



ESCWA Successfully Concludes DIGITAL ARABIC CONTENT PROJECT



After two years of implementation, ESCWA's project "Promotion of the Digital Arabic Content Industry through Incubation" is coming to a close at the end of 2009. Launched in 2007, the project represented ESCWA's contribution to the growth of the digital Arabic content (DAC) industry in Western Asia and through which the Commission sought to support and promote the development of DAC applications in ICT incubation facilities.

The project featured a number of activities of substantive and practical natures, the highlights of which included the DAC national competitions that ESCWA organized in five member countries around the mid of 2008. The Commission chose business incubators in these countries to assist it in its quest for the right DAC projects. These partners were the Jordan Innovation Centre at Philadelphia University in Jordan, Berytech in Lebanon, the Information and Communi-

cation Technology Incubator of the Syrian Computer Society in Syria, Palestine Information and Communication Technology Incubator in Palestine, and Aden ICT Incubator in Yemen.

The selection process was conducted on a national basis by evaluation committees including ESCWA representatives, the partner incubator and selected renowned technical and business experts from the respective countries. The winners were awarded one year of incubation that offered working space, training and business support.

The final meeting of the project was held at the UN House 14-15 December 2009. It was attended by representatives of the partner incubators as well as incubation beneficiaries from each winning project. The meet-

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ing reviewed and assessed the progress made towards the promotion of the DAC industry in the region. It presented a platform for sharing experiences and best practices, and for discussing the main challenges facing the implementation of DAC projects as well as the requirements for improving this sector in the region. During the meeting, a progress evaluation report was presented to assess achievements, outcomes and impacts of the project. [➔](#)

UN Publications Draw Numerous Beirut Book Fair Visitors

As part of its policy to interact with the public and promote the work of the United Nations in the country, several agencies of the world organization in Lebanon have for the first time collectively participated in the Beirut Arab and International Book Fair at the International Exhibition and Leisure Centre (BIEL) from 11 to 24 December and their displayed items attracted droves of readers, researchers and browsers.

The book fair, yearly organized by the Arab Cultural Club in cooperation with Lebanon's Ministry of Culture and the Lebanese Publishers' Union, showcased the products of more than 170 publishing houses and a number of diplomatic missions and cultural centers. The exhibition was opened on 11 [➔](#)



ESCWA Successfully Concludes Digital Arabic Content Project (Cont.)

Participants agreed in the meeting that Arab countries should realize the importance of promoting a DAC industry on the national and regional levels and should thus include it as a priority area in their national policies and agendas. There is a need to encourage research and development (R & D) activities in the DAC development domain, a point which was highlighted in the meeting. The need to formulate a long-term plan for developing the DAC industry, which should include specialized projects, was also stressed. Participants concluded that the marketing of DAC products should be conducted on a regional and international scale rather than on merely national ones. Other recommendations focused on the organization of the said competitions and of their evaluation and awards. It was agreed that these specific recommendations will be heeded in the planning of future rounds of the competitions.

A ceremony was held at the end of the meeting, during which honorary trophies were distributed to all nine winning projects as well as the partner incubators. ■



UN Publications Draw Numerous Beirut Book Fair Visitors (Cont.)

December by Prime Minister Saad Hariri in the presence of several government officials and representatives of diplomatic missions. More than 35,000 individual were expected to visit the fair, including students, scholars, professors, writers, journalists and publishers. Thousands of titles on display dealt with a very broad range of political, economic, financial, scientific, technological issues as well as innumerable works of literature and arts alongside periodical publications and other exhibits. This year was a special one for the 53-year-old event after Beirut was named the World Book Capital for 2009.

Several UN agencies in the country, including ESCWA, have displayed and disseminated many of their publications from a joint UN booth at the fair. A group of UN staff were present to assist visitors in selecting the right material and to explain the work of the Organization in the country and elsewhere. DVDs produced by the UN Department of Public Information and other agencies were also shown at the stand.

Chief of ESCWA Administrative Services Division David Iyama said on the occasion that "Culture is an important aspect of the United Nation's mission. UN offices operating in Beirut are participating in this book fair in order to reach a wide audience of Arab readers and inform them of the Organization's mission and activities in the region." He added that "a variety of documents and publications are on display that cover a wide range of topics that concern the region, including education and culture, population and development, health and agriculture, children, labor issues and many more." These are just samples of the many areas of work of the UN, he added.

The Director of the UN Information Centre in Beirut Bahaa Elkoussy commended the participation of the UN Family in this cultural event, saying that one of the main functions of the UN Information Centre is to interact with the public in order to promote and raise awareness about the work, activities and achievements of the world organization in Lebanon, the region and around the world. He added that public information officers of many UN agencies and programs in the country have passionately pooled resources and contributed to the success of our maiden collective presence at the fair. He expected the UN family to continue to actively take part in the fair in the coming years. ■



ESCWA Convenes Population & Housing Censuses Task Force

ESCWA organized in Beirut the sixth meeting of the Task Force on Population and Housing Censuses earlier in December 2009 to discuss and review ongoing projects and publications.

The workshop was organized in collaboration with the Statistics Division at UN Headquarters, and focused on discussing the final draft of the Arabic Translation of the United Nations Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses - Revision 2. Also on the agenda was a paper on "Census Undertaking Statistical Project vs. National Campaign: Innovations and Best Practices."

The workshop offered an opportunity for 18 participants from national statistical offices and two experts from the region to share experiences and best practices, assess accomplishments of the Task Force and discuss future plans.

Participants stressed the importance of finalizing the Arabic translation of a handbook on the Population and Principles of Population and Housing Censuses - 2010 round- revision 2. They valued and underscored the importance of countries' cooperation in different statistical areas, especially in that of population and housing censuses, and recommended the preparation of documents on the Task Force's achievements to be submitted to the ninth session of ESCWA Statistical Committee. ■

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