



## Haiti Earthquake Devastates UN Mission



On 12 January, Haiti was struck by a devastating earthquake that killed and wounded tens of thousands of people, including many colleagues working for the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti's (MINUSTAH) and other UN agencies. At least 150 UN staff were inside the Organization's Headquarters at the Christopher Hotel in Port au Prince when the building collapsed.

The UN has confirmed 36 fatalities, including 13 civilians, four police officers and 19 military personnel. These figures are undoubtedly subject to change in the coming days. Upon the request of the Secretary-General, all UN duty stations lowered their UN flags to half-staff out

of respect for those who have lost their lives. The flags will remain lowered for two full days.


ESCWA staff council expressed solidarity with the people of Haiti and their surviving UN personnel. The Commission's staff mourned fellow colleagues killed in the Caribbean island nation in a condolence letter disseminated to all UN staff serving in Lebanon. "Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims of the natural calamity in Haiti, their families and our dear colleagues. Every minute counts at this early stage. No effort should be spared at this moment," the council said. ESCWA will be holding a fundraising event for the families of Haiti's victims. ■

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## Training on Data Quality

ESCWA organized a training session on data quality and calculation of external trade indices in mid-December in Beirut, to introduce professionals in the field to the necessary scientific and practical tools and methods that enable them to generate indices.

Held under the project of "Strengthening the Development of International Merchandise Trade Statistics and the Compilation of E-Commerce in Member Countries of ESCWA region", the training came in to a request by member countries participating in a Cairo workshop on the subject, held in June 2008. 

## ESCWA Initiative on Aid-For-Trade Road Map

ESCWA hosted at the UN-House this week its First Consultative Meeting on Initiative on Aid-For-Trade Road Map for the Region. The meeting was co-organized by the Islamic Trade Finance Corporation and had discussed plans for organizing Expert and Ministerial Meetings in this respect. Participating

organizations were World Trade Organization (WTO), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Trade Center (ITC), The World Bank (WB), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and United

Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

It is aspired that the final report of the meeting will come up with a road map for implementation of the Aid-For-Trade initiative in the ESCWA Region. ■

## Training on Data Quality (Cont.)

The training was attended by 31 participants from 12 ESCWA member countries, representing National Statistics Offices (NSOs), Customs Authorities and Central Banks. The training session was conducted by two consultants: Eyles Al Asimi and Henri Tyrman, with the support of Mahmoud Al Qiyya from the NSO of Palestine, and Ismail

Lubbad from ESCWA.

Discussions and recommendations elaborated on the need for similar workshops to improve participants' knowledge in the areas of calculating external trade indices; of collecting, analyzing and disseminating data; and in e-commerce. They also recommended

having specific trainings at the country level followed by assistance visits. In addition, they stressed on the importance of exchanging data between the ESCWA countries and in using electronic communication. Participants welcomed ESCWA's actions towards creating a virtual network for statisticians and the ESCWA Com-Trade Database. ■

## 2010: UN Celebrates Youth, Biodiversity and Rapprochement of Cultures

### International Year for the Rapprochement of Culture



The year 2010 will be celebrated as the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures. The goal of the International Year consists in making the rapprochement of cultures the hallmark of all policy-making at local, national, regional and international levels, involving the greatest number of relevant stakeholders.

**Lead Agency:** UNESCO

**Website:** <http://bit.ly/IntlYearOfRapprochementOfCultures>

**GA Resolution:** A/RES/62/90 (<http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=A/RES/62/90>)

### International Year of Biodiversity



Biodiversity is life  
Biodiversity is our life

The United Nations proclaimed 2010 to be the International Year of Biodiversity, which is a unique opportunity to increase understanding of the vital role that biodiversity plays in sustaining life on Earth. The GA resolution (A/RES/62/920) encourages Member States and other stakeholders to take advantage of the International Year to increase awareness of the importance of biodiversity by promoting actions at the local, regional and international levels.

**Lead Agency:** Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD)

**Website:** <http://bit.ly/IntlYearOfBiodiversity>

**GA Resolution:** A/RES/612/203 (<http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=A/RES/61/203>)

### International Year of Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding

The General Assembly decided to proclaim the year commencing on 12 August 2010 the International Year of Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding. The GA considered it was necessary to disseminate among youth the ideals of peace, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, solidarity and dedication to the objectives of progress and development.

GA Resolution: A/C.3/64/L.8/REV.1

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