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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Committee on Women
Fifth session
Beirut, 19-21 December 2011

INFORMATION NOTE*1. Introduction*

The Committee on Women at the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) is holding its fifth session at the United Nations House in Beirut, from 19 to 21 December 2011. The session aims to:

- (a) Review actions taken by Arab countries to implement the recommendations made by the Committee on Women at its fourth session, held in Beirut in October 2009;
- (b) Review the Executive Secretariat report on progress achieved in implementing the activities of the Centre for Women since the fourth session of the Committee on Women;
- (c) Review the strategic framework and programme of work for the biennium 2012-2013 in the field of female advancement.

In light of the radical changes currently occurring in the region, the Committee on Women will focus in its fifth session on such significant issues as gender mainstreaming in policies, programmes, and activities of public institutions; progress achieved in the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in Arab countries; creative initiatives to combat violence against women; participation of women in political leadership and decision-making; and promotion of the role of the media for women's empowerment in Arab countries.

It should be noted that the Committee on Women was established pursuant to ESCWA Resolution 240 (XXII) of 17 April 2003, adopted by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) pursuant to its resolution 2003/9 of 18 July 2004. The Committee aims to follow up regional and global conferences on women, promote the participation of Arab countries in those conferences and coordinate efforts of Arab countries and regional organizations in the implementation of its resolutions and recommendations. The first session, establishing the Committee on Women, was held in Beirut in December 2003, the second session was held in Beirut in July 2004; the third session was held at the General Women's Union of the United Arab Emirates in Abu Dhabi in March 2007 and the fourth session was held at Le Bristol hotel in Beirut in October 2009. The secretariat of the Committee on Women is held by the Centre for Women at ESCWA.

2. Agenda

The provisional agenda and annotations are included in E/ESCWA/ECW/2011/IG.1/L.1, and the proposed organization of work for the fifth session of the Committee on Women is included in E/ESCWA/ECW/2011/IG.1/L.2.

3. Documents

The documents of the session are available on the relevant page of the ESCWA website: <http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetailsar.asp?referenceNum=1672e>. Delegation members, who wish to distribute documents and printed materials, are kindly requested to notify the Session Coordinator Ms. Fatima Sbaity Kassem or the First Social Affairs Officer (gender), Mr. Nabil Abu Dargham, before submitting documents to the Secretariat of ESCWA. No less than 100 copies should be provided in order to distribute them amongst all delegations.

4. Participants

Participants in the session include representatives of governments, national machineries, ministries, councils, committees on women, and other governmental organizations in ESCWA member countries and other Arab countries. The session will also be attended by observers representing national, regional, and international organizations accredited at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), other non-governmental organizations, national and regional networks, research centres, some bilateral and multilateral providers of support at national and regional levels, representatives of the United Nations regional specialized agencies and programmes, experts, consultants, and academics.

The Executive Secretariat of ESCWA looks forward to the participation of Arab countries at the ministerial level and hopes that their delegations will include members specialized in the different topics and themes of the fifth session of the Committee on Women.

5. Official Opening

The official opening of the session will take place at 10 am on Monday 19 December 2011, followed by the election of officers of the fifth session of the Committee on Women.

6. Registration

The registration for the session starts at 9 am on Monday 19 December 2011. Participants will be provided with identity badges that they will be requested to wear throughout the session. They will also be requested to provide their business cards in order to present the list of participants to the session secretariat.

7. Languages

Arabic is the working language of meetings and discussions during the session. English may also be used in some presentations, as required. Simultaneous interpretation to and from Arabic, English, and French will be provided.

8. Information Centre

The session provides an information centre to facilitate media coverage and the work of journalists.

9. Entry visas to Lebanon

All participants shall receive entry visas to Lebanon from the Lebanese embassies in their respective countries. If any participant could not obtain a visa, due to the absence of a Lebanese embassy in his/her country, ESCWA may issue an entry visa after receiving by fax or email, no later than 12 December 2011, a clear copy of the passport in addition to the following data:

1. Name
2. Title/Occupation
3. Place and date of birth
4. Nationality
5. Permanent address
6. Passport number
7. Place and date of issue
8. Expiry date (knowing that the passport validity should not be less than six months)

10. Accommodation and transportation

Participants will reserve their hotel accommodation in Beirut based on arrangements taken by the Executive Secretariat to provide them with low accommodation fees (a list of most hotels in Beirut is available at: <http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetailsar.asp?referenceNum=1672e>). Participants can call the reservation office directly at the hotel to complete the booking procedures as they wish, mentioning that they are participating in the fifth session of the ESCWA Committee on Women to obtain the discounted fee. Participants will be requested to settle their hotel expenses, accommodation fees and other costs directly at the hotel before departure.

11. Correspondence

All correspondence related to the session shall kindly be sent by email to the ESCWA Centre for Women, at the following addresses:

Fatima Sbaity Kassem
Coordinator of the Fifth Session of the
Committee on Women
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Or by fax or by post at the following address:

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