



**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COUNCIL**

Distr.  
LIMITED  
E/ESCWA/ECW/2017/IG.1/4(Part II)  
15 September 2017  
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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

Committee on Women  
Eighth session  
Beirut, 4-5 October 2017

Item 5 (b) of the provisional agenda

## **Sustainable Development Goal 5**

### **Activities to support the Subcommittee on Gender Equality and the Sustainable Development Goals in 2016-2017**

#### **Summary**

The intergovernmental Subcommittee on Gender Equality and the Sustainable Development Goals of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) comprises senior representatives of Arab national machineries for women. It was established following a request made by the ESCWA Committee on Women at its seventh session, held in Muscat on 20 and 21 January 2016. The request emphasizes the significant role that national women's machineries are playing in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Subcommittee's aim is to promote regional integration and consensus, facilitate capacity-building and knowledge generation, and monitor, follow up and review the processes of goal 5 on gender equality of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Subcommittee's work is guided by the ESCWA strategy on SDGs and the regional strategic framework and action plan for the implementation of the Cairo Declaration on the Post-2015 Development Agenda for Women. The present document reviews the activities undertaken by ESCWA and its partners to provide support and capacity-building to the Subcommittee members.



## CONTENTS

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>page</i>
Introduction .....	1	3
<i>Chapter</i>		
<b>I. BACKGROUND.....</b>	2-4	3
<b>II. KEY AREAS OF WORK AND TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON GENDER EQUALITY AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS .....</b>	5-6	3
A. Key areas of work.....	5	3
B. Terms of reference.....	6	4
<b>III. COMPOSITION OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE .....</b>	7-9	4
<b>IV. ACTIVITIES TO PROVIDE SUBSTANTIVE SUPPORT AND CAPACITY-BUILDING TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE.....</b>	10-13	4
A. Production of substantive material .....	11	5
B. Capacity development .....	12	5
C. Knowledge sharing.....	13	6
<b>V. PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE ENGAGEMENT .....</b>	14-16	6
<b>VI. CONCLUSION.....</b>	17	7

## **Introduction**

1. Member States participating in the seventh session of the Committee on Women of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) recommended the establishment of an intergovernmental subcommittee comprising senior representatives from national women's machineries tasked with following up on the implementation of the gender aspects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and addressing the needs of member States in fulfilling their commitments to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a particular emphasis on SDG 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The present document provides an overview of the Subcommittee's establishment, its mission and terms of reference, and the activities undertaken by ESCWA and its partners to provide support and capacity-building to its members.

## **I. BACKGROUND**

2. At its seventh session, the ESCWA Committee on Women made a set of recommendations to member States, among them the following on national machineries for women:

“- Strengthen the role of national machineries for women in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals on gender equality set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; lead the process to unite efforts to achieve those Goals at the national and regional levels; and develop national plans and monitoring and follow-up policies and mechanisms to formulate indicators aimed at mainstreaming gender in all sectors;

- Establish a subcommittee comprising members of the ESCWA Committee on Women, tasked with following up on the implementation of the gender aspects of the 2030 Agenda.”

3. The Committee also made a set of recommendations to the ESCWA secretariat, among them the following on national machineries for women:

“Work with national women's machineries on developing national plans to implement the 2030 Agenda and to unify national and regional approaches aimed at implementing those plans; ensure that gender equality goals are consistent with all international commitments, especially the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; provide the necessary technical support; and prepare studies on this issue.”

4. ESCWA established the subcommittee, which was named “Subcommittee on Gender Equality and the Sustainable Development Goals”. Serving as its secretariat, ESCWA, partnered with UN Women and the League of Arab States to provide substantive support and capacity-building to its members to enable them to implement their expected mission. Particular attention was given to generating knowledge on SDG 5 and women's advancement in the Arab region, and to enhancing the capacity of Subcommittee members to work towards aligning national strategies and policies with SDG 5 and its targets and monitoring progress in achieving them and other gender-related SDGs and targets.

## **II. KEY AREAS OF WORK AND TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON GENDER EQUALITY AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

### **A. KEY AREAS OF WORK**

5. At the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Commission on the Status of Women (Beirut, 2-3 March 2016), organized by UN Women in partnership with ESCWA and the League of Arab States and, senior representatives from national women's machineries discussed the role of the Subcommittee at a session on the theme “Strengthening the evidence of gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. They identified the following areas as key pillars for the work of the Subcommittee: knowledge and capacity-building; policy formulation; and knowledge sharing and coordination.

## B. TERMS OF REFERENCE

6. Following the establishment of the Subcommittee, ESCWA developed its terms of reference and shared them with member States for endorsement. It also requested member States to nominate senior members of national women's machineries to represent their institutions in the Subcommittee. The terms of reference outline the Subcommittee's *modus operandi*, and its key roles and functions including improving substantive knowledge, and identifying and addressing knowledge gaps related to SDG 5 and the 2030 Agenda. Below are the terms of reference of the Subcommittee:

(a) Providing member States with the necessary tools and skills to formulate and review gender-related policies and plans to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(b) Enhancing coordination mechanisms to identify and select national indicators to measure progress achieved in the implementation of SDG 5;

(c) Strengthening national monitoring abilities and data collection for reporting purposes;

(d) Developing a roadmap bringing together the gender-related targets of the 2030 Agenda and the related indicators into various interdisciplinary clusters, with a view to facilitate implementation and review efforts, and to promote comparability of national indicators;

(e) Establishing innovative regional knowledge sharing mechanisms to share experiences and best practices to advance gender equality;

(f) Formulating recommendations to improve women's status in the region, and promoting women's leadership in driving sustainable and inclusive growth;

(g) Coordinating efforts in follow up and review the implementation of the gender dimension of the 2030 Agenda at the national and regional levels.

## III. COMPOSITION OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE

7. The Subcommittee comprises the heads/senior representatives of national women's machineries in member States working on the nationalization (localization) and implementation of SDG 5 on gender equality, as well as other SDGs and targets related to gender. The secretariat functions of the Subcommittee falls under the ESCWA mandate and work programme. ESCWA has also capitalized on its existing partnership with the League of Arab States and UN Women to maximize benefits for members of the Subcommittee and implement its activities.

8. By August 2017, the following 16 ESCWA member States were actively represented in the Subcommittee: Bahrain; Egypt; Iraq; Jordan; Kuwait; Lebanon; Mauritania; Morocco; Oman; Palestine; Qatar; Sudan; the Syrian Arab Republic; Tunisia; the United Arab Emirates; and Yemen.

9. In addition to its members, the Subcommittee invites, if deemed necessary, individual experts, representatives of international and regional organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector to benefit from their experience and expertise.

## IV. ACTIVITIES TO PROVIDE SUBSTANTIVE SUPPORT AND CAPACITY-BUILDING TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE

10. Since the establishment of the Subcommittee, ESCWA has stepped up efforts with its partners and Subcommittee members to develop technical material, organize capacity development activities and promote knowledge sharing among member States. The following details work undertaken in these areas.

## A. PRODUCTION OF SUBSTANTIVE MATERIAL

11. The following substantive materials were produced to support the work of the Subcommittee:

(a) **Guide on global gender targets:** The guide, produced in Arabic and English, aligns between the SDGs and the Beijing Platform for Action to facilitate the reporting process. It aims to simplify national reporting on the implementation of the SDGs, and avoid the duplication of reporting efforts, with a view to facilitating the contribution of national reviews to regional reviews in the context of both the SDGs and the Beijing Platform for Action. The guide is consistent with the recommendations of the 2030 Agenda, which states that effective linkages are required between follow-up and review mechanisms for the SDGs and the review arrangements of all relevant United Nations conferences and processes. Subcommittee members attended a training workshop in Beirut on 17 and 18 August 2016 on how to use the guide, with the expectation that they will transfer the knowledge acquired to their respective teams in national women's machineries;

(b) **Study on reading national women strategies through an SDG lens:** The study, prepared in partnership with UN Women and the League of Arab States, maps and reviews national women's strategies to assess their compatibility with the SDGs, especially SDG 5 on gender equality. The analysis reveals gaps in current strategies, highlighted by country and by SDG 5 targets, as well as other gender-related SDG targets. Members of the Subcommittee were offered training on the results of this study to work towards filling the gaps in their respective national strategies on women;

(c) **2030 Vision on Gender Equality in the Arab Region:** The report examines progress in the Arab region in the area of gender equality over the past ten years (2007-2017), and provides lessons learned from successful policies and strategies adopted by Arab countries to mainstream gender in public policies. It also sets out approaches to support Arab countries in ensuring that gender concerns are being addressed and discussed in national policies and strategies to implement the SDGs. Key findings of the report were presented at the 2017 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development, held in Rabat from 3 to 5 May 2017.

## B. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

12. A series of capacity-building workshops were organized to enhance the capacity of the Subcommittee members on topics relevant to the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs at the national level. The following provides a summary of the workshops and their proceedings.

(a) **Introducing the Sustainable Development Goals (Beirut, 17-18 August 2016):** ESCWA, in partnership with the League of Arab States and UN Women, held a workshop to introduce the SDGs, particularly SDG 5 on gender equality, to members of the Subcommittee. The workshop aimed to build the capacity of Subcommittee members to use the guide on global gender targets; identify their technical and strategic needs; and develop a biennial work plan for the Subcommittee. The workshop resulted in a workplan outlining key priorities for member States to support efforts to integrate gender perspectives into national strategies and plans;

(b) **Baseline indicators to monitor women's status and sustainable development in the Arab region under the 2030 Agenda (Amman, 15-16 October 2016):** The League of Arab States and UN Women, in partnership with ESCWA, organized this workshop to discuss with members of the Subcommittee a questionnaire aimed at generating baseline information at the national level, and to follow up and assess progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 for Women in the Arab Region, which was prepared by the League's Arab Women Organization. The workshop aimed at building the capacity of member States in monitoring the status of women and girls in the region; developing baseline indicators to monitor progress on women's status; and creating linkages between the gender dimensions of the SDGs and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000);

(c) **Aligning national strategies on gender equality with the SDGs (Beirut, 8-10 May 2017):** Building on previous efforts by ESCWA, UN Women and the League of Arab States, this workshop aimed to build the capacity of Subcommittee members on tools and mechanisms to align national strategies on gender equality with the SDGs, notably SDG 5. The Subcommittee members were updated on recent developments relating to international and regional indicators under SDG 5. At the workshop, ESCWA capitalized on the results of its analytical study entitled “Reading national women strategies through an SDG lens” to train participants in identifying gaps in existing national strategies.

(d) **Measuring and monitoring women’s representation in local government in the Arab region (Beirut, 12-13 September 2017):** The workshop was developed in partnership between ESCWA and UN Women to examine methodologies for producing indicators. It was attended by members of the Subcommittee, national statistical bureaus, and national organizations entrusted with supervising and collecting data on national elections. The aim of the workshop was to discuss UN Women-led research on local government and its organization in the region, and implications for a standardized, global measurement of women’s representation in local government. It also provided input on the methodology of SDG indicator 5.5.1b, including definitions and terms related to local government, indicator calculations, and data sources; discussed the relevance of the indicator in the Arab region; and reflected on the mechanism for regional and global monitoring of the indicator, including the role of key national actors in data collection and reporting, the use of standardized data request forms for regional and global reporting, and the method for calculating regional and global averages of the indicator. The workshop also discussed ways to identify mechanisms for cooperation between actors at the national level to collect and analyse data.

#### C. KNOWLEDGE SHARING

13. ESCWA is continually looking at innovative developments within the region to share experiences among Subcommittee members in an enabling and learning environment. Knowledge sharing has been strengthened through an online platform where members can exchange knowledge and country experiences. Capacity development workshops were also held to provide a common space for members to exchange experiences by presenting country developments, challenges and solutions. ESCWA is also capitalizing on those experiences to support other member States. For example, in a recent technical advisory service to Jordan, ESCWA invited both Egypt and Palestine to share their experiences with the Jordanian national task force on how the SDGs are being incorporated into national plans for the advancement of women.

#### V. PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE ENGAGEMENT

14. The Subcommittee is a key venue for members of national women’s machineries to explore the impact of the SDGs on national strategies for women’s advancement. ESCWA should capitalize on its role as the United Nations regional entity to continue supporting the Subcommittee’s interdisciplinary responses to complex issues. ESCWA aims to continue building on achievements made since the establishment of the Subcommittee, follow up on the implementation of its work plan, and update its members on methods to implements the SDGs relating to gender equality, with an emphasis on SDG 5.

15. To do so, ESCWA has developed, in partnership with UN-Women, a proposal to strengthen the capacity of Subcommittee members. The project’s goal is to empower member States to implement the gender components of the SDGs, particularly SDG 5 on gender equality, and other gender-related goals and targets. It builds on existing knowledge and experience at both regional and national levels, and follows a participatory approach with a view to involving as many relevant beneficiaries as possible. The project has the following three expected accomplishments:

(a) National strategies for the advancement of women and other thematic strategies are in complete synergy with SDG 5 and other gender-related goals and targets;

(b) National reports on SDG 5 and other gender-related goals and targets are produced periodically;

(c) National stakeholders have access to quality knowledge and information on the implementation of SDG 5 and other gender-related goals and targets in the Arab region.

16. Pending resource mobilization, the project is expected to start in 2018 with a view to complete its planned activities in 30 months.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

17. Representatives of member States in the Committee on Women are invited to take note of the activities undertaken to provide support and capacity-building to the Subcommittee on Gender Equality and the SDGs, and agree on the way forward for the next biennium. Particular attention should be given to the substantive support required to strengthen the Subcommittee and its expected outputs.

-----