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Technical Committee
Fifth meeting
Beirut, 6-7 April 2011

Item 8 (b) of the provisional agenda

PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN THE WORK OF THE SECRETARIAT
IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS
MADE BY THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE AT ITS FOURTH MEETING

Summary

The Technical Committee held its fourth meeting at United Nations House in Beirut from 26 to 27 January 2010. At the end of the meeting, it made a set of recommendations; some related to the items on the agenda, and others to the nature of the work of the Committee and ways of enhancing it.

This document presents actions taken and activities carried out by the secretariat in order to implement those recommendations.

**RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
AT ITS FOURTH MEETING AND ACTIONS
TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THEM**

Recommendations made by the Technical Committee at its fourth meeting (Beirut, 26-27 January 2010) pertained to the terms of reference of the Committee, dates of meetings, evaluation of ESCWA work, participation in meetings, in addition to recommendations on ways to activate the work of the Technical Committee. Following are the recommendations and corresponding actions taken to implement them.

Terms of Reference of the Technical Committee

Recommendation (a)

Amend paragraph 10 (b) of document E/ESCWA/2010/C.4/3 on the revised terms of reference of the Technical Committee, primarily those related to the follow-up of the implementation of resolutions adopted during ESCWA ministerial sessions and reporting thereto, so as to read as follows, “To advise and assist the secretariat in presenting reports following up on the implementation of ESCWA resolutions”.

Action taken

Paragraph 10 (b) of document E/ESCWA/2010/C.4/3 on the revised terms of reference of the Technical Committee has been revised. The revised version is set out in the annex to this document.

Dates of meetings

Recommendation (b)

Schedule the Technical Committee meetings in advance, provided member countries are informed of any change in their dates.

Action taken

In order to schedule the meetings of the Technical Committee taking into account the date of submission of data related to the strategic framework for the biennium to the Committee for Programme and Coordination at the United Nations in even-numbered years, and of the date of submission of proposed programme budgets to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in odd-numbered years, the secretariat has proposed a timetable for the Technical Committee meetings until 2015. It takes into account the dates of ESCWA ministerial sessions and expert group meetings which provide an opportunity to exchange views and hold consultations with regional and international experts on the vision and strategy of the Arab region for the coming years.

The proposed schedule of meetings shall be submitted to the fifth meeting of the Technical Committee for consideration and decision. It is set out in annex 1 to the document submitted to the Technical Committee entitled, “Key options for the intergovernmental mechanism of ESCWA and its subsidiary bodies for consideration by ESCWA at its twenty-seventh session” (E/ESCWA/C.5/3). Following the approval of the proposed schedule of meetings, the secretariat will notify the member countries of any amendment thereto.

Evaluation of ESCWA work

Recommendation (c)

Give member countries, during the upcoming meetings of the Committee, the opportunity to express their views on ESCWA work: successes and possible areas of improvement.

Action taken

Under item 4 of the agenda of the fifth meeting of the Technical Committee, representatives of Egypt, Lebanon and the Sudan expressed the view of their countries with regard to ESCWA work, highlighting its strengths and weaknesses, and making proposals on ways to improve it. This item aims to promote the exchange of experiences and information; disseminate success stories; improve services provided by ESCWA to member countries and implement necessary activities for their development needs. The goal is to enhance the effectiveness of ESCWA work and achieve the desired outcomes.

The fourth meeting of the Technical Committee reviewed reports submitted by Bahrain, Jordan, Palestine and Saudi Arabia, in which they expressed their views with regard to ESCWA work, its successful experiences, and areas of improvement.

Recommendation (d)

Prepare an evaluation questionnaire to facilitate the identification of the views of member countries in relation to ESCWA work, and distribute it to member countries two months before the regular meeting of the Committee with a view to allowing sufficient time for consultation and coordination with the concerned parties to fill out and submit the questionnaire.

Action taken

Upon the request of member countries, the secretariat prepared guidelines to assist member countries in the preparation and presentation of the views of their countries in relation to ESCWA work. The guidelines were posted on the website of the Technical Committee during the last week of February 2011.

Participation in meetings

Recommendation (e)

Reaffirm the need for a designated group to participate in all the meetings of the Committee, in order to ensure the effective follow-up of the recommendations.

Action taken

In all correspondence sent to member countries, the secretariat highlights the need for a designated group to participate in all the meetings of the Technical Committee, so as to facilitate the follow-up of recommendations and other matters related to its priorities and programme of work.

Other recommendations

Recommendation (f)

Reaffirm the importance of the availability of all data and background information on issues presented to the Committee prior to the scheduled meeting; and shed light on the recommendations and proposals which member countries are requested to submit.

Action taken

ESCWA secretariat took this recommendation into account during the preparations for the fifth meeting of the Technical Committee. It has posted all information and topics related to the Technical Committee on its web page on the ESCWA website.

Recommendation (g)

Upload ESCWA publications on its website and allow for their free download. Also upload the documents of the meetings held by ESCWA and the Technical Committee four weeks in advance, in order to enable participants to examine them prior to discussions.

Action taken

The secretariat regularly posts its publications, including studies and reports of meetings and conferences organized by ESCWA, on its website, so as to allow the site visitors to view their content and use them. ESCWA provides free service to its visitors, which allows them, if they wish, to receive alert e-mails via their email addresses notifying them of ESCWA latest publications. ESCWA publications issued before 2005 could also be viewed on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org/default.asp>).

Recommendation (h)

Coordinate with member countries the preparation of ESCWA proposed strategic framework; and allow sufficient time for these countries to study the strategic framework for the 2012-2013 biennium and add their observations thereon within four weeks as of the end of the Committee meeting.

Action taken

According to the practice at the General Assembly as of 2003, a number of intergovernmental reviews are conducted in relation to the proposed strategic framework during even-numbered years, before its submission to the Committee for Programme and Coordination. Similar reviews are conducted for the proposed programme budget during the odd-numbered years, before its submission to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. In this context, the secretariat proposed a timetable for the meetings of the Technical Committee, which is an intergovernmental consultative forum responsible for reviewing the strategic framework and programme budget, in conformity with the planning approach adopted at the United Nations.

Four weeks after the fourth meeting of the Technical Committee, the secretariat received the comments made by Jordan on the proposed strategic framework for the biennium 2012-2013.

Pursuant to resolution 301 (XXVI) on the adoption of the draft strategic framework for the biennium 2012-2013, which requested the Executive Secretary to distribute the strategic framework, as adopted, to member countries, the secretariat sent the final version of the Strategic Framework for the biennium 2012-2013 to member countries, including observations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

Recommendation (i)

Reaffirm the need to send the documents of ESCWA ministerial session to member countries six weeks in advance, in order to enable them to review such documents and comment thereon.

Action taken

The secretariat made every effort to ensure that the documentation of the twenty-sixth ministerial session (17-20 May 2010) would be posted on ESCWA Internet, early enough to enable for member countries to review them, and provide feedback and suggestions thereon, prior to their discussion at the ministerial session. The secretariat will step up efforts in the future to allow sufficient time for member countries to examine the documents of the ministerial sessions and other subsidiary intergovernmental bodies.

Recommendation (j)

Approve the theme “Role of Youth and their Empowerment” as the main theme of the twenty-sixth session of ESCWA, and organize a roundtable on human and institutional capacity-building.

Action taken

Upon approval by the Technical Committee, at its fourth meeting, of proposals made by the secretariat in relation to the theme of the twenty-sixth session of ESCWA, the role of youth and their empowerment and also national youth policies were determined as the key theme of the session. It was decided that an intergovernmental meeting would be held to address this theme, in the light of its importance to the countries of the region and the proclamation by the United Nations of year 2010 as the International Year of Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding. The secretariat made a presentation on national youth policies in the framework of the Global Programme of Action for Youth, which emphasized the need to build on this programme, as it provides a policy framework and practical guidelines for national action and international support for youth development. The presentation concluded by summarizing the vision of ESCWA in relation to strengthening national capacities in the field of youth policy and action plan development.

Subsequently, a group of young Arabs who were selected from different schools and universities in Lebanon interacted with ministers participating in the session. Discussions focused on youth-related themes, namely education, employment, health, participation in decision-making and public life and globalization.

The secretariat also organized discussions on building human and institutional capacity. Furthermore, it made a presentation on the utmost importance of institutional development in the ESCWA region for modernizing the public sector. The presentation addressed the close relationship between public sector modernization and development. It stressed that developing the public sector by building institutional and human capacity is the main factor contributing to improving economic and social performance. The presentation also addressed the possibility of applying the new concept of public sector modernization in the ESCWA region and challenges facing it. It concluded with a set of recommendations which could be applied in areas of policy and capacity-building, in order to strengthen institutional structures and achieve administrative reforms.

Recommendation (k)

Post a list of the names and addresses of member country representatives on the Committee webpage, with a view to facilitating communication and discussions of issues of common interest.

Action taken

Following the conclusion of the fourth meeting of the Technical Committee, the secretariat posted a list of the names and addresses of member country representatives on the web page of the Technical Committee on the ESCWA website.

Recommendation (I)

Request the secretariat to provide technical and legal opinion when formulating recommendations prior to adoption.

Action taken

The secretariat confirms that the recommendations made by the Technical Committee will be drafted, revised and presented to member countries for discussion. Member countries are also requested to make proposals and provide technical and legal opinion thereon prior to adoption.

Annex

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

1. The Technical Committee was established pursuant to the decision of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) at its twenty-fourth session (Beirut, 8-11 May 2006) and with the aim of enhancing interaction and close consultation between the ESCWA secretariat and its member countries on substantive development issues.
2. The membership of the Technical Committee comprises high-level government officials of ESCWA member countries, designated by the National Focal Points.
3. The members of the Technical Committee shall be responsible for self-financing their participation, as agreed by member countries at the twenty-fourth session of ESCWA.
4. The Technical Committee holds three meetings per biennium, in addition to a fourth, if necessary, upon consultation between the secretariat and the ministerial session bureau. Thus, the Committee holds one meeting in the year when a ministerial session is held, and two meetings in other years. This measure shall come into effect as of 2010. The aim is to lengthen the interval between the ministerial session and the following Technical Committee meeting, in order to allow sufficient time for following up on the resolutions adopted at the ministerial session and presenting comprehensive reports on their implementation.
5. Members of the Committee shall assume the Chair of the meetings on a rotating basis, for the duration of two years and in the Arabic alphabetical order employed by the United Nations.
6. Chair of the Committee shall coincide with the Chair of the session of ESCWA.
7. The Technical Committee shall have the following functions:
 - (a) To advise and assist the secretariat in drawing up proposals for the strategic framework, the programme of work and priorities, consistent with the mandate of the Commission and its guidance;
 - (b) To advise and assist the secretariat in presenting reports following up on the implementation of ESCWA resolutions;
 - (c) To advise and assist the secretariat in following up the implementation of the programme of work and activities of ESCWA, including the mobilization of extrabudgetary resources to support their implementation, and any other outstanding matters that require action;
 - (d) To assist the secretariat in identifying emerging economic, social and other relevant priority issues for incorporation into the provisional agendas of the sessions of ESCWA and its subsidiary bodies before finalization, with due consideration to the Rules of Procedure of ESCWA;
 - (e) To carry out any other tasks entrusted to it by ESCWA.
