



## ESCWA Outlines Region's Climate Issues, Solutions in Copenhagen

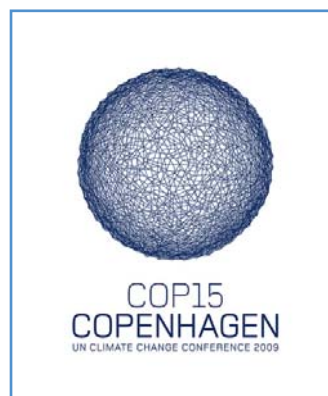
ESCWA Executive Secretary Bader AlDafa participated in the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen where ESCWA officials summarized the expected climate change challenges and potential impacts for the region. They also laid out steps ESCWA is taking to assist its member countries in climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.

Going through the challenges of sustainable development and natural resources management, the Director of SDPD Anhar Hegazi said the ESCWA region is mainly characterized by rapid population growth, political instability, acute water scarcity and unsustainable production and consumption patterns, especially for water, energy, land resources and others. These challenges certainly have environmental impacts and potential risks for the region. Furthermore, "inappropriate institutional and legislative capacities to address climate change issues and the low competitiveness of productive sectors, could hinder the region's efforts to cope with climate disruptions," Hegazi said in an intervention at the UN Regional Commissions' Joint Side Event on Climate Change that

was held on the sidelines of the conference.

As for the expected climate change (CC) impacts on the ground, ESCWA officials divided them into ones affect affecting natural resources and others that have bearings on socioeconomic aspects. With these effects, the region will expect an increase in temperatures that may lead to adverse changes in precipitation and an increase in drought spells that will diminish groundwater quantity and quality (e.g. estimated 50 percent and 15 percent reductions in freshwater supplies in Syria and Lebanon respectively). "Egypt and Iraq are estimated to lose 12 -15 percent of their fertile delta lands," Hegazi said. As for the socioeconomic impacts, they can be mainly summarized in increased political conflicts, unemployment, poverty, health problems, population displacements and mass immigrations.

In 2009, ESCWA has implemented several activities to support CC Adaptation and Mitigation measures by member states. Hegazi underscored some of these activities, including efforts by the regional commission to raise awareness on CC issues in



the region, in collaboration with the League of Arab States (LAS), the UN Environment Program's Regional Office of West Asia and some relevant Arab organizations. ESCWA has also taken actions for the formulation of a joint UN-LAS work plan for conducting "Vulnerability Assessment on Water Resources of the Region" by an expert group. The regional commission also implemented solar energy projects, which so far included solar electrification of villages in Yemen and manufacturing solar water heaters in Lebanon. In addition, ESCWA continues to promote a dialogue among member countries on transport for sustainable development and regional CC-related issues.


In statements made during the event, the Executive Secretary Badr AlDafa underscored the political will and commitment expressed by ESCWA member countries to achieve social development and address CC, citing regional initiatives in this area. "ESCWA has supported LAS Secretariat in facilitating the formulation and adoption of these initiatives," he said. ■

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## ESCWA holds Advisory Committee, Exhibition for UN Staff

Ambassadors of a number of ESCWA member countries opened an exhibition that was organized to display art works and creations of UN staff and their families. The event was part of a series of activities arranged in commemoration of ESCWA's 35th Anniversary.

The exhibition shed light on the talents and hobbies of a group of UN staff in Lebanon beyond the challenges of their daily professional life and included the tasting of a variety of traditional food products from all around Lebanon. Before inaugurating the show, ambassadors and diplomats convened an Advisory Committee meeting to discuss global issues and ESCWA activities. 

## ESCWA holds Advisory Committee, Exhibition for UN Staff (Cont.)

The exhibition showcased works by over 27 staff and family members from several UN agencies who displayed their talents. The show included two paintings by the Executive Secretary of ESCWA Badr AlDafa.

The show was the fourth cultural event organized by ESCWA for its anniversary, following a musical performance by the Ladies in Harmony group in July; the Contemporary Lebanese Artists Exhibition in November; and the Special Musical Concert: Orient meets Occident that was also held in November. ■



## Combating Violence against Women



ESCWA gathered experts, media professionals and NGO representatives in the context of the UN Secretary-General's campaign to end violence against women. The meeting kicked off with the launch of the World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, produced by the Division on the Advancement of Women at the UN Headquarters. Chief of the ESCWA Centre for Women, Afaf Omer, presented the publication and spoke of women's status in the Arab region.

The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's "UNiTE to End Violence Against Women" campaign was introduced by UN Information Centre Director, Bahaa Elk-

oussy, who stressed the need to take concrete action across the Arab region for an end to this plague. He read the message of Ban, who had pinpointed the urgency of addressing "the roots of this violence by eradicating discrimination and changing the mindsets that perpetuate it."

The meeting also featured the participation of the non-governmental organization KAFA (Enough Violence and Exploitation), through a short documentary and a statement by the group's chief, Zoya Rouhana, who highlighted the need to change people's mentality and culture in order to secure justice for women. ■

### ESCWA Discusses Social Impact of Financial Crisis

ESCWA organized a regional meeting of experts to review the social impact of the global financial and economic crisis on the countries of the region. Participants highlighted the need to urge regional governments to take advantage of the small window of opportunity presented by the crisis in order to reshape economic and social policies towards a more development and people-centered platform that integrates social concerns in economic planning.

Regional and international experts, practitioners, and UN agency representatives unanimously called for homegrown solutions to the region's development problems based on evidence deduced from research and analysis and on effective social dialogue and participation. Participants also stressed the importance of endorsing social insurance schemes and social protection programs aimed at reducing poverty, building human capital and giving vulnerable populations a stake in development.

### ESCWA Delivers a Water Management Workshop

ESCWA held a training workshop on water management for Lebanese institutions mainly to raise awareness about opportunities for applying the "Water Evaluation and Planning" (WEAP) system in various water-related sectors.

Held jointly with the Arab Center of Semi Arid and Dry Lands (ACSAD), and the German Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR), the workshop was designed to increase participants' understanding of how to use WEAP, adapt it to the specific problem needs, and set up WEAP scenario simulations, among other issues.

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