



Experts Stress Impact of Political Support for Water Resources' Management

Experts gathered at ESCWA to hold a meeting on "Applying Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Principles in Managing Shared Water Resources: Towards a Regional Vision" and they agreed on the importance of having a political umbrella as a prerequisite for any regional and sub-regional agreements on the issue.

The meeting was organized in cooperation with the German Federal Institute for

Geosciences and Natural Resources from 1 to 3 December.

Experts from regional and international institutions working on IWRM focused on three main areas: promoting cooperation, ensuring participation and identifying mutual interests in order to enhance the management of shared water resources; ensuring equitable, reasonable, sustainable and beneficial use of IWRM; and identifying appropriate mechanisms for

conflict prevention and resolution.

Discussions took account of the regional perspectives and specificities, and sought to provide guiding principles for managing shared water resources in the region. ESCWA's role was highlighted at different levels, such as in the dissemination of information on water rights to all parties; developing member countries' capacities in IWRM; dissemination of good prac-

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tices to be adapted to the levels of community, civil sector and others; raising awareness on important water-related issues; promotion of transparency in gathering data, and exchanging information. ■

ESCWA Discusses Peace Building, Conflict-Prevention in Western Asia

ESCWA convened a two-day meeting on Policies for Peace building and Conflict Prevention in Western Asia with the purpose of addressing development challenges arising from conflicts. The meeting focused mostly on the need for the rule of law, strong judiciary and strong and legitimate state institutions. It was organized in association with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Liberty and the Lebanese Economic Association on 9 and 10 December 2009, at the UN House in Beirut.

It brought together prominent experts from think tanks, academic insti-

tutions, United Nations agencies and other multilateral organizations, as well as decision-makers and civil society representatives. The main objective was to examine and recommend policies which are geared towards conflict prevention and building long-term sustainable peace in this region.

Organizers pointed out that countries suffering from conflict or political tensions are very much dependent on successful peace-building interventions that are designed to prevent relapses into conflict and ensure sustainable peace and development. Key elements for effective

interventions in the aftermath of conflicts include providing basic safety and security, an inclusive political process, the provision of essential services, restoration of core government functions and economic revitalization. These priority areas span across development, peace and security and human rights, which reflects the interlinked and mutually reinforcing nature of these issues that was repeatedly emphasized by member countries, including in the outcomes of the 2005 World Summit.

The meeting started off with a session addressing the root causes



ESCWA Discusses Peace Building, Conflict-Prevention in Western Asia (Cont.)

and spillover effects of conflict and instability in Western Asia, which examined the issue of Arab human insecurity as a root cause of conflict and development challenges. The experts have also focused on economic policy priorities which are tailored to prevent conflicts. Deliberations also looked into economic policies that undermine peace-building efforts and those that are effective in spite of unstable environments.

There was also a session dedicated to investigating social grievances as a root cause of conflict and debating the possibilities of reversing existing negative trends in order to build peace. The issues of civil strife, social inequalities as well as

the social challenges resulting from conflict were scrutinized alongside potential mitigating measures. Experts also tackled the importance of the public sector applying good governance practices as a conduit for peace building and conflict prevention. This includes effective means to achieve equal access to essential public services, a critical factor placing the public sector as a leader in local peace-building efforts.

The meeting stressed in its conclusion on the need for legitimate and flexible leadership, based on meritocracy and solid frameworks; inclusive decision-making and participatory planning; a new political compact adapted to the

situation on the ground; a dynamic civil society; strong awareness of history and lessons learned; and confidence-building mechanisms, among other things. The main recommendation was to seriously address the root causes of tensions and conflicts, in order to prevent the recurrence of problems. Another key recommendation was to enhance the capacity of state institutions in order to be able to address these root causes better, as well as to mitigate the impact and prevent the recurrence of conflict, and attain sustainable development. All of this requires political will, strong policies, and long-term planning and vision. Finally, there was general consensus that follow-up action to this successful meeting is essential. ■

The Goldstone Report Explained at ESCWA

ESCWA Staff Council organized a lecture on The Goldstone Report, which was delivered by International Law professor at the American University of Beirut (AUB), Shawki Al Masri.

Introduced as the “foremost authority on the subject,” Al Masri reviewed in his brief lecture the report in light of international law, focusing on the course of preparing it at the UN system and the steps will go through in the future.

Detailing that course, he said the Human Rights Council appointed a fact-finding mission to report on violations committed during the Gaza hostilities in late 2008 and early 2009. Led by Goldstone, the mission had four main legal references: international law; humanitarian law; international criminal law; and UN principles. This is how it drafted its report and classified the acts committed in Gaza, describing most of them as punishable by international law. “The report asked for a rigorous follow-up by the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council, and for a possible referral to the International Criminal Court,” Al Masri said. What followed was its submission to the GA, which adopted it and submitted it to the Secretary-General, who in turn submitted it to the Security Council.



“The Council is currently debating the report,” he added, laying out several possible future scenarios for action either inside the SC or the GA - which can convene an special session on the issue - or in Arab countries with national courts that have extraterritorial jurisdictions. ■



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
website: www.escwa.un.org