



# UN-ESCWA Weekly News

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## At the Service of Member Countries

On 15 and 16 January 2008, a number of experts, intellectuals, officials and representatives of member countries came to UN-ESCWA upon the invitation of Executive Secretary, Bader Omar Al Dafa, to attend a meeting entitled "Fostering Sustainable Development through Regional Integration in the Arab region: A Strategic vision for 2010 - 2020" at the Safir Helipolitan Hotel, in Beirut.

The meeting, which is the second of its kind, was held pursuant to the recommendation of a previous meeting held in January 2006 on "the Role of UN-ESCWA in serving its member countries to 2010". The purpose of this meeting was to provide a forum for deliberating on current and anticipated challenges facing Arab states amidst the ongoing global developments through the year 2020.

In his inaugural address, Al Dafa considered that this meeting opens a new phase that extends until 2020, and focused on UN-ESCWA's role as a medium between its member countries and the international community. Al Dafa said:

*"UN-ESCWA is a regional arm of the United Nations. It has a dual role: on one hand, it transfers international progress and sound practices and experiences in sustainable development to member countries. On the other hand, UN-ESCWA strives to transmit the expectations and concerns of member countries to the international community, in the context of formulating an international agenda for development work".*

Over seven continuous sessions, specialists discussed key issues, such as salient development issues on the global and regional agendas that bear direct relevance to the future of the Arab region; including sustainable development, south-south cooperation, information society, climate change and diverse socio-economic issues of concern to the region.



The results of the discussion will guide the future work of UN-ESCWA and help in identifying regional priorities and the main concerns of member states, in line with the principal issues on the agenda of the United Nations.

Participants formulated a set of recommendations that highlight enhancing communication between UN-ESCWA and other UN organizations on the one hand, and decision-makers in member countries on the other hand; benefiting of energy and water resources to achieve sustainable development and regional integration; supporting Arab youth; developing a future economic vision in the Arab world; managing shared water, and other issues. ■

## UN-ESCWA Technical Committee Holds its First Meeting

The first meeting of the UN-ESCWA Technical Committee, established pursuant to the decision of UN-ESCWA at its twenty-fourth ministerial session in 2006 was also held on 16-17 January at the Safir Helipolitan Hotel.

Participants discussed the preparations for the UN-ESCWA twenty-fifth ministerial session which might be held in May 2008, and agreed on the adoption, in principle, of the proposed strategic framework for the biennium 2010-2011.

The Technical Committee was established with the aim of enhancing interaction and close consultation between the members of the Commission and its secretariat on substantive development issues. Its membership comprises concerned senior officials from member countries. The sessions of the Technical Committee shall be held every six months, starting January 2008.

The Technical Committee has the following functions: To advise and assist the secretariat in drawing up proposals for the strategic framework, the programme of work and priorities, consistent with the mandates and guidance provided by the Commission; to advise and assist the secretariat in following up on the implementation of Commission resolutions and any other outstanding matters



## The Importance of Social Policy

The Second Social Policy Report was the subject of a one day expert group meeting on 17 January 2008, in Amman, Jordan. Organized by UN-ESCWA, the meeting was an opportunity to get feedback on the subject from eminent regional and international experts. Discussions focused on the conceptual strengths of the report and on the appeal of the concept of Integrated Social Policy and of the report itself to policy makers in the region.

While noting the challenges specific to the UN-ESCWA region-political instability, pressures of macro-economic policies on national governments, a weak civil society-the meeting stressed the regulatory role of the state and the importance of social observatories and social and economic councils as independent monitoring bodies. The meeting also delved into specific suggestions for refining the approach and scope of the report and for identifying the necessary aspects for an enabling environment that could support an integrated social policy approach. ■

More information and details of the meeting will be available on the website shortly:

<http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetails.asp?referenceNum=631E>



## UN-ESCWA Technical Committee Holds its First Meeting (Cont.)

that require action; to advise and assist the secretariat in following up the implementation of the programme of work and activities of the Commission, including the mobilization of extra-budgetary resources to support their implementation; to assist the secretariat in identifying emerging economic and social issues and other relevant

priority issues for incorporation into the provisional agendas of the Commission sessions and the subsidiary intergovernmental Committees before finalization, and with due consideration to the Rules of Procedure of UN-ESCWA; and to carry out any other tasks entrusted to it by the Commission. ■

## Resources of UN-ESCWA Region

UN-ESCWA region is rich in oil and gas resources, representing in 2005 some 51% of world oil resources and 25% of world natural gas resources. The region is largely characterized by arid land, with more than 70% of it categorized as arid. Cultivated land represents, on the other hand, a mere 4.5% of total land in this region, compared to the world average of 11.7% in 2002. ■

Map of the ESCWA region showing mineral resources and land cover classes

خريطة منطقة الإسكوا وفيها الموارد المعدنية وطبقات الغطاء الأرضي



Mineral resources	الموارد المعدنية
Fuels	الوقود
Gemstones	الأحجار الكريمة
Metals	المعادن
Non-metals	المعادن غير المعدنية
Radioactive elements	العناصر المشعة
Mining	التعدين
Fuels	الوقود
Metals	المعادن
Non-metals	المعادن غير المعدنية
Land cover classes	طبقات الغطاء الأرضي
Croplands	الأراضي المسالمة للزراعة
Savannah	السافانا
Deserts	الصحاري
Water	المياه

Source: Compendium of Environment Statistics in the ESCWA region, issued by UN-ESCWA, March 2007.

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