



# Combating Violence against Women



It is imperative to double the efforts to combat violence against women in the Arab region, said UN-ESCWA Executive Secretary Bader Omar AlDafa at a conference in Doha on 19-20 November.

Addressing the meeting on “The Effect of Violence on Women and Family” that was organized by the Doha International Institute on Family Studies and Development, Al Dafa considered that this conference represents a step towards breaking the silence that has shrouded this issue for years. He went on to say that violence against women is an old phenomenon spread throughout the world. AlDafa said that a report issued by the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in March 2008 revealed that violence

affects one out of three women at least. Violence is the main reason for death and disability among women between the age of 15 and 44, even before cancer, malaria, wars and car accidents.

According to the Executive Secretary, the issue of violence against women is no longer considered to be a taboo in most of the Arab countries, but it has become an open subject to discuss and condemn at the level of governments and societies. “The four main aspects of violence in the Arab countries are: family violence, female circumcision honor crimes and violence amidst occupation and armed conflicts,” AlDafa was quoted as saying. The head of the regional commission listed some of the challenges preventing putting an end to

this phenomenon, including failure to abide by laws that call for punishing those who commit violence against women, delay in issuing sentences against the perpetrators and the scarcity of statistics and studies that demonstrate the scope of women subject to violence, specifically family violence. AlDafa suggested some solutions, such as strengthening the political will and commitment at higher levels to make the violence against women a priority at the local, national, regional and international level, empowering women in the various social groups and deepening women’s awareness of laws and her rights. AlDafa also tackled UN-ESCWA’s role in empowering women. He said that one of the regional commission’s programs focuses on women-related issues, including empowering women and combating violence against them.

Miranda Hawa, Officer-in-Charge of the UN-ESCWA Center for Women (CFW), also participated in the meeting. Speaking in a panel discussion on “Initiatives of Regional Commissions and other UN Specialized Agencies” in eliminating violence against women, she tackled UN-ESCWA

## IN THIS ISSUE

- Combating Violence against Women
- Council of Arab Ministers of Transport: 21st Session and A Transport Forum
- Facts and Figures

## Council of Arab Ministers of Transport: 21<sup>st</sup> Session and A Transport Forum

In the presence of 19 delegations from member countries, with Arab ministers of transport, organizations and unions, and representatives of UN-ESCWA, the 21st session of the Council of Arab Ministers of Transport was held on 29 October in Port Said, Egypt.

Most importantly, the Council approved the blueprint of inter-Arab railroad linkages, which was submitted to the preparatory committee for the Arab economic summit.



## Council of Arab Ministers of Transport: 21<sup>st</sup> Session and A Transport Forum (Cont.)

The council also praised the efforts exerted in drawing up the blueprint in cooperation and coordination among UN-ESCWA, the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States (LAS- General Secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers of Transport), the Arab Union of Railways, the Maghreb Rail Transport Committee (CTFM), Arab States, and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD).

The Council also approved the draft the “Convention on International Multimodal Transport of Goods Among Arab Countries”, drawn up by LAS and UN-ESCWA. The Technical Secretariat of the Council was assigned the task of submitting the draft convention to specialized bodies within LAS for adoption, prior to ratification by member countries.

On 30 October 2008, and under the patronage of Egyptian Prime Minister Ahmad Nazif, the Arab Transport Forum was held, organized by Al Iktissad Wal Aamal Group, in cooperation with the Ministry of Transport in Egypt, the General Secretariat of LAS, and UN-ESCWA. Egyptian Minister of Transport Muhammad Lutfi Mansour delivered the opening statement on behalf of Nazif, praising the role of UN-ESCWA in developing the transport system in the Arab region, drawing up the inter-Arab railroad linkages blueprint, developing the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM), and putting together, in coordination with the General Secretariat of LAS, a unified convention on International Multimodal Transport of Goods Among Arab Countries. In his statement, UN-ESCWA representative outlined the status of the transport sector in the Arab region, as well as the proposal of a strategy to develop the integrated multimodal transport sector in the Arab region. ■



## Combating Violence against Women (Cont.)

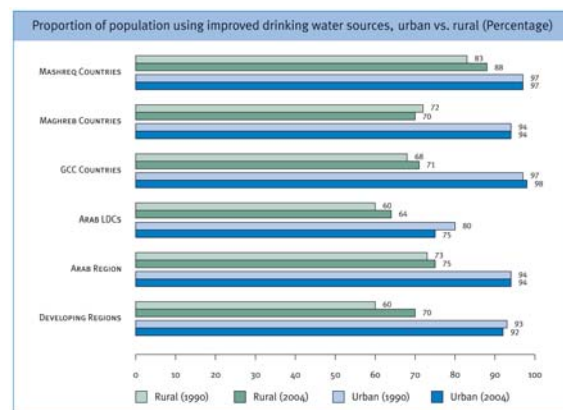
initiatives and contribution on the issue. Hawa highlighted the Regional Commission’s efforts in the issue of elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, and the importance of joint initiatives with other commissions and other organizations on the issue of violence against women. ■



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

### Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability Proportion of population using improved drinking water sources (urban vs. rural)

The proportion of the population using improved drinking water sources<sup>52</sup> in the Arab region slightly improved between 1990 and 2004 from 83 per cent to 85 per cent. It increased from 65 to 68 per cent in Arab Least Developed Countries (LDCs). However, this subregional average does not include Somalia where only 29 per cent of the population had access to safe water in 2004. In the other three subregions, it reached 86 per cent in the Maghreb, 94 per cent in the GCC countries, and 86 per cent in the Mashreq. The slight improvement in the Arab region suggests that significant efforts are still required to halve the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015. ■



Source: ESCWA; UNSD, Millennium Development Goals Indicators Database, available at: <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Data.aspx>.

### Address

P.O. Box 11-8575, Riad El-Solh, Beirut-Lebanon  
Tel.: 961-1-981301; Fax: 961-1-981510

e-mail: [webmaster-escwa@un.org](mailto:webmaster-escwa@un.org)  
website: [www.escwa.un.org](http://www.escwa.un.org)