



UN-ESCWA

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Workshop on Science, Technology and Innovation Observatories in ESCWA Member Countries

Phase I: Towards the Establishment of National and Regional STI Observatories

Beirut, 11-12 November 2009

Preliminary Information Note

1. Background

Science, technology and innovation (STI) are recognized as important strategic factors that shape and drive the socio-economic future of nations. They are essential ingredients of sustainable development that can play a major role in poverty reduction. With globalization, trade liberalization and the emergence of knowledge-based industries, the importance of STI for economic growth and competitiveness has become more evident. The growing economic and societal importance of STI has spurred the need for the collection and analysis of data that would be related to inputs, processes, outputs and impacts. Reliable facts and figures would require interrelated indicators.

STI statistics and performance indicators have become necessary tools in the evaluation of the various stages of STI performance. They are crucial for monitoring scientific and technological development, determining current global technological trends, conducting foresight exercises and determining specific areas of investment. Indicators are also essential for the formulation, adjustment and implementation of STI policies and strategies. The establishment of STI observatories (STIO) that would be responsible for the collection of data as well as for the creation and analysis of indicators would be vital for the work of policymakers and strategic analysts. As of the writing of this information note, there are no STIOs in the ESCWA region carrying out data collection and analysis duties. So far, data in EMCs is collected in a multitude of ways by a variety of institutions. A good example would be Jordan where the Higher Council for Science and Technology is engaged in data and statistics collection through several of its divisions.

To improve the situation on the ground, ESCWA has been actively promoting the establishment of STIOs in the region. It has already worked closely with several EMCs to formulate concrete plans aiming at the establishment of national STIOs. To date, Lebanon has initiated plans for an STIO that would be hosted by the National Council for Scientific Research. Syria and Jordan have closely followed pace. Several other EMCs have expressed an interest in pursuing similar plans.

In this context, capacity building will have a major role to play. During a recent workshop on the establishment of the Syrian STIO, this fact was confirmed and adapted as a recommendation. In response to this recommendation, ESCWA is organizing the Workshop on Science, Technology and Innovation Observatories in ESCWA Member Countries." The main objective of the workshop is to promote the establishment of national and regional STIOs in the ESCWA region.

The workshop is subdivided into two phases. The first phase of the workshop is entitled "Towards the Establishment of National and Regional Science, Technology and Innovation Observatories" and will be held in Beirut on 11 and 12 November 2009. The second phase will address the "Implementation of Science, Technology and Innovation Observatories" and will be held in December 2009. The first phase of the workshop will include fourteen directors of existing national STI institutions while the second phase will include public sector specialists and technology experts who are involved in the creation and implementation of STIOs and the development of STI indicators.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the first phase of the workshop are as follows:

- Assessing the impact of STI on the socio-economic development of the ESCWA region;
- Raising the awareness of participants on the role and purposes of STI observatories;
- Promoting the activities related to the establishment of national STI observatories in ESCWA member countries;
- Formulating plans for the establishment of a regional STI observatory;
- Fostering regional co-operation among STI policymakers in EMCs.

3. Topics

Below are the major topics that will be discussed during the first phase of the workshop:

- The status of STI in the Arab region;
- The role of STI in socio-economic development;
- Indicators used to measure the globalization of research and development;
- Recent developments in the production of STI statistics and indicators;
- Methodology and practice of STI policies in ESCWA member countries;
- Setting-up national STI observatories;
- Setting-up a regional STI observatory;
- Regional and international cooperation in the field of STI;
- Exchanging ideas and sharing experiences;
- Bilateral cooperation among ESCWA member countries;
- Conclusions and follow-up.

4. Participation

Fourteen participants from ESCWA member countries will be invited to the first phase of the workshop. They include high-level decision makers who are in charge of STI policies. The main speakers will be regional and international experts in STI methodologies and policies.

5. Organization, venue and dates

The workshop is organized by UN-ESCWA and will be held on 11 and 12 November 2009 at UN House, Riad El Solh Square, Beirut, Lebanon.

6. Working language

English and Arabic are the working languages of the workshop. There will be no simultaneous translation between languages.

7. Additional information

Inquiries and requests for additional information should be addressed to:

Mr. Yousef Nusseir, Director, ICT Division, UN-ESCWA, Beirut, Lebanon, Phone: +961 1 978549, Fax: +961 1 981510, Email: nusseir@un.org

Mr. Mansour Farah, Chief, ICT Policies Section, ICT Division, UN-ESCWA, Beirut, Lebanon, Phone: +961 1 978538, Fax: +961 1 981510, Email: farah14@un.org