



Saudi Arabia - ESCWA to Boost Cooperation



Capacity-building in integrated social policies, tackling poverty and strengthening social institutions were some of the issues discussed on 21 May at ESCWA, when the Regional Commission received Saudi Social Affairs Minister Youssef Al Otheymeen, the newly appointed Saudi Ambassador to Lebanon

Ali Awwad Oussairi and officials from the Embassy.

The Saudi delegation discussed with the Commission's Executive Secretary Bader Al-Dafa and senior ESCWA officials the Commission's areas of work, and possible venues of cooperation in social policy; integrating

population issues in these policies; youth and unemployment and urban observatories.

The Saudi minister underscored several possible ways of cooperation between ESCWA and the ministry. He highlighted the importance of working towards a clear national social development strategy that benefits citizens and spearheads social development activities.

Stressing the need for cooperation on social statistics and data, the minister noted the lack of such information and their crucial role in guiding the work of policy-makers. He also pointed out the issue of capacity building in social policies, through training and workshops. Falling under the same theme, tackling

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ESCWA Participates in Sustainable Development Meeting

ESCWA participated in the debates of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-17th session), where it presented the regional perspective and highlighted priority issues for the region. CSD 17 was especially significant to the Arab region since this two-year cycle (CSD 16 and 17) focused on relevant issues such as agriculture, rural development and desertification. The meeting underscored the need to revive the agricultural sector and address the needs of rural areas. It also recommended the promotion of equitable access to land, clear and secure land tenure; and the implementation



CSD-16 (2008) provided a review of the barriers and constraints to implementation, as well as lessons learned and best practices in relation to thematic areas, while CSD-17 (2009) concluded with a text that provides policy based on the previous year's review.

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poverty and strengthening social institutions and initiatives can also be a venue for common work.

For his part, ESCWA's Executive Secretary noted that it was one of the Commission's duties to transfer expertise from other geographic areas into member countries and vice versa. Success stories in social fields can thus be imported to the region, or exported elsewhere. He cited Bahrain's success, for example, in reducing unemployment from 17 to 3.5 per cent in just three years. This was only one example of the achievements that can inspire other countries.

It is worth noting that ESCWA offers advisory services to its member countries in its various areas of work. It strives to achieve regional integration and build capacities in the region to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as well as internationally-agreed goals. ■

ESCWA Participates in Sustainable Development Meeting (Cont.)

of practical measures to combat land degradation and desertification among other things.

ESCWA presented the outcome of the Arab regional consultations in support of this CSD cycle, carried out in collaboration with regional partners, namely the League of Arab States (LAS) and the UN Environment Program/Regional Office for Western Asia (UNEP/ROWA). The consultations had resulted in the adoption of the Report of the Regional Implementation Meeting of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the Statement on Proposed Policies and Measures for the Arab Region on the Thematic Areas of CSD-17. Both documents were approved by the Joint Committee on Environment and

Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR) and the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE).

In its presentation to CSD-17, ESCWA detailed proposed policies and measures adopted in the Arab statement, and emphasized that as one of the most arid and water scarce areas in the world, the Arab Region must overcome daunting challenges and constraints when addressing the issues of agriculture, rural development, land, drought and desertification. As such, the policies and measures proposed in the statement support various types of interventions and instruments in the areas of capacity building, institution building, private sector development, community-based development

with focus on women and youth, technology transfer, early-warning systems and others.

ESCWA also noted that in considering the above policies and measures, certain issues need also to be taken into consideration, namely: (i) the structural policy changes have already taken hold in the region as a result of rising concerns regarding food security; (ii) the increasing use of non-conventional water resources in the region; (iii) the obstacles to long-term strategic planning due to continuing conflicts and crises plaguing the region; and (iv) the associated challenges of climate change, population growth, unsustainable consumption and others. ■



Arabic Domain Names System Moves Forward

After Dubai and Cairo, Amman hosted the fourth meeting of the Arabic Script in Internationalized Domain Names Working Group (ASIWG). The "Fourth Meeting on Global Harmonization of Arabic Script Use in Domain Names" was particularly important in setting the rules of decision-making on contentious issues. It also drew the road ahead for ASIWG plans and activities for the remainder of 2009.

ESCWA organized this meeting in partnership with "Afilias" and the "Public Interest Registry", two global Internet bodies managing ".info" and ".org" generic Top Level Domains. Held under the patronage of Jordanian Minister of Communications and Infor-

mation Technology Bassem Al-Rosan, the ASIWG-IV was hosted by the Jordanian National Information Technology Center in Amman from 1 to 3 April 2009.

More than 20 ICT experts from different language-based communities- namely Arabic, Farsi, Urdu and Jawi- and some international experts in Internet and Domain Names issues participated in this meeting. Several technical and programmatic topics were discussed for the aim of establishing guidelines for adopting the Arabic script in Internet domain names, including domain registration and lookup processes, funding of the ASIWG, as well as updates from the different communities and global Internet bodies. ■

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