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ESCWA 2009 Highlights



If a title is to be given to the year 2009, it would have to be “A Year of Celebration and Strengthened Ties”. During that year, ESCWA celebrated its 35th anniversary, examined hot global issues, and saw its partnerships consolidated with its member countries, sister Regional Commissions and other UN entities, as well as other regional and international bodies.

ESCWA has further enhanced ties with member countries through official visits and many bilateral activities. Jordan, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Syria were stops on the agenda of the Executive Secretary in 2009. Throughout those official visits, bilateral relations and services were

discussed and joint projects had emerged.

Cooperation among UN agencies was reinforced in 2009, with the organization of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) and the Regional Directors Team (RDT) meetings held at the UN House in Beirut. The meetings, which were opened by Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro, consolidated the working partnerships among UN bodies and their association with regional and international bodies, such as the League of Arab States, the African Union, UN country teams and national governments. The meetings focused on the millennium development goals (MDGs), food security and youth.



Thirty-fifth Anniversary

ESCWA's celebrations of its 35th Anniversary have provided an opportunity for the acknowledgement of an aspect that rarely comes to light at the Commission: the cultural and artistic talents and skills of its staff. In celebrating its 35th anniversary, ESCWA has provided a platform for its staff to show their personal gifts and flairs.

This anniversary provides an opportunity for the proclamation of our adherence to ESCWA's mission and its role as a forum for developmental cooperation in times of conflict, said the Executive Secretary Bader AlDafa in launching the series of events to mark the anniversary. He added that ESCWA was aiming to turn the occasion into an opportunity to renew commitment to dialogue in times of



violence and to preserve the local character of our region in the midst of globalization.



Thirty-fifth Anniversary (Cont.)

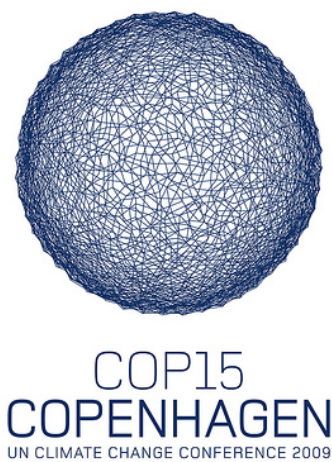
The first event in the Anniversary celebrations was a musical concert by the Ladies in Harmony, an all-women ensemble whose lead pianist is an ESCWA staff member. Then came an art exhibition the Commission organized to honor pioneer Lebanese artists and painters. The display featured some of the best works of 19 painters. ESCWA then brought together East and West in “Orient meets Occident: the Arabian Passion according to J.S. Bach,” a classical concert performed by 36 musicians and four singers from the German Foundation Podium Junger Musiker at St. George Cathedral in downtown Beirut. “Music is what remains in life. It is the language of all,” said AlDafa in introductory remarks at the event, quoting late French novelist Leon Bloy. Through music, peoples and nations rise, and with it, immortal images are painted throughout time, he added. Before the year drew to a close, ESCWA held another exhib-



it to display art works and creations of UN staff and their families. It brought to light the talents and hobbies of over 27 staff and family members, including paintings by the Executive Secretary himself.

Climate Change

In line with its mission of helping to achieve social and economic welfare in the region, ESCWA made special efforts to examine and highlight the issue of Climate Change. Through meetings, conferences and participations in global events, the commission shed light on the regional aspects of climate change and on its repercussions on member countries and beyond. It sought to find means to assist the region in adaptation and mitigation. The series of climate change meetings ESCWA held on national and regional levels were in preparation for its participation in the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009, which drew leaders and activists from around the globe. The ES Badr AlDafa and chief of the Sustainable Development and Productivity Division Anhar Hegazy attended the Copenhagen summit.



Financial Crisis

Dubbed the crisis of the century, the international financial crisis has posed one of the most real challenge to globalization and considerable efforts were made to manage and deal with it. The financial crisis was among the topics that topped ESCWA’s priorities for 2009. The Commission organized a series of meetings, culminating in the “Regional High-Level Consultative Forum on the Impacts of the International Financial Crisis on the ESCWA Member Countries: the Way Forward” held in Damascus. That meeting was aimed at harmonizing views of Arab countries on the topic in preparation for the UN Conference on World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development, which was held at the UN Headquarters in June 2009. The meeting concluded with the “Damascus Declaration,” which was presented as a background document to that global UN conference.



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