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Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda

Progress made in the advancement of women**Implementation of activities related to women advancement under the ESCWA
programme of work and recommendations addressed to the secretariat
by the Committee on Women at its sixth session****Summary**

The present report reviews the main activities undertaken by the Centre for Women of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) since the sixth session of the Committee on Women, held in Kuwait on 4 and 5 December 2013.

This report covers the studies and research carried out by the Centre, and the expert group meetings, training workshops and other events organized for member States and non-governmental organizations. It also addresses information kits, newsletters and various technical materials issued by the Centre to enhance communication with all national and regional stakeholders and facilitate the exchange of information and expertise towards greater gender equality and women's empowerment in the Arab region.

This report reviews technical assistance and advisory services undertaken by the Centre on various priority issues requested by member States, such as gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting, legislation formulation, development of strategies and action plans, and reporting, monitoring and evaluating progress achieved in the implementation of international instruments related to women. It also includes information regarding field projects and extrabudgetary activities implemented by the Centre in cooperation with international and regional organizations supporting women's rights and gender equality in the Arab region.

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Introduction

1. The Committee on Women was established at the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) pursuant to ESCWA resolution 240 (XXII) of 17 April 2003. The resolution also stipulated the establishment of the Centre for Women, which was formally founded in October 2003. In 2010, the Centre was upgraded to the level of a division, pursuant to ESCWA resolution 293 (XXVI) of 19 May 2010.
2. The first session of the Committee on Women was held in Beirut in December 2003. The second session was also held in Beirut in July 2004, the third session in Abu Dhabi in March 2007, the fourth and fifth sessions were held in Beirut in October 2009 and December 2011, respectively, and the sixth session was held in Kuwait in December 2013. The seventh session of the Committee on Women will be held in Muscat from 9 to 10 December 2015.
3. The present report provides an overview of the activities undertaken by the Centre as part of its 2014-2015 work programme, including completed studies and research, conferences, expert group meetings, training sessions, workshops, information kits and electronic materials, and advisory services and technical assistance provided to member States upon request.
4. Since the sixth session of the Committee on Women, the Centre has engaged in various regional and international partnerships and cooperation initiatives reaffirming its leading role in all areas related to gender equality and women's empowerment in the Arab region. Partnerships have been established with the Women's Affairs Committee in Kuwait, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations regional commissions, the League of Arab States, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR), the Hariri Foundation for Sustainable Human Development, ABAAD-Resource Center for Gender Equality, the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies at the American University in Cairo, the Abu Dhabi Institute of the New York University, the Women's Studies Institute of Kuwait University and the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World at the Lebanese American University. The Centre for Women has also engaged with relevant local institutions in the host country, Lebanon, including the Lebanese University, Platform Horizon for Knowledge NGO and the Beirut Bar Association, as part of its public events, such as the Gender Discussion Series.

ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BY THE ESCWA CENTRE FOR WOMEN

A. PROVIDING LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT TO THE SEVENTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON WOMEN

5. ESCWA member States participating at the sixth session of the Committee on Women adopted the 2013 Kuwait Declaration on Combating Violence Against Women at its conclusion on 5 December 2013, which calls on member States and ESCWA to monitor violence that targets women and threatens their well-being and livelihoods, thus condemning all forms of violence against women. The Declaration also confirms that women's rights violations and manifestations of violence against them have a detrimental effect on society as whole, and indicates the need for specific measures to determine liabilities and limit impunity. In the Declaration, member States affirmed their commitment to ensure women's right to a decent life without discrimination, and reiterated their support for and solidarity with women in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories in their continuous struggle for peace and independence, commending their resistance and determination to secure a decent life free from all forms of violence for their families and themselves. In addition, member States vowed to prohibit violations against women, in general, and against female refugees and internally displaced persons, in particular, in times of war and armed conflict; and called for the punishment of offenders. Member States also welcomed the Kuwaiti initiative on strengthening efforts to monitor and evaluate violence against women in the Arab region, and requested the ESCWA secretariat to implement the initiative in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders.

6. At its sixth session, the Committee on Women issued the following concluding recommendations addressed to ESCWA member States:

(a) Review cultural traditions that support women and combat those that hamper their advancement and empowerment;

(b) Ensure that national plans and legislation comply with international commitments; ratify international agreements on gender equality; and lift reservations, especially regarding the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its optional protocols and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children;

(c) Implement recommendations endorsed by ESCWA member States in their global periodic reviews of women's rights and their participation in political and economic life;

(d) Support national human rights institutions in coordinating with national committees and ministries to enhance gender equality and empower women;

(e) Intensify efforts to implement the Beijing Platform for Action and prepare national reports to review the progress made 20 years after its adoption; and collaborate with the ESCWA secretariat to prepare a regional review;

(f) Enact and implement a framework law to combat violence against women that covers the following: ensuring women's right to a life free of violence; investigating offences against women and punishing perpetrators; providing protection services to victims; compensating victims; and preventing violence against women;

(g) Target women in capacity-building programmes; raise their awareness; and include men in national initiatives to combat violence against women in general and in sessions of the ESCWA Committee on Women in particular;

(h) Strengthen the political will to support national mechanisms on the advancement of women and provide the necessary financial resources to implement, monitor and evaluate the integration of a gender perspective into all ministries, government institutions, public policy, planning and development programmes;

(i) Provide the human, technical and financial resources needed to create and adopt gender-sensitive budgets in all sectors;

(j) Strive to achieve the third Millennium Development Goal on promoting gender equality and empowering women, and implement national mechanisms on the advancement of women, taking into account national and regional specificities;

(k) Support Palestinian and Arab women under Israeli occupation;

(l) Provide support and assistance to Arab women in war zones and conflict areas;

(m) Develop partnerships at the national, regional and international levels to benefit from successful experiences;

(n) Continue to support and communicate with the ESCWA Centre for Women, and submit to it reports on best practices and successful national experiences and initiatives regarding gender equality and the empowerment of women.

7. The Committee on Women also issued recommendations addressed to the ESCWA secretariat, to be tackled by the Centre within the context of the implementation of its 2014-2015 programme of work. Accordingly, at its seventh session, the Committee on Women will review the main focus areas of the Centre's 2014-2015 programme of work and will address issues of significant relevance to women's rights

and empowerment. More specifically, the seventh session will focus, at the global level, on the way forward in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in view of the 20 year review (Beijing+20) and in the context of the new post-2015 development agenda; and, at the regional level, on women's access to justice in the Arab region and the effect of wars and armed conflicts on women and girls, with particular attention to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.

B. REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION IN THE ARAB REGION

8. Pursuant to recommendations 4 (f) and (i), issued by the Committee on Women at its sixth session, on preparing for the regional review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in collaboration with member States, the League of Arab States, regional organizations and relevant civil society institutions, and on coordinating constantly with United Nations entities and regional organizations, especially the League of Arab States, and supporting partnerships with them, ESCWA implemented a comprehensive programme on Beijing+20 over the period 2014-2015, in partnership with UN Women and in close cooperation with the League of Arab States. Drawing on planned regular budget activities for the current biennium and supported by extrabudgetary funds from UN Women, the programme included the following activities:

- **Regional training workshop for all Arab countries on preparing national review reports on Beijing+20 (Amman, 27-28 February 2014):** the workshop aimed to introduce and discuss guidelines for the preparation of national reports on progress achieved in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the Arab region, and to provide technical support to participating member States in completing their respective national review reports and addressing potential obstacles that could arise in the process.
- **Regional consultation workshop with Arab civil society organizations on Beijing+20 (Beirut, 12-13 August 2014):** the workshop aimed to solicit input on progress achieved in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action from the perspective of civil society, review the status of Arab women with regard to each of the 12 areas of concern indicated in the Platform, and discuss the methodological and analytical frameworks of any relevant shadow reports being prepared by civil society organizations. The meeting concluded with a draft joint statement by participating organizations and a set of recommendations for development and circulation at the fifty-ninth session of the Committee on the Status of Women, held in New York from 9 to 20 March 2015.
- **Arab regional synthesis report on progress achieved in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action 20 years later:** the report presents the consolidated completed measures, achievements and challenges faced by member States in their respective efforts towards meeting the strategic objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The report was based exclusively on information provided in national reports submitted by 21 United Nations Arab member States and consists of a synthesis of the main findings of national reports, with a summary of proposed recommendations. The report was presented and adopted at the Arab High Level Conference on Beijing+20: Towards Justice and Equality for Women in the Arab Region, held in Cairo in February 2015.
- **Expert group meeting on progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the Arab Region after 20 years (Beirut, 22-23 October 2014):** the meeting brought together representatives of national women's machineries in the Arab region, with the aim of presenting, discussing and validating the first draft of the Arab regional synthesis report. It also provided a platform to address Arab women's status in connection to the 12 areas of concern under the Platform and within the context of international processes, such as the post-2015 development agenda, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and the International Conference on Population and Development at 20 years.

- **Information kit on Beijing+20 in the Arab region:** the kit draws upon available data and information, including national reports on Beijing+20. It consists of a poster presenting visual data and information about each of the 12 areas of concern under the Platform, a leaflet on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and 21 leaflets corresponding to each of the Arab member States that participated in the Beijing+20 review process. Each of these leaflets includes a summary of the main actions taken by respective member States regarding the 12 critical areas of concern over the period 2009-2014.
- **Arab High Level Conference on Beijing+20: Towards Justice and Equality for Women in the Arab Region (Cairo, 2-3 February 2015):** the three heads of the organizing entities, namely UN Women, the League of Arab States and ESCWA, participated in the Conference, which aimed to discuss and adopt approaches to address challenges affecting the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment in the Arab region, and to garner senior-level political commitment to expedite national efforts for effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in preparation for the fifty-ninth session of the Committee on the Status of Women. At the conclusion of the Conference, the Arab Declaration: Towards Justice and Equality for Women in the Arab Region was adopted, reaffirming the commitment of Arab States to fully realize the objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to accelerate its implementation through a human rights-based approach. The Declaration also included a commitment by Arab States to the obligations arising from related international conventions and treaties, and to working towards equality across borders. A joint statement was also issued by participating civil society organizations calling upon States to take all the necessary measures for the effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
- **Study on the Arab region in the context of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 20 years after:** the study provides an analytical overview of key achievements, remaining obstacles, emerging threats and other factors relevant to institutional gender mainstreaming and the advancement of women in the Arab region 20 years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The study concludes with recommendations to support the development of sound policies and coherent scenarios for strategic change in the coming years, building on the momentum created by Beijing+20.

C. IMPLEMENTING STUDIES AND RESEARCH

9. Pursuant to recommendations 4 (d), (e) and (j), issued by the Committee on Women at its sixth session, on strengthening the capacity of national mechanisms to mainstream a gender perspective in national legislation, policies, plans and programmes, by providing training, technical assistance, advisory services, studies and lessons learned from successful experiences in this field; on enhancing the capacities of member States to monitor the implementation of CEDAW and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security by building the capacities of national mechanisms related to the advancement of women and of parliament members and civil society, exchange experiences and good practices, and continue to raise awareness among decision-makers on international instruments; and on providing member States with updated information and research on good practices and successful experiences and initiatives related to empowering women and gender equality by organizing studies and workshops that meet regional priorities, the Centre issued in 2015 its flagship Status of Arab Women Report: Access to Justice for Women and Girls: From Ratification to Implementation of International Instruments. The study examines the ability of women in the Arab region, both citizens and non-citizens, to access judicial processes and gain just remedy for violation of their rights. Moreover, it analyses the extent to which national legal frameworks meet the requirements set forth in ratified human rights treaties and reviews the measures taken by Arab Governments to improve women's access to justice. The study concludes with a set of policy recommendations at the general, legislative and institutional levels. The draft study was reviewed at an expert group meeting, held in Beirut on 23 and 24 September 2014. A launch ceremony was held in Beirut on 26 May 2015, in partnership with the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World; the ceremony included an open discussion of the

study's main findings and proposed recommendations. In addition, a parliamentary document entitled "Women's access to justice in the Arab region: from theory to practice" was prepared based on the findings and key recommendations of the study, for discussion at the seventh session of the Committee on Women.

10. Pursuant to recommendation 4 (b), issued by the Committee on Women at its sixth session, on studying the phenomena of child and forced marriages and their effects on the social and economic situation of women and girls in the Arab region, the Centre issued in 2015, as part of the Gender and Development Series, a study entitled "Child marriage in humanitarian settings in the Arab region: dynamics, challenges and policy options", in partnership with the Arab States Regional Office of the United Nations Population Fund. The study focuses on the issue of female child marriage in the Arab region, particularly in humanitarian settings. It examines the main causes and effects of this problem, differentiating between deeply rooted cultural and institutional elements and contextual circumstances that enforce this practice in conflict and humanitarian settings; and the health and socioeconomic implications of this phenomenon for both the girls subjected to child marriage and society at large. It concludes with sets of recommendations for policy and programmatic interventions to address the multifaceted dimensions of child marriage in the context of conflict and humanitarian crisis. The preliminary findings of the study were discussed during an expert group meeting held in Beirut on 4 and 5 December 2014.

11. Pursuant to recommendation 4 (g), issued by the Committee on Women at its sixth session, on incorporating issues related to displaced women and girls and the role of women during periods of transition in the proposed work priorities, the Centre issued a study entitled "The social and economic situation of women in conflict-stricken countries in the Arab region". The study provides an analytical account of the socioeconomic challenges facing Arab women in ongoing conflict settings, details the effects of various forms of conflict in contemporary Arab States on women and the unique structural vulnerabilities they create for them, and examines the role of stakeholders in safeguarding the rights of women in such settings and in addressing these challenges. It also discusses whether women's roles in the uprisings and beyond have led to structural changes in women's rights and to greater female political participation. It concludes with policy recommendations targeted primarily at States and the international community, calling for adequate protection of the personal security and safety of women and girls in conflict situations, as well as measures to enhance their participation in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. The findings of the study were presented and discussed at an expert group meeting held in Cairo on 7 and 8 October 2015, in partnership with the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies at the American University in Cairo.

12. In the context of the Beijing+20 review programme and as noted in section B, the Centre published in 2015 a study entitled "Arab women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: 20 years after" and a technical paper entitled "Arab regional synthesis report on progress achieved in the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action at 20 years". The findings and key recommendations emanating from the Beijing+20 process served as a basis for the production of a parliamentary document on Beijing+20 for discussion at the seventh session of the Committee on Women.

13. Pursuant to recommendations 4 (a) and 4 (c), issued by the Committee on Women at its sixth session, on striving to implement the Kuwaiti initiative to combat all forms of violence against women by intensifying efforts to monitor and analyse the phenomenon of gender-based violence in the Arab region and by proposing appropriate public policies and procedures to combat it; and on building the capacities of workers who provide protection services to victims of violence against women by developing tools and studies founded on relevant international standards, and as follow-up on the outcomes and recommendations of the Centre's normative work on that topic completed in the previous biennium 2012-2013, the Centre prepared and produced a toolkit entitled "Addressing gender-based violence in the Arab region: toolkit for service provision", in partnership with CAWTAR. The toolkit responds to the existing knowledge gap on international standards for protection of women and prevention of violence against them, specifically the due diligence standard, as well as the institutional protection gap, as evidenced in a general lack of systemic referral structures, particularly in conflict and humanitarian situations. The toolkit consists of two sections: a context section and a practical implementation section. It includes a detailed listing of necessary practical

tools for protection services by frontline service providers, including emergency relief personnel, with the aim of enhancing their necessary skills and capacities in different peace and conflict situations, as well as best approaches for religious leaders and media personnel to raise awareness and report on cases of violence. The toolkit was subjected to an extensive peer review process, including a piloting regional workshop on the theme “Addressing gender-based violence in the Arab region”, held in Tunis from 27 July to 2 August 2015.

14. Pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2003/42 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Centre has incorporated into its programmes of work since 2003 the preparation of a mandated technical paper focusing on Palestinian women, to be periodically submitted to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and to feed into the Secretary General’s Report on Palestinian Women and Girls under Israeli Occupation. In line with this mandate, in 2015, the Centre issued its periodic report entitled “Economic and social situation of Palestinian women, July 2012-June 2014”. The report reviews the status of women and girls in Palestine over the specified period, outlining positive developments and significant ongoing challenges for gender equality. It concludes with a set of recommendations for decision-makers aimed at promoting the realization of Palestinian women’s social, economic and political rights amid ongoing occupation and periodic violence.

15. The Centre for Women has issued a technical paper entitled “Women’s rights and gender equality for sustainable development: discussing the proposed sustainable development goals within the context of development in the Arab region”, which served as a background paper for the ESCWA inter-divisional 2015 Arab Sustainable Development Report. It focuses on gender equality as a core element for achieving sustainable development and tackles gender mainstreaming as a strategy to overcome inequalities and discrimination against women. The paper provides an overview of progress achieved in gender mainstreaming in the Arab region and examines development related policies and strategies, and their implementation processes from a gender perspective. It concludes with lessons learned and recommendations on policy changes needed in the Arab region to serve women’s rights and gender equality in the context of the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

D. MEETINGS AND TRAINING WORKSHOPS

16. In the context of the Beijing+20 review programme and as noted in section B of the present report, the Centre organized a regional consultation workshop with Arab civil society organizations on Beijing+20 in Beirut on 12 and 13 August 2014; an expert group meeting on progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the Arab Region after 20 years in Beirut on 22 and 23 October 2014; and the Arab High Level Conference on Beijing+20: Towards Justice and Equality for Women in the Arab Region in Cairo on 2 and 3 February 2015.

17. Pursuant to recommendations 4 (d), (e) and (j), the Centre organized an expert group meeting on the theme “Arab women and access to justice: from ratification to implementation of international instruments” in Beirut on 23 and 24 September 2014. The meeting reviewed the draft study on that topic, discussed its expected results and recommendations, and provided an opportunity for the exchange of experiences among participants on women’s right to access to justice.

18. Pursuant to recommendation 4 (b), issued by the Committee on Women at its sixth session, the Centre held an expert group meeting on the theme “Child marriage in humanitarian settings in the Arab region: dynamics, challenges and policy options” in Beirut on 4 and 5 December 2014, in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund. The meeting discussed and sought feedback on the preliminary research findings for the study on that topic, presented and reviewed the background research papers completed in support of the study, exchanged current and field-based knowledge on child marriage, and facilitated discussions on policy and programmatic options to prevent and respond to child marriage in the Arab region. The meeting concluded with two sets of recommendations: research and programmatic recommendations and policy recommendations.

19. Pursuant to recommendation 4 (g), the Centre held an expert group meeting on the theme “Social and economic situation of women in conflict-stricken countries in the Arab region” in Cairo on 7 and 8 October 2015, in partnership with the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies at the American University in Cairo. The meeting reviewed the draft study on that topic and discussed its expected results and proposed recommendations, calling for the protection of the personal security and safety of women in conflict situations.

20. Pursuant to recommendation 4 (h), issued by the Committee on Women at its sixth session, on collecting data related to the economic role of women in society, the Centre organized a regional workshop on the theme “Gender and labour in the Arab region: towards innovative approaches to women’s economic empowerment” in Abu Dhabi on 22 and 23 April 2015, in partnership with the Abu Dhabi Institute of the New York University (NYUAD). The workshop was held in the context of the NYUAD series on the topic “Nationalization of the workforce in the GCC countries” that was initiated in 2010 under the umbrella of its Regional Collaborative Seminars Programme. The workshop explored innovative policy and programmatic approaches to Arab women’s economic empowerment within the parameters of the post-2015 development agenda, the outcomes of the Beijing+20 review process, existing national economic policies, and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nationalization of workforce strategies. The workshop provided participating experts, academics and development practitioners with the opportunity to exchange knowledge and lessons learned for effective female labour participation, leading to meaningful development trajectories and greater gender equality. At the conclusion of the workshop, participants noted the need to conduct research on baseline and quality indicators, and on the impact of wars on women and girls’ economic conditions. They also recommended the undertaking of detailed studies on the multiple dimensions of Arab women’s labour force participation, taking into consideration national and subregional specificities, and relevant policies related to school-to-work transition, safety nets and access to resources.

E. INFORMATION KITS, NEWSLETTERS, ELECTRONIC PUBLICATIONS AND OTHER EVENTS

21. Recognizing the need and importance for communication between ESCWA and governmental and non-governmental bodies, experts and researchers, the Centre for Women continues to organize events and develop and disseminate information kits, newsletters and other electronic publications related to gender and women issues. The following communication tools aim to raise awareness about regional gender-related priorities:

(a) Seven sessions of the Gender Discussion Series (GDS), which have been organized to provide a presentation platform for ongoing research on gender-related priorities and women’s issues in the region. The GDS meetings tackled the following themes: “Arab women’s rights: the case of Lebanese women” (held in April 2014 in cooperation with Platform Horizon for Knowledge); “Access to justice” (held in May 2014 in cooperation with Lebanese Bar Association); “Commemoration of the sixteen days of activism to end violence against women” (held in November 2014 in partnership with ABAAD-Resource Center for Gender Equality); “Addressing women’s issues on the occasion of International Women’s Day” (held in March 2015 in cooperation with the United Nations Information Centre); “Women’s economic empowerment: strategies and outlooks from the regions” (held in March 2015 in collaboration with the United Nations regional commissions and the Regional Commissions New York Office); “Future directions and prospects for women empowerment in the Arab region” (held in April 2015 in partnership with the Abu Dhabi Institute of the New York University); “Gender Based Violence in Emergency Settings” (held in November 2015) in partnership with the ESCWA staff council.

(b) Commemorations of International Women’s Day in 2014 and 2015, to raise awareness of key gender-related issues among ESCWA staff members, diplomatic corps, policymakers, civil society, the media and international organizations. The 2014 commemoration was held under the theme “Equality for women is progress for all” and entailed the following: a statement by the ESCWA Executive Secretary focusing on the positive measures taken by Arab Governments to protect women’s rights while shedding light on continued forms of discrimination against women; a twitter campaign to generate debate on the

current status of Arab women in the context of the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda; and a visual campaign within the United Nations House in Beirut to raise awareness among ESCWA staff members about the need to empower women through actions and not merely words. The commemoration in 2015 was held in cooperation with ABAAD-Resource Center for Gender Equality under the theme "Voices of Arab women" and celebrated Arab women's accomplishments in different fields and times. The commemoration included opening remarks by the Executive Secretary of ESCWA, a keynote address by the Lebanese Minister of Displaced Persons, a speech by a prominent Libyan judge and women's rights activist, a musical performance by a leading Arab female artist, a poetry reading by an award-winning Palestinian-American poet, a documentary film by an award winning Arab film maker and interventions by a leading female television presenter;

(c) An information kit on Beijing+20 in the Arab region, consisting of a poster presenting data and information about each of the 12 areas of concern under the Beijing Platform for Action and leaflets summarizing the main actions taken by member States on these areas of concern over the period 2009-2014;

(d) A documentary on the topic "Arab women's issues in the Arab region", shedding light on key issues of concern, such as violence against women, women in conflict, refugees, women and labour, and child marriage;

(e) Two newsletters and two policy briefs on developments related to the status of women in Arab countries, each focusing on an important emerging theme;

(f) A continuously updated webpage dedicated to the Centre for Women, displaying news and events undertaken by the Centre, in addition to studies, research, reports and other electronic materials;

(g) A self-assessment of the advancement of women work programme, being conducted to identify its strengths, relevance to regional priorities and lessons learned for future work. This self-assessment is mandated by the Executive Secretary of ESCWA, and each of the ESCWA subprogrammes engage in discretionary evaluations every three bienniums as part of the ESCWA commitment to excellence and greater servicing of its mandated responsibilities.

F. ADVISORY SERVICES AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

22. Pursuant to recommendation 4 (d), issued by the Committee on Women at its sixth session, ESCWA has provided advisory services and technical support on gender-related topics to 9 member States, namely Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, the Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen. Whether delivered as advisory services addressing specific needs as requested by member States or as subregional training workshops targeting government officials, member States have benefitted from the direct assistance and services of ESCWA on a variety of issues related to women's empowerment and gender equality, including gender mainstreaming in governmental institutions; gender budgeting; local governance; local community development; review of draft constitutions; legislation formulation; development of national strategies and action plans; development of regional strategic frameworks and action plans; institutional development; and reporting, monitoring and evaluation of progress achieved in the implementation of international instruments related to women. The following tables include details of missions undertaken in member States.

TABLE 1. GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND GENDER BUDGETING

Country	Counterparts/target groups	Period	Technical assistance
Lebanon	Ministry of Social Affairs	18-19 March 2014	Gender mainstreaming at the institutional and local levels
		1-2 July 2014	Training of trainers on techniques for gender mainstreaming
Palestine	Ministry of Women Affairs; Senior level representatives of different public administrations and ministries	18-21 August 2014	Training workshop on gender mainstreaming in economic policies and public budgeting

TABLE 2. STRATEGIC PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS

Country	Counterparts/target groups	Period	Technical assistance
Oman	Ministry of Social Development	4-5 January 2014	Support developing social strategies, work plans and input on women strategies
Palestine	Ministry of Social Affairs	April 2014	Review of the national strategy on gender equality and women empowerment across sectors
Egypt	National Council for Women; Board members and senior staff	28 April 2014	Identification of priority needs and a technical support programme
	National Council for Women (NCW); Senior officials at the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior and members of the NCW legislative committee, service providers and practitioners in the field of violence against women, including police officers, judges, medical doctors, protection shelters, claim centres and non-governmental organizations	17-18 June 2014	Support developing national strategies and legislations to combat violence against women
Yemen	National Women Committee	August 2014	Reviewing the draft constitution to reflect gender equality clauses and women's rights
Sudan	National senior staff at the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security and at decentralized offices, gender unit coordinators, concerned national governmental organizations and non-governmental stakeholders	25-27 November 2014	Several phased technical support and capacity-building programmes of action to support the Sudan in the development and updates of the national policy and strategy on women empowerment and the national strategy on family development
		4-7 May 2015	Tools and instruments in policy and strategy formulation and strategic analysis, gender empowerment analysis and assessment, family life cycle needs and priority assessment, and practices on drafting women and family development strategies and strategic goals and visions
		7-10 September 2015	Preparation of work programmes, programme and project formulation, financing, implementation and evaluation

TABLE 3. INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS AND INSTRUMENTS RELATED TO WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND LEGISLATION

Country	Counterparts/target groups	Period	Technical assistance
Qatar	Supreme Council for Family Affairs, senior officials from different public administrations and ministries	4-5 February 2014	Training the Qatari official delegation on the presentation of an initial report to the CEDAW Committee
Lebanon	National Commission for Lebanese Women, gender focal points in different public administrations and ministries, and civil society representatives	28-29 May 2014	National workshop on electoral laws and women quota system

TABLE 3 (continued)

Country	Counterparts/target groups	Period	Technical assistance
Tunisia	State Ministry of Women and Family and members of the drafting committee of the draft law on violence against women	7-9 December 2014	Expert group consultation on combating violence against women and formulation of relevant national legislation
	Ministry of Women, Family and Children, national senior staff at the State Ministry of Women and Family, central and decentralized offices, gender unit coordinators, concerned national governmental organizations and non-governmental stakeholders	1-4 June 2015	Capacity-building national workshops on international frameworks, instruments and review processes related to women's rights, gender equality and development

23. Pursuant to recommendation 4 (j), issued by the Committee on Women at its sixth session, on providing member States with updated information and research on good practices and successful experiences and initiatives related to empowering women and gender equality by organizing studies and workshops that meet regional priorities, and in response to member States requests, the Centre carried out the following activities: a sub-regional workshop on the theme "Participatory community development from a gender perspective" in Amman from 20 to 22 January 2015, targeting ministries of women's affairs and social development in Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, the Sudan and Yemen to strengthen their capacities in formulating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating community-driven development programmes, fostering gender mainstreaming, and implementing and tracking change theory; and a subregional workshop on the theme "Institutional development of national women's machineries", held in Beirut from 26 to 27 August 2015, targeting ministries of women and social affairs in Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, the Sudan and Tunisia, with the aim of supporting them in strengthening the roles and mechanisms of their national women machineries and providing technical assistance to the review and evaluation of their current structures, mandates, resources and efficiency towards greater advancement of women and achievement of gender equality in the new development era.

24. In the context of the Beijing+20 review programme and as noted in section B above, the Centre organized in Amman on 27 and 28 February 2014 a regional consultation workshop for all Arab countries on national review reports.

25. Pursuant to recommendations 4 (a) and (c), issued by the Committee on Women at its sixth session, the Centre held a regional workshop on the theme "Addressing gender-based violence in the Arab region" in Tunis from 27 July to 2 August 2015, in partnership with CAWTAR. The workshop brought together technical experts on violence against women and gender-based violence, practitioners and religious leaders, with the aim of testing and validating the content of the related toolkit entitled "Addressing gender-based violence in the Arab region: toolkit for service provision", and identifying potential implementation gaps. The ultimate objective of the workshop was to train selected target groups on how to utilize the toolkit for better service provision to survivors of gender-based violence and violence against women.

26. Pursuant to recommendation 4 (i), issued by the Committee on Women at its sixth session, the Centre provided technical assistance to the Department of Women, Family and Child of the League of Arab States. In April 2014, it assisted in the development of regional strategies and action plans on women's economic empowerment, political participation and peace and security. In January 2015, it supported the establishment of a regional strategic framework for the implementation of the Cairo Declaration on a post-2015 development agenda for Arab women.

27. The activities undertaken by the Centre for Women in the field of technical cooperation and advisory services for women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming, undertaken since the sixth session of the Committee on Women, included over 15 missions executed by the Regional Advisor in 9 countries. It should be noted that advisory and technical cooperation services are demand-driven and tailor-made in response to priorities identified by ESCWA member States, with specified actions undertaken by the Centre for Women.

G. FIELD PROJECTS AND EXTRABUDGETARY ACTIVITIES

28. Pursuant to recommendation 4 (e), issued by the Committee on Women at its sixth session, on enhancing the capacities of member States to monitor the implementation of CEDAW and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security by building the capacities of national mechanisms related to the advancement of women, parliament members and civil society; exchange experiences and good practices; and continue to raise awareness among decision-makers on international instruments, the Centre has been implementing since 2013 a United Nations Development Account project entitled "Institutional and capacity-building for Arab parliaments and other stakeholders for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security", in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Africa and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The project aims to build and enhance the capacity of selected Arab parliaments and legislative bodies to address the challenges and opportunities that women are presented with during times of conflict and in post-conflict situations, and support the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Upon initiation of the project in 2013, seven target countries were selected, namely Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Palestine, Tunisia and Yemen. However, due to evolving crises in the region, the list of target beneficiary countries was revisited to include Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, the Sudan and Tunisia. Accordingly, since the sixth session of the Committee on Women, the following activities were implemented in the context of this project:

- **Expert group meeting on the identification of legislative gaps for the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security in the Arab region (Beirut, 17-18 December 2013):** the meeting aimed to discuss the methodology and outline of a regional study planned for completion in 2014 to identify legislative gaps preventing the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 and to highlight lessons learned and best practices towards the full implementation of the resolution. At the conclusion of the meeting, participants noted that the resolution was not widely implemented in the Arab region; they raised the issue of making it legally binding and suggested various country-specific proposals to that effect.
- **Regional study entitled "Identification of legislative gaps for the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security in the Arab region":** this study, published in 2015, reviews and analyses existing national legal frameworks related to the implementation of the resolution in the seven countries specified at the start of the project, and identifies legislative gaps in areas pertinent to its implementation. The study concludes with a set of concrete and specific policy and legal recommendations to encourage the full implementation of the resolution in the Arab region, particularly at the parliamentary level. The findings of the study were discussed during an expert group meeting and the study was revised accordingly to reflect participants' comments and feedback.
- **Expert group meeting to review the findings of the regional study and discuss the outline of training manuals on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security (Beirut, 25-26 June 2014):** the meeting aimed to provide feedback and peer-review on the draft of the regional study entitled "Identification of legislative gaps for the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security in the Arab region", share experiences and lessons learned for the full implementation of the resolution in the region, and

discuss the outline of the training manuals to be prepared at the next phase of the project. At the conclusion of the meeting, participants acknowledged the relevance of the valuable material provided in the study, especially in the light of recent and ongoing political and security situations and developments in the region, and commended the plans to conduct training sessions for policymakers in the context of the project based on gaps identified in the study.

- **Training manual for parliamentarians on the full legislative implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security in 9 selected Arab countries:** the training manual, published in 2015, draws on key findings of the above regional study and highlights key components of each of the four pillars of the resolution, namely prevention, participation, protection and provision of relief and recovery. The training manual consists of four sections, each addressing one pillar of the resolution, in addition to a guide for trainers that includes exercises and topics for discussion on each section. The manual was prepared as the primary resource in the training workshops targeting members of parliaments and other stakeholders in the 9 selected countries.

29. The final phase of the project comprises the organization of four consecutive training workshops for members of parliaments and other stakeholders, based on the training manual and covering each of the four pillars of the resolution. The first and second workshops were held in Tunis on 10-13 November 2015, the third and fourth will take place in February 2016. An additional workshop envisioned to build the capacity of national women machineries in the formulation of national action plans on Security Council resolution 1325 was held in Amman on 7-9 December 2015. Moreover, project activities include the establishment of an electronic network for members of parliaments and other stakeholders, including national women's machineries, within the iKNOW Politics network to sustain the acquired knowledge and provide an ongoing forum for sharing respective experiences. An evaluation of the whole project, including of training workshops from the perspective of the participants, is envisioned at the project's conclusion in February 2016, to assess the significance of transferring and exchanging knowledge among the project's beneficiaries and to evaluate the overall performance of the project and its various outputs.

30. Pursuant to recommendations 4 (f) and (i), issued by the Committee on Women at its sixth session, ESCWA has implemented a set of extrabudgetary activities as part of a programme on the Beijing+20 review, in partnership with UN Women and in close cooperation with the League of Arab States, as described in section B above.

31. Pursuant to recommendation 4 (b), issued by the Committee on Women at its sixth session, the Centre has published a study entitled "Child marriage in humanitarian settings in the Arab region: dynamics, challenges and policy options", co-funded by the Arab States Regional Office of the United Nations Population Fund.

32. The Hariri Foundation for Sustainable Human Development in Lebanon implemented, in cooperation with ESCWA and the Islamic Development Bank, a pilot project on the theme "Establishment of an observatory for Arab women: the case of Lebanon", as a prelude to the Arab Gender Index project that aims to develop an index to measure gender equality tailored specifically to the Arab region, and will include the generation of up-to-date qualitative data reflecting the actual situation of women in the region. The first stage of the project, the Pilot Project for Lebanon, was completed in 2014 at ESCWA and included the creation of a database on the legal, civil, political, economic and social status of women in Lebanon and the production of a country profile on the status of women in Lebanon as a pilot for the rest of the Arab region.

Annex

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE ON WOMEN
AT ITS SIXTH SESSION**

**A. THE 2013 KUWAIT DECLARATION ON COMBATING
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

1. The Committee adopted the Kuwait Declaration on Combating Violence against Women, set out as follows:

We, the member States participating in the sixth session of the Committee on Women of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), held in Kuwait City on 4 and 5 December 2013;

Recognizing that the Arab region is undergoing historical transitions and movements that are redefining the region, which we hope shall build a better future in terms of respect for human rights and dignity, including the protection of civil liberties and equal citizenship;

Noting the positive developments in the status of Arab women in previous years;

Affirming that Arab women are struggling with determination to protect the rights they have gained which are currently under threat because of discrimination from their societies and families and in the fields of health, education, economics and politics;

Recognizing also the negative effects of armed conflict in some Arab countries and the threats faced by women refugees and displaced women in terms of human rights violations and other forms of violence;

Affirming also the continuous suffering of women in Palestine, the Golan Heights and other occupied Arab territories and the extreme forms of violence and displacement they face;

Recognizing also the negative effects of blockades and economic sanctions on women in particular;

- Monitor with increasing alarm the violence targeted at women that threatens their well-being and livelihoods, and denies them their right to be active members of society, given that such forms of violence have become a means and a tool to hamper women's participation in development and progress;
- Condemn all types of violence against women that threaten their security and right to participate in all walks of life, considering such violence as a flagrant violation to basic ethical principles and religious values;
- Confirm that such violations and manifestations of violence not only negatively affect women but have a detrimental impact on society as a whole, thus eroding the credibility of its institutions and impeding its progress in a world where all individuals must participate in the development process;
- Also confirm the importance of upholding commitments to protect women and their human rights and provide them with the security to pursue justice founded on equality and defend their positions and active roles in society as fully competent persons; and call for specific measures to develop clear rules and procedures that determine liabilities regarding violence against women and limit cases of impunity;

- Declare our commitment to ensuring women's right to a decent life, physical integrity and human dignity without discrimination as foundations of legislation, politics and culture; given that it must be completely unacceptable in any circumstance to deny persons their right to a secure and decent life and to aspirations of a better future characterized by social equity and gender equality;
- Affirm our support for and solidarity with women in Palestine, the Golan Heights and other occupied Arab territories in their continuous struggle against the Israeli occupation and blockade; and commend their resistance and determination to a decent life that is free from all forms of violence;
- Strive to prohibit violations against women in general and against women refugees and displaced women in particular in times of war and armed conflict; and call for the punishment of offenders;
- Welcome the Kuwaiti initiative on strengthening efforts to monitor and evaluate violence against women in the Arab region; and request the ESCWA secretariat to implement the initiative in collaboration with ESCWA member States;
- Greatly value the role of the ESCWA Committee on Women as a platform for combating violence against women from a regional perspective that takes into account Arab specificities; and commend the efforts of the ESCWA secretariat in responding to the urgent challenges faced by member States.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS TO ESCWA MEMBER STATES

2. The Committee thanked the Government of Kuwait for hosting the session; Mr. Jaber al-Mubarak al-Hamad al-Sabah, Prime Minister of Kuwait, for his patronage; and the Women's Affairs Committee, under the Council of Ministers, headed by Ms. Latifa al-Fahd al-Salem, for organizing the session. At the conclusion of its sixth session, the Committee on Women issued the following recommendations to ESCWA member States:

(a) Review cultural traditions that support women and combat those that hamper their advancement and empowerment;

(b) Ensure that national plans and legislation comply with international commitments; ratify international agreements on gender equality; and lift reservations, especially regarding the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its optional protocols and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children;

(c) Implement recommendations endorsed by ESCWA member States in their global periodic reviews of women's rights and their participation in political and economic life;

(d) Support national human rights institutions in coordinating with national committees and ministries to enhance gender equality and empower women;

(e) Intensify efforts to implement the Beijing Platform for Action and prepare national reports to review the progress made 20 years after its adoption; and collaborate with the ESCWA secretariat to prepare a regional review;

(f) Enact and implement a framework law to combat violence against women that covers the following: ensuring women's right to a life free of violence; investigating offences against women and punishing perpetrators; providing protection services to victims; compensating victims; and preventing violence against women;

(g) Target women in capacity-building programmes; raise their awareness; and include men in national initiatives to combat violence against women in general and in sessions of the ESCWA Committee on Women in particular;

(h) Strengthen the political will to support national mechanisms on the advancement of women and provide the necessary financial resources to implement, monitor and evaluate the integration of a gender perspective into all ministries, government institutions, public policy, planning and development programmes;

(i) Provide the needed human, technical and financial resources to create and adopt gender-sensitive budgets in all sectors;

(j) Strive to achieve the third Millennium Development Goal on promoting gender equality and empowering women, and implement national mechanisms on the advancement of women, taking into account national and regional specificities;

(k) Support Palestinian and Arab women under Israeli occupation;

(l) Provide support and assistance to Arab women in war zones and conflict areas;

(m) Develop partnerships at the national, regional and international levels to benefit from successful experiences;

(n) Continue to support and communicate with the ESCWA Centre for Women, and submit to it reports on best practices and successful national experiences and initiatives regarding gender equality and the empowerment of women.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE ESCWA SECRETARIAT

3. The Committee issued the following recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat:

(a) Strive to implement the Kuwait initiative to combat all forms of violence against women by intensifying efforts to monitor and analyse the phenomenon of gender-based violence in the Arab region and by proposing appropriate public policies and procedures to combat it;

(b) Study the phenomena of child and forced marriages and their effects on the social and economic situation of women and girls in the Arab region;

(c) Build the capacities of workers who provide protection services to victims of violence against women by developing tools and studies founded on relevant international standards;

(d) Strengthen the capacities of national mechanisms to mainstream a gender perspective in national legislation, policies, plans and programmes by providing training, technical assistance, advisory services, studies and lessons learned from successful experiences in this field;

(e) Enhance the capacities of member countries to monitor the implementation of CEDAW and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security by building the capacities of national mechanisms related to the advancement of women and of parliament members and civil society; exchange experiences and good practices; and continue to raise awareness among decision makers on international instruments;

(f) Prepare for the regional review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing+20) in collaboration with member States, the League of Arab States, regional organizations and relevant civil society institutions;

(g) Incorporate issues related to displaced women and girls and the role of women during periods of transition in the proposed work priorities;

(h) Collect data related to the economic role of women in society;

(i) Coordinate constantly with other United Nations entities and regional organizations, especially the League of Arab States, and support partnerships with them;

(j) Provide member States with updated information and research on good practices and successful experiences and initiatives related to empowering women and gender equality by organizing studies and workshops that meet regional priorities;

(k) Continue to measure the impact of current programmes and activities related to empowering women and gender equality and prepare development plans that meet national requirements and priorities.
