



Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

REPORT

OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ON ITS FIRST MEETING AMMAN, 8-9 JUNE 2015

Summary

The Executive Committee of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) held its first meeting in Amman on 8 and 9 June 2015, bringing together representatives of ESCWA member States.

The meeting agenda covered several items, including progress made by the secretariat in the implementation of recommendations made by the Technical Committee at its eighth meeting and the Tunis Declaration on Social Justice in the Arab Region and resolutions adopted by ESCWA at its twenty-eighth session; and evaluation of the work of ESCWA. The Committee examined several regional and global issues, including Palestine under occupation and the Fourth Geneva Convention; financing for development; preparations for negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda; preparations for negotiations on climate change; and activities undertaken by ESCWA to follow up on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 20 years (Beijing+20) in the Arab region. The Committee also reviewed the proposed programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017 and the reports of the ESCWA subsidiary bodies' sessions, held since the twenty-eighth ESCWA session.

The present report includes an overview of the key issues raised and the recommendations adopted at the meeting.

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Introduction

1. The Technical Committee was established pursuant to the decision of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) at its twenty-fourth session, held in Beirut from 8 to 11 May 2006. At its twenty-eighth session, held in Tunis from 15 to 18 September 2014, ESCWA adopted resolution 320 on redesignating the Technical Committee as the “Executive Committee” and amending its terms of reference, to empower it to facilitate direct communication between the secretariat and member States on development, economic and social issues by convening its meetings more regularly and submitting resolutions to the Economic and Social Council.
2. The Committee held its first meeting in Amman on 8 and 9 June 2015. It addressed the items on its agenda, including implementing the recommendations made by the Technical Committee at its eighth meeting and of the Tunis Declaration on Social Justice in the Arab Region and resolutions adopted by ESCWA at its twenty-eighth session; and evaluation of the work of ESCWA. The Committee examined several regional and global issues, including Palestine under occupation and the Fourth Geneva Convention; financing for development; preparations for negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda; preparations for negotiations on climate change; and activities undertaken by ESCWA to follow up on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 20 years (Beijing+20) in the Arab region. The Committee also reviewed the proposed programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017 and the reports of the ESCWA subsidiary bodies’ sessions, held since the twenty-eighth ESCWA session (the fifteenth session of Committee on Transport; the eleventh session of the Committee on Statistics; the tenth session of the Committee on Energy; and the ninth session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development).
3. The present report covers the issues raised and recommendations made at the meeting.

I. RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AT ITS FIRST MEETING

4. At the end of its first meeting, the Executive Committee reached a number of recommendations and suggestions related to its agenda items.

A. RECOMMENDATIONS MADE TO ESCWA MEMBER STATES

5. The Executive Committee made the following recommendations to ESCWA member States:
 - (a) Continue to submit to the secretariat country reports on progress made in implementing the recommendations of the twenty-eighth ESCWA session and those of intergovernmental committees;
 - (b) Reaffirm the Tunis Declaration on Social Justice in the Arab Region and the principles and values contained therein, and implement it at the national level by incorporating its provisions in national and local development plans;
 - (c) Support the secretariat’s policy regarding the evaluation of its programmes and projects, including the terms of reference of the evaluation team and the evaluation strategy for the coming period;
 - (d) Continue to support the Palestinian people and intensify efforts to focus international attention on illegal Israeli practices and their effects on the economic and social situations and living standards of the Palestinian people and on sustainable development;
 - (e) Support Palestinian institutions in holding Israel accountable for its violations of international law, especially the Fourth Geneva Convention;

(f) Affirm the importance of current negotiations on the outcome document of the third International Conference on Financing for Development and the need to strengthen coordination efforts to ensure that the priorities of the Arab region are respected, especially those adopted at the ESCWA regional consultation on financing for development, held in April 2015, and to uphold the principle of common but differentiated responsibility;

(g) Participate in the third International Conference on Financing for Development at the highest levels to support development goals and priorities, and ensure the participation of experts and specialists in the various drafting committees to guarantee the inclusion of all Arab countries' objectives in the Conference's outcome document;

(h) Take the necessary measures to build capacities to finance development projects, including resource mobilization, strengthening the role of the private sector, tax reform, encouraging foreign direct investment, strengthening trade as a driver of development, enhancing financial and technical cooperation, reducing debt burdens and complying with international systems;

(i) Give the necessary attention to conflict issues in the Arab region and their negative effects on countries' ability to develop, especially regarding the need for funding and funding priorities, and research new regional financing methods;

(j) Support ESCWA efforts to outline the Arab position on several issues related to the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, within the framework of the Arab High Level Forum on Sustainable Development sessions, in preparation for the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development;

(k) Participate effectively in preparing for the post-2015 development agenda to ensure that it conforms with Arab countries' priorities, especially regarding the issues of refugees and occupation and the principle of common but differentiated responsibility;

(l) Continue to support ESCWA activities to build the capacities of Arab negotiators for effective participation in climate change negotiations and the recommendations issued at training workshops organized by ESCWA;

(m) Participate effectively in the fifth workshop on climate change, to be held in October 2015, and prepare for it at the national and regional levels, and participate in the meetings and side events of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Paris at the end of 2015;

(n) Continue to support ESCWA efforts to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; many activities have been implemented in the Arab region within the framework of Beijing+20 to overcome challenges related to women's empowerment and capacity-building and gender equality, especially the violence and abuse suffered by women in conflict and refugee situations;

(o) Affirm the importance of women's empowerment and equal economic, social and political rights in international development processes currently underway;

(p) Review the programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017, its priorities and the comments thereon, and agree to submit State comments to the secretariat by 28 June 2015 for incorporation in the final draft, in accordance with available resources, so that it can be made available to member States;

(q) Adopt the session reports of the ESCWA subsidiary bodies, taking into account comments by member States delegations regarding recommendation (i) to the secretariat in the report of the Committee on Statistics. The following are the session reports:

- Report of the fifteenth session of Committee on Transport;
- Report of the eleventh session of the Committee on Statistics;

- Report of the tenth session of the Committee on Energy;
- Report of the ninth session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS MADE TO THE ESCWA SECRETARIAT

6. The Executive Committee made the following recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat:

(a) Continue to build its evaluation capacity, taking relevant results into account in upcoming planning and implementation processes;

(b) Support member States in implementing the Tunis Declaration at the national level by developing a guidance manual for decision-makers on incorporating the Declaration's principles in development planning processes;

(c) Prepare a detailed study on Israeli practices and policies in the occupied Palestinian territories and on the possibility of describing them as Apartheid practices, for submission to the Committee at its next meeting; and a detailed study on the real cost of the Israeli occupation paid by the Palestinian people, by calculating the direct and indirect costs of the consequences of the occupation and its policies on the development process and Palestinian living standards;

(d) Prepare periodical reports on Israeli violations of international treaties and charters and their economic and social repercussions for the Palestinian people, especially a report on the effects of the occupation on environmental sustainability in Palestine, for submission at Committee sessions;

(e) Raise international awareness of the suffering of the Palestinian people and Israeli violations of international law and Palestinian rights by developing a media plan aimed at broadening the reach of statistical information indicating Israeli violations at the human rights level;

(f) Implement the outcome document of the third International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Addis Ababa from 13 to 16 July 2015, and develop an Arab vision on implementing the commitments contained in the document;

(g) Build the capacity of member States to mitigate the effects of climate change and adapt to it, within the framework of the current climate change negotiations, and benefit from green financing and green climate funds;

(h) Support member States in incorporating sustainable development targets and indicators in national development plans, and develop monitorable behavioural indicators, especially in least developed countries in accordance with their financial priorities and institutional capacity;

(i) Support member States in developing national workplans under the post-2015 development agenda and in providing the necessary funding to operationalize the agenda at the national and regional levels;

(j) Continue to offer support to Arab countries to develop their gender equality strategies;

(k) Provide documents for intergovernmental meetings three weeks before they are held;

(l) Implement the recommendation issued at the eighth meeting of the Technical Committee on operationalizing the ESCWA technical cooperation network, submit an evaluation report on the issue to the Executive Committee at its next meeting and adopt the knowledge managements tools available on the

ESCWA website, to enable member States and the Committee working group to exchange expertise and facilitate access to information on each country;

(m) Support conflict-affected countries in developing national reconstruction and development plans and prepare a preliminary study on funding reconstruction processes through an Arab reconstruction and development bank.

II. TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

A. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE AT ITS EIGHTH MEETING (Agenda item 3 (a))

7. Under this sub-item, the representative of the secretariat gave a presentation, with reference to document E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/3(Part I), on progress made by the secretariat and member States in implementing the recommendations issued by the Technical Committee at its eighth session, held in Tunis from 15 to 18 September 2014. The Secretary of the Commission said that follow up of those recommendations had effectively begun at the twenty-eighth ESCWA session. He thanked the countries that had submitted reports on progress made in implementing the recommendations of the twenty-eighth ESCWA session and the Tunis Declaration. He reviewed follow-up efforts, including redesignating the Emerging and Conflict-Related Issues Division in the upcoming strategic framework, forming an intergovernmental committee on the issue and establishing an ESCWA centre for Arab economic integration (a proposal on the centre had been adopted at the twenty-eighth ESCWA session). He then tackled redesignating the Technical Committee, the subsidiary bodies' request to hold their sessions annually, strengthening the Statistics Division, intensifying efforts to support sustainable development negotiations through the Arab High Level Forum on Sustainable Development and increasing the effectiveness of the technical cooperation network by reviewing its terms of reference for submission to the Executive Committee at its second meeting in December 2015.

8. The representative of the United Arab Emirates commended redesignating the Committee and broadening its terms of reference. He requested the secretariat to urge States to raise their representation levels in line with the level of decisions taken. The representative of Qatar said that a State's representative represented the State as a whole. The representative of Palestine said that it was vital to review and operationalize the technical cooperation network, stressed the importance of linking statistics and plans to policies and expressed his hope that the role and efforts of the Statistics Division would be strengthened. He added that Arab countries were facing great challenges that required common consultative mechanisms and that he did not agree with postponing discussions on an intergovernmental committee on emergency issues and conflict. The representative of Yemen requested ESCWA to intensify efforts regarding post-conflict rebuilding.

9. In response to comments, the Director of the Statistics Division said that ESCWA was committed to implementing the recommendations made by the Committee on Statistics at its last session by broadening the scope of its work to include insufficiently covered statistical areas, and benefit more from data provided by national bodies. The strategic direction of the ESCWA work for the period 2016-2020 had been developed to improve ESCWA work with member States by building the capacity of national bodies and establishing comprehensive national statistical systems.

10. The Executive Secretary of ESCWA, Mr. Rima Khalaf, thanked representatives for their interventions. She said that ESCWA was working tirelessly on preventing conflicts and dealing with their consequences through regular budget programmes and extrabudgetary resources that accounted for the greater part of funding. The programme to assess the cost of the Israeli occupation for the Palestinian people would be the first of its kind to estimate the economic, human, environmental and social costs of the occupation. ESCWA, in collaboration with 120 Syrian experts and over 1,000 researchers, politicians and economists from all

Syrian backgrounds, was working on the National Agenda for the Future of Syria, which would be launched soon. Similar programmes were being developed for Libya and Yemen, in collaboration with experts and national bodies representing all political parties.

**B. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TUNIS DECLARATION ON SOCIAL JUSTICE
IN THE ARAB REGION AND RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY ESCWA
AT ITS TWENTY-EIGHTH SESSION
(Agenda item 3 (b))**

11. Under this sub-item, the representative of the secretariat reviewed progress in implementing the Tunis Declaration and resolutions adopted by ESCWA at its twenty-eighth session, held in Tunis from 15 to 18 September 2014, with reference to document E/ESCEA/2015/EC.1/3(Part II). She reviewed the measures taken to implement the various resolutions, including a regional consultative meeting, held in collaboration with civil society organizations; the second meeting of the Arab High Level Forum on Sustainable Development; technical studies on social protection as a tool for achieving social justice; a regional conference on social protection and development, held in Saudi Arabia; the United Nations project on building the capacities of selected developing countries to formulate and implement policies and programmes on gender equality; and the first social development report on social justice in the region.

12. ESCWA had participated in the Conference on Social Water Studies in the Middle East and North Africa Region, held in Madaba, Jordan, on 28 and 29 September 2014. Under the Beijing+20 framework, ESCWA was preparing a study on women's access to justice in the Arab region, child marriage and the situation of Arab women in the light of national and regional developments. ESCWA was also monitoring the realities of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, following up on its consequences in view of regional and international developments and analysing its harmful effects on achieving justice; and conducting household surveys in Palestine, in collaboration with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. ESCWA had redesignated subprogramme 4 from "information and communication technology for regional integration" to "technology for development and regional integration". Regarding redesignating the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia as the "Economic and Social Commission for Arab States", the secretariat was coordinating with the Arab Group in New York to select an appropriate time to submit a resolution in that regard to the Economic and Social Council.

13. The representative of Palestine expressed his appreciation for the continued support of ESCWA to his country, especially through resolution 316 (XXVIII) on support for the Palestinian people, adopted at the twenty-eighth ESCWA session. He also warmly thanked Iraq and Qatar for their continued support. He stressed that it was necessary to intensify efforts to implement the Tunis Declaration and define the concept of justice clearly and comprehensively, so as to translate it into practical steps in member States' strategic plans and work programmes and focus on follow-up and measurement.

14. The Executive Secretary thanked representatives for their interventions and said that social justice was a multi-faceted and complex concept and that ESCWA was working on defining it and had determined three key pillars on which it should be built, namely equal rights, equal opportunities and equity in living standards. She said that certain tools were sometimes applied, such as quotas, which were not in line with equality but were used to address fundamental disparities and assist marginalized groups. The development of the social justice concept had been accompanied by follow-up and measurement methods, including identifying principal indicators for measuring justice. Those indicators would be published in a guidance manual issued alongside the Arab justice report currently being prepared by ESCWA.

**C. EVALUATION OF THE WORK OF ESCWA
(Agenda item 3 (c))**

15. Under this sub-item, the representative of the secretariat presented a report on the evaluation of the work of ESCWA, contained in document E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/3(Part III). The report defined the concept

of accountability and the new ESCWA approach to evaluation that upheld the standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group. The report set out the evaluation plan for the biennium 2016-2017 and the efforts of the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services that had been evaluating ESCWA work since April 2015 and which would issue its report in the first quarter of 2016. The representative of the secretariat urged representatives to cooperate with the Office if it contacted them.

16. Representatives made no comments on this sub-item.

D. PALESTINE UNDER OCCUPATION AND THE **FOURTH GENEVA CONVENTION**
(Agenda item 5 (a))

17. Under this sub-item, the Executive Committee was presented with the annual report on the repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people (E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/5(Part I)), at the request of member States contained in ESCWA resolution 316 (XXVIII). The report set out Israeli violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention, including displacing over 10,000 pregnant women during the war on Gaza in the summer of 2014, impeding the access of Palestinian patients to medical services and targeting hospitals and aid centres. The ensuing discussion focused on operationalizing international law, especially the Convention, in the occupied Palestinian territories. The report reviewed arbitrary Israeli practices and policies, including land seizure settlement-building and systematic oppression, such as the seizure of 40 per cent of the West Bank and 35 per cent of East Jerusalem by Israeli bodies that managed settlements; building the separation barrier; prohibiting 8-12 million refugees from returning home; revoking the residency permits of over 250,000 Palestinians; demolishing buildings and banning construction; imposing restrictions on movement; depriving Palestinians of social, education and health services; and implementing mass-punishment policies, including the arbitrary detention of over 800,000 Palestinians, the Gaza blockade and killing civilians and children. The report showed the repercussions of those practices, including stunting social and economic development in Palestine, causing severe humanitarian crises, increasing Palestinian families' reliance on aid, raising unemployment (42 per cent in Gaza and 17 per cent in the West Bank) and poverty, eliminating food security and harming psychological health.

18. The report encouraged increasing support to the Palestinian people, raising awareness of Israeli violations and their repercussions, supporting Palestinian institutions in their efforts to hold Israel accountable and closely examining Israeli breaches of international law.

19. The representative of Egypt commended the comprehensive report and requested the publication of more data to raise awareness of the issue, especially at the international level. He also commended the ESCWA approach to documenting the economic and social costs of the Israeli occupation for the future of development in Palestine. He called for intensifying that approach to face the Israeli media discourse that used data to report misleading information. The representative of Palestine offered additional information on Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights in terms of construction, and said that the Palestinian case was the main reason behind the unrest in the Arab region, calling on Arab countries to increase their support for the Palestinian Cause. Given that data did not reflect daily Palestinian suffering, he suggested including in the report life experiences that illustrated that suffering. The representative of Yemen also commended the report and concurred with the representatives of Egypt and Iraq on the importance of communicating those realities to the greatest possible number of people and requested the secretariat to support member States in doing so.

20. In response, the Executive Secretary expressed her support for representatives' proposals and said that ESCWA would attempt to broaden the reach of the information contained in the report and to ensure that the estimation of the economic and social costs of the Israeli occupation of Palestine would always be included in such reports.

E. FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT
(Agenda item 5 (b))

21. The Committee reviewed this sub-item with reference to document E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/5(Part II) on the importance of financing in implementing sustainable development projects, in view of the challenges posed by requests to finance development projects in developing and least developed countries. The document tackled the current financing situation in the Arab region, new financing initiatives, challenges and opportunities, and preparations for the third International Conference on Financing for Development.

22. The document indicated the financing for sustainable development needs of Arab countries for the period 2015-2030, estimated at \$3.6 trillion, and the preliminary cost estimates of rebuilding conflict-affected Arab countries, estimated at \$650 million. It reviewed key forums of financing for development, including the 2002 Monterrey Conference resulting in the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development, and the 2008 Follow-up International Conference in Doha resulting in the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development. Member States were urged to take measures in support of financing for development, including mobilizing further resources, involving the private sector, reforming tax systems and encouraging international financial and technical cooperation. The presentation concluded with an overview of steps taken by the secretariat to support member States, including dedicating the ninth session of the Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development in the Countries of the ESCWA Region, held in Amman on 7 and 8 April 2015, to coordinating and harmonizing Arab positions on financing for sustainable development; forming a working group on financing for development; and developing strategic partnerships with various regional and international organizations. Member States were invited to participate intensely in the third International Conference on Financing for Development.

23. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Egypt affirmed that Arab countries should benefit from regional forums, such as ESCWA and the League of Arab States, to enhance understanding of financing for development issues and prevent international actors from renegeing on their commitments to developing countries by using internal issues as pretexts. He requested ESCWA to build the capacities of Arab negotiators participating in the third International Conference on Financing for Development. He said that the establishment of regional development banks was promising and that ESCWA was the right platform to discuss establishing an Arab bank for development financing similar to the New Development Bank and the **European Investment Bank**.

24. The representative of Iraq asked about the availability of studies on challenges faced by Arab countries in financing projects. The representative of Jordan stressed the importance of building real partnerships between countries at the regional and international levels, by operationalizing the role of the private sector, transferring technologies and resolving debt issues. He called for a unified Arab position at the third International Conference on Financing for Development and the conference on the post-2015 development agenda. He commended the proposal by the representative of Egypt on establishing an Arab bank for development and reconstruction and recalled the costs of displacement resulting from conflicts in the Arab region for host countries, such as Jordan and Lebanon, which were classed as middle-income countries and required assistance in bearing the economic and social burden of displacement.

25. The representative of Yemen said that the methodology used to calculate the costs of conflict should take into account the cost of post-conflict rebuilding. The representative of Palestine said that many Arab countries, especially Palestine, currently depended greatly on external aid. It was therefore extremely important that the international community fulfilled its commitments to Arab countries, in line with local and national priorities.

26. In response, the representative of the secretariat said that there were significant challenges in the field of financing for development, including obstacles to financing small and medium enterprises; weak institutional capacities and mechanisms for financing rebuilding projects; and continuing instability and

conflicts. She stressed the importance of intensely involving member States in the third International Conference on Financing for Development.

F. PREPARATIONS FOR NEGOTIATIONS ON THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA
(Agenda item 5 (c))

27. Under this sub-item, representatives discussed ESCWA preparations for negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda, with reference to document E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/5(Part III) that set out current transformations in the Arab region, development priorities, challenges facing the majority of Arab countries and the importance of integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development. The presentation reviewed ESCWA initiatives, in collaboration with the League of Arab States and other regional partners, to coordinate member States' positions at the negotiations, especially by organizing the second Arab High Level Forum on Sustainable Development in Bahrain from 5 to 7 May 2015. It also covered the convergence of the three processes of the current negotiations, namely the third International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Addis Ababa in July 2015; the United Nations summit to adopt the post-2015 development agenda, to be held in New York in September 2015; and the climate change negotiations, to be held in Paris in December 2015. Several key Arab forums had assisted in developing regional visions and positions, including the third Arab Economic and Social Development Summit, held in Riyadh in 2013; a conference on the priorities of Arab countries regarding inclusive and sustainable development, held in Amman in May 2014; the Arab Consultative Meeting on an Accountability Framework for the Post-2015 Development Agenda, held in Tunis in September 2014; a ministerial conference on formulating the objectives and targets of the Arab post-2015 sustainable development goals, held in Sharam al-Sheikh in October 2014; the twenty-sixth Arab Summit, held in Sharam al-Sheikh in March 2015; the ninth session of the Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development in the Countries of the ESCWA Region, held in Amman in April 2015; and the second session of the Arab High Level Forum on Sustainable Development, held in Bahrain in May 2015.

28. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Egypt expressed his concern that the next challenge for Arab countries would lie in implementation, follow-up and accountability methods. Arab countries knew their development goals but did not have a clear idea of how to translate them into practical plans. He requested the assistance of the secretariat in that regard, especially in developing realistic indicators related to regional situations. The representative of Oman expressed his concern that the new development goals did not contain a commitment from developed countries to support developing countries, in contrast to the previous goals. He requested the secretariat to develop a clear implementation and follow-up schedule. The representative of Saudi Arabia concurred, affirming that the goals were **voluntary and not binding**. He requested ESCWA to assist member States in determining the format of expected evaluation reports.

29. The representative of Jordan stressed the role of statistical offices in proposing measurable indicators and assisting member States in providing necessary data that could be compared at the regional and international levels. The representative of Yemen expressed his concern that some countries might not be able to achieve some of the goals without support. The representative of Qatar warned that the necessity of peace in Arab countries to achieve sustainable development should not be overlooked; peace must be an intrinsic part of Arab development requests. The representative of Palestine stressed the importance of ESCWA support in ensuring consistency between national and international development agendas, and the need to incorporate development targets in local initiatives. He also affirmed the importance of regular evaluations and asked about monitoring mechanisms and their statistical requirements.

30. In response, the representative of the secretariat said that the consultative nature of the negotiations offered a great opportunity for member States to influence the post-2015 development agenda. It was necessary to pre-empt challenges, which was why ESCWA had invited negotiators to submit their proposals and comments. ESCWA was committed to supporting member States in that regard. ESCWA multi-sectoral work enabled it to support and empower countries to examine interlinked development goals and their indicators and to build the capacities of bodies specializing in implementation and monitoring. Arab

meetings were expected to be held with the League of Arab States following the adoption of the sustainable development goals and their indicators to examine available choices and monitoring and implementation methods.

G. PREPARATIONS FOR NEGOTIATIONS ON CLIMATE CHANGE
(Agenda item 5 (d))

31. Under this sub-item, the representative of the secretariat gave a presentation on ESCWA preparations to involve member States in international climate change negotiations, with reference to document E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/5(Part IV) that set out ESCWA efforts to build the capacities of Arab negotiators on climate change issues by organizing four workshops, in collaboration with the League of Arab States, to familiarize negotiators with the negotiations' history and present the outputs of the conferences of the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. ESCWA was organizing a fifth workshop on the issue, in collaboration with the League of Arab States, to be held in 2015 in preparation for the twenty-first Conference of the Parties, to be held in Paris in December 2015.

32. The representative of Egypt said that the most prominent challenge to the climate change negotiations was that Arab countries were in the same category as the biggest industrial polluters, such as China and India. A clear and unified Arab position was therefore necessary, especially given that developed countries were attempting to circumvent the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, which could weaken the Arab position in terms of the expected outcomes of the Paris Conference and limit the ability of developing countries to benefit from the development process. The representative of the secretariat called for increased coordination and affirmed the key role of negotiators, encouraging them to strengthen their positions by forming blocs. ESCWA was prepared to support negotiators in providing networking and discussion opportunities and in capacity-building processes.

H. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY ESCWA TO FOLLOW UP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION AFTER 20 YEARS
(BEIJING+20) IN THE ARAB REGION
(Agenda item 5 (e))

33. Under this sub-item, the representative of the secretariat presented document E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/5(Part V) on efforts to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 20 years (Beijing+20) in the Arab region; and reviewed the programme prepared by the ESCWA Centre for Women and the Arab States Regional Office of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the League of Arab States regarding adopting the regional report on implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

34. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Egypt said that women's issues were pivotal to the development process and required further intense efforts despite achievements thus far, stressing the importance of some methods, including quota systems that, although unpopular, were key temporary methods. It was vital to educate women and offer them equal economic opportunities. The representative of Palestine said that the situation of women in the region was continually deteriorating and was currently being threatened by unprecedented risks. It was therefore necessary to ensure the implementation of laws and procedural measures. The representatives of Oman, the Sudan and the United Arab Emirates noted the significant accomplishments achieved for women in the Arab region, especially in the United Arab Emirates where they enjoyed equal employment opportunities and salaries.

35. The representative of Yemen said that Sharia law did not discriminate against women, but certain traditional practices had undermined their rights. He agreed with the representative of Palestine that education was vital to tackling discrimination against women. The representative of Jordan said that women still suffered from negative discrimination in universities and in political and economic life. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic noted the inhuman conditions suffered by women in conflict-affected areas, affirming that the situation was highly concerning and needed to be addressed seriously.

36. The representative of the secretariat affirmed the importance of following up on the situation of women using appropriate indicators and of intensifying efforts to tackle violence against women, bridge the numerous gaps that impede their access to justice, enact laws and move away from practices of measuring progress using data to those of measuring on the basis of rights fulfilment and efficiency.

I. PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2016-2017
(Agenda item 6)

37. Under this item, the representative of the secretariat presented the proposed programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017 to the Committee, as contained in document E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/6, which set out the general direction of the programme, its objectives and expected outcomes, the achievement indicators of the seven subprogrammes that the work programme comprised and the proposed activities to be implemented using regular budget resources, those of the United Nation Development Fund or extrabudgetary resources. The representative of the secretariat invited representatives to comment of the programme of work, which took into account regional and international priorities.

38. The representative of the United Arab Emirates thanked ESCWA for its efforts and requested clarification of some terms and phrases, such as “social integration”, “good governance” and “migrants”, and said that it was not possible to endorse international migration concepts if their meaning was not clear, especially in paragraph 19.37 of the programme of work. The programme applied certain statements to all Arab countries indiscriminately, such as “social policies have not achieved development” in paragraph 19.38, and did not differentiate between countries in terms of achievements in social justice and the role of women, especially considering that the United Arab Emirates had accomplished achievements in both those areas. He also expressed reservations to approving paragraphs that conflicted with religious and cultural beliefs in his country in particular, and other Arab countries in general. He said that the programme did not sufficiently focus on linking peace and stability in the region with social and economic development.

39. The representative of Palestine welcomed ESCWA efforts over the previous four years aimed at broadening its vision and the scope of its strategic work, but expressed concern about inconsistencies between the strategic direction and the level of implementation. He said that some commitments and outcomes in the programme of work were not clearly reflected in accomplishments and indicators, including, for example, gender equality. Some indicators needed reformulation to become clearer and measurable. He therefore suggested adding an item on providing technical support to member States regarding incorporating sustainable development into national plans. He questioned the lack of focus on youth issues in the social development subprogramme, the absence of social justice indicators in outputs and the obscurity of sustainable development measurements in the statistics subprogramme. Regarding the subprogramme on women, he expressed concern about the absence of field projects, thus limiting financing capabilities for such efforts, especially in view of the significant pressure on resources, affirming that gender equality was vital to achieving effective development.

40. The representative of Yemen said that the programme of work was coherent and questioned the nature of support offered to least developed countries. He requested clarification of indicators on women’s issues, young people, employment and social development, and of resistance mechanisms against conflicts that were ambiguously mentioned in the document. Representatives agreed that some of the strategic dimensions had not been assigned accomplishment indicators, including good governance, for example. The programme of work should cover reconstruction efforts and post-conflict peace processes.

41. The representative of Saudi Arabia said that the programme of work should take into account the instability in some Arab countries and the conflicts continually threatening development efforts. Public policy programmes offered assistance but did not drive development, which did not meet the needs of member States. He expressed reservations about phrases related to lack of equality, exclusion and the fragility of women’s situations, and about the green economy given that it conflicted with the main Arab export, namely oil. The representative of Oman said that more attention should be given to the issue of

young people, and to standardizing statistical terms and key indicators to facilitate measurement. Sharia law should be observed in gender equality issues.

42. In response, the representative of the secretariat said that ESCWA could prepare a summary of the programme of work in the future, clarifying that the current format was the one used at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. On that basis, some issues may come under several headings. For example, the issue of young people came under inclusive development and social policy, among other headings. Field projects for women did exist, including a regional electronic network to exchange good practices and encourage regional cooperation to ensure gender equality; and an electronic database for various indicators to monitor progress in developing national policies, plans and programmes for gender equality. Gender equality did not conflict with Sharia law and ESCWA was committed to its work programme that complied with international charters and took into account the specificities of all member States.

43. The representative of the secretariat said that the programme of work did not cover the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda because they had not yet been officially launched. They would be added at a later date if member States so wished. The new development goals were voluntary and varied, allowing member States flexibility in choosing goals in line with their priorities. Member States, having contributed to the consultation process, could freely comment on the programme of work. They would be given two weeks to review and send their comments to the secretariat for incorporation as appropriate. If comments from a member State were not included in the programme of work, it would be notified in writing.

J. SESSION REPORTS OF THE ESCWA SUBSIDIARY BODIES (Agenda item 7)

44. Four subsidiary body reports were presented under this item for sessions held between the twenty-eight ESCWA session and the first meeting of the Executive Committee. The reports included recommendations, topics of discussion and information on the organization of the sessions, participants and documents. The Secretary of the Commission said that it was the first time the current item had been added to the agenda, following the redesignation of the Technical Committee as the Executive Committee and the broadening of its terms of reference. The Committee reviewed the reports and adopted them, taking into account comments on recommendation (i) to the secretariat in the report of the eleventh session of the Committee on Statistics. The following reports were presented to the Executive Committee under this item:

- (a) Report of the fifteenth session of Committee on Transport;
- (b) Report of the eleventh session of the Committee on Statistics;
- (c) Report of the tenth session of the Committee on Energy;
- (d) Report of the ninth session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development.

45. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Palestine noted recommendation (i) to the secretariat on inviting statistical offices to participate in ESCWA sessions and said that identifying delegations was the responsibility of national focal points, in coordination with national specialized bodies, so there was no need for separate invitations to be sent. The representatives of Egypt, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen agreed with the representative of Palestine. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic added that it was possible to communicate directly with specialized technical bodies following coordination with nationally appointed focal points. The representative of Egypt said that all communication should mainly be carried out with national focal points, unless a communication was addressed to a minister.

46. The representative of the secretariat said that ESCWA followed that coordination mechanism and requested member States to inform ESCWA in the event of any problems. She clarified the background of the recommendation of the Committee on Statistics, saying that one of provisions of the Tunis Declaration was to develop an indicator to measure social justice in the Arab region. During discussions on operationalizing the Declaration, representatives requested the participation of statistical office directors in ESCWA sessions to enrich discussions with their expertise. The recommendations were adopted, taking into account comments on that recommendation.

K. DATE AND VENUE OF THE NINTH MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
(Agenda item 8)

47. Participants agreed that the second meeting of the Executive Committee would be held at the United Nations headquarters in Beirut, in December 2015. The exact date would be determined by the secretariat, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee.

L. OTHER MATTERS
(Agenda item 9)

48. No comments or proposals were made under this item.

**III. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ON ITS FIRST MEETING [REPORT OR
RECOMMENDATIONS???**
(Agenda item 10)

49. At the close of the meeting, the Executive Committee adopted the recommendations presented to it and made comments thereon. The amended recommendations will be incorporated in a comprehensive report on the first meeting of the Executive Committee.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. DATE AND VENUE

50. The Executive Committee held its first meeting in Amman, on 8 and 9 June 2015. Pursuant to its Terms of Reference, which stipulate that the presidency of the Committee shall coincide with that of the ESCWA ministerial session, the representative of Bahrain was designated as Chair of the first meeting of the Technical Committee, in his capacity as chair of the twenty-eighth session of ESCWA, held in Tunis from 15 to 18 September 2012.

B. OPENING

51. The opening session of the first Executive Committee meeting began at 10 a.m. on 8 June 2015 at the Kempinski Hotel in Amman. Mr. Fouad al-Baharina, representative of the Foreign Ministry of Bahrain and Chair of the first Executive Committee meeting, gave the opening speech. He welcomed the participants, stressing the importance of joint action in achieving development goals in the Arab region.

52. Ms. Rima Khalaf, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCWA, welcomed the participants and the Chair of the meeting. She addressed the serious challenges facing the Arab region, including displacement, poverty and social disintegration, stressing that integration and cooperation had never been more important. She said that redesignating the Technical Committee as the Executive Committee, with broader terms of reference and decision-making powers, was a vital step towards strengthening ESCWA capacities to support member States in formulating and implementing development initiatives.

53. She reviewed the three main events shaping international discussions on development, namely the third International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Addis Ababa in July 2015; the United Nations summit to adopt the post-2015 development agenda, to be held in New York in September 2015; and the climate change negotiations, to be held in Paris in December 2015, highlighting ESCWA initiatives to support Arab negotiators. She also considered the ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017 and the session reports of the ESCWA subsidiary bodies, inviting participants to comment thereon.

C. PARTICIPANTS

54. The first meeting of the Executive Committee was attended by representatives of ESCWA member States. A list of participants is set out in annex I to the present report.

D. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

55. The Executive Committee adopted the agenda of its first meeting as set out in document E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/L.1. The agenda in its adopted form was as follows:

1. Opening of the meeting.
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
3. Follow-up issues:
 - (a) Implementation of recommendations made by the Technical Committee at its eighth meeting;
 - (b) Implementation of the Tunis Declaration on Social Justice in the Arab Region and resolutions adopted by ESCWA at its twenty-eighth session;
 - (c) Evaluation of the work of ESCWA.
4. Consideration of the request of Mauritania for membership of the Commission.
5. Regional and global issues:
 - (a) Palestine under occupation and the Fourth Geneva Convention;
 - (b) Financing for development;
 - (c) Preparations for negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda;
 - (d) Preparations for negotiations on climate change;
 - (e) Activities undertaken by ESCWA to follow up on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 20 years (Beijing+20) in the Arab region.
6. Proposed programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017.
7. Session reports of the ESCWA subsidiary bodies:
 - (a) Report of the fifteenth session of Committee on Transport;
 - (b) Report of the eleventh session of the Committee on Statistics;
 - (c) Report of the tenth session of the Committee on Energy;

(d) Report of the ninth session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development.

8. Date and venue of the next meeting of the Technical Committee.

9. Other matters.

10. Adoption of recommendations made by the Executive Committee at its first meeting.

56. The Committee also adopted the proposed organization of work as set forth in document E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/L.2.

E. DOCUMENTS

57. Annex II to the present report contains the list of documents considered by the Executive Committee at its first meeting.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Bahrain

Mr. Fuad Sadiq Albaharna
Head of the OIC and Regional Organizations and
Blocs Department
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Kamil Abdullah al-Ramadan
Third Secretary
International Organization Directorate
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Egypt

Mr. Majdi Radi
Assistant to the Minister
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Iraq

Ms. Azhar Hussein Saleh al-Rabiei
Director-General of the General Governmental
Contracts Department
Ministry of Planning

Ms. Marwa Ali Hamad
Ministry of Planning

Jordan

Mr. Ziad Obeidat
Director of the Development Plans and Programs
Department
Ministry of Planning and International
Cooperation

Ms. Hazar Badran
Head of the World Bank Group and United
Nations Relations Section
Ministry of Planning and International
Cooperation

Ms. Raghed al-Shakhaniba
Senior Researcher at the of World Bank Group
and United Nations Relations Section
Ministry of Planning and International
Cooperation

Kuwait

Ms. Chourouk al-Khalil
Senior Researcher in International Relations
Ministry of Finance

Ms. Mounira al-Khalifi
Researcher in Foreign Relations
Ministry of Finance

Morocco

Mr. Said Regragui
Minister plenipotentiary
Embassy of Morocco
Amman, Jordan

Ms. Meryem al-Daou
Secretary for Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

Oman

Mr. Hamad bin Jaber bin Saoud al-Mahrouqi
Director General of Administrative and Financial
Affairs
Supreme Council for Planning

Ms. Suad Mohammed Bin Youssef al-Fadel
Director of the Technical Cooperation
Department
Supreme Council for Planning

Palestine

Mr. Mahmoud Ataya
Acting Director General
General Directorate of Social Sector Planning
Ministry of Planning and Administrative
Development

Mr. Ahmed Abbas
Assistant undersecretary for development
planning
Ministry of Planning and Administrative
Development

Qatar

Mr. Khaled bin Mohammed al-Baker
Director of the Department of International
Technical Cooperation
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Oussama Othman El-Fekki Mohammed
Ahmad
Consultant for International Cooperation
Department of International Technical
Cooperation
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Nasser Saleh al-Abed al-Ghani
Researcher in International Affairs
Department of International Technical
Cooperation
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Saudi Arabia

Mr. Abdullah Ali al-Marwani
Assistant Undersecretary for Planning
Ministry of Economy and Planning

Sudan

Mr. Mohammed al-Moataz ser al-Khatem Ismail
Mahmud
Assistant Undersecretary
Ministry of Trade

Mr. Taha Mohammed Ahmed
Assistant Director of the International
Organizations Division
Ministry of Trade

Syrian Arabic Republic

Mr. Mohammed Talib Abu Seriya
Consultant
Embassy of the Syrian Arabic Republic
Amman, Jordan

Tunisia

Mr. Fathi bin Muawiyah
Foreign Affairs Consultant
Tunisian Embassy
Amman, Jordan

United Arab Emirates

Mr. Mohammed Ahmed Bin Abdul Aziz Al
Shehhi
Undersecretary for economic affairs
Ministry of Economy

Mr. Nizar Faisal al- Meshaal
Director of the Department of Economic
Agreements and Joint Committees
Ministry of Economy

Ms. Sumaya al-Jinahi
Senior Administrative Assistant
Office of the Undersecretary for Economic
Affairs
Ministry of Economy

Ms. Hanan Abdullah al-Kadi
Economic Researcher
Ministry of Economy

Yemen

Mr. Mohammed Ahmad El Haweri
Undersecretary
International Economic Studies and Forecasts
Sector
Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation

Annex II

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Title	Item	Symbol
Provisional agenda and annotations	2	E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/L.1
Organization of work	2	E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/L.2
Follow-up issues	3	E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/3
Implementation of recommendations made by the Technical Committee at its eighth meeting	3 (a)	E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/3(Part I)
Implementation of the Tunis Declaration on Social Justice in the Arab Region and resolutions adopted by ESCWA at its twenty-eighth session	3 (b)	E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/3(Part II)
Evaluation of the work of ESCWA	3 (c)	E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/3(Part III)
Regional and global issues	5	E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/5
Palestine under occupation and the Fourth Geneva Convention	5 (a)	E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/5(Part I)
Financing for development	5 (b)	E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/5(Part II)
Preparations for negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda	5 (c)	E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/5(Part III)
Preparations for negotiations on climate change	5 (d)	E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/5(Part IV)
Activities undertaken by ESCWA to follow up on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action after 20 years (Beijing+20) in the Arab region	5 (e)	E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/5(Part V)
Proposed programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017	6	E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/6
Session reports of the ESCWA subsidiary bodies	7	E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/7
Report of the fifteenth session of Committee on Transport	7 (a)	E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/7(Part I)
Report of the eleventh session of the Committee on Statistics	7 (b)	E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/7(Part II)
Report of the tenth session of the Committee on Energy	7 (c)	E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/7(Part III)
Report of the ninth session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development	7 (d)	E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/7(Part IV)
Information note		E/ESCWA/2015/EC.1/INF.1