



UN-ESCWA Weekly News

Issue 26/52

11 August

UN-ESCWA Launches Report on Globalization and Regional Integration 2007

UN-ESCWA Executive Secretary, Bader Omar AlDafa, said that Arab states have achieved uneven results in 2006 in globalization. "Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Arab states has reached a record score of USD\$62 billion and an average growth of 36 percent. This growth reflects the efforts exerted by most Arab states to lure FDI". AlDafa was speaking during a press conference held on 7August at the UN-House on the occasion of launching the "Annual Review of Developments in Globalization and Regional Integration in Arab countries 2007". The event was held in the presence and under the patronage of Lebanese Minister of Economy and Trade Mohammed Safadi.

Tourism, Transport, Investment...

In his speech, AlDafa said that the share of Arab countries in international trade has witnessed a gradual increase in 2006 to approximately 4 percent. Speaking



of the tourism sector, he added that it only represents 4.8 percent of the international average, which represents a humble figure in comparison with the touristic capabilities that Arab countries possess. "In Lebanon, data indicates that the number of tourists in 2006 reached 1,360,000, which means that this sector has much to offer," AlDafa was quoted as saying.

According to AlDafa, Arab air transport continued to record high growth in 2006 and 2007 compared with the international average. He added that the Gulf region in particular has attracted major investments that led to the increase of fleet size of airline firms and to the expansion of airports.

Arab Fund for Energy

For his part, Minister Safadi said that UN-ESCWA is making initiatives to connect Arab countries in the sectors of transport, trade and others. He expressed hope in the establishment of an Arab fund to support the energy

sector. "The concept of establishing an Arab fund to support energy must be linked to a comprehensive development plan," Safadi said. He added that if the variance in incomes in Arab states continues, then it shall represent a hindrance to economic integration. "The variation in energy costs among energy consuming and energy producing Arab countries hinders economic and social development," Safadi said.

For Increased Investment

Nabil Safwat, Officer-in-Charge of the Economic Development and Globalization Division (EDGD) at UN-ESCWA presented the contents of the report. Safwat said that the share of the UN-ESCWA region in the average FDI have reached 3.75 percent in 2006, while it represented 1.99 percent of the average Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Safwat referred to the share of Arab world in international economy, international trade negotiations and trade fa-

cilitation, as well as Arab regional integration.

The "Annual Review of Developments in Globalization and Regional Integration in Arab countries 2007" recommended that investment policies in Arab states be reviewed, and considered it was important to establish policies that link local businesses to FDI firms. Similarly, it called for coordinating Arab state positions in the World Trade Organization's (WTO) talks. UN-ESCWA had started preparing these annual reviews in 2002. ■



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Business Development

As part of UN-ESCWA's efforts to build the capacities of various sectors in Iraq, the "Governance in Support of Employment Creation in Iraq" project aims at contributing to poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods through employment generation and implementing the pro-poor strategies at the local level. Along these lines, UN-ESCWA established three Business Development Centers (BDC) have been established in the Basra Governorate in cooperation with the Iraqi Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the UN Office for Pro-

ject Services (UNOPS).

The function of these BDCs is to train local members of the community on business planning and business management and to assist them in developing their business ideas and framing them into simple business plans. In addition, they provide support to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs to review business proposals and nominate candidates for eligibility to receive loans that reach USD 5,000 loan, from a USD 50 million pool budgeted for the Basra region.



The centers' 15-member staff completed four training workshops, the last of which on July 20- August 7, 2008 in the Shatt Al Arab Center in Basra. It consisted of training

in the fields of Information Technology (IT) and business. As of August 10, 2008, the BDCs have been ready to offer training and consultation. ■

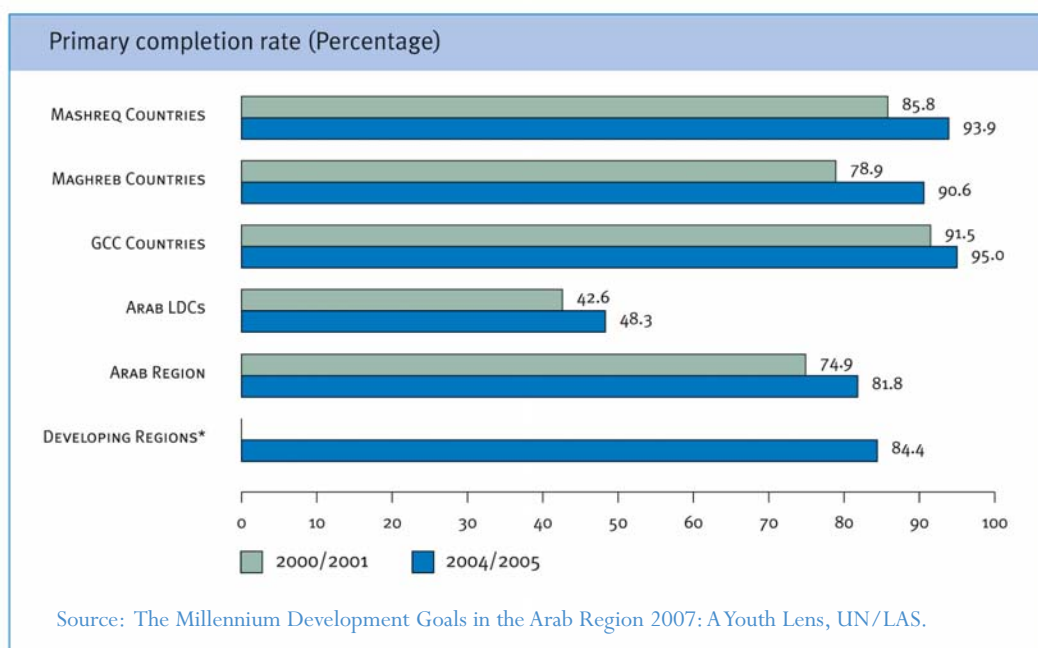
Facts and Figures: The Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region 2007

Goal 2: Achieve Universal primary Education

Primary Completion Rate (Percentage)

The primary completion rate for the region suggests that about 81.8 per cent of eligible children completed primary education. Consequently, youth literacy rates rose by almost 17 percentage points registering 83.4 per cent in 2005. The Mashreq subregion had the highest completion rate in the Arab region,

with around 94 per cent of eligible children reaching the last grade of primary school. The Maghreb countries also managed to retain students for a longer period of time than before, with the average completion rate rising by over 10 percentage points to 90.6 per cent in 2005. ■



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