



**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COUNCIL**

Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/EC.7/2020/4
3 December 2020
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Executive Committee
Seventh meeting
Online meeting, 21 December 2020



Item 5 of the provisional agenda

Proposed programme plan for 2022

Summary

The present document contains the proposed programme plan for 2022 of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). It does not 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 being approved by the General Assembly. The present proposal may therefore undergo amendments during that review process.

The Executive Committee is invited to review the proposed programme plan for the six subprogrammes set out in the present document and make recommendations thereon.

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	1-3	3
<i>Chapter</i>		
I. Overview of the thematic clusters	4-6	3
II. Programme plan for 2022 by objective	7-31	4
A. Climate change and natural resource sustainability	8-10	4
B. Gender justice, population and inclusive development.....	11-15	5
C. Shared economic prosperity	16-19	5
D. Statistics, the information society and technology.....	20-23	6
E. 2030 Agenda and SDG coordination	24-26	7
F. Governance and conflict prevention	27-31	7
III. ESCWA response to the COVID-19 pandemic under the proposed programme plan for 2022	32-38	8
A. Climate change and natural resource sustainability	33	8
B. Gender justice, population and inclusive development.....	34	8
C. Shared economic prosperity	35	9
D. Statistics, the information society and technology.....	36	9
E. 2030 Agenda and SDG coordination	37	9
F. Governance and conflict prevention	38	9
IV. Conclusion	39	9

Introduction

1. The present document contains the proposed programme plan for 2022 of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). It provides an overview of all areas of work under the six subprogrammes, and an explanation of the logic that underpins the choice of deliverables to be submitted to member States through the official budget process.
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 through extrabudgetary resources, are essential to deliver all planned activities and services requested by member States.
3. The proposed programme plan for 2022 is subject to change based on future mandates and priorities that may emanate from scheduled global and regional conferences and decisions related to the ongoing realignment process of the United Nations Development System. The plan is based on the assumption that deliverables and activities for 2022 are implementable. However, should any unexpected regional or global developments or factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, impact the Commission's planned activities and deliverables, they would be adjusted during 2022 within the scope of overall objectives, strategies and mandates.

I. Overview of the thematic clusters

4. To deliver on its mandate and attain its vision for a stable, just and flourishing Arab region, ESCWA will continue to leverage its wealth of expertise and its robust network of partnerships to support member States' efforts to mitigate the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, while remaining on track to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
5. Through context-tailored, participatory and multidisciplinary approaches, ESCWA will assist member States in stimulating sustainable, post-COVID-19 growth and debt reduction; creating jobs; reducing inequality and increasing opportunity by upholding women's rights; empowering young people, older persons and persons with disabilities; tackling multidimensional poverty; addressing migration and refugee issues; ensuring the integrated management of natural resources; achieving sustainable energy; and providing social protection for all.
6. The ESCWA strategy is centred around six key objectives supported by six thematic clusters, as follows:
 - (a) Climate change and natural resource sustainability:
 - To advance climate action and integrated and sustainable policies in the areas of water, energy and food security.
 - (b) Gender justice, population and inclusive development:
 - To achieve equitable and inclusive social development and reduce inequality, poverty and unemployment, in line with the principle of leaving no one behind.
 - (c) Shared economic prosperity:
 - To achieve equitable economic growth, amplify regional interconnectedness and integration, and advance the effective implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

(d) Statistics, the information society and technology:

- The objective, to which this subprogramme contributes, is to strengthen the development of official statistical frameworks, improve the quality and availability of statistics, and advance the information society and economy by accelerating the integration of technology and innovation for sustainable development in the Arab region.

(e) 2030 Agenda and SDG coordination:

- To accelerate progress towards sustainable development in the Arab region in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to advance intraregional collaboration and a multi-stakeholder approach to key regional and subregional sustainable development issues.

(f) Governance and conflict prevention:

- To advance just, peaceful and inclusive societies, especially for people living under occupation, in conflict or in post-conflict settings; and to improve governance and strengthen effective, efficient and accountable public institutions.

II. Programme plan for 2022 by objective

7. The proposed programme plan for 2022 is expected to yield the following results under each of the six objectives.

A. Climate change and natural resource sustainability

8. This objective aims to bolster member States' commitments to climate action so as to build communities' resilience to achieve global and national development goals. It also encourages member States to adopt policies, plans, harmonized tools, techniques and guidelines related to improved groundwater resource management, increased agricultural productivity, greater sustainability of energy systems, and strengthened regional networks and coordination mechanisms that support water, energy and food security.

9. To achieve these results, ESCWA will continue to strengthen member States' engagement and capacity in building climate resilience, by mainstreaming climate considerations in development planning and financing. It will provide technical assistance to facilitate access to science-based knowledge resources in support of informed policymaking. Specifically, in line with SDG target 1.5, ESCWA will analyse ways to reduce climate vulnerability in strategic sectors through diverse partnerships under the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies. SDG target 2.4 will be supported by assessing the impact of climate change on agricultural productivity, ecosystems and extreme water-related climate events. Moreover, ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy will contribute towards SDG targets 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3. Progress towards SDG 12 will be supported by promoting sustainable production and consumption patterns through a more efficient use of natural resources and reducing food loss and waste. ESCWA will also contribute towards SDG 13 by strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity through integrated policy measures on climate change adaptation and mitigation, and by building human and institutional capacity.

10. ESCWA plans to provide technical assistance to member States in this field, offer a neutral platform for cross-sectoral dialogue, and promote the identification and adoption of sustainable solutions in the areas of renewable energy, energy efficiency, water-use efficiency, food security, waste management, and environmental sustainability. ESCWA will also support the Joint Committee of Agriculture and Water in the Arab Region in implementing the 2019 Cairo Declaration, and review and adopt guidelines on water allocation for the agriculture sector in Arab countries.

B. Gender justice, population and inclusive development

11. This objective aims to ensure more targeted poverty alleviation strategies, inclusive social protection systems, and informed exchange among public and private actors to create equitable and innovative labour markets that offer decent and productive work for all. It also strives to increase the capacity of member States to address structural inequality between social groups, and establish avenues for the participation of marginalized groups (women, young people, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants) to ensure that no one is left behind.

12. To achieve these results, ESCWA will support member States in developing integrated social policies. Specifically, it will work with the League of Arab States, UNICEF and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative to roll out a revised Arab methodology for measuring multidimensional poverty. The methodology will be initially implemented in parallel with ESCWA work on inequality to mainstream equality and social justice in public policymaking, measure and combat inequality, and bridge gaps in justice policies.

13. In addition, ESCWA will promote the creation of inclusive and decent work through more diversified and sustainable sectors. It will partner with the International Labour Organization, private sector entities, and regional universities to examine the future of the labour market in the Arab region and its implications for economic inclusiveness, skills matching and job demand. It will build a network of regional and national governmental and non-governmental actors to provide a forum for Arab countries to prepare for the Fourth Industrial Revolution's impact on job markets and on achieving the 2030 Agenda. Special focus will be placed on the empowerment of young people, women and persons with disabilities.

14. ESCWA will support the coordinated efforts of member States to address inequalities, empower vulnerable groups, streamline the principles of social justice in policymaking processes, and align their practices with international norms and global and regional frameworks adopted to address social justice, social protection, inequality, inclusive urban development, migration, gender equality, youth empowerment, and the inclusion of persons with disabilities and older persons (SDGs 5, 10, 11, 16 and 17).

15. In partnership with the League of Arab States, it will assist Arab countries in delivering on their international commitment by supporting the implementation, follow-up and review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the regional review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. It will also support member States' efforts to advance gender equality through its regional project with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UN-Women to monitor, analyse and support the reform of national legislation and policies.

C. Shared economic prosperity

16. This objective aims to develop fiscal policies that are connected to economic diversification, social development and the SDGs, while ensuring macroeconomic stability. It also strives to build Arab Governments' human and institutional capacity to design and implement sound trade, logistics and transport policies that increase connectivity and contribute to economic growth and prosperity. Moreover, it aims to provide an integrated financing framework prototype for the implementation of national development plans and related targets in line with the 2030 Agenda.

17. To achieve these results, ESCWA will focus on facilitating governmental processes, including policymaking, and providing thought leadership and technical expertise to achieve shared and sustainable economic prosperity in the region. It will continue to provide assistance to member States in monitoring, analysis and forecasting of macroeconomic and social variables to demonstrate the implications of national strategies, programmes and policies on economic growth and fiscal space to achieve the SDGs. Moreover, it will provide advisory services and capacity-building on best practices for resource allocation, mainstreaming SDGs and mitigating structural economic challenges. In addition, ESCWA plans to expand its support to member States on monitoring their public social expenditure, by providing comprehensive mechanisms and

user-friendly methodological tools, such as the social expenditure data portal that facilitates analysis of fiscal policy choices and their linkages to social expenditure and macro-fiscal sustainability.

18. ESCWA plans to enhance member States adherence to existing trade agreements and their negotiating capacity to access new intra-Arab and global trade agreements, such as the Arab Customs Union, the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the European Union, and the African Continental Free Trade Area. To that end, it will develop new user-friendly toolkits for simulating the socio- and macroeconomic impact of participation in potential new trade agreements. It will also focus on improving its platform to monitor and evaluate Arab economic integration linked to productive economic and service sectors, making use of key performance indicators, indices and policies. Furthermore, to facilitate cross-border trade, ESCWA plans to build on existing geographic information systems for transport networks and facilities in the Arab region, to assess and compare transport performance and transport connectivity between countries within the region and with the rest of the world. This will be complemented by advice to member States geared at improving road safety, by identifying the riskiest transport roads in the region, supporting the achievement of transport-related SDGs (3, 9 and 11), and facilitating access to the United Nations Road Safety Fund, all of which will lead to improved logistics for the implementation of trade facilitation agreements.

19. ESCWA plans to monitor and assess progress in advancing financing for development outcomes and ensure that pathways to financing, including in the context of COVID-19 and beyond, serve as a key means to implementing the 2030 Agenda. It will develop the Arab Financing for Development Scorecard as a regional toolbox for assessing prime direct cross-border flows and indirect financing opportunity costs. In tandem, ESCWA will spearhead country-tailored integrated financing frameworks to map the financing landscape, estimate the cost of nationally established goals and targets, and mobilize resources to finance the SDGs.

D. Statistics, the information society and technology

20. This objective aims to strengthen coherence and coordination of statistical activities by member States, based on national statistical frameworks, to cover the data needs of the 2030 Agenda; and ensure greater compliance with international statistical standards and recommendations leading to more consistent data on the region and more effective use of statistics in policymaking. It also strives to develop effective national and regional plans and strategies, with improved synergies between science, technology and innovation (STI), to accelerate the transformation to knowledge and digital economies by building STI ecosystems and promoting technology-based entrepreneurship and small and medium enterprises in the Arab region.

21. To achieve these results, ESCWA will promote the use of diverse data sources in official statistics, the digitalization of data services and e-commerce, and innovation based on information and communications technologies (ICT), artificial intelligence and frontier technologies, in line with the SDGs. This will include the use of big and open data and geospatial technologies to underpin national statistics strategies, and of official statistics to monitor and follow up on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. ESCWA will also continue providing technical assistance to Arab countries on the use of technology in censuses and surveys, sectoral and aggregated statistics, and a wide application of register-based data collection. Moreover, it will advocate greater compliance with international statistical standards, and provide policy recommendations resulting in more consistent data and statistics for the region. It will also act as the regional custodian of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, and will utilize established intergovernmental networks of statistical experts to boost the impact of statistical capacity development so as to effectively implement the Arab Regional Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data.

22. Through its Technology Centre, ESCWA will promote the utilization of knowledge and expertise in entrepreneurial and green technologies for sustainable development, provide a platform for dialogue to address regional challenges related to innovation and technology, provide technical support to member States, and mobilize resources and develop partnerships.

23. ESCWA will develop and promote technical solutions, platforms and mechanisms for advancing the STI utilization in inducing social, economic and political development in the Arab region. In collaboration with specialized regional organizations, it will assist member States in devising policies and strategies to benefit from frontier technologies, artificial intelligence, ICT, innovation, and mainstream technologies. Moreover, ESCWA will continue supporting regional agreements on the Arab Internet Governance Forum, digital government and e-governance.

E. 2030 Agenda and SDG coordination

24. This objective aims to improve institutional coordination and evidence-based national policies and processes that reflect an understanding of the key principles of leaving no one behind, the rights-based and multi-stakeholder approach to sustainable development, and a more integrated formulation of strategies and targets across the SDGs. It also strives to increase the ability of government and non-government stakeholders to partake in the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda in Arab countries, and enhance opportunities for different groups to engage with each other across national, subregional, regional and global forums.

25. To achieve these results, ESCWA will continue to support the alignment of national development plans with the 2030 Agenda, and advocate for an integrated approach to the achievement, follow-up and review of the SDGs. Building on the results of ESCWA activities regarding the 2030 Agenda, including the annual Arab Forum on Sustainable Development and the Arab Sustainable Development Report, the Commission will continue to demonstrate the necessity and added value of a nationally owned integrated approach to the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda, through its forums, expert meetings and knowledge products. It will do so by providing member States with information, tools and recommendations on alignment and integration, and by ensuring that national development plans, strategies, voluntary national reviews and other planning and reporting mechanisms are guided by the key principles of the 2030 Agenda.

26. ESCWA will organize forums and meetings and create learning opportunities for different stakeholders of the 2030 Agenda. It will continue to use the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development as an annual opportunity for Governments to outline and exchange experiences and good practices in support of the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda, to discuss pressing development issues in the region to inform relevant intergovernmental processes, and to keep abreast of new research and knowledge material on sustainable development. ESCWA will also harness the support of the Arab NGO Network for Development and of the League of Arab States, the Islamic Development Bank, UNDP and the Inter-Parliamentary Union to continue providing civil society organisations and parliamentarians with the opportunity to contribute to larger multi-stakeholder discussions and engage with government representatives.

F. Governance and conflict prevention

27. This objective aims to mitigate member States' exposure to the sources and drivers of hazards and vulnerability; strengthen conflict prevention through evidence-based risk management by policymakers; build stronger institutions in the context of SDG 16 and more robust nationally-owned reform initiatives that are harmonized, promote fairer competition and contribute to inclusive sustainable development, regional integration and economic growth; and improve services provided by public institutions by enhancing their performance and accountability.

28. To achieve these results, ESCWA will continue to focus on conflict prevention. It will periodically assess the impact of conflict and occupation on the capacity of member States to achieve the SDGs, and to define strategy options for promoting inclusive human development in the Arab region. The proposed integrated actions and policies aim to cultivate an enabling environment where people's rights, freedoms and socioeconomic opportunities can thrive. Moreover, ESCWA plans to support member States in evaluating human development achievements, and examining the nexus between human security and human development. This will be achieved by developing analytical tools and methodologies based on adapted global indices related to human development, governance, environmental sustainability, political instability, and the impact of conflict on development in the region.

29. ESCWA will provide technical assistance to member States, including through knowledge transfer, institution- and capacity-building, technology-based applications, and support for inclusive national dialogues. In this regard, ESCWA will advance national governance and resilience capacities to mitigate specific shocks, assess and improve the effectiveness of crisis-response policies, and lower risks associated with emerging socioeconomic and governance challenges, which are often transboundary and linked to natural disasters, health threats, and conflict and non-conflict drivers of hazards and vulnerability. It will also strengthen the capacity of Palestinian institutions to mitigate the impact of the Israeli occupation on development and the attainment of the SDGs.

30. ESCWA will raise awareness and support knowledge-sharing on the correlation between institutional quality and development gains. By providing member States with technical assistance, capacity-building and actionable policy advice, it will seek to improve institutional effectiveness and identify best policy options to increase the quality, inclusiveness and accountability of institutions. It will also promote dynamic markets and facilitate cooperation among member States, regional entities and other partners working in the field of competition and consumer protection. Moreover, it will continue to facilitate progress towards regional capacity-building through the Arab Annual Competition Forum. ESCWA will also continue to strengthen harmonized national competition reforms in line with international standards, while taking into consideration global economic trends and challenges, so as to establish a competition framework that reflects the region's development needs and contributes to the modernization of Arab trade integration, inclusive sustainable development and growth.

31. In addition, ESCWA will provide member States with policy advice and capacity-building on digital government transformation and innovation, and offer measurement tools to assess progress in digital transformation and guide the advancement of digital government services.

III. ESCWA response to the COVID-19 pandemic under the proposed programme plan for 2022

32. ESCWA will adapt its current programme to continue providing member States with support to address the immediate and longer-term socioeconomic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. If not addressed, these consequences will jeopardize hard-gained progress towards fulfilling the Arab region's aspirations for a peaceful and dignified future, rooted in durable peace and security, sustained prosperity and respect for diversity and human rights.

A. Climate change and natural resource sustainability

33. ESCWA plans to assess the continued threat of the pandemic and provide sectoral policy advice to Governments and regional stakeholders focused on responses to and recovery from the pandemic, assisting Governments with building back better and resuming their efforts to achieve SDGs 2, 6, 7, 11, 12 and 13. This includes greater incorporation of health-related considerations into sectoral assessments, and technical assistance to ensure the resilience of people and the planet under changing socioeconomic and climate conditions. This support is expected to result in greater national capacity to mobilize resources and expertise to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic on food security and the delivery of essential water and energy services for green recovery.

B. Gender justice, population and inclusive development

34. ESCWA will continue to analyse the impact of the pandemic, and to contribute to the development of national scenarios and strategies aimed at mitigating it. It will also continue to serve as a platform for the exchange of knowledge and good practices between countries. The planned support is expected to result in informed policies to address inequalities among various groups, in particular those disproportionately affected by the immediate and medium- to long-term socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic, and in strengthened inclusive social protection for a health emergency response.

C. Shared economic prosperity

35. In response to the devastating impact on national economies, and considering the fiscal stimulus packages proposed by Governments worldwide that may impact trade in the Arab region, ESCWA plans to assist regional and national trade finance organizations to design appropriate and effective instruments and strategies to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on exports and enterprises, and to facilitate economic recovery. In addition, it will continue to review trade and trade-facilitation measures to assist countries in coordinating responses and incorporating specific provisions in trade-integration schemes. It will also review and monitor the outcomes of the Initiative on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond, and ensure that it considers regional dimensions, especially with regard to financing for development. Moreover, ESCWA will promote debt swap for climate finance as a potential tool for debt reduction, in addition to improving climate finance. The planned support is expected to mitigate the pandemic's impact on trade flows; result in specific policies and regulations aimed at facilitating trade during crises, including health emergencies; and potentially allocate a certain amount of debt for a debt swap for a climate/development finance initiative.

D. Statistics, the information society and technology

36. ESCWA will adjust its interventions and tools to ensure that planned support to member States remains relevant and adequate in the new context. Specifically, it will promote digital e-government, digital inclusion, remote working arrangements, and utilization of frontier technologies. Accordingly, ESCWA will introduce new methods and tools to deliver its services and review its working methods. Some parliamentary, regular and ad-hoc meetings will be merged and/or will be held virtually, and many publications and technical materials will be adapted and limited to electronic formats. Capacity-building services will be adapted for innovative online mentoring platforms. The planned support is expected to strengthen the capacity of Arab policymakers (in governments and elsewhere) to apply new data, statistics, technology, knowledge products, tools and techniques to inform policy decisions to deal with the medium- and longer-term ramifications of the pandemic.

E. 2030 Agenda and SDG coordination

37. ESCWA will continue to develop and disseminate knowledge and policy products on measures and opportunities to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the COVID-19 context and build resilience to crises; and to provide space through existing platforms for multi-stakeholder engagement and dialogue so as to refocus the debate on the central role of the SDGs in tackling the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic and moving forward with a green and inclusive recovery. The planned support is expected to result in the formulation of recovery plans that, in addition to mitigating the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic itself, build on and integrate the principles of the 2030 Agenda.

F. Governance and conflict prevention

38. ESCWA will devise tools for public institutions to assess effectiveness of policies deployed in response to the pandemic and, by extension, help build national institutional capacity to addresses its socioeconomic and governance ramifications. The planned support is expected to enhance integration and collaboration among stakeholders through whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches and national-to-local coordination in the fight against COVID-19 and its socioeconomic consequences; build the capacity of key public institutions, senior policymakers and public servants to design and implement coherent, coordinated and harmonized national policies for achieving inclusive human development; and increase knowledge of the institutional arrangements for SDG implementation in the Arab region.

IV. Conclusion

39. The Executive Committee is invited to review the proposed programme plan for the six subprogrammes set out in the present document and make recommendations thereon.
