Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to Host Expert Group Meeting on Strengthening Good Governance Practices in Conflict Affected Countries: Current Priorities and Future Interventions, 27-28 February 2009, UN House, Beirut

Beirut, Lebanon, 27 February 2009 — The section for Emerging and Conflict Related Issues (ECRI) of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), which is dedicated towards addressing development challenges as a result of conflict, is hosting an expert group meeting on Strengthening Good Governance Practices in Conflict Affected Countries: Current Priorities and Future Interventions, 27-28 February 2009, at UN House, Beirut.

By bringing together a wide range of local, regional and international experts and representatives from member states, including the League of Arab States, United Nations Development Programme, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, European School of Governance, the Arab Center for the Development of the Rule of Law and Integrity, the American and Lebanese Universities, the Lebanese center for Policy Studies, main objective of the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) is to explore the means of enhancing the performance of the public sector in achieving national development goals – within the context of conflict and political tension.

More specifically the EGM aims to provide a platform for exchanging knowledge of administrative reforms and good governance practices as a vehicle for development, conflict mitigation and peacebuilding. In addition, the meeting will examine possible good governance interventions that would mitigate the impact of conflict on development and articulate future pragmatic interventions to enhance good governance practices in conflict affected countries.

The first panel of the meeting focused on the importance of the role of good governance in social and economic development and peacebuilding. In light of the development challenges facing Western Asia in general, and in conflict affected countries in particular, the dedication to good governance practices is all the more pressing.

In the second panel, the challenges to good governance in conflict affected countries were identified. The most serious challenges within the public sector appeared to be the depletion of human resources and physical infrastructure, and outdated administrative practices. These factors have rendered public institutions unable to cope with the increasing demand for essential services, thus compromising economic and social development. Participants examined effective and sustainable good governance interventions, and discussed the right combination of actors that would enhance good governance practices and how such a process could strengthen essential service delivery and contribution to state-building. The third panel examined successful models that support the enhancement of local good governance practices in the region.
On the second day, the meeting will tackle the theme of strengthening the public sector through capacity development, as a precursor to state-building and a vital pillar of any peacebuilding strategy. It is also expected that alternative interventions will be proposed, such as public-private partnerships and corporate social responsibility which, if effectively implemented, could promote good governance practices and render the public sector more competitive, cost-effective, transparent, service-oriented and accountable.