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**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

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Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda

**Follow-up issues**

**Implementation of the Tunis Declaration on Social  
Justice in the Arab region and resolutions adopted by ESCWA  
at its twenty-eighth session**

**Summary**

This report sets out the actions taken by the secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to implement the Tunis Declaration on Social Justice in the Arab Region, resolutions on the various areas of the Commission's work and issues of interest to member States, adopted at the Commission's twenty-eighth session, held in Tunis from 15 to 18 September 2014.

It also presents the information received from member States on implementation of the Declaration and resolutions.

## **ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE SECRETARIAT**

### **Tunis Declaration on Social Justice in the Arab Region**

#### **A. SUMMARY OF THE TUNIS DECLARATION**

1. In this Declaration, member States requested the secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to undertake the following:

(a) To incorporate the elements of social justice in its work on the preparation, monitoring and implementation of a post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals, and establish clear implementation and monitoring mechanisms to ensure the achievement of national, regional and global development goals, in accordance with country capabilities;

(b) To strengthen the policy capacity of member States in all relevant fields through training, research and normative work, including through the production of reports on justice, poverty, inequality, social protection, social inclusion, women's empowerment, natural resource management, renewable energy subsidies, access to technology and good governance, as well as trade policies and their role in achieving development;

(c) To provide advisory services and technical support to member States to improve national policy responses so as to enhance social cohesion, tackle youth and women's development challenges, and promote youth and women's participation and empowerment in decision-making processes;

(d) To monitor the effects of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, its implications in the light of regional and international developments and its detrimental impact on the attainment of the multiple dimensions of justice in Palestine and the region as a whole, so as to uphold the human rights-based and legal efforts to condemn the Israeli occupation and support the Palestinians in demanding their rights;

(e) To create a measurement tool to monitor progress in the area of social justice in the Arab region and strengthen the capacity of member States and statistical agencies to collect, build, analyse and disseminate harmonized related indicators.

#### **B. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES**

2. The ESCWA secretariat undertook the following activities pursuant to the Tunis Declaration:

(a) *Normative work*

(i) ESCWA has launched a series of working papers addressing different aspects of the declaration. They approach the matter of justice from various angles, including: gender; policymaking; the link between economic growth, employment, poverty and inequality; early childhood development; inequality of opportunity in education; perceptions of inequality and social justice; and the impact of refugees on economic growth in host countries in the Arab region. The papers are the following:

- a. Inequality decomposition in the Arab region: application to Jordan, Egypt, Palestine, the Sudan and Tunisia. This paper evaluates differences in household expenditure in rural/urban areas, female/male-headed households, non-educated/educated-headed households and non-employed/employed-headed households, in eleven household income and expenditure surveys from five Arab countries: Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, the Sudan and Tunisia;
- b. Perceptions of inequality and social justice in the Arab region. By analyzing each sub-group of the population, mainly defined by socioeconomic characteristics, this paper seeks to identify perceptions of inequality and social justice and what determines them;

- c. Development policy change models: the practitioners' view. This paper looks at the role of external development agencies in creating consensus in-country for needed policy change;
  - d. Economic growth, employment and poverty in Arab countries. The study examines the link between economic growth, employment, poverty and inequality in Arab countries and developing economies in other regions during the period of the Millennium Development Goals. It examines how economic growth and inequality affected the extreme poor and the poor;
  - e. Opportunities for early childhood development in Arab countries: profile and evolution of inequality and its sources. This study evaluates opportunities for early childhood development in 13 Arab countries using indicators for maternal care during pregnancy and child delivery, children's access to minimum nutrition, health services, parental care and cognitive developmental activities;
  - f. Inequality of opportunity in education in the Arab world. Using the latest student test scores in mathematics and science reported by the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and in reading reported by the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA), this paper compares inequality of opportunity for achievement in those areas in 11 Arab countries;
  - g. Refugees and economic growth: challenges and opportunities for the Arab region. This paper studies the impact on economic growth of refugees in host countries in the Arab region, with a specific focus on the displaced populations of Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic;
- (ii) ESCWA is finalizing three studies on issues related to women. Those on access to justice for women and child marriage in humanitarian settings address inequality and injustice and provide key policy recommendations for improving social justice at the country and regional levels. The third study looks at the impact of women NGOs on women's livelihoods, after accounting for socioeconomic and demographic factors. The findings of the first two studies will be articulated in two policy briefs aimed at strengthening commitment and targeted action on gender equality in member States.

(b) *Social policies*

- (i) ESCWA released social protection profiles for Oman and the United Arab Emirates. They are part of a series mapping available social protection (such as universal access to health and education, social assistance programmes, social security and insurance programmes), community development programmes, labour market policies and public works;
- (ii) ESCWA has developed a toolkit for enhancing capacity in designing participatory social protection policies, designed to reinforce the Commission's efforts to promote a broad regional rights-based approach to social protection policies and the participatory mechanisms needed to guarantee their success. In nine modules, the toolkit explains what is needed to formulate, implement, finance, monitor and assess such policies, and how to reach consensus on effective and sustainable social protection choices;
- (iii) ESCWA organized a regional workshop on the toolkit in Beirut from 27 to 30 July 2015, attended by officials from Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Morocco and Tunisia, and a social policy expert from Yemen. Participants provided valuable feedback on the toolkit and its relevance to their needs. The workshop enabled participants to become better acquainted with social protection concepts and approaches, and exchange national experiences and lessons learned in the design and implementation of social protection programmes;
- (iv) ESCWA organized a high-level round table to discuss the link between participation and social justice as part of the activities associated with the tenth session of the Committee on Social Development, which was held on 8 and 9 September 2015 in Rabat. The round table brought

together heads of delegations, high-level speakers and experts and allowed government representatives to share information on national initiatives to promote social justice;

- (v) ESCWA organized a regional conference in Riyadh, in November 2014, on social protection and development, attended by representatives of member States and the League of Arab States. Three technical presentations made at the conference will form the basis for technical advice to member States;
- (vi) The social protection toolkit will be utilized for technical cooperation activities with member States.

(c) *Palestine*

- (i) ESCWA partnered with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics to carry out a household survey on living conditions in Gaza and the impact of the Israeli offensive conducted there in July-August 2014;
- (ii) ESCWA partnered with Birzeit University to analyze the results of the survey and prepare a report on the main findings and trends, and the coping mechanisms adopted by the Palestinians in Gaza. It also maps further policy-oriented research, programmes and interventions;
- (iii) Pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2003/42 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, ESCWA has prepared a technical report that reviews the status of women and girls in Palestine between July 2012 and June 2014. It outlines improvements in gender equality and significant challenges that still prevent Palestinian women and girls from realising their rights.

(d) *Statistics*

ESCWA is working on different methodologies for collecting data on social justice in the Arab region, including:

- (i) Developing composite indices;
- (ii) Measuring different development outcomes in early stages of life to measure inequalities of opportunity;
- (iii) Using international standardized tests to measure the quality of education.

### **314 (XXVIII). The Arab Forum on Sustainable Development**

#### **A. SUMMARY OF THE RESOLUTION**

3. In this resolution, the Commission requested that the ESCWA secretariat hold sessions of the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development periodically, in partnership with the League of Arab States and other organizations concerned with sustainable development, in order to prepare for the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, review the progress made in achieving the sustainable development goals and contribute to launching regional partnerships to advance sustainable development in the Arab region. It also requested the secretariat to monitor progress in achieving sustainable development in the Arab region and to prepare reports on the topic on the basis of official data for presentation at the sessions of the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development. It requested the Executive Secretary to present a report at the twenty-ninth session of the Commission on the procedures undertaken to implement the resolution.

## B. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

4. The ESCWA secretariat held the second session of the Arab High-level Forum on Sustainable Development in Manama, from 5 to 7 May 2015, in partnership with the League of Arab States and the United Nations Environment Programme, as main partners in the Forum, to discuss format and focus areas. All ESCWA substantive divisions and members of the Regional Coordination Mechanism have been cooperating to prepare the Arab sustainable development report, which will be issued in 2016.

**315 (XXVIII). Establishing an intergovernmental committee  
on technology for development**

## A. SUMMARY OF THE RESOLUTION

5. In this resolution, the Commission endorsed changing the name of subprogramme 4 from “Information and communications technology for regional integration” to “Technology for development and regional integration” and decided to establish an intergovernmental committee to be named the Committee on Technology for Development, comprising representatives from ESCWA member States with experience in the field, to replace the Consultative Committee on Scientific and Technological Development and Technological Innovation. The Commission also decided that the Committee shall hold its sessions once every two years, with effect from 2016, and requested the Executive Secretary to submit a report on the implementation of the resolution to the Commission at its twenty-ninth session.

## B. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

6. The Technology for Development Division has changed the name of subprogramme 4 from “Information and communications technology for regional integration” to “Technology for development and regional integration”. It has started preparing for the establishment of the intergovernmental committee, which will hold its first meeting in 2016.

**316 (XXVIII). Support for the Palestinian people**

## A. SUMMARY OF THE RESOLUTION

7. In this resolution, the Commission requested that the ESCWA secretariat raise the level of its support for the Palestinian people and their institutions at all levels, including the enhancement of human resources for subprogramme 7 to support the implementation of the following:

(a) Providing normative and technical assistance to Palestinian institutions according to Palestinian needs;

(b) Developing more activities on Palestine and organizing special events in observance of the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People with the aim of raising awareness and mobilizing support for the Palestinian people in Palestine and abroad, and securing the widest media coverage for those events;

(c) Submitting periodic reports to the ministerial sessions of the Commission on Israeli practices that violate the economic and social rights of the Palestinian people and other rights guaranteed under international laws, charters and conventions;

(d) Monitoring the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation, mobilizing regional partners to support the Palestinian people and their institutions in Palestine and abroad, assisting them in achieving development, and exerting pressure and conducting advocacy to help them to obtain their full rights as guaranteed by United Nations resolutions and international conventions and charters.

B. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

8. ESCWA prepared a note by the Secretary-General on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan, and presented it at the 2015 sessions of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.
9. ESCWA observed the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 27 November 2015 and organized a series of activities aimed at raising awareness and mobilizing support.
10. ESCWA partnered with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics to carry out a household survey on living conditions in Gaza and the impact of the Israeli offensive conducted there in July-August 2014.
11. ESCWA partnered with the Birzeit University to analyze the results of the survey.
12. ESCWA is preparing a report on the impact of Israeli practices on the Palestinian economy using a computable general equilibrium model.
13. ESCWA organized a workshop on 24-25 November 2015 entitled Palestine and the Occupation: Towards a Better Understanding and a Targeted Research Agenda.
14. ESCWA is preparing a study entitled “The Palestinian People and Israel: Background Study on the Question of Apartheid” to examine whether Israeli policies and practices with regard to the Palestinians amount to apartheid, as defined in international law.

**319 (XXVIII). Adoption of the proposed amendments to the programme of work for the biennium 2014-2015**

A. SUMMARY OF THE RESOLUTION

15. In this resolution, the Commission adopted the amendments introduced to the programme of work for the biennium 2014-2015, taking into account remarks made by member States at the twenty-eighth ESCWA session, and requested the secretariat to follow up on its implementation and, if necessary, include activities to address any challenge that may emerge in the Arab region.

B. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

16. The ESCWA secretariat is following up on the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 2014-2015 through its monthly meetings on deliverables, where it reviews implementation by divisions of their output. The secretariat is also following up through periodic programme performance reporting.

**320 (XXVIII). Redesignating the Technical Committee as the “Executive Committee” and amending its terms of reference**

A. SUMMARY OF THE RESOLUTION

17. In this resolution, the Commission decided to redesignate the Technical Committee as the “Executive Committee”. It also decided to revise the role of the Committee and its terms of reference, with immediate effect, as set out in the annex to the resolution. It requested the Executive Secretary to follow up on the implementation of the resolution.

B. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

18. The ESCWA secretariat submitted resolution 320 (XXVIII) to the Economic and Social Council, which approved the redesignation of the Technical Committee as the “Executive Committee” and the revision of its role and terms of reference. The Committee held its first meeting in Amman on 8 and 9 June 2015.

**321 (XXVIII). Redesignating the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia as the “Economic and Social Commission for Arab States”**

A. SUMMARY OF THE RESOLUTION

19. In this resolution, the Commission recommended that the Economic and Social Council should:

(a) Redesignate the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia as the “Economic and Social Commission for Arab States”;

(b) Amend the terms of reference of the Commission as set forth in its resolution 1985/69, of 26 July 1985, in line with the new designation.

20. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to follow up on the implementation of this resolution and submit a report on the progress achieved in that regard at the twenty-ninth session of the Commission.

B. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

21. The secretariat will submit resolution 321 (XXVIII) to the Economic and Social Council, containing a recommendation to redesignate the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia as the “Economic and Social Commission for Arab States” and to amend the terms of reference of the Commission as set forth in its resolution 1985/69, in line with the new designation.

22. The Executive Secretary is following up on this recommendation with the member States of the Economic and Social Council to ensure its successful endorsement.

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