



UN-ESCWA Weekly News

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Executive Secretary Heads UN-ESCWA Ambassadors Meeting



UN-ESCWA Advisory Committee held its periodic meeting on 13 October at the UN House. Executive Secretary Bader Omar AlDafa opened the meeting, which was attended by the ambassadors of the 14 member countries. Also present was the Republic of Sudan, a first-time participant that recently joined UN-ESCWA.

AlDafa noted in his remarks the positive developments that took place in Lebanon since May, and which “helped in restoring our activities in the host country, because meetings, conferences, seminars and other activities that used to exceed 100, had stopped or been transferred to other countries be-

cause of the security situation”. He also stressed that Beirut is the permanent headquarters of UN-ESCWA, in response to reports about relocating the Commission, noting however that “the economic and social developmental work that we do in Lebanon and the region requires political and security stability to be comprehensive and sustainable”. He added that the recent visit by UN Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiros to Lebanon reflected the international organization’s support to Lebanon, to bolster its regional, Arab, and international status. AlDafa welcomed Sudan’s accession to UN-ESCWA membership, saying that this step “strengthens UN-ESCWA’s position as a regional arm for the

UN and a forum for concerned expertise in the region”.

For his part, Sudan’s Ambassador Jamal Mohamed Ibrahim thanked UN-ESCWA for its continuous support, saying that by becoming part of the Commission, Sudan is a step closer to Arab economic integration and Arab unity. Yemen’s Ambassador Fayssal Amin Abu Ras also suggested that UN-ESCWA expand communication with the private sector, and establish the unique elements of each member country, making exchanges all the more useful among them.

The meeting discussed the results of the UN-ESCWA 25th Ministerial Session, held on 26-29 May in Sana’a; the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) meeting, held on 13-14 September in Beirut; major activities to be implemented until the end of 2008; the UN-ESCWA Subsidiary Committees, the ongoing preparations for UN-ESCWA’s plan for the biennium 2010-2011, including the budget. The meeting also tackled the official visits by the Executive Secretary to member countries. ■

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Statistical Committee Convenes Eighth Session

UN-ESCWA Statistical Committee held its 8th session on 14-16 October at the UN House. Attending the meeting were delegations from Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Sudan. Also present were representatives of specialized UN organizations, and regional and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Following the opening session, officers were elected. Yassine Hajj Abdeen, Director-General of the Sudanese Central Bureau of Statistics, was elected as chairman of the Session, while Ali bin Mahboub Al Raissi, Director General for Population Census and Social Statistics at the Omani Ministry of National Economy, and Mahdi Mohsen Ismail Allaq, Head of the Iraqi Central Organization



Statistical Committee Convenes Eighth Session (Cont.)



for Statistics and Information Technology (COSIT), were both elected vice-chairmen. Abu Bakr Al Jundi, Head of the Egyptian Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics was elected, for his part, as rapporteur.

Issues Tackled and Recommendations

The session tackled issues of concern to the region, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); capacity-building in statistics for evidence-based policymaking; and the activities of the Regional Task Force on Population and Housing Censuses. The session also looked into providing an official

other regional organizations in view of new statistical initiatives in the region. It also reviewed progress made in the implementation of statistical activities; and the proposed programme of work for the biennium 2010-2011 in the field of statistics.

In its final session, the Commission adopted a series of recommendations, including requesting member countries to draw up periodic national reports on the progress in the achievement of MDGs nationally, and be responsible for preparing reports for national parties in coordination with UN organizations. Participants also

recommended that national strategies to develop statistics be completed and implemented, asking UN-ESCWA in the issue of gender to hold specialized workshops on the methodologies for measuring MDG indicators according to the revised framework in cooperation with specialized UN agencies; and participate actively in the Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies, by providing the essential resources to prepare a study on developing progress indicators and the measuring mechanism regionally. Participants also requested that UN-ESCWA cooperate with concerned international agencies, to offer technical assistance to member countries, empowering them in the use of modern techniques in Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX), and offering financial support to the ones willing to participate in concerned workshops. Participants concluded by asking that UN-ESCWA give special attention to the countries that have not yet completed the implementation of the fundamental principles for official statistics, and offer them the appropriate technical support to do so. ■

Facts and Figures: The Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region 2007

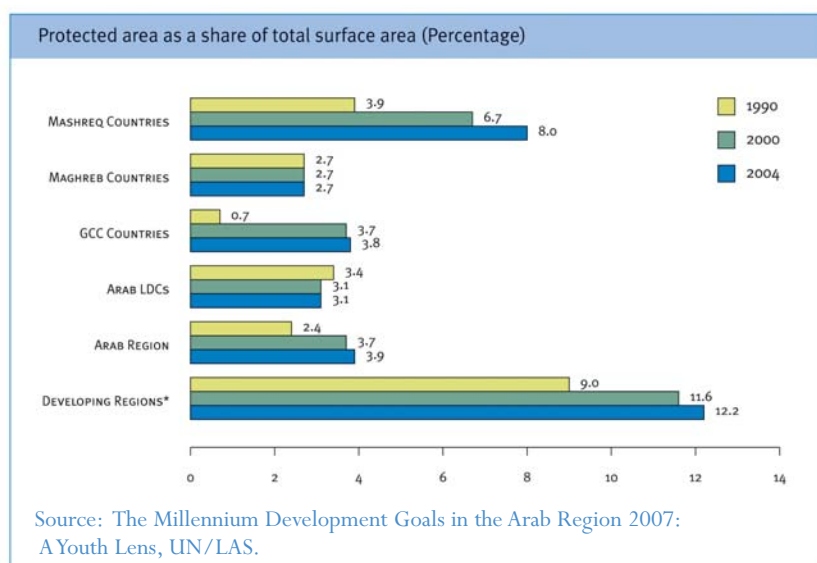
Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Stability

Protected area as a Share of Total Surface Area

All Arab countries share, in varying degrees, the major challenge of improving

environmental governance and integrating environmental resource management into

poverty-reduction strategies and national development plans. Regarding land covered by forests in the Arab region, it has declined from 7.4 per cent in 1990 to 6.7 per cent in 2005. If that trend persists, this region will be unable to integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources, despite reforestation efforts in several countries. On the other hand, Arab region has witnessed a strong increase in protected areas since 1990. The size of protected areas in the region relative to the total surface area has risen from 2.4 to 3.9 per cent between 1990 and 2004. Nevertheless, the ratio of protected areas to total surface area in the Arab region remains around three times less than the world average of 13 per cent. ■



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