

**UNITED NATIONS**

Economic and Social Commission  
for Western Asia



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**ESCWA Opening Statement  
to the  
Regional Workshop on Trade and Environment Capacity Building  
25-27 March 2006  
by  
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**Your Excellency Under-Secretary Al-Eraimi,  
Director General Muharrari,  
Your Excellency Dr. Al-Riyami,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you today on behalf of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia to the Regional Workshop on Trade and Environment Capacity Building. Meanwhile, let me convey to you the welcome and appreciation of Ms. Mervat Tallawy, our Executive Secretary and Ms. Anhar Hegazi, Director of the Sustainable Development and Productivity Division from ESCWA, who would have joined us today was it not for the change in venue and commitments in Beirut.

As you are aware, the rapidly changing arena of international trade has introduced new challenges and opportunities for developing countries in their efforts to achieve sustainable development. This has increased the importance of examining the relationship between trade and environment policies in an integrated manner.

ESCWA has devoted considerable efforts over the past few years to building capacity on trade and environment issues. It is within the framework of the Regional Program on Trade and Environment Capacity Building, which was adopted by a resolution of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment in 2003, that ESCWA has included this Workshop in its work programme and is conducting it in cooperation with the League of Arab States and the UNEP Regional Office for Western Asia.

The Workshop is also the first in a series of activities planned within the framework of the inter-regional United Nations Development Account project on Capacity Building in Trade and the Environment. It will be followed by two sub-regional studies focusing on a key trade and environment priority issue being faced by countries in the Mashreq and the Gulf sub-regions; by six national roundtables to discuss trade and environment priority issues with local stakeholders in the public and private sectors; and by a High Level Meeting on Trade and Environment to foster consensus on regional priorities and positions, which will take place by the end of this year. Member Countries who are interested in taking part in these activities are encouraged to indicate so.

I hope that our Workshop will succeed in building capacity on major topics and priorities related to trade and environment negotiations and policy-making at the global, regional and national levels.

I am also pleased that cooperative efforts have allowed this Workshop to be held as a back-to-back activity with the Regional Workshop on Trade and Environment for Arab and Middle East Countries being organized by the World Trade Organization. I hope that these complementary activities will serve to widen understanding of the different aspects of trade and environment.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Ministry of Regional Municipalities, Environment, and Water Resource and its staff for welcoming us so warmly here in Oman. Special thanks is also extended to Sultan Qaboos University for accommodating this workshop on your beautiful campus. I would like to also thank the League of Arab States, the UNEP Regional Office for West Asia, the WTO as well as our colleagues in UNEP/ETB and UNCTAD for making this Workshop possible. A special thanks also goes to my colleagues in ESCWA who worked hard to organize this Workshop.

Thank you all for your participation and your contributions to this Workshop, and I wish you a very successful and pleasant stay in Oman.

Thank you.