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Report
of the first session of the Committee on Technology for Development
Dubai, 11-12 February 2017

Summary

The first session of the Committee on Technology for Development of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) was held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on 11 and 12 February 2017. Its main theme was technology for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Its agenda contained several items on international and regional processes on information and communications technology (ICT) for development; the digital economy and transforming towards smart societies; science, technology and innovation for development; the features of innovation in the Arab region; and strengthening technology transfer systems in Arab countries.

Participants took note of activities implemented by ESCWA under its regular programme and the technical cooperation programme over the biennium 2014-2015, the activities of the ESCWA Technology Centre for the period 2011-2016, and the programmes of work for the bienniums 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 in the field of technology for development. A roundtable discussion was held on technology and implementing the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region. The Committee made several recommendations, some procedural and others related to items on the agenda.

The present report summarizes the discussions on each agenda item, and the outcomes and recommendations reached. The Committee adopted the present report at its closing meeting on 12 February 2017.

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Introduction

1. The Committee on Technology for Development held its first sessions pursuant to ESCWA resolution 315 (XXVIII) of 18 September 2014 on establishing an intergovernmental committee on technology for development at ESCWA, adopted by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 2014/35 of 17 November 2014.
2. The present report sets out the recommendations made by the Committee on Technology for development at its first session: recommendations on each of its agenda items and general recommendations. It also presents key issues discussed under each agenda item, summaries of opening statements, and details of the session's organization and participants.

I. RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT AT ITS FIRST SESSION

A. RECOMMENDATIONS TO MEMBER STATES

3. The Committee took note of the proposed activities in the field of technology for development for the biennium 2018-2019, and stressed the importance of measuring their impact. It commended the focus on linking technology issues with implementing the 2030 Agenda, within the context of an integrated and comprehensive vision.
4. The Committee considered the technical cooperation services provided by ESCWA in the field of technology for development over the biennium 2014-2015, under subprogramme 4 implemented by the Technology for Development Division, and over the period 2011-2016 under the programme of work of the ESCWA Technology Centre.
5. The Committee made the following recommendations to member States:
 - (a) Request advisory, technical cooperation and capacity-building services in the field of technology for development, in line with national priorities. It affirmed an approach towards linking Technology Centre programmes to sustainable development issues over the coming three years, to increase the impact and benefit of its activities and link the Centre's outputs with the Committee on Technology for Development;
 - (b) Continue efforts to bridge the digital divide and build inclusive information societies and knowledge economies that place citizens at the heart of their development efforts, so as to achieve sustainable economic growth, reduce poverty and increase well-being;
 - (c) Promote cooperation between policymakers in the field of technology and digital economy officials and their counterparts in other sectors, to benefit from the potential opportunities of the digital economy in increasing employment, diversifying the economy and accommodating new types of digital jobs;
 - (d) Support investment in ICT infrastructure, develop ICT industries, and ensure that ICT services and products meet local demands and can be exported, by promoting investment (Arab and foreign), innovation and research, and identifying sectors where Arab countries have a competitive advantage in smart industries, so as to produce digital technology rather than simply consume it, and benefit from it as a new source of alternative employment opportunities for jobs that have been made redundant through digitization;
 - (e) Develop e-government services, and implement global best practices in electronic governance, including performance measurement;
 - (f) Strengthen the competitiveness of technology-reliant sectors, eliminate obstacles impeding the expansion of the digital economy, and broaden regulations to cover new fields, such as the Internet of things, cloud computing, and Internet domain names, including Arabic domain names, and participatory platforms;

(g) Focus on education, training and skills refinement for all social groups, especially young people and women, through technology, particularly ICT, to benefit from the digital economy and information society, and strengthen entrepreneurship, employment and cybersecurity;

(h) Participate in ISDEHAR (Information Society and Digital Economy Hub for the Arab Region) activities, and encourage the private sector to participate in this programme so it becomes a major partner therein and in developing the digital economy in the region;

(i) Undertake a leading role in Internet governance, through either the enhanced cooperation process or the Internet Governance Forum, both of which emanated from the World Summit on the Information Society;

(j) Participate effectively in international and regional conferences and events in the field of technology for development, especially those on Internet governance;

(k) Formulate policies/strategies, and develop laws and legislations to promote innovation and employ science, technology and innovation (STI) capacities to achieve sustained and inclusive economic growth and social development;

(l) Launch inclusive initiatives to promote innovation and entrepreneurship, especially in the SDG-related fields;

(m) Intensify efforts to periodically measure innovation in the Arab region by collecting information and data on the innovation system and on innovation inputs and outputs, given its role in economic diversification and in transforming towards a knowledge economy;

(n) Strengthen regional cooperation and networking and build partnerships to benefit from research and development in the field of technology to achieve sustainable development;

(o) Implement the SDGs in an integrated way between various sectors to increase the efficiency and benefits of technology as a means of implementing the Goals, and cooperate with national focal points concerned with implementing the Goals in a way that utilizes science, technology and innovation (STI);

(p) Encourage specialized bodies in Governments, the private sector and non-governmental organizations to put forward initiatives that employ STI in achieving the SDGs, including establishing scientific observatories to monitor STI, and publish those initiatives on a global initiatives platform to exchange knowledge and best practices between Arab and other countries;

(q) Focus on developing technology mechanisms for inclusive development, with special attention to marginalized and rural areas and refugees;

(r) Increase expenditure on research and development to at least 1 per cent of gross domestic product, to achieve the SDGs.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE ESCWA SECRETARIAT

6. The Committee commended the ESCWA secretariat's efforts to change the focus of subprogramme 4 from ICT for development to the wider issue of technology for development, so as to face challenges impeding the employment of technology to drive development in member States.

7. The Committee noted the secretariat's efforts to create interlinkages between its normative activities (studies and research papers) and technical cooperation activities or advisory services provided to member States, and its attempts to build consensus so as to benefit from the outcomes of normative activities to exploit opportunities and face challenges.

8. The Committee made the following recommendations to the secretariat:

(a) Prepare studies on the development of innovation, entrepreneurship and technological creativity profiles in the Arab Region;

(b) Prepare studies on the legal and organizational frameworks which support innovation in the Arab Region, particularly the mechanisms used to implement intellectual property rights in Arab countries in a way that utilizes the 2030 Agenda;

(c) Support countries in adopting and implementing integrated sets of benchmarks and indicators to guide the management of technology, knowledge and innovation and of online Arabic digital content, and support member States in evaluating e-government, open government and digital economy services;

(d) Support member States in the area of smart government and open government and their tools and concepts, so as to stimulate the economy and better serve society;

(e) Conceptualize a common Arab work programme to expedite digital transformation in Arab countries;

(f) Study the role of ICT in strengthening STI systems, and cooperate with relevant countries in this area;

(g) Assist member States in ensuring that their STI initiatives that contribute to the achievement of the SDGs reach global platforms.

II. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

A. REVIEW OF ESCWA WORK IN THE FIELD OF TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (Agenda item 4)

9. Under this item, the Committee considered the following: document E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/3(Part I) on the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 2014-2015; document E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/3(Part II) on technical cooperation services over the biennium 2014-2015; and document E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/3(Part III) on activities undertaken by the ESCWA Technology Centre over the period 2011-2016.

10. The Secretary of the Commission gave a short presentation on ESCWA working mechanisms, explaining the Commission's decision-making process and those of its subsidiary bodies.

11. The representative of the secretariat presented the activities implemented under subprogramme 4 on technology for development under the programme of work for the biennium 2014-2015. He explained that the main objective of subprogramme 4 was to accelerate bridging the digital gap in the ESCWA region and build an inclusive, people-centred and development-oriented information society and knowledge-based economy in the Arab region. He also reviewed the expected accomplishments, and how to achieve them.

12. Activities included preparing and publishing studies and manuals on various issues, notably the regional status of the information society, competitiveness in the ICT sector, the Arab dialogue on Internet governance, open technology initiatives, technology and its impact on development, the knowledge-based economy in the Arab region, and cybersecurity and combating cybercrime. Activities also included organizing expert group meetings, high-level forums and workshops, such as the Arab Internet Governance Forum, the Consultative Committee on Scientific and Technological Development and Technological Innovation, the Regional Forum on Arabic Digital Content, the Regional Forum on Science and Technology Diplomacy, and the Council of Arab eGovernment Programme Directors. The presentation also covered advisory services, networking efforts and partnership building through the Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders in the Arab region and national technology development and transfer systems.

13. The ESCWA Regional Adviser on Technology for Development presented the technical cooperation activities implemented over the biennium 2014-2015. He said that technical cooperation included advisory services, capacity-building activities and field projects, implemented upon requests by member States. Such services focused on reviewing ICT and e-learning strategies, strengthening e-services, e-government portals and measurement indicators, transforming towards an information society, evaluating electronic readiness and cloud computing, automating processes, updating ICT data, ensuring information security, and improving electronic statistics, innovation policies and entrepreneurship.

14. The representative of the ESCWA Technology Centre gave a comprehensive review of the activities implemented by the Centre since its establishment in 2011. He explained the motivation for setting up the Centre, its rules of procedure and its administrative mechanism. He said that the Centre conducted studies on establishing national systems and offices for technology transfer, facilitated partnerships for productive projects to support the SDGs, employed science diplomacy to support regional stability and prosperity, and prepared STI maps. He summarized the findings of an evaluation of the Centre's work in 2015, and of the Centre's workplan for 2017 that he linked to the SDGs. He said that focus in 2017 would be on employing STI to serve development priorities in the Arab region, especially energy, water and food security and climate change issues to ensure sustainable development.

15. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Qatar requested clarification on the accession of the remaining Arab countries to ESCWA and on efforts in that regard. The Secretary of the Commission referred to the relevant ESCWA resolution requesting the secretariat to invite remaining Arab countries to join ESCWA. He said that the secretariat was communicating with countries at the political level, but the decision to join ultimately lay with the countries. The representative of Bahrain affirmed the role of the Executive Committee in adopting the decisions of ESCWA subsidiary bodies, given that it enjoyed some of the powers of ESCWA ministerial sessions during the two years between the convening of those sessions.

16. The representative of Kuwait asked whether the Committee considered budgetary issues. The Secretary of the Committee said that it considered programme issues only. However, its decisions might have financial implications that must be clarified to member States if adopted.

17. The representative of the secretariat said that, since its establishment, the Technology Centre had undertaken networking, but the Board of Directors had recently taken a decision to focus as of 2017 on four key issues: water, food, energy and climate change. He added that the responsibilities of the Centre and the Committee did not overlap. However, the Committee involved the Centre officially in the ESCWA intergovernmental process, given that it submits its reports to the Commission. The secretariat diligently avoided any overlap in activities and issues.

18. In view of significant joint challenges and the need for the Centre's networking role, the representative of Kuwait requested the development of a clear strategy and indicators to measure the Centre's work over the next two to three years, in line with efforts to link that strategy with the 2030 Agenda.

19. The representative of the Sudan noted the secretariat's efforts in holding training workshops and supporting member States. He requested greater efforts to build the capacity of member States with regard to e-government and open government and their management. The representative of the United Arab Emirates commended the ESCWA technical cooperation services, and called for their continuation and promotion.

B. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT ISSUES (Agenda item 5)

20. Under this item, the Committee considered document E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/4(Part I) on international and regional processes, and document E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/4(Part II) on the digital economy and the shift towards smart societies in the Arab region.

21. The representative of the secretariat presented the international and regional processes established under the auspices of the United Nations to strengthen the role of ICT in development, including the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in its two phases (Geneva, 10-12 December 2003; and Tunis, 16-18 November 2005), which resulted in the establishment of the Internet Governance Forum, the global and regional Internet governance processes, and increased cooperation between Governments. A key issue in the Tunis Declaration was Internet governance, financial mechanisms, and the need to organize the implementation process at the global level by giving a key role to regional commissions. He said that the role of ESCWA was to launch dialogue with specialized bodies, in collaboration with the League of Arab States, publish studies, establish and operationalize the Arab Internet Governance Forum, prepare the ISDEHAR programme to promote the information society and digital economy in the Arab region and employ it in implementing the 2030 Agenda, and formulate policies in that field in Arab countries.

22. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Mauritania requested the secretariat to focus on building the scientific and intellectual capacities necessary to benefit from the opportunities of technology for development, notably in education structures.

23. The representative of Saudi Arabia stressed the importance of operationalizing the Tunis Declaration, especially the enhanced cooperation process between Governments, by developing a United Nations-Arab umbrella to guide and protect Arab investments in the field.

24. The representative of Lebanon stressed his country's commitment to the enhanced cooperation process, and urged other countries to participate to ensure that the Arab bloc had a stronger voice at global events. The representative of the Sudan agreed with the representatives of Bahrain and Lebanon, highlighting the role of Arab Governments in activating the enhanced cooperation process and optimizing its benefits, in coordination with organizations working in that field such as the International Telecommunication Union.

25. The representative of the Sudan noted the ESCWA secretariat's efforts in the ICT field, especially capacity-building for digital transformation, stressing the importance of also building legal and institutional capacity. He said that it was vital to establish an Arab platform for space and satellites, given that some Arab countries either had or subscribed to satellites. The representative of Bahrain enquired about the ICT financial mechanisms highlighted in the Tunis Commitment and Plan of Action for the Information Society.

26. The representative of the secretariat said that the secretariat's vision for the ICT sector for development must include a principle component on developing science and innovation. He welcomed the interventions of the representatives of Lebanon and Saudi Arabia, which had clearly adopted parallel processes in the ICT sector for development. He added that the financial mechanisms in the Tunis Commitment had not been globally developed to meet Arab needs, thus requiring Arab countries to increase their ownership of the issue and strengthen integration in securing and exchanging resources, including human resources.

27. The representative of the secretariat then gave a presentation on the digital economy and its role in transforming towards smart societies. The presentation included the features and plans of the digital economy in developed countries, and the status of the ICT sector in the Arab region and its potential to transform towards the digital economy and smart societies. In general, the ICT sector in the region had witnessed significant progress following the release of new generations of smart phones and wider broadband penetration via fixed and mobile networks. He said that, despite a drop in investments owing to a lack of political and economic stability in the region, many countries, such as Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and the United Arab Emirates, had adopted national strategies to promote the digital economy and smart societies. He also gave an overview of the ISDEHAR programme, prepared by ESCWA to support Arab efforts in transforming towards the information and digital economy.

28. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of Kuwait said that Arab countries were suffering from a lack of GDP resources to fund research and innovation. It was necessary to provide political and financial support from countries and allocate resources to strengthen capacity to develop technology, with the help of

investors from developed countries. The representative of Qatar said that his country earmarked 3 per cent of GDP for digitization and the communications sector, and that there were many projects under implementation, including a joint project between the Government and the Qatar Foundation, implemented in collaboration with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The representative of the Sudan noted technological developments in the Arab region, highlighting the success of several initiatives, including the Careem application. He stressed the need for Governments to cooperate with the private sector to operationalize initiatives on smart cities and the digital economy.

29. The representative of the secretariat welcomed interventions by representatives, and reaffirmed the size of the digital economy and its considerable opportunities. He added that many elements required for following up on the issue with member States came under the ISDEHAR programme. He stressed the importance of partnerships with the private sector, and invited representatives to participate in the ESCWA Conference on WSIS, to be held in 2017.

C. SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION FOR DEVELOPMENT ISSUES (Agenda item 6)

30. Under this item, the Committee considered the following: document E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/5(Part I) on international and regional processes, document E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/5(Part II) innovation landscape in the Arab region, and document E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/5(Part III) on the ESCWA project to promote technology transfer in Arab countries.

31. The representative of the secretariat presented the current international and regional processes on harnessing STI for development, especially the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development, the 2030 Agenda, the Global Science and Technology Forum, the Dijon Declaration, and the International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre for South-South Cooperation. The presentation covered international and regional organizations working in the field, including the League of Arab States institutions (the Arab Organization for Education, Culture and Science, the Arab Organization for Information and Communication Technologies, and the Arab Organization for Industrial Development and Mining), the Union of Arab Scientific Research Councils, and ESCWA, its working mechanisms and its key issues.

32. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of the Sudan stressed the importance of benefiting from and building on imported and local technologies, and supporting rural technology for inclusive development, given that 'technology' also included old technologies. The representative of Kuwait said that it was vital to provide a mechanism to encourage private sector participation in that field. The representative of Qatar said that the Qatar Foundation had launched projects to bridge that gap, and was cooperating with the Qatar Science and Technology Centre and 25 enterprises, including Microsoft, with research centres in the Qatar Foundation to develop initiatives in that area. The representative of Saudi Arabia enquired about the added value of the Arab Innovation Index, given the existence of the Arab Knowledge Index developed by the United Nations Development Programme and the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation. He also proposed that convening the Arab forum of technology development should be considered at the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development, organized by ESCWA.

33. The representative of the secretariat said that focus on technology did not only include new technologies, but also covered nationalizing appropriate technologies to meet the needs of countries, societies and inclusive development; there were many examples, such as exploiting solar power to generate electricity in Yemen. She stressed the importance of interacting with the private sector and research centres, which ESCWA was encouraging by inviting the private sector to intergovernmental meetings. However, the private sector required government incentives, such as tax cuts. She added that Arab countries were making notable efforts in the area of technology incubators, which should be expanded and exploited. She clarified that the Arab Innovation Index built upon the Arab Knowledge Index that did not include time series data.

34. The representative of the secretariat then gave a presentation on the innovation landscape in several Arab countries, such as Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and the United Arab Emirates. She said that determining the innovation landscape was based on internationally-recognized innovation elements, namely education and training, research and development, policies legislation and regulation, infrastructure and ICT, and the innovation ecosystem. The presentation covered the status of innovation in the Arab region according to the Global Innovation Index, the most widely used and comprehensive index worldwide. The Western Asia and North Africa region ranked fourth globally with an Index value of 33.9, which was lower than the global average of 36.73 in 2016 and the regional average of 35.26 in 2015. The highest ranking Arab country globally was the United Arab Emirates, in forty-first place.

35. Representatives discussed the presentation and made suggestions on increasing the benefits from the report on the innovation landscape. The representative of the secretariat said that ESCWA would prepare a detailed report on the technology landscape in the Arab region, including innovation.

36. The representative of the ESCWA Technology Centre presented a project funded by the United Nations Development Account, totalling around \$500,000, aimed at strengthening technology transfer in Arab countries. The project was currently being implemented with partners from various sectors from five Arab countries, namely Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman and Tunisia. Mauritania and the Sudan would join at a later date. He said that the project's expected outcomes included strengthening the capacity of countries to provide an enabling political environment for research, development and innovation, so as to build a technology system, and to employ scientific findings in trade through centres tasked with technology transfer and nationalization and by building bridges between scientific research institutions and industrial, production and trade activities in the private sector. The presentation stressed the importance of governance in scientific research, education, human resources, technology transfer and innovation, given its significance to technology transfer.

37. The representative of Bahrain commended the role of the ESCWA Technology Centre in networking Arab scientific and technological activities. He enquired about the mechanism to benefit from the outcomes of the Centre's project, and proposed adding the project's outcomes and recommendations to those of the Committee.

D. PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2016-2017 IN THE FIELD
OF TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT
(Agenda item 7)

38. The Committee reviewed the semi-implemented programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017 in the field of technology for development. The representative of the secretariat said that the trajectory of subprogramme 4 had been changed from focusing on ICT to a more comprehensive approach covering technology for development, so as to follow economic and social developments in the Arab region, and to reflect the greater role of technology, benefit from opportunities for development provided by new technologies, and increase focus on innovation. The presentation covered the establishment of the ESCWA Technology Centre, developments in the programme of work, the expected accomplishments and their indicators of achievement, the implementation strategy, and the outcomes of technical services, publications, and audiovisual and technical material.

39. Representatives took note of the programme of work, and said that it was consistent with their countries' priorities and could be benefited from.

E. PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2018-2019 IN THE FIELD
OF TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT
(Agenda item 8)

40. The Committee reviewed the activities proposed under subprogramme 4 on technology for development of the strategic framework for the biennium 2018-2019, adopted by ESCWA at its twenty-ninth session (Doha, 13-15 December 2016). The representative of the secretariat presented the expected accomplishments for the

biennium 2018-2019 and their indicators of achievement. He said that proposed activities included drafting reports on progress in the Arab Internet Governance Forum process; preparing studies on implementing intellectual property rights to promote innovation, on strengthening productivity and ensuring economic growth through technology, and on the impact of technology on economic and social structures and strengthening institutional frameworks towards smart sectors; holding expert group meetings on implementing intellectual property rights strategies to promote innovation and the competitive advantage of ICT sectors to drive the digital economy and regional integration, and on the Arab Internet governance roadmap; and providing assistance to the League of Arab States and its specialized organizations on Internet governance, Arabic domain names, the digital economy, innovation policies, enhancing cooperation, ICT strategy, STI for achieving the SDGs, digital Arabic content, and entrepreneurship.

41. Representatives took note of the programme of work, and requested the secretariat to expand its services to member States in harnessing technology for economic and social development.

F. TECHNOLOGY AND IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARAB REGION (ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION)
(Agenda item 9)

42. The secretariat held a roundtable discussion on the role of STI in implementing the SDGs, and on incorporating the SDGs into national development plans in the Arab region. The representative of the secretariat presented a comprehensive study and a presentation on harnessing STI mechanisms to implement the SDGs, including key global initiatives on technology aimed at achieving those Goals. The presentation focused on SDG 17 and its means of implementation, and related processes such as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development, technology facilitating mechanisms, and the Global Forum on Technology for Sustainable Development. The presentation also covered a parallel process of equal importance, namely the WSIS process held over two stages in Geneva and Tunis, and resulting in commitments and actions plans to bridge the digital divide between countries. The presentation considered proposals to build interlinkages with those initiatives, to achieve national development goals under the 2030 Agenda.

43. The ensuing discussion focused on the role of technology as a means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda, given its relevance to many sectors in most countries. They agreed that it was vital to adopt an integrated and cross-sectoral approach to technology.

44. Some representatives presented their national plans consistent with the 2030 Agenda, and the institutional steps for its implementation. The representative of Qatar set out the Qatar National Vision 2030 that was based on human, social, economic and environmental development, and focused on the implementation role of technology and information systems. He considered the issue of e-government and the importance of technology in modernizing education and analysing data, and of long-term investments in technology.

45. The representative of Iraq reviewed his Government's efforts in preparing technology strategies and policies and government working mechanisms for implementing the 2030 Agenda at the national and local levels. The representative of Morocco considered her country's sustainable development strategy 2015-2020 comprising 7 pillars and 132 goals, with a budget of 97 million dirhams. She said that the strategy was equivalent to an integrated framework with contributions from the economic, social and environmental sectors. When developing the strategy, the focus was on coordination between ministerial departments, the role of the private sector, and determining governance priorities. The Chair of the Committee requested that a copy of those strategies be sent to the secretariat to maximize benefit.

46. The representative of the United Arab Emirates discussed an Emirati technological platform for following up on the implementation of the SDGs. It presented the Goals and the means of implementation, and followed up on their implementation. The platform also supported social participation with the business and civil sectors. He proposed expanding the platform into a joint Arab platform for the SDGs.

47. The representative of Saudi Arabia said that the 2030 Agenda and the Saudi Vision 2030 were largely consistent. The Vision comprised 13 programmes, including one on national transformation consisting of projects such as transforming towards the digital economy, smart cities and e-commerce. The representative of Tunisia discussed an integrated plan comprising national projects to advance government departments, reduce the digital divide, shift towards smart government 2020, develop infrastructure, automate and simplify administrative procedures, develop a workplan for open government and initiatives to involve citizens in decision-making through electronic applications, and publish programmes on social media.

48. The representative of Saudi Arabia discussed a Saudi youth initiative on “digital good” in 2015-2016 to collect donations for relief and development, and the platform that had been gifted to the United Nations Development Programme. She noted the role of technology in formulating the 2030 Agenda through a Myworld survey, and proposed a similar survey for Arab countries. She added that there was a need to develop and compare data results in Arab countries. In response, the representative of the secretariat said that ESCWA had developed an electronic platform to monitor development statistical indicators in Arab countries, especially those related to the SDGs, which would be launched shortly. ESCWA had also established a unit on the SDGs to coordinate with Arab countries. The ESCWA Regional Adviser said that Arab sustainable development initiatives on the global platform constituted only 1 per cent of total initiatives. He encouraged cooperation between ESCWA and the United Arab Emirates to benefit from the platform in publishing Arab initiatives.

49. The representative of Tunisia said that it was necessary to take into account inequality in accessing technology, and technological illiteracy that impeded the Agenda’s implementation. He added that, in general, Arab societies consumed technology; it was therefore necessary to encourage innovation and enable populations by modernizing education and its methods. He stressed the importance of continuity between the Committee’s sessions to build on previous work. The representative of Iraq highlighted the significance of forging partnerships to implement the 2030 Agenda, and of harmonizing it with national plans. However, major challenges remained, such as strengthening institutional performance and financing, which must be tackled through assistance, foreign direct investment, mobilizing local resources, workers’ remittances, and reforming tax systems, among others. The representative of Kuwait said that there could be no development without technology, but the challenge lay in selecting the appropriate technology.

50. The representative of the Sudan discussed the need to employ appropriate technology for development. He said that an STI strategy had been adopted in the Sudan in 2016. Pre-implementation planning required surveying capacity and existing plans and harmonizing them with the 2030 Agenda, conducting a policy discussion on priorities with all stakeholders, and studying tradeoffs between policies. He stressed the importance of horizontal coordination and follow-up, allowing officials to exchange lessons learned.

51. In response to the discussions, the representative of the secretariat proposed initiatives, followed by small countries for technological applications in specific fields, as examples of areas available to countries with limited capacity to employ technology for development. It was necessary to reposition the technology sector in Arab policymakers’ minds, given that it was the winning ticket in the development lottery. Some initiatives, such as the app economy, did not need large initial investments.

52. The representative of the secretariat affirmed that technology was the cheapest method for achieving sustainable development. Participants stressed the importance of continued communication between Committee members, of encouraging innovation and initiative, of modernizing education, and of strengthening technical cooperation.

G. DATE AND VENUE OF THE SECOND SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON
TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT
(Agenda item 10)

53. It was agreed that the second meeting of the Committee on Technology for Development would be held in Beirut, unless another member State submitted a request to host it.

H. OTHER MATTERS
(Agenda item 11)

54. No issues were discussed under this item.

**III. ADOPTION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE COMMITTEE
ON TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT AT ITS FIRST SESSION**

55. At its closing meeting on 12 February 2017, the Committee on Technology for Development adopted its recommendations as amended.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. DATE AND VENUE

56. The Committee on Technology for Development held its first meeting in Jumeirah Mina A'Salam Hotel, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on 11 and 12 February 2017. The Committee' work was divided over four meetings.

B. Opening

57. Mr. Haidar Fraihat, Director of the ESCWA Technology for Development Division, gave the opening speech for the first session of the Committee on Technology for Development on 11 February 2017. He gave an overview of the role and functions of ESCWA in the United Nations, notably driving economic and social development processes in Arab countries, and achieving regional integration and interaction between Western Asia and other regions. He said that technology and the knowledge economy were key pillars of the ESCWA development vision to achieve wellbeing in the region. The secretariat was working with member States to build an information society and knowledge economy based on technology and innovation, by bridging the digital divide, benefiting from ICT, promoting STI programmes, and improving access to, developing and transferring technical expertise and productive technologies. That approach to ESCWA work had been strengthened with the establishment of the Committee on Technology for Development pursuant to ESCWA resolution 315 (XXVIII) of 18 September 2014. The Committee was tasked with identifying the Arab region's priorities in the field of technology for development, following up progress in those areas, and following related regional and international processes, conferences and forums, building capacity and harmonizing policies and strategies, forging partnerships, and coordinating positions at the regional and international levels.

58. The representative of the secretariat tackled the main theme of the first session of the Committee on Technology for Development: technology to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He gave an overview of the 2030 Agenda and of technology's crucial role in achieving the SDGs in their economic, social and environmental dimensions. He reviewed the agenda items on that issue, including key international mechanisms for harnessing technology, science and innovation to achieve the SDGs, methods to incorporate the 2030 Agenda in national development plans in the Arab region, ICT issues, the innovation landscape, technology transfer models, and the digital economy for transforming towards smart societies.

59. He recalled ESCWA cooperation efforts with other United Nations regional commissions and organizations in developing a framework for following up and reviewing the 2030 Agenda at the national, regional and global levels. Those efforts included the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development that tackled STI and ICT issues. In 2016, ESCWA had formed a unit for following up on the 2030 Agenda covering all development areas, especially STI.

60. The Chair of the first session and representative of the host country (United Arab Emirates), Mr. Hamad Obaid Al Mansouri, Director General of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, gave a speech on commending ESCWA efforts for tackling central issues on modernization and development in Arab countries.

He said that this role had gained ESCWA the respect of many Governments and institutions. He welcomed the convening of the first session of the Committee in parallel with the World Government Summit, which had made the region a global focus for its concern for developing government work in the service of the world's populations.

61. He stressed the importance of the issues on the session's agenda for the region as a whole, especially in today's world where speed, innovation and significant change were part of daily life and at the core of development plans and strategies. The digital economy was expanding because of the increased use of electronic platforms and mobile phones, and the considerable contributions of young people in developing and implementing initiatives. He called for investments in young people's creative capacity, and for continued focus on humanity and development. Human beings would remain at the helm, but technology and artificial intelligence would provide opportunities to strengthen communication and economic and social development. He added that efforts, such as the current session, were needed to awaken the Arab region and prepare it for the future. Everyone must collaborate in developing standards and policies, and in exchanging experiences, expertise and knowledge. He affirmed the commitment of the Government of the United Arab Emirates to placing its experiences and expertise at the service of the region, especially in the fields of innovation, smart government and government accelerators. He also stressed the importance of interaction between member States to achieve prosperity for all.

C. PARTICIPANTS

62. Representatives of 12 ESCWA member States participated in the session, namely Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates.

D. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

63. Pursuant to article 18 of the Rules of Procedure of ESCWA, which provides that member States shall assume the presidency of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission on a rotating basis, in Arabic alphabetical order as established by the United Nations, the United Arab Emirates, in the absence of Jordan, assumed the presidency of the first session of the committee on Technology for Development.

64. Mr. Fuad Sadiq Al Baharna (Bahrain) assumed the position of vice-chair. The representative of Tunisia, Ms. Salma Al Saidi, was elected as Rapporteur.

65. A drafting committee was formed, chaired by Ms. Al Saidi and comprising the ESCWA secretariat.

E. PROVISIONAL AGENDA

66. At its first session, the Committee on Technology for Development adopted the provisional agenda set out in document E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/L.1 as follows:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
4. Review of ESCWA work in the field of technology for development
 - (a) Implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 2014-2015;
 - (b) Technical cooperation services over the biennium 2014-2015;
 - (c) Activities undertaken by the ESCWA Technology Centre over the period 2011-2016.

5. Information and communications technology for development issues:
 - (a) International and regional processes;
 - (b) Digital economy and the shift towards smart societies in the Arab region.
6. Science, technology and innovation for development issues:
 - (a) International and regional processes;
 - (b) Innovation landscape in the Arab region;
 - (c) ESCWA project to promote technology transfer in Arab countries.
7. Programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017 in the field of technology for development.
8. Proposed programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019 in the field of technology for development.
9. Technology and implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab region (roundtable discussion).
10. Date and venue of the second session of the Committee on Technology for Development.
11. Other matters.
12. Adoption of the recommendations made by the Committee on Technology at its first session.

F. DOCUMENTS

67. Annex II to the present report contains the list of documents presented to the Committee on Technology for Development at its first session.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Bahrain

Mr. Fuad Sadiq Al Baharna
Organizations Management Advisor
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Iraq

Mr. Maher Hammad Johan
Undersecretary
Ministry of Planning

Kuwait

Ms. Samira Ahmed Omar
Director General
Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research

Lebanon

Mr. Bassel Al Ayoubi
Director General of Investment and Maintenance
Ministry of Telecommunications

Ms. Yvonne Youssef Sleiman
Head of International Relations Directorate
Ministry of Telecommunications

Ms. Zeina Bou Harb
Administrative Assistant
Ogero Telecom

Mauritania

Mr. Sidi Ould Salem
Minister of Higher Education and Scientific
Research

Morocco

Ms. Samia Chakri
Acting Director of Digital Economy
Ministry of Industry, Investment, Trade and Digital
Economy

Oman

Mr. Obaid Ben Mohammed Al Saidi
Director, Programs Department
The Research Council

United Arab Emirates

Mr. Hamad Obaid Al Mansoori
Director General
Telecommunications Regulatory Authority

Mr. Salem Mohammed Al Hosani
Deputy Director General
Information and eGovernment Sector
Telecommunications Regulatory Authority

Ms. Hanan Abdallah Al Kadi
Administrative Officer

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Mr. Khaled Al Alqura Daghi
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Research and Development Sector
Qatar Foundation

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Mr. Amr Hamud Al Omary
Planning Expert
Ministry of Economy and Planning

Ms. Haifa Bint Abdel Aziz Al Muqrin
Head of Sustainable Development Goals Sector
Ministry of Economy and Planning

Mr. Mansour Bin Saleh Al Kourashi
Director
Department of Planning, Coordination and
Follow-up of Information Society
Communications and Information Technology
Commission

Sudan

Mr. Mohammed Abdul Rahim Yaseen
Director General
National Information Centre

Mr. Osama Abdul Wahab Rayes
Director General
Africa City of Technology

Tunisia

Ms. Salma Al Saidi
Head of Media and Communications Office
Ministry of Public Service and Governance

Mr. Khaled Sallami
Director General
e-Government Unit
Presidency of the Government

Annex II

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Title	Item	Symbol
Information note		E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/INF.1
Provisional agenda and annotations	3	E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/L.1
Organization of work	3	E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/L.2
Review of ESCWA work in the field of technology for development	4	E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/3
Implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 2014-2015	4 (a)	E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/3(Part I) (Arabic only)
Technical cooperation services over the biennium 2014-2015	4 (b)	E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/3(Part II) (Arabic only)
Activities undertaken by the ESCWA Technology Centre over the period 2011-2016	4 (c)	E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/3(Part III) (Arabic only)
Information and communications technology for development issues	5	E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/4
International and regional processes	5 (a)	E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/4(Part I)
Digital economy and the shift towards smart societies in the Arab region	5 (b)	E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/4(Part II) (Arabic only)
Science, technology and innovation for development issues	6	E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/5
International and regional processes	6 (a)	E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/5(Part I) (Arabic only)
Innovation landscape in the Arab region	6 (b)	E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/5(Part II)
ESCWA project to promote technology transfer in Arab countries	6 (c)	E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/5(Part III) (Arabic only)
Programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017 in the field of technology for development	7	E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/6
Proposed programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019 in the field of technology for development	8	E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/7
Technology and implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab region	9	E/ESCWA/TDD/2017/IG.1/8