariat has undertaken a number of activities in various fields.

##### *(a) Development data and indicators*

##### *1. Developing a strategy for availability of all indicators*

31. Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) has been widely recognized, nationally and internationally, as an important tool for the exchange of development indicators, including MDGs and their metadata. In 2011, the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and ESCWA organized capacity-building training on the use of SDMX. There is a planned future training of national statistical offices and line ministries, and an international workshop will also be organized in order to share experience on the use of SDMX practices and to support networking.

##### *2. Identifying ways for monitoring and reporting*

32. ESCWA trains the Arab countries in the use and application of the DevInfo application to disseminate MDGs and other developmental indicators and to facilitate monitoring and reporting. ESCWA has developed an Arab MDG monitor to facilitate a comprehensive knowledge sharing platform of national and regional MDG databases, reports and activities.

### 3. *Ensuring metadata*

33. ESCWA is compiling available national and international MDG data and metadata. The aim is to assess availability and discrepancies between both sources, to define metadata for each indicator in each source, to monitor progress in the availability of MDG data and convergence between both sources, and to build the capacities of countries in common areas of major discrepancies.

#### (b) *Supporting member countries*

34. ESCWA has finalized the production of a web-based Metadata Handbook for an engendered MDG Arab customized framework on goals issues and indicators (GIsIn). The Metadata Handbook is a tool for data producers and aims to build on synergies from ongoing work in the area of gender statistics by forging a common methodological knowledge among stakeholders in order to facilitate the production of comparable statistics for evidence-based policymaking and planning. In 2012, ESCWA is planning to translate the UNSD Handbook on MDG into Arabic. In addition, ESCWA will be developing a framework for effective use of statistics in policymaking and compile relevant best practice from national statistical offices, national agencies and UNCT.

35. Moreover, ESCWA organized a workshop on the Use of SDMX in DevInfo for MDG Data Reporting, (Amman, 10-14 July 2011). The objective of the event was to provide national and regional requirements for exchanging metadata to comply with international standards and discuss challenges and future plans for better coordination and dissemination of data. The workshop, attended by 19 representatives from 12 national statistical offices, was organized by UNSD, ESCWA and the African Development Bank (AfDB) and facilitated by SDMX experts from Metadata Technology and DevInfo.

36. The workshop helped the participants realize the benefits of SDMX, including: (a) Improvement of data quality and availability and reduction of data discrepancies; (b) Budgetary savings attributed to the minimum maintenance required, the number of available free tools, and the ease of data and metadata dissemination; (c) Reducing the response burden and the likelihood of errors, as international agencies can directly query data from national databases; (d) Improved coordination of national statistical systems (NSS) thanks to instant notifications of new or revised data and the reduction of time lags.

37. ESCWA is planning to hold two more MDG capacity-building workshops during the first half of 2012 to improve the inter-institutional coordination procedures for the production, description and adjustment of data. The workshops will strengthen the capacity of countries in producing statistics and indicators of relevance to MDGs indicators on water, sanitation and employment. The workshops will enhance understanding of the adjustment and calculation methods used by national and international organizations and improve data exchange.

#### (c) *Assessing quality*

38. ESCWA has initiated the compilation of national data for all MDG indicators for ESCWA member countries with in-depth assessment of data availability and discrepancy between national and international sources to be used as a benchmark for monitoring progress. It will continue this activity during 2012. The results of these assessments will be compiled in a technical report on discrepancies between national and international sources. The report will be presented in an expert group meeting on MDG to be held in July 2012.

## **298 (XXVI) Social development**

### A. THE RESOLUTION

39. At its twenty-sixth session, the Commission adopted resolution 298 (XXVI) on Social development. It endorsed the change in the title of subprogramme 2 from “Integrated social policies” to “Social

development”; and requested the Executive Secretary to submit to the Commission at its twenty-seventh session a report on the implementation of this resolution.

40. Accordingly, the title of subprogramme 2 changed to “Social development”, as was subsequently reflected in the strategic framework, as well as the programme of work for the biennium 2012-2013.

**299 (XXVI) Adoption of the amendments introduced to the programme of work for the biennium 2010-2011**

A. THE RESOLUTION

41. At its twenty-sixth session, ESCWA adopted resolution 299 (XXVI) on the adoption of the amendments introduced to the programme of work for the biennium 2010-2011. In the resolution, the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to follow up the implementation of the programme of work and to include within it, as necessary, activities that address any changes that may take place in the ESCWA region. The Commission also requests the Executive Secretary to provide information on any further amendments to the programme of work in the report on progress made in implementing the programme of work for the biennium 2010-2011, which will be distributed to member countries.

B. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

42. Pursuant to this resolution, the secretariat prepared a report on the programme performance to be presented to the Commission in document E/ESCWA/27/5(Part I) (agenda item 6(a)). The report highlights the results achieved and lessons learned in the biennium 2010-2011, including the accomplishments achieved in each of the seven subprogrammes as well as the executive direction and management.

**301 (XXIV) Adoption of the draft strategic framework for the biennium 2012-2013**

A. THE RESOLUTION

43. At its twenty-sixth session, ESCWA adopted resolution 301 (XXVI) on the adoption of the draft strategic framework for the biennium 2012-2013. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to distribute the strategic framework in the form adopted by member countries. It further requested the Executive Secretary to submit a report to the Commission at its twenty-seventh session on the progress made in implementing the strategic framework including the amendments introduced, in addition to the achievements of ESCWA.

B. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

44. Pursuant to this resolution, on 28 February 2011, the Executive Secretary transmitted to member countries the final strategic framework for the biennium 2012-2013 as adopted by member countries and including the amendments agreed upon by the fiftieth session of the United Nations Committee for Programme and Coordination.

45. Furthermore, document E/ESCWA/27/6(Part II) (agenda item 7(b)) contains changes to the programme of work for the biennium 2012-2013 which have been proposed in the light of emerging global and regional issues, including the key concerns and priorities underscored by member countries. The Commission is invited to consider and endorse the proposed changes before they are incorporated into the programme of work for the biennium 2012-2013.

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