



UN-ESCWA

WEEKLY NEWS

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Issue No. 32/52

03 December 2007

Climate Change in the UN-ESCWA Region



UN-ESCWA Executive Secretary Bader Al Dafa presented a two-fold solution for abating the repercussions of climate change (CC) in the region, noting its four defining characteristics on UN-ESCWA countries. But first and foremost, collective action and strong determination are needed to thwart this phenomenon. Quoting the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Al Dafa emphasized "we all have a historical responsibility to future generations, our grandchildren will be our judges."

Representing a share of 3% of the world's population, the UN-ESCWA region bears the responsibility of a meager 3% of the world CO₂ emissions. Yet, despite the fact that UN-ESCWA countries do not contribute significantly to Global Warming, Al Dafa pointed that they will be disproportionately affected by Climate Change (CC).

Furthermore, he noted with concern that the region is also likely to experience the full spectrum of CC consequences, whereby sustained CC will make the region drier & warmer, reduce its biodiversity, increase the spread of

pests and wildfires, and raise the level of its sea water.

In a perennially crises prone region, CC is also expected to further exacerbate water scarcity, increase conflicts over natural resources, raise unemployment levels, and displace millions of communities, to name just a few.

Finally, highlighting the importance of natural resources in an area especially dependent on them, Al Dafa stressed that some countries in the UN-ESCWA region have been greatly blessed with large oil & natural gas reserves. But, in general, the region has been far less fortunate with respect to fertile land & renewable water. These critical natural resources determine the entire social, economic and political life in the region. Climate change will compromise all of them.

Al Dafa laid out these points in the presentation entitled "Strategies for Adaptation and Mitigation of Climate Change in the UN-ESCWA Region", which he delivered on 12 December during the side-event organized by the five UN regional commissions in Bali, Indonesia, on the sidelines of the UN conference on Climate Change (3-14 December 2007). The event was attended by UN Secretary-General Special Envoys on Climate Change, Han Seung-soo and Ricardo Lagos Escobar, Indonesian Minister of the Environment, Rachmat Witoelar, and head of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Yvo de Boer.

Technology for Enhanced Productivity and Competitiveness

UN-ESCWA, in partnership with the Arab Science and Technology Foundation (ASTF), organized the Expert Group Meeting on "Harnessing Technology for Enhanced Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Productivity and Competitiveness" in Cairo from 3 to 4 November 2007. The meeting was held concurrently and complementarily with the "Made in the Arab World 2007" Competition finals organized by ASTF.

Participants discussed institutional, legal, financial, and policy frameworks that allow overcoming market failures and barriers impeding technology deployment among SMEs. Along this line, the meeting also discussed models for integrating technologies within production processes, and how to integrate SMEs into value-added production chains.



Participants also agreed upon a set of recommendations to help governments, and research, development and production centers in the formulation and implementation of national and regional policies, programs and projects that aim to improve SME productivity and competitiveness in the UN-ESCWA region.

The address of UN-ESCWA Executive Secretary to the meeting, delivered by Ms. Anhar Hegazi, the Director of the Sustainable Development and Productivity Division, stressed the importance of these small enterprises in the regional countries' economy, the pressure they suffer from the liberalization of international trade and the importance of supporting them, and integrating technology into them.

Provision of Services under Crisis Conditions

UN-ESCWA and the United Nations Development Programme - UNDP Iraq Office, based in Amman, organized three workshops on "Management of Services under Crisis Conditions", on 3-24 November 2007, in Amman, Jordan. The meeting aimed at building the capacities of staff of the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works (MoMPW) in Iraq to reliably and efficiently provide water, sanitation and municipal services under



Provision of Services under Crisis Conditions (Cont.)



crisis and conflict conditions. For this purpose, it included specialized workshops in these areas, each consisting of two modules: crisis management; and strategic planning.

The training workshops were implemented in partnership with the Lebanese Centre for Policy Studies, through a team specialized in crisis management, which presented and trained participants on techniques in management of resources, and the efficient provision of services under crisis situations, and showed them the best practices in this field. A specialized team in strategic planning also provided training on principles of strategic planning, supported by Eidos Think Tools software to analyze the best applicable scenarios for planning under crisis management.

On the sidelines of the workshops, field trips were planned to the Water Processing Unit at the Dead Sea, and the Amman Municipality, to expose participants to success stories.

To follow-up the results of the workshops, participants committed to prepare reports including action plans and successful case studies, within 3 months following the end of the workshop, each in his respective field. Twenty cases studies shall be selected to participate at the upcoming follow-up workshop, scheduled to take place during mid February.

Gender Budgeting

UN-ESCWA organized a regional workshop on gender budgeting on 27-28 November 2007, in Amman, Jordan. Ms Shirin Shukri, an expert from UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) trained twenty-one employees from the National Machineries for Women (NMW) and the ministries of finance and planning from eleven UN-ESCWA member countries, on how to include a gender perspective in national budgets.



Climate Change in the UN-ESCWA Region (Cont.)

Al Dafa concluded by saying that solutions to these problems lie in the adoption and implementation of adaptation and mitigation strategies aimed at confronting the ramifications of climate change in the region. In this respect, the Executive Secretary said all countries of the region are keen on not being portrayed as spectators, but rather as active and involved members of the international community with common but differentiated responsibilities.

Under adaptation, UN-ESCWA will support its member countries in their efforts to adapt to the implications of climate change by developing a four step regional strategy which includes: preventing losses by building or modifying infrastructures; reducing losses to tolerable levels by redesigning crop mix; sharing or spreading losses by designing social safety nets to provide disaster relief and minimize impact on the poor and disadvantaged groups; and providing alternative locations for the resettlement of displaced communities.

As for mitigation, UN-ESCWA will lay heavy stress on providing incentives to member countries to incorporate mitigation into their national development strategies. In this connection, it will propose a long-term regional strategy that promotes climate-friendly policies and technologies, economic incentives, and renewable energy technologies that support industrial, residential and commercial sectors in reducing their energy consumption.

On Friday, 14 December, the Executive Secretary also took part in a series of meetings organized and hosted by the Executive Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission



for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP). The Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions met with the senior management team of UN-ESCAP and exchanged views on the common challenges confronting the commissions and the administrative and managerial measures undertaken to tackle them. Al Dafa also participated in a seminar on Emerging Development Issues and Challenges in the Regions, where he delivered a presentation on the Challenges and Opportunities of Economic Social Development in the UN-ESCWA Region, focusing on the importance of mobilizing human, economic and financial resources for regional development. The presentation laid out regional options for addressing development issues and challenges, including a more constructive role of a transparent and efficient public sector, and the consideration of taxes on capital flows.

In addition, within the framework of maintaining mutual understandings and coherent positions on common issues of concern on the global and regional agendas of the UN, the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions also held their quarterly regular meeting at the headquarters of UN-ESCAP in Bangkok.

Tutoring Computer-Based Accountancy

Supporting the need for improved employment creation, and the establishment of enterprises at the local community level in Iraq, the Smart Community Project (SCP) was designed within the UN-ESCWA Unit for Emerging Conflict and Related Issues, whereby was launched a modular "Computer-Based Tutor for Accountancy Skills in Arabic". The programme has been designed according to the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP).

UN-ESCWA held a workshop aimed at delivery of the programme and its multiple applications on 10-11 November 2007, in Beirut. University professors from 4 partner universities that help UN-ESCWA in implementing the SCP participated in the workshop: namely the Universities of Mosul, Thi Qar, Salahu-

ddine, and Al-Qaddiseyeh. The experts involved in the development of the programme trained university professors, who will transmit this knowledge to trainers in their areas of work and neighboring communities. The programme was designed to teach basic accountancy skills, which suit the needs of those wishing to practice this profession without enrolling in university. Partner universities will incorporate the programme within their accountancy curricula as well as deliver it to prospective entrepreneurs and non governmental organizations (NGO) as part of their community development efforts.



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