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**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**



## **Report**

### **Eleventh session of the Committee on Social Development Khartoum, 17-18 October 2017**

#### **Summary**

The eleventh session of the Committee on Social Development was held in Khartoum, on 17 and 18 October 2017. It was hosted by the Ministry of Security and Social Development of the Sudan. The session provided an official platform for member States to hold discussions, exchange expertise and formulate recommendations on the programme of work of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and on key vital issues that contribute to achieving social development in the Arab region. Participants reviewed several reports on priority issues such as age structural transitions, intergenerational justice and inclusive urban development.

Agenda items also covered progress in implementing the recommendations made by the Committee at its tenth session, notably the report of the Intersessional Group of Experts on Disability, a roundtable discussion on implementing the Tunis Declaration on Social Justice in the Arab Region, and support to member States in implementing the social aspects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The session also reviewed the proposed ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019.

The present report contains a brief account of the main issues raised during the presentations and discussions, and of the recommendations made by the Committee under each agenda item.

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## **Introduction**

1. The eleventh session of the Committee on Social Development was held in Khartoum on 17 and 18 October 2017, under the auspices of the Ministry of Security and Social Development of the Sudan, pursuant to the recommendations made by the Committee at its tenth session held in Rabat on 8 and 9 September 2015.
2. The present report outlines the main issues discussed and the recommendations agreed by participants. The Committee unanimously adopted the recommendations contained in the present report at its final session, held on 18 October 2017.

### **I. RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AT ITS ELEVENTH SESSION**

3. At the close of the eleventh session, held in Khartoum on 17 and 18 October 2017, the Committee thanked the Sudan for hosting the session and for its generous hospitality. The following recommendations were made to member States and the secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

#### **A. RECOMMENDATIONS TO ESCWA MEMBER STATES**

- (a) Take note of progress in implementing the recommendations issued at the tenth session of the Committee on Social Development and of the social development priorities set out in the ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019, and continue focusing on key aspects of current ESCWA work;
- (b) Affirm the importance of continuing the current approach of strengthening the link between ESCWA studies and reports on the one hand, and technical cooperation requests made by member States for the provision of capacity-building programmes, advisory services and guides for decision makers on the other;
- (c) Take note of efforts by the Group of Experts on Disability and its report, encourage greater focus by the Group on conflict-affected countries given the increased disability rates therein, and work on involving civil society and the private sector in the Group's work given their significant role in supporting persons with disabilities;
- (d) Encourage the private sector to support programmes for persons with disabilities in the context of corporate social responsibility;
- (e) Continue working on incorporating social justice principles in social policymaking, and raise awareness at the national level on the concepts of intergenerational justice and its impact on public policy;
- (f) Stress that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda must be based on its fundamental principles, namely maintaining the all-encompassing and interconnected nature of the Agenda and its Goals and targets, and the need for integrated policies and interventions and synergistic results within the framework of national priorities;
- (g) Implement the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda while ensuring integration among all dimensions and balance between the economic, social and environmental needs of current and future generations;
- (h) Incorporate in development policies all population age structures and expected demographic transitions, so as to prepare interventions in line with the 2013 Cairo Declaration on Population and Development and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, in accordance with the fundamental principles of the 2030 Agenda.

## B. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SECRETARIAT

- (a) Organize training workshops for member States on using the guide prepared by the secretariat to mainstream social justice principles in public policymaking, including social protection policies;
- (b) Continue convening meetings of the Group of Experts on Disability until the next Committee session, ensuring that the Group will present its progress report to the twelfth Committee session and strive to secure funding for its activities;
- (c) Prepare introductory material and provide technical services to support member States in implementing the New Urban Agenda in related economic, social and environmental fields, especially in countries recovering from and affected by conflict;
- (d) Increase technical support services to member States to implement the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda based on ESCWA approaches that support its integrated nature;
- (e) Develop a simplified questionnaire for member States on the activities of the Social Development Division, and closely follow up with member States to ensure their effective contribution to fulfilling the questionnaire's purpose;
- (f) Increase member States' involvement in the Committee's next session by giving them a space to make presentations on their efforts in implementing the recommendations issued at previous Committee sessions;
- (g) Provide technical support to develop systems for monitoring and evaluating progress at the national level in implementing a guide on social protection policies and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## II. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

### A. PROGRESS IN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT SINCE THE TENTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (Agenda item 4)

#### 1. *Implementation of activities under the ESCWA programme of work and pursuant to recommendations made by the Committee* (Agenda item 4 (a))

4. Under this sub-item, the Committee considered document E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/3 (Part I) on implementing the activities under the ESCWA programme of work and the recommendations made by the Committee. The document set out the expected accomplishments of subprogramme 2 on social development, and progress in implementing activities under the ESCWA programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017. It indicated activities that were implemented in 2015 but not mentioned in the report on implementing social development-related activities presented to the Committee at its tenth session. Those activities focused on building capacity; providing advisory services; preparing studies; implementing field projects; organizing meetings on various social development issues and priorities, such as social justice, migration, social protection, social inclusion, young people and persons with disabilities; integrating the main demographic social groups in national development policies; applying a participatory approach in policymaking; and incorporating the 2030 Agenda in national development strategies.

5. The ensuing discussion focused on the following:

(a) Acknowledging progress in implementing social development activities, requesting the secretariat to continue providing technical cooperation programmes to member States, strengthening regional consultations, and exchanging best practices and lessons learned on issues covered by the ESCWA programme of work that meet the needs of member States;

(b) Paying greater attention to disability issues, especially in conflict-affected countries that witness significant increases in the numbers of persons with disabilities, providing technical assistance to member States to develop standardized national disability registers, offering health insurance to persons with disabilities and enacting related regulatory laws, preparing detailed analytical studies to monitor the needs of persons with disabilities, achieving greater balance in the provision of ESCWA services and activities, and involving all countries in disability-related workshops;

(c) Highlighting projects and activities implemented by ESCWA in several member States to increase benefits therefrom, especially activities tackling shared issues and issues discussed in preparation for global agreements or conferences, such as migration within the context of preparations for the global compact for migration; implementing the SDGs and incorporating them in national development plans; and preparing for the 2019 global review of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development;

(d) Focusing future activities on rebuilding and rehabilitation in response to current events in some member States;

(e) Requesting ESCWA to provide technical support to combat poverty, prepare comprehensive data surveys to achieve social justice, especially since some member States have launched projects to review social protection for vulnerable groups, and researching the effectiveness and efficiency of social security systems.

6. The representative of the secretariat clarified that member States must submit requests for technical assistance through ESCWA official channels by sending them to the Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Section with detailed information on the required activities and expected outputs.

*2. Report of the Intersessional Group of Experts on Disability on its first meeting*  
(Agenda item 4 (b))

7. Under this sub-item, the Committee considered document E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/3 (Part II) on the report of the Intersessional Group of Experts on Disability. The Group was formed pursuant to a recommendation by the Committee at its tenth session. The document set out key issues discussed at the Group's first meeting (Beirut, 20-21 September 2016) that focused on article 33 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on national implementation and monitoring, on the disability-related SDGs, and on difficulties in collecting detailed data on disability. The document also presented the recommendations of the Group, and its comments on its proposed rules of procedure and terms of reference, and the issues to be addressed by focal points members of the Group, such as the frequency of meetings and additional funding.

8. The ensuing discussion focused on the following:

(a) Continuing work on standardizing the definition of disability and classifying its types, noting that relevant ministries had not agreed on one definition, with some adopting the definition of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics and others using the medical definition;

(b) Forming the Group of Experts on Disability with two representatives from each country, one representing the Government and the other representing civil society. Two reports can be submitted on the

mechanism to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in each country, one from the relevant government body and the other from civil society;

(c) Collaborating with the Arab Labour Organization to guarantee employment for persons with disabilities and provide them with social protection;

(d) Requesting ESCWA to provide technical assistance to the Sudan on disability issues, especially regarding data collection;

(e) Benefiting from country experiences in enhancing the rights of persons with disabilities and integrating them into the labour market, exchanging expertise and best practices, and benefiting from ESCWA reports in that regard, especially the most recent report on Strengthening Social Protection for Persons with Disabilities in Arab Countries;<sup>1</sup>

(f) Funding the meetings of the Group of Experts on Disability, especially through private-sector involvement, and aiming to hold meetings biennially with the possibility of member States hosting another meeting within that two-year period.

*3. Results of the questionnaire on the programmes and activities of the Social  
Development Division  
(Agenda item 4 (c))*

9. The representative of the secretariat gave a presentation on the results of the ESCWA questionnaire to consider member States' views on the activities and outcomes of the Social Development Division, and key proposals on the best ways to improve activity implementation. The questionnaire was one mechanism adopted by ESCWA to determine country priorities. ESCWA had sent the questionnaire to national focal points, who referred it to relevant ministries. Despite close follow-up, ESCWA had received responses from only six countries, namely Egypt, Iraq, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia. ESCWA was prepared to consider other mechanisms proposed by countries to increase the response rate.

10. Country responses included proposals to focus the Division's work programme on social protection issues; persons with disabilities, especially developing a unified classification of disability types; migration and development; social justice; combating poverty; social inclusion; policies to strengthen social cohesion; and family empowerment for those receiving cash benefits. Respondents also made suggestions to ensure that technical assistance services better met country priorities by expanding technical support fields to include social protection, older persons, young people, persons with disabilities, and social security. They proposed establishing an electronic forum to exchange expertise and enhance communication and interaction between countries, improving capacity-building activities and training workshops organized by ESCWA, and issuing periodic publications with summaries of future training sessions and disseminating them to member States. With regard to improving communication mechanisms with countries and publishing ESCWA products, proposals included establishing a database for experts in the social development field in the Arab region and regularly communicating with them, conducting joint studies with member States on national priority issues, and enhancing technology use. Questionnaire results also included proposals to develop frameworks to implement the 2030 Agenda. Detailed questionnaire results are available on the ESCWA website.<sup>2</sup>

11. In the ensuing discussion, participants stressed the importance of the questionnaire as a tool for evaluating the work of the Social Development Division and for planning future work. They enquired as to whether the responses of the six countries would be used as a basis for determining country priorities, or

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<sup>1</sup> E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/2.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unescwa.org/events/committee-social-development-11th-session>.

whether efforts would be made to collect responses from the remaining countries. Participants made the following proposals:

- (a) Achieving greater balance and coordination between the Division's activities and commitments on key issues related to global agreements or work programmes and the activities of the 2030 Agenda;
- (b) Strengthening coordination between ESCWA, United Nations country offices and other development partners at the regional and national levels to determine priorities;
- (c) Analysing the reasons behind the questionnaire's low response rate and identifying weaknesses in the questionnaire, in the means of communication and coordination, or in the approach used to receive responses;
- (d) Sending the questionnaire to non-government bodies to gauge the opinion of all segments of society;
- (e) Sending a working group to all countries to collect the required information from government bodies and other groups tasked with identifying priorities, rather than only sending the questionnaire by email;
- (f) Involving countries in developing the questionnaire.

4. *National follow-up on the Tunis Declaration on Social Justice in the Arab Region*  
(Agenda item 4(d))

12. At the eleventh session on the Committee on Social Development, a roundtable discussion was held on national follow-up of the Tunis Declaration on Social Justice. Representatives of Iraq, Morocco, the Sudan and Tunisia participated in the discussion.

13. The representative of the secretariat gave an overview of progress made in preparing a guide on mainstreaming social justice in development plans, policies and programmes, and steps taken to adopt the guide as a capacity-building tool. He said that ESCWA had prepared the guide pursuant to the Tunis Declaration on Social Justice issued at the twenty-eighth ESCWA session (Tunis, 15-18 September 2014) and to a recommendation by the Committee on Social Justice at its tenth session (Rabat, 8-9 September 2015). The guide had been presented and piloted in several workshops and meetings, and work was currently underway to review and revise the final draft. The guide would be used as a training tool in workshops at the regional and national levels to strengthen countries' capacity to mainstream social justice concepts in formulating, developing and evaluating plans and public policies, in line with country needs and specificities. He also noted the guide's goals and target groups, explained the methodology used to prepare it, and the contents of its six parts.

14. Many participants shared their experiences in formulating policies that took into account social justice, and explained how they would benefit from the guide and the importance of promoting participation and social justice to improve policy effectiveness.

15. Mr. Mohamed Fajri, the representative of Morocco, gave a presentation in which he highlighted the commitment of Morocco to the concept of social justice and to mainstreaming it in public policy. Achieving social development was a prominent aspect of the Government's approach over the past 20 years; recently, achieving social justice had become a pressing need. He said that the commitment of Morocco to that approach was enshrined in the country's various constitutions, especially the new 2011 constitution where several provisions required the establishment of a socially just society. Royal and government statements at many key events had also stressed the importance of achieving social justice. He added that the ministry responsible for social development was focused on advancing marginalized groups and improving their living conditions. He highlighted the ministry's main achievements, including *Ikram* 2012-2016 (a government plan for equality), a

law on combating violence against women, and a body to fight discrimination. He said that the Government paid special attention to disability issues, and was on the verge of completing a public policy on advancing the rights of persons with disabilities, consistent with a human rights-based approach and a social justice approach. A national policy was also underway to protect children's rights and organize awareness-raising campaigns to protect older persons through several programmes and activities aimed at mainstreaming the concept of social justice.

16. Mr. Taoufiq Kalthoum, the representative of Tunisia, gave a presentation on key reforms adopted in Tunisia to support the achievement of social justice. Since the 1960s, Tunisia had focused on advancing human capital, improving the livelihoods of marginalized groups, and combating marginalization through free education, family planning and other measures to achieve social justice. He said that the concept of social justice had been mainstreamed in the new constitution's preamble and in several articles on health, education, women's rights and the rights of persons with disabilities. The five-year plan on economic and social development 2016-2020 contained several structural and policy reforms and development programmes that upheld the concept of social justice, including establishing a national social protection floor, and dedicated a pillar to human development and social inclusion as bases of social justice. He considered several reforms carried out by the Ministry of Social Affairs in that regard, such as promoting mechanisms and programmes for vulnerable groups by adopting new approaches for social assistance and economic inclusion, and developing a new system for economic, education and social inclusion for persons with disabilities, increasing employment and raising incomes as a social justice mechanism, and improving citizens' access to social services to achieve equality.

17. Mr. Hussein Ali Abdul Hussein Al Saedi, the representative of Iraq, gave a presentation in which he clarified the commitment of Iraq to the concept of social justice. He said that several articles of the Iraqi constitution indicated that the Government must provide social security, health insurance and basic living requirements to individuals and households, especially women, children and persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development was working to achieve sustainable development and incorporate it in its strategic plans, and was allocating funds for their implementation in partnership with all social actors. The Ministry was implementing the concept of social justice through programmes and projects on eradicating all types of poverty, raising living standards for Iraqi households, enacting a social protection law covering all social groups (Iraqi and non-Iraqi), regulating the establishment of small enterprises, granting small loans to the unemployed, and offering conditional cash benefits. The commitment of Iraq to the concept of social justice was further evidenced by the enactment of a new social security law, and the development and implementation of national strategies to end violence against women and reduce poverty, and other strategies for children and young people based on the principles of justice and fairness.

18. Mr. Jamal al Nile, the representative of the Sudan, gave a presentation on formulating policies that took into account social justice, noting that the 2005 Sudanese constitution cemented a broad understanding of social justice by incorporating an annex on basic public rights. He said that the public sector's strategy contained fundamental issues, such as eradicating poverty, ensuring stability and resettlement, and implementing various reforms to end conflict, including establishing development funds in conflict areas. Several policies and programmes had been adopted, such as the national population policy and a plan to support poor households, providing cash benefits, and integrating persons with disabilities into the labour market and supporting them with small projects. He said that work was underway to develop an integrated social policy, in collaboration with ESCWA, committed to the concept of social justice and to citizens' values and public rights. The Sudanese commitment to mainstreaming the concept of social justice was also reflected in the development of national programmes to implement the SDGs. The Ministry of Security and Social Development was using the guide on mainstreaming social justice in development plans to prepare several documents, and was coordinating with partners in other ministries to disseminate and benefit from the guide. He highlighted the challenges facing implementation, notably funding, and some proposals on ways to benefit from the guide, such as involving civil society organizations in discussions on achieving social justice, and reviewing basic documents in all countries to ensure that they covered social justice issues. Such a process



would require organizing workshops and seminars to strengthen the use of the guide and build relevant capacity.

19. The ensuing discussion focused on the following:

(a) Stressing the importance of coordination between ministries and organizations working on achieving social development to avoid the duplication of efforts;

(b) Affirming the need to prepare national reports on social development that monitor progress in policy implementation;

(c) Highlighting the importance of policies based on human rights rather than on current needs, whatever the circumstances and security situation;

(d) Confirming that the concept of social justice is a general concept that must cover all individuals and classes, which must be taken into account in all policies, especially economic policies, to avoid the growth of one sector over another or at the expense of another;

(e) Researching the possibility of ESCWA developing a general framework to tackle poverty as a reference for countries, and a general framework for implementing the 2030 Agenda in Arab countries to expedite SDG implementation.

*5. Technical assistance for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals*  
(Agenda item 4 (e))

20. The representative of the secretariat gave a presentation on the ESCWA approach to supporting national efforts on SDG implementation and the areas of technical assistance offered by ESCWA in that regard. He said that the SDGs were one component of the 2030 Agenda, in addition to the declaration and the means of implementation, review and follow-up. He added that the development concept was based on five dimensions: economic, social, environmental, political (governance and participation) and a cultural dimension that was often overlooked, creating a gap in development policies. The last two dimensions were present in national policies but were partially missing from the 2030 Agenda, and entirely absent from the prevailing concept of development. He stressed that the social component would remain the weakest if not bolstered by policies on social issues, given that those were an integral part of national public policy.

21. He summarized the outcomes of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, notably the need to avoid developing partial sectoral policies, study multidimensional poverty, and focus on disability issues. He gave some examples of the types of technical assistance provided for implementing the 2030 Agenda at the national level in Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, the State of Palestine and the Sudan, where attention was focused on adapting the 2030 Agenda to national specificities, while stressing the importance of striking a balance between technical aspects and policymaking and the need for transformative policies to achieve development while leaving no one behind. He mentioned the ESCWA comprehensive approach to developing the strategic framework for its programme of work.

22. The ensuing discussion focused on the following:

(a) Adapting the 2030 Agenda at the national level to meet national priorities and specificities and country implementation capacity, especially since some global goals are related to specific geographic areas and not always applicable to other regions or countries;

(b) Strengthening partnerships between government bodies, international organizations, civil society institutions and the private sector to prepare national plans and implement the 2030 Agenda;

- (c) Reviewing data sources and not relying solely on data from national statistical offices, but rather using civil registers, research and studies to extract data, and providing comparable data;
- (d) Dividing work between all government bodies and ensuring collaboration between them;
- (e) Ensuring policy consistency and integration between the economic and social dimensions, and not overlooking one dimension at the expense of another in national policies and strategies;
- (f) Stressing the importance of incorporating the SDGs in national plans to ensure a more effective contribution by Arab countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda so as to secure significant achievements. This requires a real commitment from countries, and the identification of institutional frameworks, funding sources and monitoring and follow-up tools;
- (g) Highlighting efforts by Iraq to eradicate poverty, especially by developing national policies and launching a social protection network project covering 1.5 million households (a pioneering project that member States can benefit from);
- (h) Highlighting efforts by the Syrian Arab Republic to establish an aid fund to provide social protection services at all levels, including to poor households and persons with disabilities;
- (i) Recognizing efforts by Tunisia to tackle the causes of poverty by developing national strategies to combat poverty that bring together efforts by all ministries, and encouraging self-reliance among beneficiaries by funding small projects;
- (j) Stressing that ESCWA technical services should not be limited to developing policies but should also cover programme implementation.

## B. PRIORITY ISSUES IN ACHIEVING SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARAB REGION (Agenda item 5)

### 1. *ESCWA, Habitat III and the New Urban Agenda from a socially inclusive perspective* (Agenda item 5 (a))

23. Under this sub-item, the Committee considered document E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/4(Part I) on ESCWA, Habitat III and the New Urban Agenda from a socially inclusive perspective. The representative of the secretariat gave an overview of the goals and outcomes of Habitat III, held in Quito from 17 to 20 October 2016. ESCWA had participated in the conference preparations at the regional level, and had led the regional consultative process in collaboration with its partners (UN Habitat and the League of Arab States). The document set out statistical data on urbanization rates in the Arab region and globally, and the demographic and development challenges in the region.

24. The representative of the secretariat gave a detailed explanation of the New Urban Agenda adopted at Habitat III, and its impact on the Arab region. The New Urban Agenda represented a qualitative shift in city management and planning by promoting an urban development model incorporating all aspects of sustainable development, opting to avoid rather than cope with the negative effects of urbanization, and highlights the benefits of developing policies through an interconnected approach, so as to ensure more inclusive, resilient, secure and sustainable cities. The presentation covered the role of ESCWA in implementing the New Urban Agenda from an inclusive social perspective, and potential ESCWA support to member States. ESCWA had made commitments to implement the Urban Agenda at the regional level, including a project funded by the United Nations Development Account on national urban policies.

25. The ensuing discussion focused on the following:

(a) All data in document E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/4(Part I) were disseminated by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which publishes periodic estimates on population and urban indicators. They are not national statistical data, but allow for comparability and projection;

(b) The problems arising from rapid urbanization are manifested in the pressure on urban services, the rapid growth of slums, rural-urban migration and weak food security. The Urban Agenda stresses the importance of people-centered urban planning to avoid unforeseen repercussions and ensure the establishment of more inclusive, secure, sustainable and resilient cities, rather than limiting work to tackling the consequences of unbridled urban growth and its negative impact on societies, social cohesion and sustainability;

(c) The guide to measuring urban deprivation prepared by ESCWA, in collaboration with UN Habitat and the Arab Urban Development Institute, has been fully applied in Tripoli, Lebanon. Research is underway on necessary funding to implement it in Tunis and Nouakchott.

2. *Age structural transitions and sustainable development*  
(Agenda item 5 (b))

26. Under this sub-item, the Committee considered document E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/4(Part II) on age structural transitions and sustainable development. The presentation defined all age groups, namely children, young people, active working-age adults and older persons, and listed the development challenges they faced in the Arab region and beyond. Notable challenges included child labour, early marriage, dropping out of school, unemployment of young people and active working-age adults, youth participation in armed conflict and older persons suffering from chronic non-communicable diseases, in view of the absence of social protection programmes. The presentation reviewed the demographic profiles of ESCWA member States, and anticipated changes in age structures based on demographic trends and prospects, and their implications for development policymaking.

27. The presentation showed that over half of ESCWA member States had transitional age structures, with 45-60 per cent of the population comprising young people under 30, thus indicating upcoming demographic changes in most Arab countries but at different rates. The Arab region must adapt to the ageing phenomenon given the lack of resources and weak institutional structures and policies. The presentation set out recommendations to member States on measures to benefit from the demographic window, including taking note of changes in age structures in national strategies and development policies.

28. The ensuing discussion focused on the following:

(a) Stressing the need to include data on disability rates, and indicating the availability of national statistical data in several countries comparable with data set out in the document to ensure their accuracy, especially concerning average life expectancy in Tunisia;

(b) Tackling differences in standards used to define children and older persons, such as the legal definition (civil and Sharia) and definitions in international conventions, taking into account the presence of two categories of older persons based on biological age and retirement age, and stressing the importance of Arab countries agreeing on a unified definition for each group;

(c) Noting that one of the main challenges concerning older persons is the pressure they place on financial balances in social security systems and the resulting need to increase health-care spending, in view of the low percentage of the population covered by insurance programmes and high unemployment;

(d) Ensuring that social insurance funds take into account demographic changes when preparing actuarial studies, especially on pensions and *takaful* systems, to avoid negatively impacting fund balances;

(e) Taking into account children's best interests when considering the challenges facing them, thus requiring their participation in deciding their future and protecting them from family and other forms of violence and from economic exploitation;

(f) Not overlooking new and highly important phenomena facing young people, such as addiction, deviancy and illegal migration, and the need to prepare social specialists for tackling such problems;

(g) Awarding top priority to women of reproductive age (15-45) given the fertility spike in the region, and including in the document an analysis of challenges facing other social groups, such as migrants, the forcibly displaced, refugees and nomads;

(h) Stressing the importance of investing in the demographic transition in Arab countries to reap the benefits of the demographic window;

(i) Allocating a larger space in the document to analysing rapid demographic changes in the region, especially changes within age groups, and examining the significant disparities between urban and rural population groups and the impact of migration on young people;

(j) Studying links between different groups, analysing the negative impact of each group's status on that of the others, and developing a comprehensive associative framework to solve the issues of different age groups.

3. *Intergenerational justice: concept, dimensions and policy implications*  
(Agenda item 5 (c))

29. Under this sub-item, the Committee considered document E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/4(Part III) on intergenerational justice: concept, dimensions and policy implications, which was prepared pursuant to a recommendation made at the twenty-eighth ESCWA session and to the Tunis Declaration on Social Justice. The presentation defined the concept of intergenerational justice as "the fair allocation of burdens and benefits across generations, where fairness entails that the pursuit of welfare by the present generation does not diminish the opportunities of succeeding generations for pursuing a good and decent life". Intergenerational justice requires balance between the needs of present and future generations based on the principles of social justice, namely enhancing rights, equity, equality and participation. The concept not only applies to natural resource sustainability but also to all issues affecting future generations, such as public debt and social protection. The study of intergenerational justice is of special importance in the Arab region in view of the focus on economic growth and natural resource exploitation, rapid population growth, recurrent financial crises, weak environmental governance, and a lack of political stability. The presentation covered the ethical motives of social intergenerational justice, and its related dimensions and standards relevant to the Arab region. It set out the economic, social, environmental and financial dimensions and the adopted indicators to measure each dimension, proposals to include intergenerational justice issues in formulating policies and development programmes, and examples of practical interventions to protect the rights of future Arab generations.

30. The ensuing discussion focused on the following:

(a) The importance of intergenerational justice to achieving sustainable development;

(b) The need to adopt indicators on social exclusion and gender discrimination, given their impact on achieving social justice;

(c) The importance of incorporating in policymaking the political dimension impacting governance and participation.

C. PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2018-2019  
IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT  
(Agenda item 6)

31. The representative of the secretariat presented document E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/5 on the proposed programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019 in the field of social development. The document covered the proposed ESCWA activities and outcomes for the biennium 2018-2019. The programme of work was prepared in line with subprogramme 2 on social development of the revised strategic framework for the biennium 2018-2019, which was adopted by ESCWA at its twenty-ninth session (Doha, 13-15 December 2016).

32. The speaker explained the objective of subprogramme 2 on social development, the proposed strategy for implementing the work programme, and the three expected accomplishments regarding social policies on rights, international migration and social justice, noting that the fourth expected accomplishment on achieving the 2030 Agenda would not be included in the programme of work until further notice. He considered the external factors expected to impact the implementation of the programme of work, such as data and resource availability, political stability, and national commitment to achieving social justice. While the regular budget funded issues of social inclusion, social protection, persons with disabilities, young people, sustainable development, population, international migration, social justice and the New Urban Agenda, technical cooperation activities focused on providing advisory services and organizing training workshops upon countries' request. The United Nations Development Account was involved in implementing several projects on urban and population policies, enhancing social justice, and adopting a participatory approach in SDG implementation.

33. The ensuing discussion focused on the following:

(a) Incorporating in the ESCWA programme of work a project by the Development Account on humanitarian policies, aimed at linking between humanitarian work, peace and development;

(b) Including in the programme of work clear outcomes of population policies, periodic reviews on the implementation of recommendations of the International Conference on Population and Development, and activities on 'resilient cities' (a key topic in several international conferences planned for 2018).

D. OTHER MATTERS  
(Agenda item 7)

34. No discussion points were raised under this item.

E. DATE AND VENUE OF THE TWELFTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT  
(Agenda item 8)

35. Under this item, the Committee decided to hold its twelfth session at the ESCWA headquarters in Beirut in March 2019, provided that no other member State submits a request to host the session.

**III. ADOPTION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ELEVENTH  
SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**  
(Agenda item 9)

36. At its final meeting, held on 18 October 2017, the Committee adopted the recommendations of its eleventh session as set out in the present document.

## **IV. ORGANIZATION OF WORK**

### **A. VENUE AND DATE OF THE SESSION**

37. The eleventh session of the Committee on Social Development was held in Khartoum on 17 and 18 October 2017. Over those two days, the Committee discussed the items on its agenda, as set out in paragraph 44 to the present report.

### **B. OPENING**

38. The eleventh session of the Committee on Social Development was opened by Mr. Hussein Ali Abdul Hussein Al Saedi, Chair of the tenth session of the Committee. He gave a statement on behalf of Iraq, in which he thanked the Sudan for its generous hospitality and member States for their active participation and trust in Iraq while chairing the previous session and during the period between the two sessions. He indicated the considerable responsibility of the current session to highlight the various key issues related to social development. He concluded by wishing every success to the session's proceedings.

39. Mr. Frederico Neto, Director of the Social Development Division, gave a statement on behalf of ESCWA. He thanked the Sudan and the Ministry of Security and Social Development for their generous hospitality, the Chair of the tenth session, and member States for their continued collaboration with ESCWA and for their participation despite difficulties and challenges. He said that the current session was being held at a time when the Arab region was undergoing several development changes, in view of the social, economic and political challenges facing the achievement of development and human wellbeing. Those changes and challenges required concerted regional and international efforts to achieve development so as to make the world more just, secure, sustainable and inclusive.

40. Mr. Muhammad Khayr, Undersecretary of the Sudanese Ministry of Security and Social Development, gave a statement in which he apologized for the absence of the Minister because of an urgent meeting, and wished the session every success.

41. Mr. Hatim El Sir Ali, Foreign Trade Minister of the Sudan, thanked ESCWA for its continued collaboration with his country in three regional projects on social development, and for organizing the current session in the Sudan. He noted the reforms undertaken by the Sudan and the current national dialogue, stressing that all national efforts were fully consistent with ESCWA requests. He underscored the importance of ESCWA support in disseminating social justice and sustainable development in the Sudan and the Arab region. He said that the Ministry of Foreign Trade, as a point of reference for ESCWA activities in the Sudan, was looking forward to the recommendations and outcomes of the current session.

### **C. PARTICIPANTS**

42. Representatives of the following 11 ESCWA member States participated in the session: Bahrain, Iraq, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, the State of Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, the Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen. Representatives of regional organizations, observers and experts also attended the session. The list of participants is set out in annex I to the present report.

### **D. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

43. Pursuant to ESCWA resolution 226 (XXI) on the election of officers for the sessions of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies, members States shall assume the chairmanship of the sessions of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies, on a rotating basis, in Arabic alphabetical order. In accordance with rule 12 of the ESCWA Rules of Procedure, at the beginning of each session, the Commission shall elect from among the representatives of its member States two Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur. In accordance with this rule, Mr. Suleiman al-Jabiri, representative of Oman, was appointed Chair of the session. Mr. Hussein Ali Abd al

Hussein al Saadi, representative of Iraq, and Mr. Ayman Sawalha, representative of the State of Palestine, were appointed Vice-Chairs. Mr. Abdullah al Falla, representative of Mauritania, was appointed Rapporteur.

#### E. AGENDA

44. At its first meeting, the Committee adopted the agenda for its eleventh session set out in document E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/L.1:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
4. Progress in social development since the tenth session of the Committee on Social Development:
  - (a) Implementation of activities under the ESCWA programme of work and pursuant to recommendations made by the Committee;
  - (b) Report of the Intersessional Group of Experts on Disability on its first meeting;
  - (c) Results of the questionnaire on the programmes and activities of the Social Development Division;
  - (d) National follow-up on the Tunis Declaration on Social Justice;
  - (e) Technical assistance for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.
5. Priority issues in achieving social development in the Arab region:
  - (a) ESCWA, Habitat III and the New Urban Agenda from a socially inclusive perspective;
  - (b) Age structural transitions and sustainable development;
  - (c) Intergenerational justice: concept, dimensions and policy implications.
6. Proposed programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019 in the field of social development.
7. Other matters.
8. Date and venue of the twelfth session of the Committee on Social Development.
9. Adoption of the recommendations made by the Committee on Social Development at its eleventh session.

45. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted the proposed organization of work set out in document E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/L.2, following its amendment based on a recommendation by the secretariat to consider item 4 (d) on national follow-up on the Tunis Declaration on Social Justice in the Arab Region and 5 (c) on intergenerational justice: concept, dimensions and policy implications.

#### F. DOCUMENTS

46. A list of meeting documents submitted to the Committee at its eleventh session is set out in annex II to the present report. Documents are available from [www.unescwa.org/committee-social-development-11th-session](http://www.unescwa.org/committee-social-development-11th-session).

## Annex I

### **LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

#### **A. ESCWA MEMBER STATES**

##### Bahrain

Ms. Maha al Jaudar  
Third Secretary  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

##### Iraq

Mr. Hussein Ali Abdul Hussein Al Saedi  
Director of Planning and Follow-up  
Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

##### Mauritania

Mr. Abdullah al Falla  
Director of Social Action and National Solidarity  
Ministry of Social Affairs, Childhood and Family

##### Morocco

Mr. Mohamed Fajri  
Chief, Partnership Section  
Ministry of Solidarity, Women, Family and Social  
Development

##### Oman

Mr. Suleiman al-Jabiri  
Ambassador of Oman  
Oman Embassy in Khartoum

##### State of Palestine

Mr. Ayman Sawalha  
Adviser to the Minister for Social Development  
Ministry of Social Development

##### Saudi Arabia

Mr. Saleh ben Jalwi al Masood  
Economic Adviser  
Ministry of Economy and Planning

Mr. Khaled ben Soulaïman al-Wahbi  
Director of Development  
Ministry of Labour and Social Development

##### Sudan

Mr. Hatim El Sir Ali  
Minister of Foreign Trade

Mr. Ali Muhammad Khayr  
Undersecretary  
Ministry of Security and Social Development

Mr. Jamal al Nile Abdullah Mansour  
Director-General for Policy, Planning and  
Research  
Ministry of Security and Social Development

Ms. Limia Abdul Ghaffar Khalfallah  
Secretary-General  
National Population Council

Mr. Bader al-Din Ahmad  
Secretary-General of the National Disability  
Council  
Ministry of Security and Social Development

Ms. Oaima Osman Khaled  
Acting Director for External Cooperation  
Ministry of Security and Social Development

Mr. Mubarak Rahmtalla  
Expert in Development Cooperation  
Ministry of Security and Social Development

Mr. Taha Mohammed Ahmed  
Administrative Assistant  
Ministry of Trade

##### Syrian Arab Republic

Ms. Maysa al Midani  
Director of Social Services  
Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour

##### Tunisia

Mr. Taoufik Kalthoum  
Director-General  
Ministry of Social Affairs

##### Yemen

Mr. Ayub Abubakar Mohammed Ayoub  
General Manager  
Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour  
Aden Governorate



## B. UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATIONS

### Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Middle East Region

Mr. Anwar Jebara  
Human Rights Officer  
Beirut, Lebanon

### United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)

Ms. Abeer Alhadj  
Expert in monitoring and evaluation

Ms. Bahaa al-Sharif  
Expert in women's economic empowerment

### World Health Organization (WHO)

Ms. Heba Hussein Ibrahim  
Maternal and child health

Ms. Sana Abdul Alazi al Rahman  
Communicable and non-communicable diseases

### United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

Mr. Faysal Ishaq Abdullah  
Population and development programmes advisor

## C. ARAB AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

### Council of Arab Economic Unity

Ms. Mariam Imam Muhyieddeen  
Assistant Secretary-General

### Arab Labour Organization

Mr. Adil Muhammad Salih Bashir  
Director of the Arab Centre for Social Insurance

### Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization

Mr. Ali Abdullah Naim  
Director  
Khartoum International Institute for Arabic  
Language

### African Development Bank

Mr. Souare Darbo  
Senior Economist

### Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

Mr. Ismael al Rahel Mairy  
Programmes Director

### National Population Council - Secretariat General

Ms. Wisal Husein Abdullah  
Assistant Secretary-General for Technical Affairs

### Human Aid Commission

Ms. Mona Nour Daem Omar Mohammed  
Director-General for Planning and Technical  
Cooperation

### Combating Violence against Women and Children Unit

Ms. Fatima Salem  
Director of scientific research

### Sudan University of Science and Technology

Ms. Hadia Moubarak Hajj al Chaykh  
Dean of the Institute

### Omdurman Ahlia University

Ms. Darya al Nazir al Koni  
Lecturer in the human development institute

### Ahfad University for Women

Ms. Arwa Abdul Rahman al-Kanja  
Advisor on gender and development

### Al Sayaran Charitable Organization

Mr. Walid Sufyan Mohammed Issa  
Secretary-General

### Sudanese Business and Employee

Mr. Bakri Yousef Omer  
Secretary-General

Annex II

**LIST OF DOCUMENTS**

Title	Item	Symbol
Information note		E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/INF.1
Provisional agenda and annotations	3	E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/L.1
Organization of work	3	E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/L.2
Progress in social development since the tenth session of the Committee on Social Development	4	E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/3
Implementation of activities under the ESCWA programme of work and pursuant to recommendations made by the Committee	4 (a)	E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/3(Part I)
Report of the Intersessional Group of Experts on Disability on its first meeting	4 (b)	E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/3(Part II)
Priority issues in achieving social development in the Arab region	5	E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/4
ESCWA, Habitat III and the New Urban Agenda from a socially inclusive perspective	5 (a)	E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/4(Part I)
Age structural transitions and sustainable development	5 (b)	E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/4(Part II)
Intergenerational justice: concept, dimensions and policy implications	5 (c)	E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/4(Part III)
Proposed programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019 in the field of social development	6	E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/5