



## IN THIS ISSUE:

- ESCWA, OECD Sign MoU
- ESCWA 4th Committee on Women: For Gender Equality in National Plans

# ESCWA, OECD Sign MoU



ESCWA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on measuring the progress of societies during the Third OECD World Forum on Statistics, Knowledge and Policy, held in Busan, Korea from 27 to 30 October 2009.

Speaking at the session on “Charting Progress, Building Visions, Improving Life: In a Time of Crisis”, ESCWA Executive Secretary Bader AlDafa laid out the objectives and scope of work of the UN Commission. In the context of quantifying progress and crises alike, AlDafa noted the region faces

specific development challenges. As a result, a significant proportion of resources are being devoted to resolving the impact of crises, and development efforts have slowed down their pace, in spite of macroeconomic indicators documenting a growth.

To face these challenges, the Executive Secretary laid out some practical steps, such as reforming the statistical legislation, establishing national strategies for development of statistics, providing data at the sectoral and mostly micro level. He also pointed out the need for time series data, which is paramount to measure the impact of policies and

for cross-country comparisons.

As the Globe faces multiple crises, ESCWA is dealing with compounded challenges to lead the United Nations regional vision of ‘ONE WORLD’ by building effective multi-lateralism. It regards times of crises as times of challenge and “opportunities for change”. Charting progress of societies comes as an impetus to change and redirect our eyes to what progress means to each of our nations, what policies are needed to reach societal aspirations, and hence what indicators are needed to measure these processes and their results. ■

## ESCWA 4th Committee on Women: For Gender Equality in National Plans

Participants in the ESCWA 4th Committee on Women adopted the resolution on “Follow-up on the Implementation of Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA): Beijing+ 15” and the draft consolidated Arab report on the implementation of BPFA. The Committee, a specialized intergovernmental body established in 2003, convened its 4th meeting on 21-23 October under the auspices of Lebanon’s First Lady Wafaa Michel Suleiman and in the context of ESCWA 35th Anniversary.

“For Arab women to be able to achieve the level of efficiency we all want for them and the pivotal role they deserve, their issues should be included in national, strategic development visions,” ESCWA Executive Secretary Bader AlDafa said at the opening of the meeting.

Also speaking at the opening were Bahrain representative and Chairperson of the 3th Committee on Women, Lulua Al Awadi, Arab League Assistant Secretary General for Social Affairs, Sima Bahouth, Special Adviser of the UN Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Rachel Mayanja, and representative of Lebanon’s First Lady, Najwa Nasr. Speakers focused on empowering women economically, as well as the progress achieved in the area of women empowerment fifteen years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and PoA and the challenges left to face.

The meeting recommended, inter alia,



including gender issues in national plans and strategies and considering women empowerment a national and regional priority. It stressed the importance of political will in ensuring gender equality and justice and focused on reforming the image of women in society, through school curricula and books.

Participants elected Syria’s Najwa Hassan as chairperson for the 4th Committee, while Bahrain’s Lulua Al Awadi and Sudan’s Khadija Hamed were chosen as vice-chairmen. Oman’s Yahya Al Hanai was elected, for his part, as rapporteur. ■

### **Environmental Accounting**

*ESCWA held an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on “Environmental Economic Accounting for the ESCWA Region” on 14-16 October that concluded with recommendations for improving environment and Water Accounts and for developing environmental protection expenditures in the ESCWA region. The meeting discussed the 2009 ESCWA publication “Framework for environmental economic accounting in the ESCWA region”. It was attended by participants from national statistical offices, ministries of Environment and Water in ESCWA member countries, and experts from regional and international organisations.*

*The meeting encouraged countries that produced pilot water accounts to complete with monetary and emissions accounts, while other countries were encouraged to implement pilot accounts. LAS pledged to include environmental economic accounting at the next meetings of the Council of Arab Ministers on Water and the Council of Arab Ministers responsible for the environment. ESCWA and the UN Statistics Division were invited to provide more technical assistance missions and propose a work plan for each set of countries to develop integrated environmental economic accounting that cover main subaccounts such as water, energy land and waste.*

### **Water Quality and Technical Cooperation in Oman**

*ESCWA organized two workshops in Oman on the themes of technical cooperation and water quality to empower participants from line ministries and governmental institutions in Oman in both areas.*

*The first workshop was held on 6 and 7 October in cooperation with the Ministry of National Economy. Along two days of work, participants increased their knowledge in the concepts of technical cooperation and methods of partnering with international agencies, networking mechanisms, information sharing and exchange of experience. Participants recommended the follow-up on areas of E-commerce and climate change inter alia.*

*On a relevant note, and also in Oman, ESCWA held a three-day workshop (10-14 October) on the “Quality of Drinking Water Resources”, in cooperation with the Public Authority for Electricity and Water. Through dynamic discussions, participants increased their knowledge of the concepts of water quality management tools, sources of pollution, water sampling and analysis techniques best practices in water treatment technologies as well as international standards and guidelines. Participants recommended that specialized trainings be held on topics related to quality of drinking water resources, such as the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM).*

### **Regional Integration in Financial Services**

*ESCWA organized an EGM on Regional Integration in Financial Services on 21-22 October to evaluate economic regional integration by focusing on financial services. Participants formulated a set of recommendations to policy makers on how to develop financial services sectors in order to promote regional economic integration. Attending the meeting were representatives from ten ESCWA member countries, in addition to representatives from several capital markets, LAS, and the Saudi Fund for Development.*

*The meeting provided a venue for them to exchange ideas and discuss all issues related to promoting regional integration and to present the major challenges hindering regional integration in financial services. Participants also evaluated regional integration efforts, discussed challenges, and exchanged ideas on how to develop financial services in order to help promote regional integration.*

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