



## East and West Embrace in ESCWA Concert




Music lovers flocked to the Maronite Cathedral of St. George in Downtown Beirut, Lebanon, last week to attend a special classical concert held on the occasion of the 35th Anniversary of ESCWA. The Commission's Executive Secretary, Bader Al-Dafa, and the German Foundation Podium Junger Musiker had jointly extended the invitation to a concert entitled "Orient Meets Occident: the Arabian Passion according to J. S. Bach."

The concert was attended by representatives of the top three Lebanese leaders, with Information Minister Tarek Mitri representing the Lebanese President, MP Hagop Pakradonian representing the House Speaker and MP Bassem al Shab representing the Prime Minister. Also attending the event was Bishop Boulos Matar representing Patriarch Mar Nasrallah Sfeir, along with a host of political, diplomatic, economic, artistic and cultural figures, and UN staff.

"Music is what remains in life. It is the language of all. Through it, peoples and nations rise, and

with it, immortal images are painted throughout time," said AlDafa, quoting French novelist Leon Bloy, at the opening of the concert to which 36 musicians and four singers lent their talents.

"Peace is unquestionably what each one of us aspires to. For it to become a solid reality in our lives, and a culture for the coming generations, peace should blossom under the umbrella of economic, social and cultural development. Such was the message of ESCWA, ever since its inception in this precious region. The concert is part of a series of activities ESCWA is organizing to celebrate its 35th Anniversary. Earlier this month, the regional commission opened an exhibition at the UNESCO palace in Beirut for a group of pioneer Lebanese painters whose creative works helped maintain a colorful presence for their country on the Arab and international cultural scenes. The coming month, ESCWA will inaugurate another exhibit for talented UN staff who will display paintings, sculptures, photographs and other forms of artistic expression," AlDafa said in his address. 

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## Preparing Arab Countries for WTO Negotiations

The ESCWA high level expert group meeting on the "Preparation of the Arab Countries for the 7th WTO Ministerial Conference", called on Arab countries to consolidate their negotiating positions to accommodate their development needs and global changes, namely the economic and financial crisis and the protectionism to which it is giving rise.

ESCWA had co-organized the event with the Arab NGO Network for Development and the Lebanese Ministry of Economy and Trade on 11 and 12 November in Beirut, to discuss the issues to be addressed by the agenda of 7th World Trade Organization's (WTO) Ministerial Conference in light of the global financial and economic crisis, 

## East and West Embrace in ESCWA Concert (Cont.)

The head of the German Foundation Podium Junger Musiker, Willy Rellecke, commended for his part the cultural exchanges between East and West, emphasizing the significant contribution of music to breaking down borders, in a reference to the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall, which Germany and Europe recently celebrated.

The orchestra, directed by Valdimir Ivanoff, performed a great variety of pieces brilliantly mixing eastern with western tunes and melodies. ■



## Preparing Arab Countries for WTO Negotiations (Cont.)

and to tackle contention issues in the Doha multilateral round of negotiations. The meeting sought to shed light on the positions of Arab countries and their approaches to these issues. It also underscored ways to face the repercussions of the global economic crisis on international and regional trade, as well as on the multilateral trading system.

Participants called on Arab countries to examine their economic and trade policies in light of global changes, and monitor its implications on the economic activity, and growth and development rates. They considered that the global crisis took its toll on Arab economies and foreign trade. According to them, some Arab countries are negatively affected by the crisis as a result of their open economies, and their

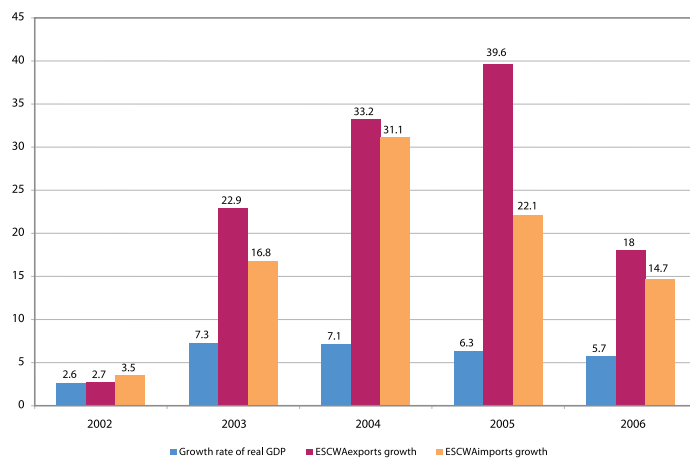
dependence on exports, remittances, foreign direct investments, and financial aids, which requires looking into reallocation of resources and building these countries' productive capacities.

The meeting was attended by representatives from Arab Ministries concerned with trade and trade negotiation issues; International and regional organizations such as the WTO, the World Bank, the League of Arab States, and the General Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture for Arab Countries. Also attending were representatives from the civil society, non-governmental organizations and experts in the issues of the economic and financial crisis and its implications on the multilateral trading order and contention issues in the Doha round. ■

## Facts and Figures: Growth rates of GDP, exports and imports in the ESCWA region, 2002-2006

Figure III plots the relationship between the growth rate of real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the growth rates of exports and imports in the ESCWA region over the period 2002-2006. It is clear that the growth rates of exports and real GDP do not always move together. Specifically, between 2004 and 2005, while exports increased by 39.6 per cent and imports decreased by 22.1 per cent, the rate of growth of real GDP decreased by 6.3 per cent. Despite the entry into force of GAFTA and the subsequent elimination of tariffs, GDP growth continued to decrease to 5.7 per cent in 2006, while exports also decreased by 18 per cent. Consequently, the ESCWA study on the "Assessment of Trade Policy Trends and Implications for the Economic Performance of the ESCWA Region" infers that the episodes of trade liberalization in the ESCWA region are not always accompanied by higher GDP growth rates. ■

Figure III. Growth rates of GDP, exports and imports in the ESCWA region, 2002-2006 (Percentage)



Source: *Assessment Of Trade Policy Trends And Implications For the Economic Performance Of The ESCWA Region*, ESCWA, 2009.

### 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)