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Proposed programme plan for 2021

Summary

The present document sets out the proposed programme plan for 2021 of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). It does not however provide information on resource requirements, because only the Secretary-General of the United Nations can issue such information in his proposed programme budget, which is reviewed by the relevant United Nations intergovernmental bodies before approval by the General Assembly. The present proposal may therefore undergo amendments during that review process.

Member states are invited to review the proposed programme plan and make recommendations thereon.

CONTENTS

Introduction

1.   The present document sets out the proposed programme plan for 2021 of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). It provides an overview of all areas of work organized under six interdependent subprogrammes, which derive their mandates from the ESCWA subsidiary bodies.

2.   The implementation of ESCWA work does not rely on the regular budget alone. Other funding sources, namely the Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation, the United Nations Development Account and voluntary contributions, are essential to delivering all planned activities and services requested by member States.

3.   The proposed programme plan for 2021 is subject to change based on future mandates and priorities that may emanate from global and regional conferences and decisions related to the ongoing realignment process of the United Nations Development System.

I. OVERVIEW

4.   The overall objective of the proposed programme plan for 2021 is to support member States in implementing their development plans, in aligning their development plans with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in adapting and implementing policies and programmes to further progress in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Special interventions to attain this objective will be tailored to target least developed and conflict-affected countries.

5.   Based on the guiding framework of the 2030 Agenda, the proposed programme plan for 2021 has been designed to address the most pressing obstacles that hinder the achievement of the SDGs in the Arab region. It emphasizes the fundamental principles of 'leaving no one behind' and reducing inequality between subregions and social groups. It also aims to support member States in building inclusive, resilient and peaceful societies that guarantee a brighter future for younger generations; ensure that strong and transparent institutions provide access to basic services and infrastructure for the people of the region; create employment opportunities through reforms and by drawing on the potential of technological advancements; mitigate the impact of climate change; strive towards social justice; engage young people; advance gender equality; and capitalize on the positive effects of migration. The proposed programme plan for 2021 intends to provide a coherent support structure, through its six subprogrammes, to address member States' priorities in those areas. To that end, ESCWA will strengthen the delivery of evidence-based policy advice and expertise, strive to ensure consensus on vital topics, and conduct cutting-edge research and studies to inform and guide equitable and sustainable development in the region.

6.   In response to the Secretary-General's call for a more nimble, efficient and effective organization, ESCWA is undergoing a change in structure and way of working. For 2021, ESCWA proposes to consolidate its programme of work into six subprogrammes that underscore the natural integration and complementarity between all the areas of ESCWA work towards achieving the SDGs.

7.   Moreover, in response to the Secretary-General's call for a stronger focus on delivery rather that process to empower people over bureaucracy, ESCWA is transitioning to an agile, decentralized, results-oriented way of working that centres on empowering staff while concentrating on outcomes rather than procedure.

8.   Rapid regional and global developments require a proactive approach that optimizes ESCWA convening power. The Commission aims to leverage its multidisciplinary expertise through the optimal combination of commitment, knowledge, value and delivery. It strives to act as an innovative catalyst for positive change in the region, to assist in building entrepreneurial and knowledge societies, to support a people-centred transition towards the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and to move towards a new reality of stability, justice and prosperity.

9.   The proposed change aims to reposition ESCWA as a forward-looking organization, recognized in the region and beyond for spreading knowledge, disseminating good practice, stimulating insightful debate, generating measurable impact and value-added products for member States, and benefiting citizens of the region, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalized.

10.   Over the last several years, ESCWA has proven its capacity to implement its programme of work and allocate resources efficiently, as mandated by General Assembly of the United Nations. However, despite producing valuable research and supporting a significant number of policy changes, ESCWA can do more to be acknowledged for the value of its work and merit as a regional institution and house of expertise. ESCWA is therefore embracing change. It is imperative to rethink the way the Commission's mandate is being fulfilled to meet the changing expectations of member States, to preserve the comparative advantage of ESCWA, and to produce the added value that makes a desirable difference to people's lives. To this end, ESCWA will replace the current operating structure with a more dynamic, agile and flexible framework. This shift will address emerging challenges and maximize opportunities to ensure the following:

(a)   Enhance organizational performance to the level required to realize the needed synergies and complementarities for achieving organizational goals and significant impact;

(b)   Accelerate decision-making with openness and transparency at all levels;

(c)   Streamline processes (less layers) and develop new practices based on success stories towards a more efficient and effective use of human and financial resources;

(d)   Make the best use of accountability systems equipped with key performance indicators;

(e)   Encourage management to act as enablers of the delivery process through a balanced role of coaching, guiding, inspiring and leading change;

(f)   Build cross-sectoral approaches to create a more collaborative environment that nurtures individual talents and expertise, enhances team spirit, encourages proactive initiatives, and facilitates the exchange of ideas, innovation and creativity;

(g)   Create incentives for innovation and entrepreneurship that optimize the use of talents and sense of ownership across functional and administrative boundaries;

(h)   Ensure effective responses by ESCWA to new challenges presented by the changing needs of member States, including by employing new technologies to enable informed and effective interventions and optimize decision-making.

11.   The six subprogrammes will perform the following functions:

(a)   Establish and serve regional platforms and initiate policy dialogue;
(b)   Enhance knowledge exchange, policy coordination and consensus-building;
(c)   Provide technical assistance and policy advice, and develop policy tools;
(d)   Offer capacity-building and promote institutional strengthening;
(e)   Generate innovative knowledge products, data and information;
(f)   Forge and strengthen partnerships with regional and international stakeholders;
(g)   Represent the needs and views of the Arab region at the global level.

II. PROPOSED PROGRAMME PLAN FOR 2021

Subprogramme 1: Climate change and natural resource sustainability

Overall objective: Acts as a pioneer and multi-stakeholder regional platform for deliberation, consensus-building, peer learning, and policy solutions to address the challenges of climate change, water scarcity and energy inefficiency that impede sustainable development in the Arab region.

Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies

Vision: Lead informed action on climate change towards building resilience and enabling adaptation though localized initiatives and strengthened institutions.

Key results areas

Results are expected in following key areas:

- Climate finance, including debt swaps for climate change;
- Climate change adaptation and mitigation;
- Circular economy;
- Green technology adaptation;
- Climate change analysis using geographic information systems (GIS).

Natural resources sustainability

Vision: Act as a recognized convener of high-level meetings for experts and officials to inform and adopt integrated policies to address transboundary issues, assist member States in improving energy and water performance, and examine sustainable solutions for agriculture and food security.

Key results areas

Results are expected in the following key areas:

- Water security and resource management;
- Agriculture and food security;
- Energy management.

Subprogramme 2: Gender justice, population and inclusive development

Overall objective: Acts as a pioneer and multi-stakeholder regional platform for deliberation, consensus-building, peer learning, and policy solutions to achieve gender equality and gender justice for all women and girls; promote equitable, inclusive and participatory social development; reduce poverty and unemployment; and apply a rights-based approach to migration governance.

Centre for Women

Vision: Act as a recognized policy provider and lead adviser on gender equality in the Arab region, and achieve global acknowledgment for translating international instruments and standards into tailored approaches, agreements and norms in line with the region's socioeconomic context.

Key results areas

Results are expected in the following key areas:

- Violence against women;
- Women, peace and security;
- Women's economic empowerment;
- Gender mainstreaming and decision-making.

Urban development, social protection and poverty reduction

Vision: Act as a leading regional adviser on urban regeneration, inclusive fiscal policy and integrated, inclusive and equitable social policy to ensure informal settlements upgrading, enhance social protection, and reduce poverty and increase social equality in the Arab region.

Key results areas

Results are expected in the following key areas:

- Social protection schemes;
- Multidimensional poverty and inequality;
- The middle class;
- Inclusive fiscal policy;
- Informality and labour market inequalities;
- Future of Cities.

Population dynamics and migration

Vision: Produce effective knowledge products and provide policy advice on changes in population dynamics to optimize demographic dividends, address social inequality, and tackle migration and refugee issues in the Arab region; and act as a regional leader in providing policy advice, strengthening institutions and driving the discussion on disability-inclusive development in the region.

Key results areas

Results are expected in the following key areas:

- International Conference on Population and Development review;
- Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration;
- Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing;
- Disability-inclusive development.

Job creation and employability

Vision: Act as a leading provider of policy advice on labour market dynamics and on job creation mechanisms to increase labour market participation, decrease unemployment and reduce poverty in the Arab region.

Key results areas

Results are expected in the following key areas:

- Future of work;
- Power skills and employability;
- Informality and labour market inequalities;
- Small and medium enterprises and innovation.

Subprogramme 3: Shared economic prosperity

Overall objective: Acts as a pioneer and multi-stakeholder regional platform for deliberation, consensus-building, peer learning, and policy solutions on inclusive fiscal policy, public finance management, illicit financial flows and trade development, to achieve a basic standard of living for all people in the Arab region through sustained and integrated economic development. The subprogramme will also support member States to comply with the commitments made in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

Economic diversification and fiscal policy

Vision: Act as a leading regional adviser on inclusive fiscal policy and public finance management to achieve equitable economic growth, sustain adequate social expenditure, expand social welfare, and achieve fiscal sustainability in the Arab region.

Key results areas

Results are expected in the following key areas:

- Economic modelling;
- Public finance and inclusive fiscal policy;
- Economy of the Future.

Trade openness and regional connectivity

Vision: Enhance regional prosperity and promote interconnectedness and integration in the Arab region by acting as a recognized regional policy advisor on trade development, agreement and facilitation.

Key results areas

Results are expected in the following key areas:

- Trade and industrial policy;
- Trade negotiation and trade facilitation;
- Productive capacity of the Arab least developed countries;
- Transport connectivity and logistics.

Finance for development

Vision: Support member State in developing financing mechanisms and frameworks for achieving the SDGs in the Arab region.

Key results areas

Results are expected in the following key areas:

- Illicit financial flows;
- Reporting on the Adidas Abba Action Agenda.

Subprogramme 4: Statistics, the information society and technology

Overall objective: Acts as a pioneer and multi-stakeholder regional platform for deliberation, consensus-building, peer learning, and policy solutions to strengthen the institutional framework for official statistics in the Arab region and enhance the production and use of harmonized, timely and reliable statistics for evidence-based policymaking, to enable the measurement of national and regional progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda; and advance the information society in the Arab region and foster the integration of technology and innovation for inclusive and sustainable development.

Statistical management

Vision: Assist member States in establishing national strategies for developing official statistics and producing data and indicators with a focus on the 2030 Agenda.

Key results areas

Results are expected in the following key areas:

- Arab regional action plan for sustainable development data;

- Official statistics for monitoring and following up on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

- Non-traditional data sources, technology in data collection statistical information systems, and linking statistical and geospatial information;

- Fundamental principles of official statistics.

Development and operation of official statistics

Vision: Assist member States in improving the production of harmonized official statistics on demographic, social, economic, environmental and cross-cutting subjects.

Key results areas

Results are expected in the following key areas:

- Developing economic, demographic, social, environment and gender statistics;

- Establishing indicator frameworks and data core sets for the SDGs, food security, disaster risk reduction;

- Collecting and processing data on priority topics for the Arab region.

Advanced technologies in statistics and information

Vision: Accelerate the collection, production and dissemination of statistics and data through the employment of advanced technologies.

Key results areas

Results are expected un the following key areas:

- ESCWA Statistical Information System;
- Arab data hub for the United Nations system and the regional SDG portal;
- Advanced data transmission technologies;
- Use of non-traditional data sources for official statistics.

Information society and Internet-based development issues

Vision: Provide support for the advancement of the information society, and act as the regional driver of the Arab digital development process and as the principal custodian of Internet governance knowledge production, dialogue and capacity-building in the Arab region.

Key results areas

Results are expected in the following key areas:

- Arab digital development national reviews and agendas;
- Regulations and legislation that promote the information society;
- Internet governance dialogue.

Innovation and emerging technologies

Vision: Act as the principal advisory source for the strategic use of technology, frontier technologies and innovation to achieve inclusive and sustainable development, and contribute to the conversion of the economies of member States into economies based on scientific and technological knowledge.

Key results areas

Results are expected in the following key areas:

- Innovation policies and strategies for sustainable development;
- Frontier technologies for sustainable development;
- Policies for promoting technological entrepreneurship.

ESCWA Technology Centre

Vision: Lead efforts by Arab countries and public and private organizations to acquire the tools and capabilities necessary to accelerate socioeconomic development to attain technological parity with other countries and regions worldwide. The Technology Centre will serve as a regional catalyst for institutions networking on policy areas related to technology and innovation.

Key results areas

Results are expected in the following key areas:

- Technology transfer;
- Regional network of national technology transfer offices;
- Mechanisms for innovation and technological entrepreneurship;
- Innovation labs.

Subprogramme 5: 2030 Agenda and SDG coordination

Overall objective: Provides regional leadership on SDG policy advice, support, assistance and knowledge production to ensure the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region; and acts as a platform for multi-stakeholder regional deliberation, consensus-building and peer learning to strengthen cooperation and coordination on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs with international and regional intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, especially the League of Arab States and its subsidiary bodies, to achieve the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region.

Vision: Build on the ESCWA SDG strategy and conceptual approach, adopted by the ESCWA Executive Committee in December 2015, and the momentum generated by previous and ongoing ESCWA activities to address the increasing demand for support towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Key results areas

Results are expected in the following key areas:

- Reporting on Arab regional progress towards the SDGs;
- Organizing the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development;
- Policy and educational tools on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs;
- Coordinating the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs within ESCWA;
- Coordinating the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at the regional and global levels;
- Building awareness of linkages between national, regional and global follow-up and review within the context of the Arab region;
- Highlighting cross-border or regional implications of the SDGs;
- Building awareness on adaptation and alignment of the SDGs in national development plans.

Subprogramme 6: Governance and conflict prevention

Overall objective: Acts as a pioneer and multi-stakeholder regional platform for deliberation, consensus-building, peer learning, and policy solutions to ensure participation and partnerships for governance and institution building, and to enhance the capacity of member States in conflict or post-conflict settings on conflict prevention for more just, equitable and inclusive societies in the Arab region.

Governance and enabling environment

Vision: Create a regional network and lead a regional platform on competitiveness policy, and provide policy advice on institutional strengthening, digital government transformation, and efficiency mechanisms.

Key result areas

Results are expected in the following key areas:

- Enhanced capacity of public institutions to develop governance strategies and policies to strengthen their resilience, performance and service provision;
- Improved delivery of essential services for the achievement of the SDGs;
- Improved economic governance to ensure proper alignment of the three pillars of sustainable development in economic policy decision-making.

Digital government services and open government

Vision: Act as the primary provider of policy advice on digital government transformation, and lead efforts on open government and the assessment of digital government services.

Key results areas

Results are expected in the following key areas:

- Advanced public services;
- Measurement of digital government services;
- Open government and open data policies and strategies;
- Innovation in the public sector;
- E-platform and webpages for digital government transformation and open government.

Resilient development and conflict prevention

Vision: Act as a key provider of policy advice on vulnerability assessment and risk mitigation, lead efforts on conflict prevention, and formulate a regional post-conflict inclusive-development roadmap.

Key results areas

Results are expected in following key areas:

- Vulnerability assessment and risk mitigation;
- Post-conflict and sustainable peace;
- Improved development of projects under occupation.