

**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION
FOR WESTERN ASIA (ESCWA)**

Twenty-sixth session
Beirut, 17-20 May 2010

INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

2010

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I. INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

The twenty-sixth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) will be held at the United Nations House in Beirut, the permanent headquarters of the Commission, from 17 to 20 May 2010.

The session will be attended by representatives of ESCWA member countries; States Members of the United Nations invited as observers; relevant United Nations organs and specialized agencies, observers from interested regional and intergovernmental organizations, organizations and entities with standing invitations from the General Assembly, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

The Commission hopes that member countries will be represented at the ministerial level and that their delegations will include experts in economic, commercial and social fields. The session will consider several issues related to general policy in the ESCWA region, including the role of youth and their empowerment, and human and institutional capacity-building.

Credentials

Official credentials duly signed by the appropriate authorities of Governments, agencies or organizations in accordance with the relevant provisions of the rules of procedure of ESCWA should, if possible, be submitted to the Secretary of the Commission (room F-845, ext. 1845) no later than one week before the opening of the session, or to the ESCWA registration desk at the time of registration.

Arrival in and departure from Lebanon

The composition of delegations and expected dates and times of arrival should be communicated to the Secretary of the Commission. All participants will have the right of entry into and exit from Lebanon, and no impediment will be imposed on their transit to and from the session areas. They will be granted facilities for speedy travel. Visas will be granted on arrival at the airport to participants from Gaza, where there is no Lebanese embassy, provided the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants is informed of passports details (and faxed copies of passports) **at least 15 days prior to the arrival** of the delegate in question. Participants will be exempted from airport taxes.

II. CONFERENCE SERVICES AND FACILITIES

The ESCWA secretariat will provide, for as long as is required for the session, (including during the preparatory period preceding the session and the period following the session) the necessary premises, including conference rooms, committee rooms, delegates' and interpreters' lounges, suitable office space with communication facilities, storage areas and related amenities.

The three conference rooms will be equipped for simultaneous interpretation between the Arabic and English languages and will have facilities for sound recording in both languages.

Staff members of the Conference Services Section at ESCWA will be responsible for registering delegates, issuing the necessary badges and providing provisional list of participants. They will also provide information on and support with regard to meeting services, including documents distribution, agendas and interpretation, as well as the editing, translation, reproduction and distribution of the final report of the twenty-sixth session.

General inquiries regarding meeting services may be made to the Conference Services Section (room F-035, ext. 1035).

Registration and identification

Participants will be provided with identity badges at the registration desk and will be requested to wear those badges at all times.

Session documentation

During the session, documents will be available in limited quantities at the documents distribution desk in the conference area. Participants are requested, however, to bring with them the complete set of documents sent by ESCWA to their Governments or organizations. All session documents may be downloaded from the relevant page of the ESCWA website, available at: <http://www.escwa.un.org>.

Delegates wishing to submit documents for circulation should present them to the Secretary of the Commission for clearance prior to distribution by the ESCWA meeting assistants. It should be noted that a minimum of 100 copies is required to ensure distribution to all delegations. In accordance with the United Nations rules and regulations for the control and limitation of documentation, the ESCWA secretariat

cannot undertake to translate or reproduce documents or statements submitted by individual delegations unless approved by the Commission.

Only United Nations documents or documents cleared by the Secretary of the Commission may be distributed during the session. Session documents will be distributed in conference rooms by a documents' officer. Other ESCWA publications will be available outside the conference rooms.

III. FACILITIES AND SERVICES FOR PARTICIPANTS AT THE UNITED NATIONS HOUSE

United Nations House

The United Nations House in Beirut, the permanent headquarters of ESCWA, is located in Riad El-Solh Square in Beirut Central District. The building also houses other United Nations entities, including the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Office of Drug Control/Centre for International Crime Prevention (UNODC), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Information Centre/Service (UNIC/UNIS).

Three large conference rooms and several smaller meeting rooms with state-of-the-art facilities occupy an entire floor (B-1 level). The building and grounds include ramps, lifts and toilets. Extensive in-house support services and facilities are available, as described below. Related enquiries may be directed to the General Services Section (room F-133, ext. 1133).

Travel services

Travel assistance is available through the ESCWA Travel Unit located on the first floor of the United Nations House and open during office hours from 7.30 a.m. to 3 p.m. (room F-127, ext. 1143 or 1187). Participants are requested to communicate the expected date and time of their arrival and their flight numbers to ESCWA. It is advisable to confirm return travel arrangements well in advance.

Cafeteria

The cafeteria, located at the ground floor of the United Nations House, provides a wide range of meals, snacks, desserts and beverages at reasonable prices. It is open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Library

A large library occupies much of the second floor and is open from 7.30 a.m. to 3 p.m., from Monday to Friday for internal users, and from 10.30 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. from Monday to Friday for external users. Participants will have access (on the premises only) to publications, journals and newspapers, the Internet and online databases. The library can also provide research services on any topic of interest to participants.

Information services and media coverage

The public meetings of the session will be open to representatives of the press and of other information media accredited by the United Nations. Such representatives will be provided with the required passes and necessary facilities. The UNIC/UNIS provide the media, Government officials, NGOs and other entities with information on the United Nations activities, documents, press releases and other information materials. It also produces press releases, collaborates with local radio and television broadcasters and organizations, and participates in arranging media events to promote activities of ESCWA and other United Nations entities. All enquiries related to media coverage and public information should be directed to Mr. Bahaa ElKoussy, Director, UNIC/UNIS Beirut, either by e-mail at: unic-beirut@un.org or by phone on extension 1830.

The ESCWA website provides up-to-date information on the structure and activities of the secretariat, as well as access to the library and other resources. Participants may access the site at: <http://www.escwa.un.org>.

Medical facilities

Medical facilities adequate for first aid in cases of emergency will be provided by the ESCWA secretariat. The ESCWA clinic is located on the first floor of the United Nations House (rooms F-145 to F-147, ext. 1145, 1146 and 1147) and is open during official working hours (7.30 a.m. to 3 p.m., from Monday to Friday). For serious emergencies, the secretariat will ensure immediate transportation by ambulance and admission to a hospital with first class facilities.

In the event of a medical emergency, the following ESCWA staff can be contacted for assistance and proper directions:

Name	Extension	Tel. (direct)	Mobile
Dr. Josette Sfeir	1144	01-978144 01-978147	70-993100
Ms. Lina Soubra	1145	01-978145	03-189941

Moreover, there are many hospitals located in and around Beirut with proficient and experienced medical staff (including four major University Hospitals, just 5 minutes away from the United Nations House):

American University of Beirut Medical Center	01-374374/350000
Hotel-Dieu de France Hospital	01-615300/400
Saint George Hospital University Medical Center	01-581700
Rafic Hariri University Hospital	01-830000

Security and safety

The ESCWA Security and Safety Section, based on the ground floor of the United Nations House (GF-00 and GF-03, ext. 1000 or 1003), operates on a 24-hour basis. Security officers are prepared to provide assistance in all matters relating to security and safety. The Section maintains contact with all local emergency services and relevant authorities. Officers may also provide information on how to contact ESCWA staff members, if necessary. In the event of an emergency, the Chief of the Security and Safety Section can be contacted for assistance (GF-03, ext. 1003).

Internet access

Wireless Internet is available on all floors as well as the ground floor, MZ and B1 conference areas. Except for the conference area at the B1 level, access to the Internet on all other floors requires a pass key which is posted in general public areas on each floor.

Postal services

Incoming letters and telegrams will be distributed to participants. Participants who expect mail to arrive after their departure should contact the ESCWA Mail and Registry Unit (room MB-11, ext. 1033) and provide a forwarding address. During the session, mail for participants should be addressed to:

Name of participant (twenty-sixth session)
c/o Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)
P.O. Box 11-8575
Riad El-Solh square
Beirut, Lebanon

Telecommunications services

The country code for Lebanon is (961). It is followed by the local area code and the telephone number. The area code for Beirut is (01) and for mobile phones is (03) or (70) or (71). If you are dialing Lebanon from outside the country, you must omit the (0) in the area code and for the mobile phone starting with (03). For example, to reach the secretariat from outside Lebanon, you may dial the country code +961 followed by the mobile or area code then by the 6 digit phone number (+961-1-xxxxxx for placing calls to Beirut, or +961-3-xxxxxx or +961-70-xxxxxx or +961-71-xxxxxx for placing calls to mobile numbers).

The main listed telephone number of ESCWA is +961-1-981301. Direct calls can be made to the required staff member from inside Lebanon by dialing 01-978 followed by the last 3 digits of the four-digit extension of the party sought. For example, if the secretariat extension being sought is **1900** then the number to dial from inside Lebanon would be 01-978**900**. Direct internal calls from within the United Nations House can be made by dialing the four-digit extension alone.

Telephone information may be obtained from the ESCWA Communications Unit (room F-229, ext. 1210); the operator may be reached within the building by dialing "9". Incoming telephone calls for visitors will be put through whenever possible. Personal telephone calls, fax, mail and courier services may be provided against cash payment.

The ESCWA fax numbers are +961-1-981510/1. The Communications Unit may be reached by e-mail at: afeworko@un.org.

Public pay phones are also available and can be used to make local and international calls. Most Lebanese use mobile phones, and coverage extends throughout the country. Pay phone cards are available in post offices, kiosks and smoke shops; mobile phone cards can be purchased from mobile phone retail shops which are abundantly available throughout Lebanon.

Contact numbers in ESCWA

Office of the Executive Secretary

Name	Position	Extension	Tel. (direct)
Mr. Bader Omar Al Dafa	Executive Secretary	1802	01-978802
Mr. Albaqir Adam	Secretary of the Commission	1845	01-978845
Mr. Nabil Abu Dargham	Special Assistant to the Executive Secretary	1847	01-978847

Administrative Services Division (ASD)

Name	Position	Extension	Tel. (direct)
Mr. David Iyamah	Chief, Administrative Services Division	1316	01-978316
Ms. Anastasia Wilson	Chief, Human Resources Management Section	1306	01-978306
Mr. Michael Lynch	Chief, Security and Safety Section	1003	01-978003
Ms. Ahed Sboul	Chief, Conference Services Section	1113	01-978113
Ms. Maria Carmen Emmerich	Chief, General Services Section	1133	01-978133
Mr. Mario Tuason	Chief, Budget and Finance Section	1309	01-978309

Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Division (PPTCD)

Name	Position	Extension	Tel. (direct)
Mr. Roberto Laurenti	Chief, Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Division	1818	01-978818
Ms. Ramla Khalidi	Acting Chief, Technical Cooperation Section	1419	01-978419
Mr. Tarcisio Alvarez-Rivero	Chief, Programme Planning and Coordination Section	1863	01-978863

Chiefs of substantive Divisions

Name	Position	Extension	Tel. (direct)
Ms. Anhar Hegazi	Chief, Sustainable Development and Productivity Division (SDPD)	1502	01-978502
Mr. Youssef Nuseir	Chief, Information and Communication Technology Division (ICTD)	1549	01-978549
Mr. Nabil Safwat	Chief, Economic Development and Globalization Division (EDGD)	1438	01-978438
Mr. Frederico Neto	Chief, Social Development Division (SDD)	1417	01-978417
Mr. Juraj Riecan	Chief, Statistics Division (SD)	1351	01-978351
Mr. Tarik Alami	Chief, Section for Emerging and Conflict-Related Issues (ECRI)	1616	01-978616
Ms. Afaf Omer	Chief, ESCWA Centre for Women (ECW)	1729	01-978729

United Nations Information Centre/Service (UNIC/UNIS)

Name	Position	Extension	Tel. (direct)
Mr. Bahaa Elkoussy	Director, UNIC/UNIS	1830	01-978830

IV. FACILITIES AND SERVICES IN LEBANON

Accommodation

Hotel accommodation is available at reasonable rates for persons attending the session. A comprehensive list of hotels in the area and their prices may be requested from the Procurement and Travel Unit at ESCWA (room F-141, ext. 1141). For more information on hotels in Beirut, see the session page on the ESCWA website <http://escwa.un.org>.

Weather

Weather in Lebanon is generally moderate, typical of many Mediterranean countries and is characterized by four seasons: spring, summer, fall and winter. In coastal areas, winters are generally cool and rainy whilst summers are hot and humid. In more elevated areas, temperatures usually drop below freezing during the winter, sometimes heavy snow; while summers are warm and dry. Average temperatures in Beirut range between:

Winter	13°C-16°C	(during the period January-March)
Spring	18°C-25°C	(during the period April-June)
Summer	25°C-30°C	(during the period July-September)
Autumn	15°C-24°C	(during the period October-December)

During the session, the temperature is expected to range between 18° and 25°C.

Banking, currency and exchange rates

The unit of currency is the Lebanese pound (or lira). Coins are issued in denominations of LL250 and LL500 and notes in denominations of LL1,000, LL5,000, LL10,000, LL20,000, LL50,000 and LL100,000. The current exchange rate

for the United Nations programmes is US\$1.00 = LL1,501, while the exchange rate on the Beirut market is US\$1.00 = LL1,500.

There are no exchange restrictions on the inflow and outflow of local and foreign currency or on the exchange and transfer of currencies. Banks are open between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m., from Monday to Friday, and between 8 a.m. and 12 noon on Saturdays. Exchange offices are open until late in the evening. There are several banks located in the vicinity of the United Nations House.

The United States dollars are used widely throughout the country. Restaurants, hotels and stores often quote their prices in US dollars, and many establishments may convert and provide US dollar prices for you upon request.

Money or traveler checks can be exchanged at banks, private money exchange shops and major hotels. Major credit cards (Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Diners Club etc.) are accepted at most stores, restaurants and hotels throughout the country. Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) are also widely available in Beirut and main cities throughout the country and usually dispense both US dollars and Lebanese pounds.

Transportation

Many travel agencies in Beirut have modern buses available for sightseeing and tourist trips to various areas in Lebanon. In addition, there are numerous car rental and taxi offices. Commuting between hotels and the United Nations House can be made by taxi or “service” (LL10,000 per car or LL2,000 per passenger respectively, negotiated before departure). Such vehicles are plentiful and may be hailed along any street in Beirut. However, it is recommended to use taxi companies which are considered safer.

Restaurants and shopping

There are many Lebanese, European and Middle Eastern restaurants in and around Beirut, as well as a number of fast food restaurants. Many restaurants are located in the Beirut Central District, minutes’ walk away from the United Nations House. More information can be obtained from any hotel in Beirut.

Sightseeing

Main cities, historical landmarks

The Capital of Lebanon is Beirut. Other main cities include Tripoli, Jbeil (Byblos), Saida (Sidon) and Tyre (Sur).

The United Nations House is located in the Beirut Central District. Sights in the immediate vicinity include the newly-restored town centre area, offering shops, restaurants, Roman ruins, the Parliament and Government Houses; the Corniche, a wide-paved walkway along the sea; the famous Hamra Street, for those who like to shop. The Ministry of Tourism or any of the numerous travel agencies in Beirut may be contacted for further information on guided tours or other cultural and touristic sites of interest around Lebanon. The Cedars of Lebanon, which are one of its most important landmarks, serve as the country's national emblem. The most important historical landmarks are Baalbeck, Beiteddine, Byblos, Jeitta Grotto, Aanjar, and Qadisha Valley. The following website may be visited for more information: <http://www.lebanon-tourism.gov.lb>.

Government office hours

Working hours in Government offices are from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., except on Sundays and official holidays. No official holidays coincide with the session.

Internet

Internet cafés are available throughout Lebanon and many hotels and restaurants now offer high-speed Internet access for free or for a small fee.

Language

While Arabic is Lebanon's official language, English and French are widely spoken. Most Lebanese speak at least two or three languages. Many establishments provide signs, menus and information in both Arabic and English.

Time

Lebanese time is G.M.T. +2 hours in winter (October to March) and +3 hours in summer (beginning April to end September), when daylight saving time is observed.

Electrical current

The electrical current is 220 or 110 volts AC (50 cycles) country-wide.

Useful numbers in Lebanon

Internal Security Forces (Police)	112
Civil Defense	125
Fire Brigade	175
Red Cross	140

Yellow Pages	1515
Beirut International Airport Inquiries	150