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Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda

Follow-up issues**Action taken pursuant to the Doha Declaration on the Implementation
of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
in the Arab States****Summary**

The Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab States was adopted by member States of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) on 15 December 2016, as an outcome of the twenty-ninth ministerial session of the Commission. It requested the ESCWA secretariat “to continue supporting the implementation process in line with the strategies approved by member States”, focusing on a set list of activities contained in paragraph 27 of the Declaration.

This document presents progress made by the ESCWA secretariat in the implementation of those activities. It features each set of activities mentioned in the Declaration in bold, then lists what was undertaken by the ESCWA secretariat in implementation. Members of the Executive Committee are invited to take note of the information set forth therein and advise on the way forward.

**Action taken by the secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission
for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

In the Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab States, member States requested the ESCWA secretariat to undertake the following:

(a) Continue to produce informative material on the implementation of the [2030] Agenda [for Sustainable Development] at the national level, and to focus on local development requirements in rural and urban areas;

Action taken

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) submitted a document on transport and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to the seventeenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics, which was held in Cairo on 23 and 24 January 2017. The document presented the systems approach as a conceptual framework to tackle transport issues, mapping the links between transport performance and the SDGs. It offered a set of guiding principles for the integration of the SDGs in future transport strategies and action plans in the Arab countries. The document was used in a capacity-building workshop on strategic planning for the transport sector in the State of Palestine, held in Beirut on 22 and 23 March 2017. It was also used in discussions on transport planning issues with the staff of the Ministry of Transport of Iraq on 24 October 2017.

ESCWA submitted a document on trade and the SDGs to the eleventh session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development, held in Beirut on 27 and 28 November 2017. The document set out the relation between trade and several SDGs, presented the results of a survey on the perceptions of high-ranking trade officials on trade liberalization and sustainable development, and provided recommendations for the Arab countries on how to enhance the role of trade in promoting development and achieving the SDGs.

ESCWA has also prepared three technical papers on measuring water, energy and food security indicators in the framework of the 2030 Agenda, and is working on a study on the typology of green technology applications and adequate, climate-resilient technologies for waste management in the Arab countries.

In cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme, the League of Arab States and the Center for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe, and as per the request of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment, ESCWA will convene the fifth Arab Round Table on Sustainable Consumption and Production from 18 to 20 December 2017, in Cairo. The round table will focus on adopting sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns at the national level. It will also showcase the experience of partners in the SwitchMed programme, which have made strides in fulfilling indicator 12.1 of the SDGs, on the number of countries with SCP national action plans or SCP mainstreamed as a priority or target into national policies.

The Unit on the 2030 Agenda, which was established to help member States in implementing the SDGs, is planning for the following activities:

(a) A workshop and trainings on accelerating and monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the Sudan, which will involve government and non-government stakeholders; the activity could be tailored to the needs of other member States upon request;

(b) In the framework of the project on “Implementation, follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: enhancing the capacities of Arab countries”, manuals, guidelines and training materials will be produced, and regional awareness-raising workshops will be held on the adaptation and inclusion of the SDGs into national plans.

The Inter-agency Scientific Committee of the Regional Coordination Mechanism will control the quality of knowledge and capacity-building materials produced on the 2030 Agenda.

ESCWA has produced social justice and social protection toolkits that adopt the framework of the 2030 Agenda. It is working on an interactive online policy toolbox, which will contain various knowledge and capacity-building products on youth development. A paper will also be produced and a workshop held on social protection in rural areas, in relation to SDG 1 on ending poverty, particularly targets 1.3 and 1.5 on social protection for the poor and vulnerable.

ESCWA has also produced a regional report on “Social protection of persons with disabilities in Arab countries”, of relevance to SDGs 1, 4, 8, 10, 11, 16 and 17. It has published technical papers on conditional cash transfers in Arab countries; the social impact of subsidy reform; changes in social expenditure on social protection in Arab countries; and the social protection profiles of Mauritania and Tunisia, in support of the implementation of target 1.3 on social protection. Its bulletin on SDGs and international law explored the legal obligations of governments to implement the SDGs. Finally, ESCWA has published two technical papers on slum upgrading and social housing policies in the Arab region in support of the implementation of SDG 11 on making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

(b) Prepare a concept paper on establishing an Arab forum for financing sustainable development in the region, which complements the role of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development. Prepare working papers on the interlinkages between the Agenda’s economic, social, environmental, political/institutional and cultural dimensions and its 17 goals, and on the role of the various actors in its implementation, including Governments, civil society and the private sector;

Action taken

ESCWA has prepared a concept note advocating for the establishment of an Arab forum for financing sustainable development in the Arab region, which was submitted for discussion at the twelfth session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development, held in Beirut on 4 and 5 December 2017.

ESCWA is also issuing two publications in the Arab Horizon 2030 series, one on sustainable energy and the other on prospects for enhancing food security in the Arab region.

Finally, ESCWA has proposed an implementation framework for the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region. The framework was discussed in a consultative meeting held from 18 to 20 September 2017, in Cairo, which gathered representatives of environment ministries and national statistical offices, along with civil society and international organizations. The framework includes the approach adopted, an assessment of environmental priorities in the Arab region and an assessment of the integration of the environmental dimension of the SDGs into regional and national development frameworks.

(c) Develop approaches that facilitate incorporating and adapting the Agenda and its Goals and targets nationally and regionally, including an approach to identify sets of interlinked goals drawn from national priorities, so as to ensure effectiveness and efficiency; and implement programmes to build national capacity and transfer knowledge to benefit from regional and international initiatives;

Action taken

ESCWA has prepared a paper on monitoring, evaluating and dashboarding in the context of national development plans, which presents a dashboarding approach to the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of development plans and the SDGs. Dashboarding is presented as a key exercise that allows governments to measure progress, identify discrepancies between goals and realizations, and plan for the future.

To help member States in mainstreaming energy-related SDGs into their national development plans, ESCWA organized a regional capacity-building workshop on the “Water-Energy Nexus Operational Toolkit: Renewable Energy” in July 2017, which addressed the potential use of commercialized renewable energy technologies to improve water security. Another workshop on the “Water-Energy Nexus Operational Toolkit: Technology Transfer” was held in October 2017. Discussions focused on improving the technical capacity of government officials who manage or oversee the provision of water or energy services in ESCWA member States.

Work on the *ESCWA Water Development Report 7: Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction in the Arab Region* was finalized. The report is aimed at informing discussions on the links between the sustainable development targets focused on climate change and disaster risk reduction, with a view to adopting an integrated approach for the monitoring and implementation of these targets as included in the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

In the field of technology, ESCWA has prepared a report on the science, technology and innovation priority areas that can contribute to the implementation of the SDGs. In the field of social development, the establishment of an intergovernmental group of experts on disability will facilitate knowledge transfer across the Arab region on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for persons with disabilities. ESCWA will also organize a training workshop on employment policies for persons with disabilities, in support of the implementation of target 8.5 of the SDGs on achieving, by 2030, full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

In the area of gender equality, ESCWA has produced two studies on violence against women related to target 5.2 on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation. The first report, entitled *Status of Arab Women Report 2017 – Violence against Women: What is at Stake?*, reviews evidence-based knowledge on violence against women in the Arab region and underlines the human rights of women and girls. The second report, prepared in partnership with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and entitled *Estimating Costs of Marital Violence in the Arab Region: Operational Model*, proposes a model for costing violence against women relevant for the Arab region. It also determines key operational steps to undertake the costing exercise on the country level.

ESCWA has also prepared a study on the state of gender justice in the Arab region related to target 5.1 on ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere. It reviews the progress made in the Arab region in addressing and eliminating discrimination against women, and examines the instatement of accountability mechanisms to combat discriminatory measures, and of institutional mechanisms that allow victims of gender-based discrimination to seek redress. The study was complemented by a policy brief on institutional mechanisms for gender accountability in the Arab region, which examines States’ obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of women. ESCWA has finally produced a report entitled *Women’s Political Representation in the Arab Region*, which examines women’s representation in the legislative, executive and judiciary branches and in local councils. It also highlights new forms of representation, such as participation of women in peace talks, national dialogues and constitutional committees.

(d) Prepare training material and programmes and the necessary guides to develop national capacity and assist decision makers and development partners in the implementation process, including parliamentarians and civil society organizations;

Action taken

ESCWA has produced training material and has organized regional and national capacity-building workshops to guide member States in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as follows:

- Regional capacity-building workshop on the adoption of the 2030 Agenda (May 2017);

- Training workshop on target 5.5, aiming at ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life, attended by officials from statistical offices and ministries of interior and of women's affairs from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco and the State of Palestine (September 2017);
- Capacity-building workshop on integrating the SDGs in the national strategies of Mauritania, focusing on gender equality, women's empowerment and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security (March 2017);
- Capacity-building workshop on achieving SDG 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment in the Syrian Arab Republic (March 2017);
- Training workshop on supporting national mechanisms in implementing SDG 5, which targeted the Jordanian National Commission for Women (August 2017);
- Technical assistance on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for staff of the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Lebanon (September 2017).

As part of efforts to improve economic planning and evidence-based policymaking in support of sustainable development, ESCWA has responded to several technical assistance requests in the field of tax cooperation. National and regional workshops were held on subjects including base erosion and profit shifting, and double taxation avoidance.

ESCWA has also conducted a national consultation meeting in September 2017 on costing intimate partner violence in the State of Palestine, in partnership with the Ministry of Women's Affairs, with a view to the achievement of target 5.2.

(e) Continue to develop analysis tools that assist in determining interlinkages between goals, in accordance with country specificities and national plans, including network analysis, modelling and forecasting; and work with member States to build capacity in this field;

Action taken

In March 2017, ESCWA issued a technical paper entitled "Prototype model for Sustainable Development Goal simulation", which proposed a quantitative tool to integrate SDGs into economic planning, detailing its theoretical and technical aspects, as well as its prerequisites, limitations, hardware requirements and troubleshooting techniques.

Work is under way on a quantitative framework to assess the impact of trade and logistics reforms on selected SDGs. The model developed could be applied to member States in the biennium 2018-2019 if resources are made available.

(f) Build national capacity to prepare reports on progress achieved in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, and disseminate existing approaches to drafting such reports;

Action taken

ESCWA has developed an Arab financing for development scorecard to help member States in assessing progress achieved in the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which contributes to the realization of the SDGs. The analysis of scorecard results revealed that, in recent years, resources have been flowing out of the region instead of being directed towards regional sustainable development efforts.

ESCWA convened the 2017 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development in cooperation with the League of Arab States from 3 to 5 May in Rabat. The Forum served as a high-level regional platform for review and follow-up of implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region.

Finally, ESCWA has assisted member States in the adoption of methodologies used to measure progress in the achievement of water-related targets, as part of the Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG 6 on ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, launched by UN-Water. This activity has contributed to enhance capacity in the collection and presentation of data for the preparation of national reports.

(g) Assist Arab countries in developing appropriate institutional arrangements and coordination mechanisms between entities in national statistical offices, so as to improve efficiency in monitoring and evaluating progress in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and their targets;

Action taken

ESCWA has organized assessments of national statistical systems in Egypt and Jordan, with a view to formulating national strategies for the development of statistics in support of the 2030 Agenda. Similar assessments, bringing together various producers and users of official statistics, are being conducted for Libya, the Sudan and Yemen.

ESCWA has prepared guidelines on including people with disabilities in the collection of SDG data, in cooperation with national statistical offices and the Washington Group on Disability Statistics. It has also released training material on energy and gender statistics.

The Unit on the 2030 Agenda will provide demand-driven policy advice on the establishment of national committees tasked with following up on the implementation of the SDGs.

(h) Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the availability of good quality statistics for use in preparing indicators to measure progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, in collaboration and coordination with the secretariat of the Arab Working Group on Environment and Sustainable Development Indicators and national statistical offices;

Action taken

In early 2017, ESCWA prepared a comprehensive analysis of data availability for monitoring purposes, in cooperation with the United Nations Statistics Division and the League of Arab States. The analysis is currently being updated. Available results were presented to the Statistical Committee at its twelfth session, held in Beirut on 4 and 5 April, in a document entitled “Role of official statistics in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab region: data availability on the Sustainable Development Goals”.

(i) Identify a narrow set of indicators, based on national and regional priorities while taking into account the capacity of Arab countries to provide the necessary indicators in line with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and international standards, so as to periodically monitor the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Action taken

The Technical Advisory Group on Demographic and Social Statistics of ESCWA partnered with the United Nations Population Fund and national statistical offices to produce a list of core and secondary population indicators for Arab countries. The indicators were adopted by the Statistical Committee at its twelfth session (Beirut, 4-5 April 2017).
