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ESCWA Chiefs Mull Work Plan, Key Issues at Retreat



How are we doing and how can we do better? Questions that were raised and profoundly discussed by ESCWA senior officials at their retreat for three days (12-14 October 2009) in a suburb of Beirut, Lebanon. Chaired by Executive Secretary Bader Al Dafa, the retreat presented, in Al Dafa's own words "an exclusive occasion to talk transparently about our work and the challenges we are facing in a world where the perfect constant element is: CHANGE."

The exercise helped managers at ESCWA reassess their plans in order to ensure better services to the Commission's 14 member countries, and "to engage in constructive self-criticism," Al Dafa added.

The objective behind the retreat for ESCWA's chiefs was to dedicate a special period of time to more lengthy contemplation of work-related issues away from the usual office setting and its demanding environ-

ment. It was a special occasion for in-depth discussions and exchanges of ideas in a relaxed milieu.

During their time together, ESCWA managers discussed such substantive issues as "whether they are doing the right things" and "if they are doing things right?." It was also an opportunity to get to know one another better, enhance their interpersonal dynamics and improve their working relationships.

More precisely, the ESCWA retreat addressed and reassessed the 2010-11 work plan in the light of lessons learned from the 2008-09 experience. It delved into ways in which ESCWA could improve its performance and deliver better services to its member countries.

After this time of putting their heads together for the Commission and its clients, participants have cultivated, among other

issues, an improved common understanding of members' aspirations with regard to the 2010-11 priority areas, and of the knowledge, information and normative support that members expect.

Established in 1973, ESCWA is composed of 14 Arab countries: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. As a Think Tank it provides assistance and implements activities in its main areas of work, which are partitioned along its divisions: the Sustainable Development and Productivity Division; the Economic Development and Globalization Division; the Information and Communications Technology Division; the Statistics Division; the Emerging and Conflict-Related Issues Unit; the Sustainable Development Division; and the Center for Women. ■

ESCWA Launches Arab Gender Statistics Database

ESCWA launched this week the Arab Database on Gender Statistics “Arab GenInfo_09” and the knowledge-sharing platform supported by ESCWA Virtual Library on Gender Statistics during the Second Interagency and Expert Group Meeting on Gender Statistics (IAEGM-GS) in the Arab Region from 12 to 14 October 2009 at the UN House in Beirut.

The meeting urged countries to publish gender-based studies on the results of household surveys and censuses. National Statistical Offices (NSOs), in collaboration with line ministries, women’s machineries and non-governmental organizations were highly encouraged to expedite the development of national websites on gender statistics and issues to be linked to official websites of NSOs.

The meeting was attended by over 40 officials and experts on statistics from the region and from regional and UN organizations such as the League of Arab States and the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

Speaking at the opening, ESCWA Statistician Neda Jafar underscored the importance of “gender statistics in the work of national, regional and international institutions” and that they “certainly lead to improving official statistics of NSOs in general.” Finding social differences between members of a given society is the first step to study the sources of these differences that then lead to formulating successful programs and policies, she added. Jafar noted that ES-

CWA works towards developing gender statistics in the region through capacity-building in institutions and drafting national reports on the issue.

The second IAEGM-GS addressed a common methodology for the Arab Goals, Issues and Indicators Framework. The framework provides a measurement tool linking Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Beijing Platform for Action. Countries were requested to compile data as per the framework and to apply the concepts, definitions and methodologies discussed during the meeting.

The opening also included



speeches by Regional Director of the World Health Organization for the Eastern Mediterranean, Dr. Hussein Gezairy, and World Bank’s Senior Demographer Sulekha Patel. Both speakers stressed on the importance of sex-disaggregated data as sources of information for their respective organizations.

ESCWA collaborated with other UN agencies in organizing

the event, which was part of ongoing efforts to strengthen NSOs capabilities in engendering statistics. Back-to-Back, it also held at the UN House the First Meeting for the Taskforce on Gender Statistics from 15 to 16 October to assess the status of Gender Statistics in the Arab region; identify needed capacity building activities and develop short and medium-term work plans for the Task Force. ■

ESCWA Upcoming Meetings

Meeting	Date and Venue	Division
EGM : review of the Progress Achieved in Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action in the Arab region: Beijing +15	19-20 October Bristol Hotel, Beirut	Centre for Women (CFW)
Fourth Session of the Committee on Women: Promoting Arab Women’s Economic Participation	21-23 October Bristol Hotel, Beirut	CFW
EGM on Regional Economic Integration	21-22 October UN House	Economic Development and Globalization Division (EDGD)
Press conference to launch the UNCTAD report, Information Economy report 2009 <i>Trends and Outlook in Turbulent Times</i>	22 October UN House	Information and Communication Technology Division (ICTD), and the UN Information Centre (UNIC)
Seventh Session of the Committee on Social Development	26-27 October UN House	Social Development Division (SDD)
EGM on the Preparation Of A Methodology For Assessing The Vulnerability Of Water Resources To Climate Change	26-28 October UN House	Sustainable Development and Productivity Division (SDPD)
Arab Forum on Social Policy	28-29 October UN House	SDD

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