Virtual Expert Group Meeting on ESCWA's report:

The Future OF Work in the Arab region: Evidence from ESCWA's Skills Monitor

22 October 2021, Time: 15:00-17:00 (Beirut time)

Background

The impact of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) on the future of work is not fully investigated. Academic research provides mixed conclusions when studying the effect of technology on economic development and employment. For instance, Schwab (2016) argued that the (4IR) has a positive long-term impact on the economy with negative short-term consequences on employment. Prisecaru (2016) provided a different argument on how the 4th industrial revolution will affect the social costs of taxes in lowering unemployment. Nilsson (1984) noted that artificial intelligence will be within reach of society in no time; thus, people need to identify coping strategies and adapt to the newly created jobs. Manyika (2017) suggested that 60% of current jobs incorporate at least 20% of automated activities, where soon these jobs might be fully automated. The World Bank's *World Development Report* (2019) showed that jobs are always reshaped by the change in technology where technological advancement always pave the way for new jobs to exist.

In order to address these challenges, ESCWA developed a unique job monitor that aims at swiftly monitoring the demand for newly needed skills, and in turn, changing existing skills. ESCWA's Skills Monitor uses big-data mining, machine learning and artificial intelligence in order to identify skills. The monitor could aid in addressing the skill mismatch and is designed to provide valuable information on inclusiveness (gender and youth), jobs accessible for people with disability, sectoral development, jobs growth predictions and SDG mapping among many others. Using results of this monitor, the draft report – subject of the meeting–provides an analysis of whether the type of skills and jobs demanded in the region address the needs of the 4IR and the new era of economic development. The report looks at whether the adopted technologies are reflected by the demanded skills. It also analyzes the type of skills and jobs in the Arab region, their interconnectedness, the odds of reskilling and upskilling, interlinkage with SDGs and their inclusiveness. The report will also examines if the Arab region is ready for tomorrow's jobs, as well as the readiness of labor market policies, rules, and regulations and their alignment with the requirements of the future of work and the 4IR (policies related to reskilling, upskilling, employment security measures, etc..).

Objectives

The aim of this expert group meeting is to discuss whether labor markets in the Arab region are ready for tomorrow's jobs and if demanded skills are employed in the right side of economic development. Using ESCWA's Skills Monitor data, this meeting is expected to discuss the primary results of the monitor and receive comments from experts on the draft report.

Format

The EGM will run in two sessions of 1.00 hour each and will be conducted in English. Participants will include experts in the labor market policies and the future of work. All participants will contribute to the review and discussion of the first draft of the report. The recordings and the presentations will be posted on the website after the conclusion of the meeting. The follow-up actions, including key recommendations and knowledge products, will be disseminated through the ESCWA website.

Targeted Audience

The meeting will include policy makers and experts who are engaged in development of labor market policies and in the development of artificial intelligence-based tools and systems for policy advice. The meeting also intends to involve representatives of the private sector, academia, regional/international organizations working in the area of future of work in the region.

Expected Results

The main outcome of the event will be validating and updating the report's findings and identifying recommendations.

Agenda

Time (Beirut)	Description
15:00-15:10	*Opening Remarks*
15:10-15:20	**Overview of the report and what does it offer, Dr. Salim Araji, Project Coordinator.** This presentation will focus on the scope of the report, its objective, and the overall progress towards its completion.
Session 1	
15:20-15:40	*ESCWA Skills Monitor: Data and Results* **Moderator: Dr. Salim Araji, Project Coordinator, ESCWA** **Data coverage: representation and limitations,** *Ms. Sama El Hage Sleiman, Lead Author, ESCWA* This presentation will initiate the discussion on data sources and online hubs, data coverage, shortages, representativity and foreseen limitations. The presentation will give examples on how data availability and coverage can affect the inferences made from the Skills Monitor and how the robustness of the tool becomes limited to representative sectors and geographic areas. **Discussion**
15:40-16:10	**Report Main Findings:** *Ms. Sama Sleiman, Lead Author, ESCWA.* This session will focus on the New ERA of remote working, types of demanded skills, jobs, job families and industries, SDG mapping, Gender and disability in the workplace. **Discussion**
Session 2	
16:10-16:30	*ESCWA Skills Monitor: The Way Forward and Policy Recommendations* **Moderator: Miss Sama Sleiman, lead Author, ESCWA** **The future of skills – labor market mismatch in the Arab region Country Example:** *Dr. Salim Araji, Project Coordinator.* We will showcase how Lebanon's training programs might not lead to the attainment of demanded skills, where policy intervention is required. **Discussion**

16:30 -16:50	**Policy recommendations: Dr.** *Nawar Alawa, Regional adviser on Technology for development.* This session will propose initial recommendations tackling the challenges discovered in sessions one and two **Discussion**
16:50- 17:00	**Closing session and Future steps**

ESCWA Focal Points

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