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**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION****FOLLOW-UP TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESOLUTIONS
ADOPTED BY THE COMMISSION AT ITS TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION****Summary**

This report presents the actions taken by the secretariat to follow up the implementation of the resolutions that were adopted at the twenty-fifth session of the Commission on the various issues of interest to the member countries of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and on which the work of the Commission is focused. The resolutions are as follows:

- 281 (XXV) Addressing climate change issues in the Arab region;
- 282 (XXV) Mitigating the impact on development of conflict, occupation and instability in ESCWA member countries;
- 283 (XXV) ESCWA member country compliance with international standards for enhancing national statistical systems;
- 284 (XXV) Establishment of the ESCWA regional technology centre;
- 285 (XXV) Integrated social policy;
- 286 (XXV) Gender statistics for equality and empowerment of women;
- 287 (XXV) Strengthening statistical capacities for evidence-based policymaking;
- 288 (XXV) Establishing an Arabic language centre at ESCWA;
- 289 (XXV) Supporting the comprehensive development efforts of Yemen;
- 290 (XXV) Call for regional action to accelerate implementation of the Monterrey Consensus in Western Asia;
- 291 (XXV) Frequency of the sessions of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies.

281 (XXV) Addressing climate change issues in the Arab region

1. At its twenty-fifth session, ESCWA adopted resolution 281 (XXV) on addressing climate change issues in the Arab region. In this resolution, the Commission requested the secretariat to prepare an assessment of the vulnerability to climate change of socio-economic development in the region, with particular emphasis on freshwater resources, and to take the measures necessary to increase awareness of climate change in terms of adjusting to and alleviating its impact, and to work with member countries and initiate dialogue over the relevant recommendations. The Commission also requested the secretariat to develop an Arab framework action plan on climate change in partnership with the League of Arab States, United Nations Environment Programme/Regional Office for West Asia (UNEP/ROWA) and other relevant regional organizations. The Executive Secretary was requested to make available through the regular budget the resources necessary to implement those activities, and to report on the findings and recommendations arising from the assessment and any additional action taken in that regard to the twenty-sixth session of the Commission. Member countries were encouraged to support and participate actively in the preparation of the above-mentioned vulnerability assessment, including the provision of required facilities and information.
2. ESCWA held the twelfth meeting of the Regional Coordination Mechanism of the United Nations organizations in the Arab region in Beirut on 13 and 14 September 2008. The meeting addressed issues related to climate change and the importance of concerted efforts to face its impacts on the region. As a result of this meeting, a thematic working group on climate change issues was established aimed at identifying a mechanism for cooperation and coordination among United Nations organizations in the field of climate change, and at achieving integration between the activities of the various organizations in order to support the efforts of member countries in facing climate change impacts, provide accurate information and raise the level of public awareness of this important issue.
3. The ninth sectoral meeting for coordination between the League of Arab States and United Nations organizations was held at the Headquarters of the League of Arab States in Cairo on 17 and 18 June 2009, with a special focus on climate change. Areas of cooperation and operational priorities were identified, and ESCWA was asked to prepare an assessment of the vulnerability to climate change of water resources and land, and the resulting socio-economic repercussions.
4. In an effort to complete the above-mentioned assessment, ESCWA organized, in cooperation with the League of Arab States and several United Nations organizations, an expert group meeting on assessing the vulnerability of water resources to climate change in the Arab region. The meeting aimed at discussing the work plan that needs to be adopted in order to assess the vulnerability of water resources to climate change in the Arab region; and at identifying the tasks to be carried out by involved partners in implementing activities that have been agreed upon, including the following: (a) collecting available data on climate and water resources and incorporating them within a system for knowledge administration; (b) determining the analytical model of climate change in harmony with regional specifications; (c) raising awareness of and disseminating information on relevant issues; and (d) providing technical support to member countries to build capacities in the areas of modelling climate change and assessing its impact. A working group was established to follow up the implementation, comprising ESCWA, UNEP/ROWA, Regional Office for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, Arab Centre for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands and some representatives of member countries.
5. ESCWA implemented the following activities aimed at raising awareness of the measures that need to be adopted in order to adapt to climate change and mitigate its impacts:
 - (a) Prepared a technical report on transport for sustainable development, including adopted measures, progress made, challenges and policies;

(b) Organized a meeting, in cooperation with the League of Arab States and UNEP/ROWA, on transport for sustainable development in the Arab region and its pertinence to climate change (Cairo, 29 September - 1 October 2009);

(c) Submitted the report to the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment at its twenty-first session (Marsa Alam, 9-10 November 2009). ESCWA provided a detailed presentation on transport and sustainable development in the Arab region, its status, adopted measures and future prospects. In the discussion, the Council called in its resolution 330 of the regular session of 11-12 November 2009 to make use of that document in setting national plans and updating them as well as in ongoing negotiations on climate change with regard to transport-related issues, and in the preparation of the eighteenth session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development;

(d) Participated in the Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change, where ESCWA submitted a document during the side meeting of the regional commissions on the impact of climate change on the countries of the region and the relevant Arab declarations and positions in negotiations;

(e) Prepared a publication on the importance of concerted efforts to fight climate change for the World Environment Day 2009. The presentation included the potential impacts of climate change on different sectors, adaptation and mitigation measures, as well as services ESCWA can provide in various sectors. Additionally, the publication focused on available cooperation mechanisms through the United Nations Climate Change Convention.

6. ESCWA contributed actively to the preparation of the general framework of the draft Arab framework Action Plan on Climate Change, which comprises a set of work programmes in the fields of greenhouse gas emissions reduction and adaptation to the potential impacts of climate change. The project granted priority to adaptation programmes in the implementation process, which included climate, water, land, biodiversity, agriculture, forestry, industry, energy, transport, construction, human settlements, health, seas and coastal areas. ESCWA prepared a document on mitigation and adaptation measures, and proposed work programmes related to energy and transport. The project sought to achieve economic and social benefits at a national level that could enhance sustainable development, help to reduce poverty and promote flexibility in economic sectors vulnerable to climate change.

282 (XXV) Mitigating the impact on development of conflict, occupation and instability in ESCWA member countries

7. At its twenty-fifth session, ESCWA adopted resolution 282 (XXV) on mitigating the impact on development of conflict, occupation and instability in ESCWA member countries. In this resolution, the Commission expressed its grave concern with regard to continued occupation, violence, political tensions and conflicts and their negative impact on social and economic development, and on the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in conflict-affected countries and Western Asia as a whole. It called upon the secretariat to intensify its efforts to raise awareness of the potential impact of conflict and instability on development; to build on successful ESCWA interventions in countries affected by conflict or occupation by developing and sharing best practice; to contribute to the capacity-building of Government officials by focusing on management skills and strategy planning; to continue its efforts aimed at mobilizing extrabudgetary resources to finance the implementation of capacity-building and other activities; and to enhance partnerships with relevant local, regional and international organizations. The Commission also called on member countries and donors to support ESCWA in its efforts to mitigate the impact of conflict and instability, and requested the Executive Secretary to submit a report to the twenty-sixth session of the Commission on the progress achieved in implementing this resolution.

8. During the biennium 2008-2009, the secretariat undertook various activities pursuant to that resolution, which are summarized below.

9. ESCWA sought to detect global challenges and assess their indirect impact on conflicts, and provided policy recommendations that member countries can adopt, aimed at developing appropriate programmes and strategies in order to enhance their inner immunity and face these challenges. Within that context, ESCWA prepared reports and informative material that addressed the damages and negative effects inflicted by conflict on socio-economic development, as well as a report on the livelihoods of the inhabitants of Palestine, including East Jerusalem conferred by the Secretary-General by memorandum to the Economic and Social Council. ESCWA also prepared a study on the impact of displacement arising from conflict, which profoundly stressed that displacement represents one of the most important issues in the region, and that resolving such an issue requires coordinated strategies at the regional level.

10. ESCWA issued a number of studies and organized several expert group meetings, workshops and forums on such important topics as conflict and instability in the region, the role of the public sector in mitigating the vulnerability of development to conflict and instability, and the importance of this sector in establishing the foundations of good governance that leads to peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

11. Within the efforts exerted by ESCWA for the dissemination of best practice to help enhance development in a context of conflicts and clarify developmental approaches that can be adopted by member countries, the Commission prepared a series of informative and audio-visual material on experiences and lessons learned in the development of human and institutional capacities as the essential foundation to achieve development and peace. In the preparation and publication of this material, ESCWA relied on its experience in building individual and institutional capacities. The material is expected to offer technical support to member countries in their advancement towards development and modernization of the public sector. In the same context, ESCWA published a booklet on modern trends and best practice in the fields of public finance and management aimed at disseminating best practice in internal auditing. The booklet is expected to be used as a roadmap to improve performance in public administration.

12. ESCWA adopted as well initiatives to build human and institutional capacities considered as a key measure to promote and enhance State institutions. Such initiatives aim to enrich skills and human capacities in member countries in such a way as to become an incentive for change and development. ESCWA implemented a series of successful activities at this level in several fields, including public administration, strategic planning, peaceful livelihood, management, vigilance in times of crisis, local economic development, life skills and information and communications technology (ICT). As a result, a total of 2,694 individuals from the public sector and civil society benefited from training sessions on the modernization of the public sector, and 900 at the local level benefited from developmental models that can be adapted in order to help to overcome infrastructural weaknesses and fluctuations in the security situation in areas of conflict and regions emerging from conflicts.

13. ESCWA was active in mobilizing funds to meet the growing needs and demands of member countries to benefit from services offered by the Commission. In the biennium 2008-2009, subprogramme 7 on conflict mitigation and development succeeded in securing US\$797,945. It is worth noting that extrabudgetary resources dropped significantly compared with previous bienniums as a result of the inability of the programme to allocate adequate human resources to that end.

14. ESCWA also worked on building partnerships between stakeholders in regions suffering from conflicts and their regional and global counterparts. These partnerships led to several types of cooperation aimed at achieving integration in work and collaboration of efforts, drawing on the expertise available in the region and the world. Within that context, ESCWA activities and projects were the subject of several agreements and partnerships with consulting firms, governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at the regional and international levels.

**283 (XXV) ESCWA member country compliance with international standards
for enhancing national statistical systems**

15. At its twenty-fifth session, ESCWA adopted resolution 283 (XXV) on ESCWA member country compliance with international standards for enhancing national statistical systems. In this resolution, the Commission affirmed the importance of the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics and the recommendations that were made at the Arab statistical forums, including Amman Declaration on Statistics in 2007. It requested member countries to take all necessary measures in order to produce high-quality official statistics that can be used in international comparisons by applying international concepts, classifications and standards, activating statistical institutions and taking necessary measures to apply the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, thereby ensuring the credibility, impartiality and autonomy of statistical institutions and enhancing the credibility of statistics at the national, regional and international levels. The Commission called on member countries to complete the design and implementation of national strategies for statistical development in line with the general orientations issued by Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (Paris 21) and enhance the position of the national statistical machinery within the national institutional structure, and strengthen the structural factors that are connected to the legislative framework and regulatory arrangements.

16. The Commission requested the secretariat to organize training workshops on international concepts, classifications and standards; and to support member countries in undertaking to apply the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, and in designing and implementing national strategies for statistical development. It also encouraged them to participate in and adhere to the General Data Dissemination System and the Special Data Dissemination Standard of the International Monetary Fund. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to follow up on the above recommendations and submit a report thereon to the twenty-sixth session of the Commission.

17. The secretariat undertook various activities pursuant to that resolution, which are summarized below.

18. ESCWA held training workshops on international concepts, classifications and standards, including the following:

(a) Environmental Economic Accounting for the ESCWA Region (Beirut, 14-16 October 2009), which discussed the system of economic and environmental accounting as an international standard and its application in the ESCWA region;

(b) National Workshop on International Trade in Services (Damascus, 28 June-2 July 2009), which included meetings on the balance of payments manual (version 6);

(c) Workshop on Indicators of Foreign Trade in ESCWA Member Countries (Beirut, 14-16 December 2009).

19. ESCWA provided technical assistance to the Sudan from 27 to 30 September 2009 in the preparation of the energy balance in accordance with international standards, and to the Ministry of Economy in the United Arab Emirates from 7 to 9 March 2009 in the preparation of training on environmental statistics, organized by the United Arab Emirates for statistical offices, ministries of environment and relevant departments in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). In addition, ESCWA prepared a set of statistical terms that was made available on the webpage of ESCWA Statistics Division, in an attempt to standardize terms expressing specialized international concepts and norms in Arabic.

20. ESCWA provided support to member countries in terms of adopting and implementing the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, and of designing and implementing national strategies for statistical development. Within that context, ESCWA collaborated with Paris 21 partnership in the organization of the fourth Forum for Arab Statistical Capacity-Building (Cairo, 25-26 May 2009). The

Forum emphasized the need to develop national strategies for the development of statistics. These strategies enable member countries to work efficiently according to standards set forth in the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, and help them progress towards the production of high-quality statistics by national statistical offices.

21. Within that context, the secretariat presented a report to the Statistical Commission at its eighth session (October 2009) on the results of the second round of the assessment implemented to examine the needs of national statistical offices in the ESCWA region. The report included an assessment of the institutional body and the level of implemented activities compared to the fundamental principles. The statistics website includes the latest developments, practice and information related to national strategies, thereby paving the way for an exchange of knowledge at this level. ESCWA cooperated with the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics to organize a seminar on statistical systems in member countries, which discussed the current status of statistical structures and legislations (Damascus, 21 August 2008).

22. Additionally, the Commission provided advisory services and organized capacity-building activities. These activities included the second national workshop on strategic framework for enhancing national statistical capacities and mainstreaming gender in the statistical work (Beirut, 25-27 November 2008), and the participation in the high-level meeting on mainstreaming sectoral statistical systems into the national strategy for the development of statistics (12-13 October 2009). ESCWA participated in the workshop on the statistical strategy for the GCC countries (Oman, 4-8 October 2009). In addition, ESCWA participated with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in a global project aimed at measuring the progress of societies in the economic field, and thus organized a regional seminar for measuring progress of Arab societies (Cairo, 27 May 2009), the first meeting of the Steering Committee and a workshop on the progress of societies (Amman, 3-4 October 2009).

23. ESCWA encouraged member countries to accede to the General Data Dissemination System and the Special Data Dissemination System. At the eighth session of the Statistical Commission, the secretariat stressed the importance of countries accession to those two systems, knowing that member countries exerted intensive efforts in that context. Bahrain, Iraq and the United Arab Emirates acceded to the General System, while Jordan has recently acceded to the Special System.

284 (XXV) Establishment of the ESCWA regional technology centre

24. At its twenty-fifth session, ESCWA adopted resolution 284 (XXV) on the establishment of the ESCWA regional technology centre. In this resolution, the Commission requested the secretariat to finalize hosting arrangements, coordinate with member countries over the establishment of a board of governors and take the necessary measures to draft administrative regulations in preparation for approval by the board of governors. It also requested the secretariat to set up within ESCWA a multidisciplinary team to support and monitor progress in the operationalization of the centre. Finally, the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to report on the progress made in the implementation of this resolution to the twenty-sixth session of the Commission.

25. By October 2008, in response to the request of the Executive Secretary, five countries had expressed interest in hosting the ESCWA technology centre, namely: Jordan, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Syrian Arab Republic.

26. During November 2008, a delegation from the Information and Communication Technology Division visited those countries that had expressed an interest for further discussions and clarifications of some issues. As a result of these visits and correspondence, the secretariat received the following offers:

(a) Jordan offered money, facilities and offices as a contribution to host the centre. The offer included \$450,000 in cash, in addition to benefits in kind worth \$400,000 for individuals and \$400,000 of equipment and facilities;

(b) Oman presented details and proposals concerning the centre, and offered \$1 million over three years to cover the rent of offices, maintenance costs at the headquarters, and transport and logistics fees;

(c) Qatar welcomed the idea of hosting the centre without bearing any expenses;

(d) Saudi Arabia offered to host the centre and participate in its funding, provided other member countries participated as well and that participation in decision-making was proportionate to the funding;

(e) The Syrian Arab Republic expressed its willingness to provide funds and facilities to contribute to host the centre without specific details. The offer included offices for the centre and the willingness to participate in its funding.

27. In March 2009, ESCWA Executive Secretary formed a high-level committee to evaluate the offers to host the centre. Following the evaluation and the review of the results of visits, the committee found three offers to be the most feasible to host the centre with no clear prior conditions, namely, those made by Jordan, Oman and the Syrian Arab Republic. Given that the offers were not uniform in terms of information that had been provided, the committee developed an assessment questionnaire to be used as a basis of comparison between the three offers.

28. In April 2009, the committee submitted the questionnaire to the three countries that were willing to host the centre and asked for clarifications and details concerning their offers. It received a response from Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, but did not receive a reply from Oman, despite reminders sent by the Executive Secretary to Oman in June 2009.

29. In August 2009, the evaluation committee recommended the selection of Jordan as a host country for the ESCWA technology centre, and the Executive Secretary approved this recommendation.

30. In November 2009, ESCWA submitted letters to Jordan and other member countries to brief them on the recommendation of the evaluation committee and the approval of the Executive Secretary. In response, it received a letter from Jordan in which it reiterated its commitment to host the centre.

31. A draft agreement with the host country and proposed statute of the centre were prepared to formalize the hosting arrangements and start establishing the centre. The host country agreement and statute documents were reviewed by the United Nations General Legal Division and the Government of Jordan.

23. In December 2009, in line with regulations and procedures of United Nations recruitment, ESCWA appointed a P5 official to lead the team in charge of establishing the centre. In order to obtain sufficient multidisciplinary support and adequate monitoring for the centre activities, a committee was established representing the various relevant divisions, namely, the Information and Communication Technology Division, Social Development Division and Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Division.

33. In addition, terms of reference were set for the establishment of the board of governors and the technical committee in order to prepare for the formation of these bodies.

285 (XXV) Integrated social policy

34. At its twenty-fifth session, ESCWA adopted resolution 285 (XXV) on integrated social policy. In this resolution, the Commission requested the secretariat to build upon the experience of promoting integrated social policy in Bahrain, Egypt, the Sudan and Yemen, and to intensify its endeavours in advocating and

enhancing the capacity of member countries to formulate and adopt an integrated social policy approach through a number of actions. It also requested the Executive Secretary to submit a report on the progress made in implementing this resolution to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session.

35. The secretariat undertook various activities pursuant to that resolution, which are summarized below.

(a) *Developing the integrated social policy approach and promoting it among decision makers in member countries*

36. ESCWA issued the second report on integrated social policy, entitled “From concept to practice” (2008). This report contains a proposal to adopt the approach of integrated social policy in order to benefit all and achieve social justice, which is the pillar of social development and preservation of basic human rights. Additionally, the Commission issued the third report on integrated social policy, entitled “Visions and strategies” (2009). This report deals with the social priorities included in national development strategies and vision statements adopted by ESCWA member countries, with a focus on the challenges and measures proposed for public policies aimed at addressing these challenges. ESCWA issued a publication on social development and economic growth in 2008, and another on social policy and social protection, entitled “Challenges in the ESCWA region” (2009). Moreover, the Commission published two articles on successful experiences, namely: one on the economic and social councils and the second on social observatories in some countries. The two articles provide patterns of effective institutional structures that promote the integrated social policy approach through ample, evidence-based social analyses and researches, and that allow for dialogue between different categories and decision makers.

(b) *Promoting and following up on dialogue and consultation processes based on the participation in the field of social policy between governmental bodies, civil society organizations and the private sector*

37. In 2008, ESCWA prepared a national report on integrated social policy in Palestine, which reflected the reality of social policy and defined political, social and economic obstacles that impacted the contents and mechanisms of social policymaking and their implementation. The report was discussed in a number of meetings in 2008 and in a national conference towards integrated social policy in Palestine in 2009. In 2007, ESCWA began implementing a project to support the dialogue on integrated social policy in the Sudan in 2007 in agreement with the specificities of the State. ESCWA is currently working with the Government of the Sudan and the League of Arab States to elucidate the steps to be taken in the second phase in the project and to take an in-depth look at social policy issues in the country.

38. ESCWA prepared a guide on strengthening partnerships between Governments and civil society organizations in public policy processes. This guide deals with the participatory process in the context of community development approach, which is a comprehensive approach for change and modernization processes in the structures and capacities of institutions as well as the adopted systems and standards in the exercise of their functions and dissemination of their values. The guide was discussed during an expert group meeting held in Beirut on 29 and 30 April 2009. Within that context, ESCWA issued a set of reports on the role of the media in raising the interest of public opinion in development issues, legal frameworks governing the participation of civil society in decision-making and social observatories as a tool to promote partnership between Governments and civil society organizations in the field of public policies. ESCWA also issued a bulletin on putting the media at the heart of social development (volume 2, Issue 4), and another on the participation in public policies (volume 2, Issue 7).

39. ESCWA is currently working on the implementation of a subregional project, entitled “Participatory human development in post-conflict countries”. This project aims to enhance partnership between Governments and civil society organizations in ESCWA members emerging from conflicts (Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and Yemen) by formulating, implementing and monitoring public policies. The project includes a set of activities initiated by the implementation of a survey for concerned entities in different fields of social development in each of the four ESCWA member countries. This survey was followed by an expert group

meeting, held in Manama from 12 to 14 October 2009, to present and discuss material issued by ESCWA on the community development approach and the participatory research approach for the development of the community in ESCWA member countries. In the context of capacity-building workshops to be held within the project on community development approach, participatory social development, training approach and participatory research approach, two workshops were organized on the community development approach in Beirut from 15 to 20 February 2010. Moreover, a website was created with three electronic forums aimed at promoting dialogue on various complex issues related to the project objectives and goals.

(c) *Assisting member countries in implementing action plans and internationally agreed recommendations*

40. ESCWA issued a study on social exclusion aimed at reviewing and analysing the concept and mechanisms of social exclusion as well as at defining marginalized groups in the Arab region. The study is based on field researches conducted in Egypt, Lebanon and Yemen. It was subsequently discussed at an expert group meeting on social exclusion, held in Beirut in 2008. Within that context, ESCWA issued a leaflet on social exclusion in the region. Additionally, the Commission prepared a report on the challenges to social integration in the ESCWA region, and the report was discussed at the seventh session of the Committee on Social Development (Beirut, 2009). Moreover, ESCWA issued a booklet on social integration; and a report was issued in 2009 on the challenges faced by persons with physical disabilities in Jordan.

41. Within the framework of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, ESCWA carried out a regional survey on the response of ESCWA member countries to the Programme. The Commission held the Workshop on Reinforcing National Capacities in Responding to the World Programme of Action for Youth: National Reports and Systematic Documentation of Accomplishments (Beirut, 17-18 December 2008). The Workshop aimed at presenting and discussing the outcome of the regional survey, and agreeing to a unified outline for writing national reports on the response of ESCWA member countries to the Programme of Action for Youth. In the same context, an expert group meeting was held in collaboration with the Family Development Foundation, namely, the Expert Group Meeting on Reinforcing Social Equity: Integrating Youth into the Development Process (Abu Dhabi, 29-31 March 2009). This Meeting included the presentation and discussion of a set of studies on the demographic, social, economic and cultural specificities of youth in Arab countries, in addition to the discussion of national reports on the responses of ESCWA member countries to the Programme. ESCWA also issued in that regard the fourth issue of the "Population and development report on youth in the ESCWA region: Situation analysis and policy implications on development". This report deals with contemporary methodological approaches related to youth and sheds light on the status of youth in the ESCWA region in terms of education, employment, health and participation in the public life.

286 (XXV) Gender statistics for equality and empowerment of women

42. At its twenty-fifth session, ESCWA adopted resolution 286 (XXV) on strengthening the statistical capacities of ESCWA member countries to produce gender statistics for equality and empowerment needed for planning and policymaking. The resolution called upon member countries to adopt the set of indicators in the Arab Gender Issues and Indicators Framework (GIsIn) and produce statistics for monitoring and evaluating strategic policies and work plans; and to develop a mechanism for the collection, dissemination and analysis of gender-sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data by rural, urban and age information. It further encouraged member countries to formulate and implement training programmes in order to mainstream gender issues and statistics into their statistical systems, with a view to sensitizing data producers and users to the issue of gender equality. In that resolution, ESCWA was requested to provide technical support to member countries in the form of advisory services and workshops, and assist member countries in integrating a gender perspective into national strategies for the development of statistics and national statistical system plans of action. Additionally, it requested the secretariat to work with member countries in developing a detailed gender database to act as a gender mainstreaming observatory in all

sectors; and to mainstream gender statistics, as appropriate, into its programmes and outputs. The Executive Secretary was further requested to report on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution to the twenty-sixth session of the Commission.

43. The secretariat undertook various activities pursuant to that resolution, which are summarized below.

44. ESCWA provided member countries with technical material in support of their activities in the area of gender statistics. It published the “Booklet on gender in MDG: Information guide for Arab MDG reports” in both Arabic and English, which was launched in 2009 by the Executive Secretary and received media coverage. More than 2,500 copies were distributed worldwide. The English version of the Booklet is available at: <http://www.escwa.un.org/divisions/scu/GenderMDG/index.asp>; and the Arabic version is available at: http://www.escwa.un.org/divisions/scu/gendermdg/index_Ar.asp. ESCWA also developed the “Glossary on gender statistical terms” in order to harmonize gender-related terms in Arabic. The glossary will be translated into other languages (French, Russian and Spanish) in collaboration with other regional commissions and is available on the Statistics Division homepage.

45. Moreover, ESCWA convened the second Interagency and Expert Group Meeting (IAEGM) on Gender Statistics in Arab Countries (Beirut, 12-14 October 2009). ESCWA provided support to the Central Organization for Information and Technology in Iraq (COSIT) to develop its national gender website. A proposed framework and guidelines for development of national websites on gender statistics was presented by ESCWA to the Second IAEGM. In addition, ESCWA implemented a set of activities related to the project on “Development of National Gender Statistics in Iraq” in collaboration with COSIT. The project aims to enhance national capacities for the development of quality gender statistics and indicators, including sex-disaggregated data; and to contribute towards more effective and gender-responsive monitoring and reporting, and formulating more gender-responsive policies and strategies in order to achieve the MDG on gender equality and women’s empowerment. The project succeeded in terms of completing a number of outputs and activities, including a list of critical gender issues; a set of core gender statistics and indicators; a publication on the assessment of gender statistics in Iraq, and on women and men in Iraq; a database on gender statistics; a publication on time-use survey; a strategic framework for enhancing national statistical capacities, developing gender statistics and mainstreaming gender in all statistical work; and the convening of a number of workshops on time-use survey, DevInfo, mainstreaming gender in labour statistics and mainstreaming gender in the national statistical strategy. A major achievement of this project was the establishment of the Gender Statistics Unit at COSIT.

46. ESCWA developed the first Arab gender statistics database, namely, “Arab GenInfo_09”, which was launched at the second IAEGM on gender statistics and is available at: <http://genderinfo.escwa.un.org/>. ESCWA is expected to develop further its regional gender database to include the proposed GIsIn indicators during 2010-2011. ESCWA strongly encourages Arab countries to compile and disseminate available data on gender. A compilation of available national gender statistics publications were also made available by ESCWA on the gender statistics virtual library link at: <http://www.escwa.un.org/divisions/scu/themes/index.asp>.

47. In an effort to facilitate mainstreaming of gender statistics at national and regional levels, the Arab Task Force on Gender Statistics was established in 2009. The First Meeting for the Task Force was convened in Beirut, on 15-16 October 2009. The Task Force Meeting discussed regional priorities and developed a roadmap for activities to be implemented, which includes publications, capacity-building workshops, training resources, databases and other related activities for the coming years. Moreover, ESCWA mainstreamed gender-sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data through its two main recurrent publications, namely, Population and Vital Statistics Bulletin, and Statistical Abstract (2008), in addition to the inclusion of a new chapter on gender equality. As a member of the Global Gender Statistics Programme, ESCWA endeavours to align the global requirement of the Programme with its regional programme. At the same time, the Arab IAEGM and Task Force on Gender Statistics are set to provide the mechanism for reflecting regional needs and requirements and provide a positive feedback of its regional perspective into

the global Programme. Moreover, the Statistics Division in addition to a number of Arab countries are members of the Friends of the Chair on Violence against Women, which aims to improve the indicators in that specific field.

287 (XXV) Strengthening statistical capacities for evidence-based policymaking

48. At its twenty-fifth session, ESCWA adopted resolution 287 (XXV) on strengthening the statistical capacities of ESCWA member countries to produce evidence-based data needed for policymaking. In that resolution, ESCWA member countries were urged to produce MDG indicators, adopt the Common Set of Core Information and Communications Technology Indicators issued by the Global Partnership on Measuring Information and Communications Technology for Development, and make available data related to those indicators for review of strategic policies and work plans in areas of priority. The resolution further called upon member countries to accelerate implementation of the 1993 System of National Accounts and its revisions in order to enable policymakers to monitor economic changes and improve economic performance. Moreover, the resolution requested the Executive Secretary to hold training workshops on international concepts, classifications and standards; and to support member countries in undertaking to apply the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in terms of designing and implementing national strategies for statistical development and participating in and adhering to the General Data Dissemination System and the Special Data Dissemination Standard of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The Executive Secretary was further requested to report on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution to the twenty-sixth session of the Commission.

49. The secretariat undertook various activities pursuant to that resolution, which are summarized below.

50. In its parliamentary report to the eighth Statistical Committee on the Millennium Development Goals: Monitoring Framework and Proposals for Improvement” (E/ESCWA/SD/2008/IG.1/4), ESCWA provided assessment of the key issues of existing discrepancies between national and international sources of statistical information for MDG indicators. It also highlighted gaps in the availability of data in both sources as a result of poor reporting mechanism at the sub-national level to international sources, in addition to gaps in reporting between national, regional and international levels. Within that context, ESCWA undertook various activities to improve the quality of data and reduce discrepancies, including performing quality checks on national data, compiling time series for each indicator from national publications and websites, and requesting countries to provide methods of computation, sources and data for missing years. As a result of this continuing effort across the region, eight countries disseminated national DevInfo databases. This accomplishment was facilitated by ESCWA through the convening of three DevInfo workshops (Beirut, 7-10 July 2008 and 13-17 July 2009; and Tripoli, 22-26 November 2009). These workshops encouraged the collaboration and exchange of data in the statistical system and improved harmonization of definitions and methodologies at the sub-national level. A specialized training of trainers on DevInfo was also organized towards the establishment of an Arab DevInfo Training Team (ADITT) to provide national and regional support to DevInfo application in the region. A specialized forum to encourage the development of trainers and sharing experiences and best practice was established on the following link: <http://www.escwa.un.org/divisions/forums/devinfo/>. Moreover, ESCWA organized two workshops on MDG monitoring and reporting, namely, the first, which was sub-national (Amman, 17-20 May 2009); and the second on MDG Monitoring (Beirut, 7-10 December 2009). These aimed at improving reporting, reducing discrepancies and enhancing the quality of statistics along with the collaboration with other United Nations specialized agencies. Additionally, ESCWA organized training on statistical data and metadata exchange to encourage and build the capacities of member countries in order for them to use the latest innovations in exchange of data (Beirut, 16-18 November 2009). In focused areas, ESCWA organized the Expert Group Meeting on Poverty Measurement (Beirut, 28-29 April 2009).

51. ESCWA also provided capacity-building workshops and technical advisory services to enable member countries to adopt the Common Set of Core Information and Communications Technology Indicators issued by the Global Partnership on Measuring Information and Communications Technology for Development,

and make available the data related to those indicators. In that regard, three workshops were held, namely: two national workshops on measurement of ICT statistics for, respectively, Iraq (Beirut, 17-21 June 2008) and the Syrian Arab Republic (Damascus, 12-16 July 2009); and a subregional workshop for GCC on indicators of access to and use of ICT (Kuwait, 29 March to 2 April 2009). Moreover, a number of advisory technical missions were undertaken in Oman related to the use of ICT in government and business (15-22 December 2008), and to measuring ICT indicators (28 February-12 March 2009); and in Kuwait related to survey design for ICT in business (10-22 April 2009).

52. In order to accelerate the implementation of the 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA) and its revisions and enable policymakers to monitor economic changes and improve economic performance, ESCWA undertook several activities, including the following: the Regional Expert Group Meeting on National Accounts and the Implementation of SNA 2008 (Cairo, 12-14 May 2009); and two national workshops on national accounts concepts and use, and the implementation of 1993 SNA in, respectively, the Syrian Arab Republic and Jordan (Damascus, 8-12 June 2008; and Amman, 9-12 November 2009). Additionally, a number of technical and tailored advisory services complemented the support of ESCWA in the field of national accounts, which included missions to Yemen (20 June - 3 July 2008 and 28 November - 5 December 2008), Palestine (3-8 May 2009 and 3-8 July 2009) and the Sudan (15-25 June 2009).

53. ESCWA developed a virtual library aimed at facilitating the exchange of experience and knowledge between countries through its official webpage and with a view to promoting best practice in the development of statistical systems and activities. This knowledge-sharing aims to provide users and producers from different disciplines with access to selected national, regional and international sources across a variety of thematic areas, such as the national statistical systems, gender, health, MDGs, population and housing, and social progress. A second platform is being developed specifically in the area of International Merchandise Trade Statistics (IMTS) Knowledge Base in order to provide an information and communications tool for producers and consumers of external trade statistics, including, among others, relevant publications, databases, international classifications and useful links on events, training sessions and workshops, thereby facilitating the exchange of information and discussions.

288 (XXV) Establishing an Arabic language centre at ESCWA

54. At its twenty-fifth session, ESCWA adopted resolution 287 (XXV) on establishing an Arabic language centre at ESCWA. In this resolution, the Commission encouraged the secretariat to continue cooperation with ESCWA through the focal points designated by member countries for this project. It also requested the Executive Secretary to follow up on the implementation of this resolution and submit a report to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session.

55. The secretariat undertook various activities pursuant to that resolution, which are summarized below.

56. The secretariat provided a presentation on the project of the proposed centre in a number of member countries and held consultations with concerned academic and governmental entities. It noted a consensus on the importance of such a mechanism to support the Arabic language in international organizations and institutions, and of the tasks it undertakes with regard to terminology, training and coordination among various stakeholders to write in and use Arabic.

57. However, the debate remains open on the sources of funding. The secretariat was recently notified that the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM) at United Nations Headquarters had adopted a similar project and letters were submitted to Arab countries for funding. Some ESCWA member countries expressed their wish to achieve some kind of integration between the two projects by distributing tasks in a way that could enhance effectiveness and avoid duplication of work. ESCWA is currently seeking along with DGACM to find a mechanism that could achieve such cooperation and integration.

58. While waiting for the results of coordination with DGACM, it is important to recall that ESCWA benefits from its position in the Arab region and its close relationship with educational institutions that train

language specialists, thereby increasing the opportunities for training and developing programmes to the set needs of international organizations. The Commission played an active role in facilitating the ratification of memoranda of understanding with a number of universities and DGACM.

59. ESCWA trained a number of translation graduates with a special focus on Arabic for a period of four months. The Commission received a number of students and trained them to translate documents and publications, and resorts to them when needed for servicing conferences and meetings organized by different departments.

60. ESCWA was also the lead organization to translate important documents issued by United Nations Headquarters into Arabic, as the qualified body to issue such documents in Arabic. The Commission takes knowledge of the observations of countries, and receives comments on its Arabic publications from readers of various categories. In April 2010, ESCWA trained employees from the World Health Organization, who came at the expense of their organization to train for the purpose of drafting records and reports in Arabic.

61. In the field of terminology, ESCWA contributed through cooperation between the Conference Services Section and substantive divisions for issuing a variety of terms in different disciplines, notably ICT, statistics, climate change and natural disasters.

62. Aware of the need to harmonize efforts between ESCWA and United Nations Headquarters, the secretariat remains convinced that the Arabic language requires special support. Member countries could decide the mechanism of such a support through financing a project for the collection and revision of terms, a training project or the translation of documents in modern fields that lack enough material in Arabic, as is the case of other languages in other countries. Such support aims to strengthen the position of the Arabic language in electronic and specialized publications.

289 (XXV) Supporting the comprehensive development efforts of Yemen

63. At its twenty-fifth session, ESCWA adopted resolution 289 (XXV) on supporting the comprehensive development efforts of Yemen. The resolution called upon ESCWA to provide more support to Yemen with a view to achieving the activities and efforts that are undertaken as part of comprehensive development and national efforts aimed at attaining MDGs. It also requested the Executive Secretary to follow up on its implementation and submit a report to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session.

64. The secretariat undertook various activities pursuant to that resolution, which are summarized below.

65. Since 2008, ESCWA has undertaken 23 advisory services and capacity-building activities in Yemen, trained three technicians through a fellowship programme and implemented such projects as the preparatory assistance for disseminating renewable energy services to rural villages, as was the case of the village of Kawa'a in Yemen.

66. Two Yemeni officials from the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation were trained by ESCWA on strengthening their capacities for formulating technical requests and to ensure the optimal use of technical cooperation services provided by ESCWA. This training contributed to the formation of more articulate and coherent requests for technical assistance from Yemen that reflect depth, the ability to prioritize and to think over a long period, and accuracy.

67. Additionally, Yemen received technical cooperation assistance in the field of statistics to improve national accounts. Moreover, technical advice led to forecasting methods for GDP growth rates. ESCWA further provided advice on engendering policies in order to build the capacity of the staff at the Ministry of Planning to mainstream a gender perspective into plans and policies, and assisted Yemen in preparing the publication, entitled "Mainstreaming Gender in National Planning", with the Women's Forum for Research and Training.

68. In addition, the Workshop on Production and Consumption, and Establishment of National Cleaner Fuel Strategies and the Workshop on Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women were held in Yemen.

69. Given the priority of climate change and the relation between energy and environment statistics, ESCWA, in collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division, provided a fellowship to an official from Yemen who received training in Turkey on compiling monthly data on oil statistics in both oil production and consumption.

70. A list of technical cooperation activities provided to Yemen is enclosed in the annex to this report.

290 (XXV) Call for regional action to accelerate implementation of the Monterrey Consensus in Western Asia

71. At its twenty-fifth session, ESCWA adopted resolution 290 (XXV) on the call for regional action to accelerate implementation of the Monterrey Consensus in Western Asia. In this resolution, the Commission requested the secretariat to strengthen cooperation with the relevant regional and international organizations and with other United Nations regional commissions on issues related to the Monterrey Consensus, with a view to supporting the position of developing countries with respect to the formulation of international rules. It also called upon the secretariat to pursue the outcome of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development and support member countries in studying and analysing new issues arising from that Conference that relate to the region. Additionally, it asked the secretariat to assist them in devising and pursuing appropriate policies, and to support national efforts aimed at building institutional capacities, particularly with respect to foreign direct investment, double taxation treaties, international regulation of investment and bilateral investment agreements. It also requested the Executive Secretary to report on the progress made in implementing this resolution to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session.

72. The secretariat undertook various activities pursuant to that resolution, which are summarized below.

73. ESCWA cooperated with regional organizations, particularly the International Labour Organization (ILO), the regional commissions of the United Nations, and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (Financing for Development Office) for the preparation of joint reports and studies on the financial crisis. A joint report was prepared with other United Nations regional commissions on the impact of the global financial crisis on the region, measures taken and proposed solutions at the regional level. Equally, the commissions collaborated with ILO in preparing a report on the impact of the global financial crisis, particularly on financial and oil markets, unemployment and poverty.

74. The secretariat pursued the implementation of the outcome of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development that reviews the Monterrey Consensus (Doha, 29 November - 2 December 2008), and worked on a report on the progress made by member countries in financing for development. An expert group meeting on this matter is set to be held in 2010. The report will review the progress made by member countries on various issues and recommendations contained in the Monterrey Consensus, in addition to the outcome of the Follow-up Conference held in Doha. Moreover, the expert group meeting will address the issues of remittances and their impact on financing for development in receiving countries.

75. With regard to providing technical support to member countries in the areas of foreign direct investment, negotiations of bilateral investment agreements and avoiding double taxation, ESCWA offered technical assistance to member countries by organizing various national workshops, namely:

(a) National Workshop on Negotiations of Bilateral Investment Agreements (Cairo, 12-16 October 2008);

(b) National Workshop on Negotiations of Bilateral Investment Agreements (Muscat, 25-29 January 2009);

(c) National Workshop on Drafting Bilateral Agreements for the Promotion and Protection of Foreign Investment (Muscat, 5-9 December 2009);

(d) Preparation of two training sessions on the prevention of double taxation and bilateral investment agreements in 2010.

291 (XXV) Frequency of the sessions of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies

76. At its twenty-fifth session, ESCWA adopted resolution 291 (XXV) on the frequency of the sessions of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies. In this resolution, the Commission called on the secretariat to carry out an in-depth evaluation of the intergovernmental structure of ESCWA in the light of both programme priorities, as identified by member countries, and of ongoing United Nations reforms; and to support, monitor closely and assess the contribution of the Technical Committee. In addition, the Commission requested the secretariat to improve and continually update the ESCWA website, with the aim of providing easy access for future delegates attending the sessions of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies to session documents and reports, and to activate the national focal points identified by those countries. Finally, the secretariat was requested to review the outcome of the in-depth evaluation at the twenty-sixth session.

77. The secretariat undertook various activities pursuant to that resolution, which are summarized below.

78. ESCWA is constantly working to update and develop the design of its website and its content by updating information and data; regularly uploading documents, reports and studies; and creating new pages for scheduled meetings and conferences, making available all relevant documents and information to official representatives in order to provide prior information before the convening of these meetings. ESCWA website can also be used to monitor the progress of the work of the secretariat and implemented activities.

79. In its third meeting (July 2009), the Technical Committee adopted the new communication strategy that was presented to it. The strategy proposed new communication lines between ESCWA and member countries, between countries themselves, and between ESCWA and other organizations operating in the region, based on making use of development in electronic communications and ICT tools to facilitate the exchange of information. Accordingly, the secretariat initiated the implementation of the new communication strategy by enhancing direct communication between ESCWA and focal points in member countries, as well as communication channels between countries themselves. Communication will take place by means of electronic and ICT tools as well as through a clear strategic communication, thereby encouraging the use of the ESCWA website to follow up on work and activities, and enhancing communication between focal points and ESCWA.

80. The secretariat dedicated a page on the ESCWA website to the Technical Committee, and created an electronic forum (<http://www.escwa.un.org/tc>) within this page to facilitate communication and intensification of consultations between member countries on various issues. The page and the forum were launched during the fourth meeting of the Technical Committee (January 2010).

81. The secretariat conducted an assessment of ESCWA intergovernmental machinery based on the priorities set in programmes and ongoing reforms at the United Nations. Observations and recommendations stemming from the assessment of the intergovernmental machinery and its subsidiary bodies are set forth within item 7 (a-i) of the provisional agenda for consideration by the Commission.

Annex

ADVISORY SERVICES OFFERED TO YEMEN DURING THE BIENNIUM 2008-2009

Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation

1. Technical advice was offered to the Export Supreme Council on the preparation of a project to develop non-oil exports in Yemen.
2. Technical advice was offered to improve the status of Yemen in terms of the index of economic freedom, and to discuss the nature of services required in the field of economic analysis and measurement of the economic outlook.
3. Technical advice was offered on ways of updating the institutional and administrative system, building capacities and skills, promoting the use of ICT infrastructure programmes and services, and completing the networking process of the Information Centre at the Ministry of Oil and Minerals and the Centre for Women.
4. Technical advice was offered and training provided to the employees of the Supreme Council for Women to develop their skills, plan and document projects, and set and follow up plans of action.
5. Technical advice and training were provided to the employees of the Ministry of Planning in governorates across Yemen for the development of knowledge with regard to the importance of mainstreaming gender in the preparation of developmental plans and programmes.
6. Technical advice and training were provided with regard to the gender-sensitive budget in addition to an explanation on ways of preparing it.

Ministry of Industry and Trade

Technical advice was provided on the procedures of accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and clarification was given on the position of Yemen in negotiations. A workshop was held on the accession of Yemen to WTO in the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Hadramout Governorate in the city of Mukalla.

Ministry of Electricity and Power/Public Electricity Corporation

1. A workshop was held on the improvement of the efficiency of energy and rationalization of its use;
2. A session was held on training trainers in the field of energy auditing.

Ministry of Water and Environment

The Ministry participated in the symposium on the preparation of national policies for cleaner fuel in the Republic of Yemen.

National Information Centre

A training workshop was held to build capacities in the field of data and statistics processing related to the production of standard ICT indicators.

Women National Committee/Yemeni Women's Union

1. A training workshop was held to advocate the role of women as voters and candidates in Sana'a.
2. A training workshop was held on gender and leadership role of women as voters and candidates in Aden.
3. Two workshops were held, namely: (i) on integration of gender analysis tools in developmental planning; and (ii) on gender-sensitive budgets.
4. Technical advice was offered to the Yemeni Women's Union on ways of implementing technical assistance related to integrating gender in national policies, plans and programmes.
5. Technical advice was offered and a training workshop was prepared on the concepts of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and official reports as well as shadow reports were prepared.
6. Technical advice and training were provided on conflict resolution.
7. Technical advice was offered and a training workshop was prepared on building the capacities of women in establishing alliances, negotiations and management skills.
8. Technical advice was provided and a training workshop was prepared on ways of preparing income-generating projects.

Ministry of Oil and Minerals/Geological Survey and Mineral Resources Board

A training workshop was prepared on ways of managing situations resulting from natural disasters and landslides.

Central Statistics Organization

1. Technical advice was offered to examine the status of available statistical data for the preparation of national accounts estimates, to assess the final results of economic surveys for the period 1998-2005, and to establish a mechanism for the development of these surveys to become more comprehensive and cover the informal sector.
2. Technical advice was provided to review the steps for developing a methodology for the preparation and formulation of the gross domestic product.
3. Technical advice was offered to assess the data collection system and process of collecting statistics on foreign trade of goods as well as the necessary data.

Al-Takaful and Social Welfare Society in Taiz

A workshop was held on the project of establishing a stone plant within the initiative of the "Smart Village" project.

Ministry of Tourism

Technical advice and a training session were provided to the Ministry of Tourism on the application of the tourism satellite account and developing a general framework to set appropriate policies that would enhance the role of tourism in Yemen.

Ministry of Transport

1. Technical advice was offered to prepare a technical report on the economic feasibility study for the establishment of an international railway network in Yemen.
2. Technical advice was offered to discuss and review the expertise and experiences of developed countries in the field of road safety, and to develop a strategy aimed at improving road safety in Yemen.

Centre for Science and Technology, Aden University

Technical advice and training were provided on technological incubators in the field of ICT.
