



# UN-ESCWA Weekly News

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## UN-ESCWA Proposes Setting up a Fund to Confront Arab Youth Issues



The Executive Secretary of UN-ESCWA, Mr. Bader Omar Al Dafa, has suggested the setting up of a fund to confront the issues of Arab youth, notably the issue of unemployment. During its first phase, the fund would start with the implementation of trial initiatives, after which they would be developed and modified to suit special requirements by the countries of the region. Al Dafa also suggested the establishment of an observatory whose mission would be to scrutinize policies related to the youth, especially unemployment; store successful international experiences and modify them to suit Arab circumstances; and support institutions whose policies have succeeded in confronting problems of the youth.

Al Dafa's statement was made during the second day of the general session of the 35th Conference of the Arab Labor Organization that was held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, from 23 February until 1 March 2008.

Al Dafa said that the percentage of the youth (whose age range between 15 and 24) has reached 21% out of the overall Arab countries in 2005 or 66 million people. It is expected that their number reach 78 million people by 2020. Despite the improvement

of the education level in the past decades, the percentage of unemployment among the youth is still high, reaching 53% of the overall people seeking jobs. This is the result of several reasons and is gravely affecting youth as individuals and affecting the societies that they live in and this is being manifested in the emergence of certain phenomena including emigration, extremism, drug proliferation, crime and others.

Despite the rise in the percentage of youth among other citizens in the Arab states, Al Dafa referred to a new emerging phenomenon, which is the strong decrease in infertility and children mortality that will lead to an increase in the percentage of youth being in the working age. So Arab states must either provide hope for the youth to benefit from them in achieving economic growth, increasing investment revenues and ensuring full operation of the Arab states' skills or face an aggravating problem of unemployment that could lead to grave consequences and challenges that would be difficult to confront.

Al Dafa said he has faith that the role of the United Nations and ESCWA does not only lie on determining the problem or issue of priority, but on devising a suitable

mechanism or strategy to confront it and on coming up with practical plans to improve the qualification of the educational, experimental and vocational systems. The role of the UN and ESCWA also lie on linking the results of the educational system with the needs of the job market and establishing an infrastructure to raise the productive qualification of workers and facilitate their relocation to other jobs that suit their qualifications. Within this framework, the Executive-Secretary proposed a series of procedures to confront challenges that the Arab youth are facing, including:

- 1- Setting up a fund to confront issues of the Arab youth, specifically the unemployment. The fund would start with the implementation of trial initiatives, after which these initiatives would be developed and modified to suit special requirements by the countries of the region.
- 2- Establishing an observatory whose mission would be to scrutinize policies related to the youth, especially unemployment, store successful international experiences and modify them to suit Arab circumstances and support institutions whose policies have succeeded in confronting problems of the youth.
- 3- Establishing a database for work and unemployment by focusing on the youth in the Arab world. The database aims at developing a number of indices to follow-up on the percentage of unemployment and its composition with respect to the social factor, age group, geographical presence, educational level and others.
- 4- Building a future system capable of drawing images of the fu-

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ture job market, qualifications needed and specializations that are not found to orient the students and graduates.

- 5- Using information technology and its tools to monitor recent needs and provide it in various regions and make it accessible to everyone in order to look for jobs and developments in the job market.
- 6- Encouraging scientific research in the fields of raising the productive qualification, future job market needs and technical developments. ■

# Ban Ki-moon Launches Notable Campaign to End Violence against Women

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has launched a multi-year campaign to intensify action to end violence against women and girls.

“Violence against women and girls makes its hideous imprint on every continent, country and culture,” said the Secretary-General. “It is time to focus on the concrete actions that all of us can and must take to prevent and eliminate this scourge - Member States, the United Nations family, civil society and individuals - women and men. It is time to break through the walls of silence, and make legal norms a reality in women’s lives,” Ban said.

The campaign aims at mobilizing public opinion to ensure that policy makers at the highest level work to prevent and eradicate violence against women. A key target will be to secure political will and increased resources from governments, international institutions, United Nations entities, the private sector and other donors for policies and programmes to tackle the problem.

Running from 2008 to 2015 - to coincide with the target date of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) - the campaign will focus on three key areas:



global advocacy; United Nations leadership by example; and strengthened efforts and partnerships at the national, regional and international levels. The link to the MDGs reflects the fact that violence against women constrains the active involvement of women in development and is seen as a serious obstacle to the achievement of all internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. ■

**On the sidelines of the 35th Arab Labor Conference, Executive Secretary Bader Omar Al Dafa met with Egyptian Prime Minister Mr. Ahmad Nazif, and talks focused on UN-ESCWA work in the region. He also met with Palestinian Minister of Planification and Labor, Mr. Samir Adballah Dib Ali.**

During the 35th conference of the Arab Labor, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between UN-ESCWA, represented by its Executive Secretary Bader Omar Al Dafa and the Arab Labor Organization represented by its General Manager Ambassador Ahmad Mohammed Lokman. Within the framework of the MoU, both parties agreed to hold a yearly coordination meeting to agree on joint projects. They also agreed to exchange statistics and special documents on the state and movement of the job market and on investment opportunities, as well as experiences on social and economic development in addition to benefiting from the special information network of both parties. Agreement was also achieved on the selection of some priorities of the working plan, the most important of which are limiting unemployment, providing jobs for the youth, boosting the rights of the woman and protecting children from all forms of exploitation at work, in addition to integrating people with special needs in society in general and in work in particular. ■

## UN-ESCWA Upcoming Meetings

Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works in Iraq: Human Resources Management Training on Decentralization of Service Delivery	8 – 13 March	Amman, Jordan
Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works in Iraq: Management Skills for Middle Managers (Follow-up) And Management of Service Provision under Crisis Conditions: The case of Water, Sanitation and Municipal Service Delivery (follow-up)	10-14 March	Istanbul, Turkey
Expert Group Meeting on Promoting Digital Arabic Content Industry in the ESCWA Region	12-13 March	Beirut, Lebanon
Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works in Iraq: Leadership Skills and Gender Issues in Municipal Work/ Service Delivery	15-19 March	Amman, Jordan

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