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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Thirtieth session
Beirut, 25-28 June 2018

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

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Annotations

A. Senior officials segment

1. Opening

The thirtieth session of the Commission will be held at the United Nations House in Beirut. It will comprise two segments: the senior officials segment, which will begin at 9 a.m. on Monday, 25 June 2018, and the ministerial segment, which will begin at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 27 June 2018. The representative of Qatar will give the opening address as Chair of the twenty-ninth session, and the representative of the ESCWA secretariat will give a welcome address.

2. Election of officers

Rule 12 of the Rules of Procedure of the Commission provides that member States shall chair the sessions of the Commission on a rotating basis, in the Arabic alphabetical order employed by the United Nations,* and that the Commission shall, at the beginning of each session, elect from among the representatives of its members two Vice-Chairs and a Rapporteur, who shall remain in office until such time as their successors shall be elected and be eligible for re-election. At the twenty-ninth session, it was agreed that Tunisia would chair the thirtieth session.

3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Rule 8, article 1 of the Rules of Procedure of the Commission provides that the Commission shall, at the beginning of each session, after the election of the Chair according to rule 12, adopt the agenda for that session on the basis of the provisional agenda. Pursuant to that rule, the Commission will be presented with the provisional agenda and annotations for the session in the present document E/ESCWA/30/L.1, and with the organization of work in document E/ESCWA/30/L.2. The Commission may adopt these two documents in the form in which they are submitted or make amendments thereto.

4. Consideration of requests by States Members of the United Nations and/or its specialized agencies that are not members of ESCWA to participate as observers in the thirtieth session of the Commission (E/ESCWA/30/3)

Under this item, requests received from States Members of the United Nations and/or its specialized agencies that are not members of the Commission to participate as observers in its thirtieth session, in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1818 (LV), paragraph 4, and rule 63 of the Rules of Procedure of the Commission, will be presented to the Commission for consideration and approval.

Global and regional developments

5. Survey of economic and social developments in the Arab region 2017-2018 (E/ESCWA/EDID/2018/1/Summary)

The Survey is published annually by ESCWA pursuant to General Assembly resolution [35/56](#), and ESCWA resolutions 270 (XXIV) and 303 (XXVII). It analyses economic and social developments in the Arab region within the global and regional contexts, which forms the basis for policy discussions, peer learning, keeping pace with global and regional developments, and tackling national development challenges. Projections differ between oil-producing and non-oil producing countries. The summary of analyses and conclusions can be used to adapt national development plans to country needs, and to formulate strong and coordinated policies aimed at achieving inclusive and sustainable economic transformation.

The Commission is invited to take note of key economic and social developments presented in the Survey and to comment thereon.

* ESCWA member States in the Arabic alphabetical order are as follows: Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Tunisia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Sudan, Iraq, Oman, the State of Palestine, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Mauritania and Yemen.

6. Megatrends in the transport sector and their impact on the Arab region (E/ESCWA/30/4)

The evaluation of megatrends forms part of preparatory studies for an ESCWA project on formulating a common strategy to develop a regional multimodal transport system to promote inclusive and sustainable development in the Arab region. The document presented under this item reviews megatrends in the transport sector resulting from various geographic, economic, regulatory, technological and political factors, which together will contribute to moulding the global transport landscape over the period 2030-2050, including the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, the impact of climate change on opening new shipping lines through the Arctic Ocean, hyperloop trains with speeds exceeding 1,000 kilometres per hour, the use of clean energy sources and solar energy as alternatives to fossil fuels, the digital revolution and the regulatory solutions it provides, and driverless vehicles.

The Commission is invited to discuss the document and comment thereon.

7. Support for the Palestinian people: impact of the Israeli occupation and practices (E/ESCWA/30/5)

The secretariat monitors and analyses the social and economic conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, the impact of the Israeli practices and policies therein, and the violations of international law perpetrated in the context of the Israeli occupation, as mandated by resolutions adopted at previous ESCWA sessions, particularly resolutions 316 (XXVIII) and 326 (XXIX). The document submitted under this item pursuant to those resolutions provides a snapshot of Israeli policies and practices, such as structure and home demolitions in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. It presents a number of their cumulative repercussions on the Palestinian population, particularly on their social and economic conditions. It also takes in focus the Israeli-imposed blockade on the Gaza Strip then sheds light on the impact of Israeli policies and practices on vital sectors of the Palestinian economy.

The Commission is invited to take note of and discuss the contents of the document.

Work of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies

8. Outcomes of the 2018 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development (E/ESCWA/30/6)

Under this item, the Commission will consider the outcomes of the 2018 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development, which was held on the theme “Natural resources, future generations and the common good” in Beirut, from 24 to 26 April. The Forum was organized under the patronage of the Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri, in collaboration with the League of Arab States and United Nations organizations operating in the Arab region. The theme of the Forum was chosen in line with that of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies”, which was held in New York from 9 to 18 July 2018. The outcomes of the Arab Forum and other regional forums are presented to the High-level Political Forum.

The Commission is invited to take note of the Forum’s outcomes and provide comments on the way forward.

9. Links between information and communications technology processes and sustainable development (E/ESCWA/30/7)

Under this item, the Commission will consider information and communications technology processes and their links with sustainable development objectives. Since the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society in 2003, ESCWA has played a pioneering role in regional efforts to build an information society. Since the overall review in 2015, which enhanced the role of regional commissions, ESCWA has worked on connecting regional efforts to build an information society with efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; on promoting the development of a digital

economy and smart societies in the Arab region; and on using information and communications technology to support development goals. The aim of the document presented under this item is to solicit member States' views on future efforts to link the process of the World Summit on the Information Society with the sustainable development process in the Arab region.

The Commission is invited to take note of accomplishments and implemented activities, and to comment on the way forward.

10. Proposal for the establishment of an Arab centre for climate change policies at ESCWA (E/ESCWA/30/8)

Under this item, the Commission will consider a detailed proposal on the establishment of an Arab centre for climate change policies under the ESCWA secretariat after its adoption by the Executive Committee at its fourth meeting, with changes taking into account comments from member States. The centre's proposed functions include providing technical support and advisory services to member States on climate change mitigation and adaptation at the regional, subregional and national levels, and in sectors directly and indirectly affected by climate change; supporting government institutions in following up on the implementation of international and regional instruments on climate change; coordinating between Arab States and across sectors to reach unified positions and common ground in climate change negotiations; and building negotiating capacity through workshops on priority issues for member States.

The Commission is invited to consider the detailed proposal and comment on the way forward.

11. Activities of the ESCWA Technology Centre over the period 2016-2017 (E/ESCWA/30/9)

Under this item, the Commission will consider the accomplishments and activities of the ESCWA Technology Centre over the period 2016-2017, including advisory services, studies and technical reports, projects, workshops and partnerships. The document presented under this item sets out the Centre's workplan for 2018 and its objectives towards sustainable development, as adopted by the Board of Governors at its seventh meeting on 27 November 2017. The workplan forms part of the ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019.

The Commission is requested to take note of the Centre's accomplishments and activities, and to comment on the way forward.

12. Implementation of the Doha Declaration and other resolutions adopted by the Commission at its twenty-ninth session (E/ESCWA/30/10)

Under this item, the Commission will consider the activities undertaken by ESCWA to implement the Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other resolutions adopted by ESCWA at its twenty-ninth session, held in Doha from 13 to 15 December 2016, on its various areas of work and on issues of concern to member States. Moreover, member States can present their work on the implementation of parts of the Declaration and resolutions that are relevant to them.

The Commission is requested to take note of the activities implemented since the twenty-ninth ESCWA session pursuant to the resolutions, and member States are invited to present progress reports on their achievements in implementing the resolutions.

13. Reports of the Executive Committee (E/ESCWA/30/11)

Under this item, the Commission will consider the reports of two Executive Committee meetings held in the period between the twenty-ninth and thirtieth ESCWA sessions. The third meeting of the Executive Committee was held in Rabat on 6 and 7 May 2017 ([E/ESCWA/2017/EC.3/8/Report](#)), and the fourth meeting was held in Beirut on 13 and 14 December 2017 ([E/ESCWA/2017/EC.4/9/Report](#)). The reports contain the resolutions and recommendations, topics of discussion, organization of work, and lists of documents and participants for both meetings.

The Commission is invited to adopt the two reports.

14. Reports of the Commission's subsidiary bodies (E/ESCWA/30/12)

Under this item, the Commission will consider the following reports of ESCWA subsidiary bodies that were not presented to the Executive Committee, on sessions held in the period between the twenty-ninth and thirtieth ESCWA sessions:

- (a) Report of the eighth session of the Committee on Women, held in Beirut on 4 and 5 October 2017 ([E/ESCWA/ECW/2017/IG.1/7/Report](#));
- (b) Report of the eleventh session of the Committee on Social Development, held in Khartoum on 17 and 18 October 2017 ([E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/6/Report](#));
- (c) Report of the eighteenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics, held in Beirut on 20 and 21 December 2017 ([E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.1/9/Report](#));
- (d) Report of the eleventh session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development (liberalization of foreign trade), held in Beirut on 27 and 28 November 2017 ([E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.3/11/Report](#));
- (e) Report of the twelfth session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development (focus on finance), held in Beirut on 4 and 5 December 2017 ([E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.2/9/Report](#)).

The Commission is invited to adopt those reports.

Management issues

15. Programme performance in the biennium 2016-2017 (E/ESCWA/30/13)

Under this item, the Commission will consider a document that contains a general performance evaluation under the ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017, and a review of outcomes and lessons learned in implementing the seven subprogrammes. The document also provides a performance evaluation of the executive direction and management, including the Office of the Executive Secretary, the Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Section, the Strategy, Evaluation and Partnership Section, and the Administrative Services Division.

The Commission is invited to review the document and provide comments on the general performance of ESCWA and its seven subprogrammes.

16. Technical cooperation and regional advisory services (E/ESCWA/30/14)

Under this item, the Commission will review the technical cooperation activities undertaken by ESCWA over the biennium 2016-2017 within the framework of the following three financing mechanisms: the

Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation, the United Nations Development Account, and extrabudgetary resources. Activities funded by the Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation aim to strengthen member States' capacity through training activities, advisory services and technical guidance on formulating public policies, strategies and workplans in various areas of expertise. Activities funded by the United Nations Development Account and from extrabudgetary resources include implementing regional and interregional projects.

The Commission is invited to take note of the activities and their outcomes, and to comment thereon.

17. Financial status of the Commission (E/ESCWA/30/15)

Under this item, the Commission will review the financial status of ESCWA programmes, including financial allocations and expenditures under the regular budget, the United Nations Development Account and extrabudgetary resources.

The Commission is invited to take note of the financial status of ESCWA and comment thereon.

18. Proposed amendments to the strategic framework and programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019 (E/ESCWA/30/16)

Under this item, the Commission will consider amendments proposed by the secretariat to the strategic framework and programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019, in the light of emerging issues requiring the review and amendment of some activities.

The Commission is invited to consider the proposed amendments for adoption.

19. New vision for reform in the United Nations

Under this item, a presentation will be made to the Commission on key reforms contained in the Secretary-General's initiative.

Member States are invited to take note of those reforms.

B. Ministerial segment

20. Opening

The opening session of the ministerial segment will start at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 27 June 2018. It will comprise opening remarks by the representative of Qatar as Chair of the twenty-ninth session of the Commission; a statement by the representative of Tunisia as Chair of the thirtieth session; a statement by Mr. Mohamed Ali Alhakim, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCWA; and an address by the representative of Lebanon, the host country.

21. Technology for sustainable development in the Arab region: round tables (E/ESCWA/30/17/CRP.1)

ESCWA selected "Technology for sustainable development in the Arab region" as the theme of its thirtieth session. The secretariat has prepared a study on the topic, which focuses on creating decent employment opportunities and empowering young people (E/ESCWA/30/17).

The topic will be addressed at the ministerial level in three round-table discussions, with reference to a paper containing a set of points to guide the discussions. The round-table discussions will cover the following:

- (a) Integrating technology and innovation into national development planning;
- (b) The role of technology in tackling the challenges of the Arab region;
- (c) Frontier technologies: opportunities, challenges and the way forward.

The round-table discussions will result in a ministerial declaration on technology for sustainable development in the Arab region, for adoption by member States at the closing of the session.

22. Date and venue of the thirty-first session of the Commission

Rule 1, paragraph (a) of the Rules of Procedure of the Commission provides that the regular sessions of the Commission shall be held every two years, at a time to be determined by the members of the Commission. The Commission is expected to hold its thirty-first session in Beirut in 2020, unless it receives an invitation from a member State wishing to host the session.

23. Other matters

This item covers any other matters that members of the Commission might wish to discuss.

24. Adoption of the outcome document and resolutions emanating from the session

Under this item, the Commission will consider the draft ministerial declaration on technology for sustainable development in the Arab region, which will emanate from the roundtable discussions.

25. Adoption of the report of the thirtieth session of the Commission

Under this item, the Commission will adopt the draft report of the thirtieth session, containing recommendations and resolutions.
