

# ANNUAL REPORT 2017



UNITED NATIONS

إسكوا  
ESCWA

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

# ANNUAL REPORT 2017

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# FOREWORD

In May of 2017, I was honoured to be asked by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres to take the helm of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), succeeding the distinguished Rima Khalaf who steered ESCWA through a most challenging period. The conflicts and instability that have scarred our region in recent years are far from resolved; I thus accepted this mandate with humility and a keen awareness of the magnitude of the hurdles ahead.

Great as these challenges are, the promise is greater: I have taken on the responsibility with high expectations of what can be achieved in the Arab region over the years to come. Now in its fifth decade, ESCWA is maturing as an institution. I am convinced that through hard work, honest and open communication, debate based on sound, factual evidence, and meaningful policy research on economic and social development, we can not only ensure progress for the millions of children, women and men who call this region home today; we can also strive for lasting prosperity and dignity for future generations.

I have asked all my staff to roll up their sleeves; I have empowered them to ask difficult questions, and ensured they have the resources to continue advocating for those in our region whose voices are less heard. Least developed countries, conflict-ridden regions, a people living under occupation, internal displacement and refugee crises: these are but a few of the priorities we must urgently address in discharging our duties.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Secretary-General's envisaged reforms in the management and development spheres will of course frame our interventions for years to come.

While the pursuit of medium and long-term development goals in the face of immediate conflict can appear daunting, ESCWA's work helps mitigate the impact of crisis, develop societal resilience, and lays a foundation for constructive reconciliation and peacebuilding. In carrying out our mandate, our watchwords will be transparency, integrity and accountability: towards our member States, the international community at large, and most importantly towards the people of this region whom we serve.

I also take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the Government of Lebanon, in particular the Office of the Prime Minister, for continuing to support our regional commission: Lebanon is home to ESCWA, and we look forward to a continued productive partnership with our host country.

I invite you, dear readers, to discover the many facets of our work in these pages, as we forge ahead in helping implement the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda while upholding the values and principles of the United Nations.

Join the conversation and share your comments on [facebook.com/unescwa](https://facebook.com/unescwa) and on [@UNESFWA](https://twitter.com/UNESFWA).



**Mohamed Ali Alhakim**  
Executive Secretary



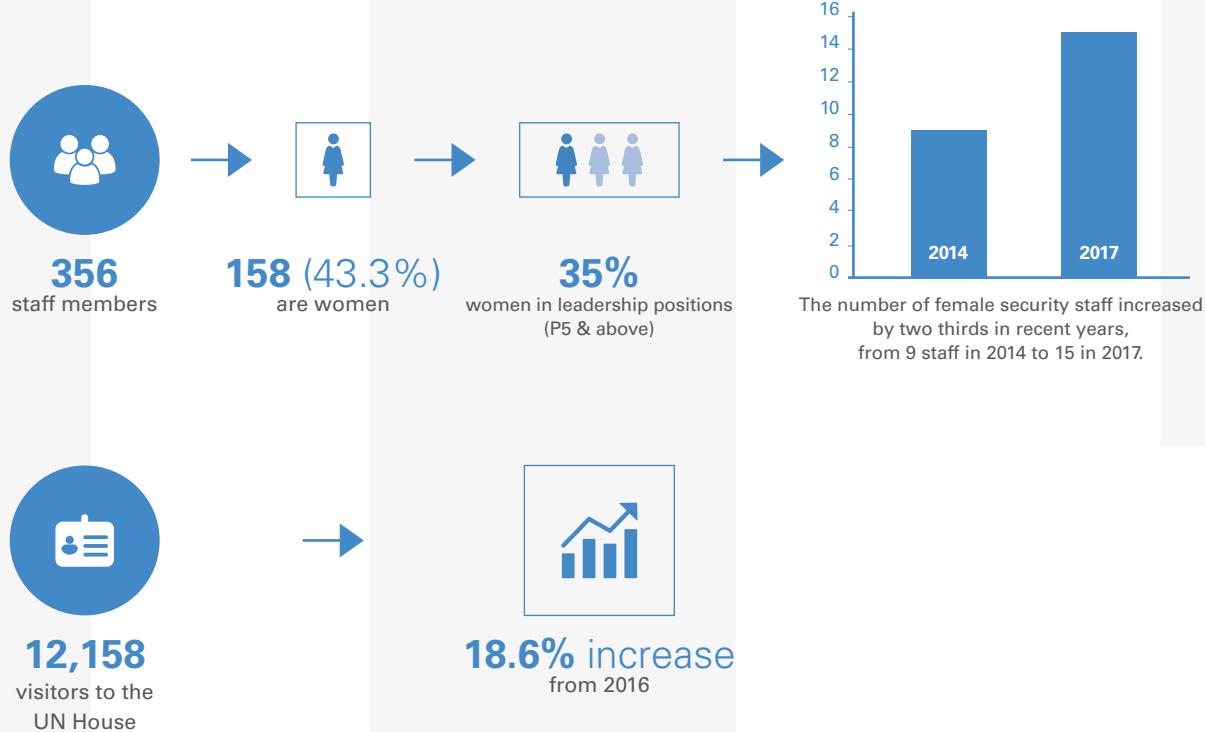
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# ESCWA IN BRIEF

One of five United Nations regional commissions, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) provides a presence for the Economic and Social Council in the region and gives a voice to Arab countries on the global stage. It helps to implement global policy frameworks, notably the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), hand in hand with its 18 member States.

ESCWA leverages its convening power to promote dialogue and knowledge-sharing at the national, regional and global levels, foster interregional cooperation and develop rich, robust South-South partnerships, working with its sister regional commissions based in Addis Ababa, Bangkok, Geneva and Santiago de Chile.





In his oath of office, the Secretary-General stated that achieving gender parity across the United Nations system was one of his top priorities. His new, system-wide approach includes monitoring the following areas: leadership and senior appointments; recruitment, retention; progression and talent management; work environment; and field and mission settings.

ESCWA shares this commitment to gender parity and continues to be the top performing entity in the System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

Regional organizations are essential to face the very difficult challenges that threaten us.

Regional and global solidarity must be our guide, as we draw on our collective efforts to build a life of peace, dignity and prosperity for all.

SECRETARY-GENERAL  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

**ANTÓNIO GUTERRES**

## VISION

ESCWA supports national and regional efforts towards a stable and prosperous Arab region, in which people enjoy **freedom, equality, social justice and sustainable livelihoods**.



freedom



equality



social  
justice



sustainable  
livelihood

## WHO WE ARE

ESCWA has 18 member States in the Arab region. While markedly different in many aspects, they share development opportunities and challenges that can most effectively be addressed through collective, coordinated action. United Nations regional commissions are uniquely positioned to provide impartial intergovernmental platforms for the advancement of regional integration, the development of regional norms and standards, the exchange of experiences and the fostering of international (south-south, north-south and triangular) cooperation.

Regional commissions are recognized for the critical role they play in promoting a holistic view of development in their regions, one that balances the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in their member States.

# ESCWA IN BRIEF

## WHAT WE DO

The mandate of ESCWA is to support inclusive and sustainable development in its member States, advance regional integration and provide advocacy for the region's needs and concerns on the global stage. Through research and analysis, ESCWA links knowledge on economic and social issues to policy. It brings together policymakers, researchers, experts and other stakeholders in intergovernmental and expert group meetings in the pursuit of constructive dialogue and concerted action. On the ground, ESCWA provides targeted technical cooperation and advisory services to member States upon their request. It serves as:



### VOICE OF THE REGION

Creating regional platforms for deliberation, coordination and consensus building among member States to influence global forums.



### THINK TANK OF THE REGION

Undertaking innovative research, and supporting quality data collection and analysis for evidence-based policymaking.



### ADVISER TO THE REGION

Providing regional, subregional and national capacity-building and technical advisory services, and supporting national efforts to adopt norms and policies.



### PARTNERSHIPS & NETWORKS

ESCWA frames its interventions within wider regional efforts to drive development and maximize impact. It has established strategic partnerships with the League of Arab States, other Arab organizations, regional United Nations entities and country teams, and a number of key donors and civil society organizations and networks.

The strategic partnership of ESCWA with the League of Arab States is dynamic and wide-ranging. ESCWA provides substantive support to the League's intergovernmental bodies, such as the Arab Ministerial Water Council and its Technical, Scientific and Advisory Committee; the Arab Ministerial Council for Meteorology and Climate; the Arab Permanent Committee for Meteorology; the Arab Climate Change Negotiations Group; the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment; and the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Electricity. The Secretary-General of the League of Arab States has attended some Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) meetings convened by ESCWA to increase coordination between United Nations entities working in the region.

## ESCWA LEVERAGES SUCH PARTNERSHIPS IN ORDER TO:

**Influence development policy:** Translating evidence-based recommendations into policies and programmes requires shaping agendas, including through pressure groups, the moral force of dignitaries and institutions, and traditional and social media.

**Facilitate stakeholder dialogue:** ESCWA is committed to inclusive development and consensus building. It constitutes a dialogue platform for all stakeholders, including policymakers and beneficiaries of development programmes.

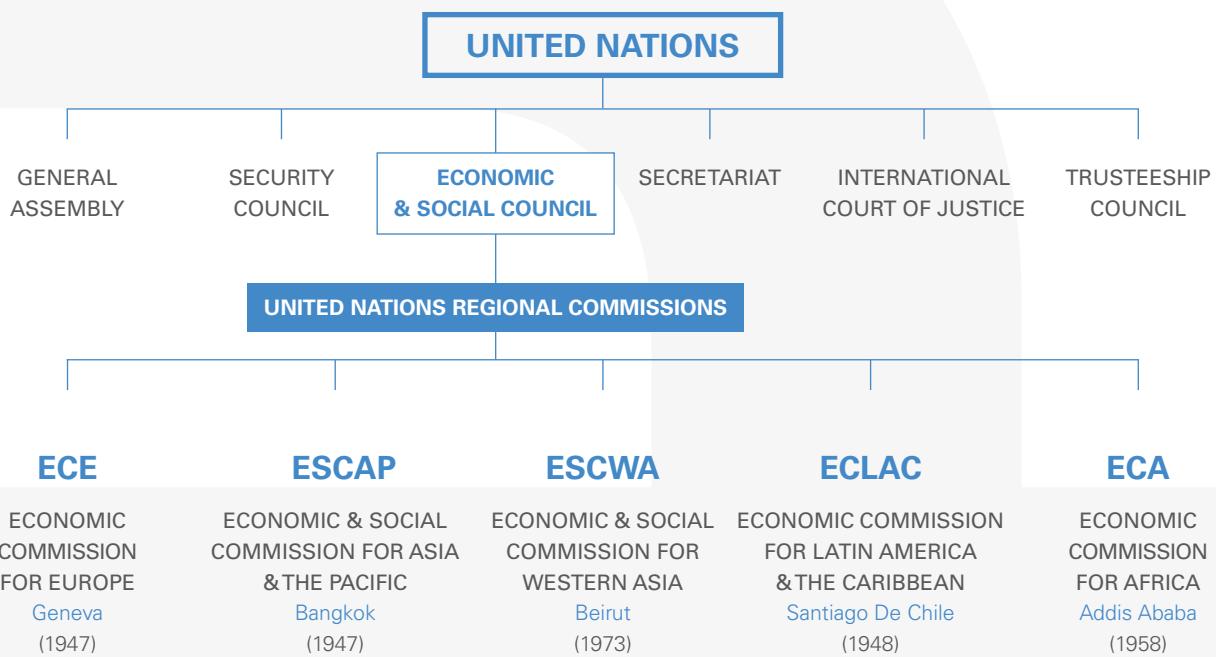
**Broaden the scope of development interventions:** Partnerships improve results as they allow for coordinating actions, and pooling resources and information.

**Help bridge gaps between knowledge and Implementation:** ESCWA works for the translation of knowledge and recommendations into action on the ground. In order to achieve that goal, it selects partners that have proven records of implementation, enjoy high credibility and adhere rigorously to universal norms and values.

**Tap into innovation:** Private sector actors and specialized entities provide new concepts and resources that assist ESCWA in delivering its mandate.

**Promote norms and values:** As the United Nations' arm in the region, ESCWA promotes the organization's values and norms in all areas of intervention, including through collaboration with its diverse development partners.

**Mobilize funding:** Partnerships can provide additional financing to build on existing activities and tackle emerging issues.



# ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

The Executive Secretary heads the Commission and holds the rank of Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations. Current Executive Secretary Mohamed Ali Alhakim hails from Iraq; his predecessors originated from Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, the State of Palestine, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.



## LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHT: NEW EXECUTIVE SECRETARY MOHAMED ALI ALHAKIM



Mohamed Ali Alhakim was appointed Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCWA by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres in May 2017.

Mr. Alhakim brings to the position a deep knowledge of the governmental landscape, coupled with strong networks throughout the region and extensive experience in the issues confronting ESCWA member States. He previously served as Permanent Representative and Ambassador of Iraq to the United Nations, both in Geneva and New York (2010-2017); as Ambassador and Director of Arab, European, International Organizations and Policy Planning at the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2006-2010); as Iraq's Minister of Communications (2004-2005); as Member of the Iraqi National Assembly and Foreign Relations Sub-Committee (2005-2006) and as Senior Social and Economic Adviser to the Vice-President of Iraq (2004-2010).

Mr. Alhakim holds a doctorate degree in management of engineering and telecommunications, a master's degree in computer information technology and a bachelor's degree in education and statistics.

**MOHAMED ALI ALHAKIM**  
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

**KHAWLA MATTAR**  
Deputy Executive Secretary,  
Programme Support  
• Programme planning and  
technical cooperation  
• ESCWA Communication and  
Information Unit (ECIU)  
• National Agenda for the  
Future of Syria (NAFS)

**VACANT**  
Deputy Executive Secretary,  
Programme  
Strategy, evaluation and  
partnerships

**KARIM KHALIL**  
Secretary of the  
Commission

**ROULA MAJDALANI**  
Sustainable Development Policies Division (SDPD)

- Energy
- Water
- Food & environment policies

**FREDERICO NETO**  
Social Development Division (SDD)

- Participation & social justice
- Population & social development
- Inclusive social development
- Unit on the 2030 Agenda

**MOCTAR MOHAMED EL HACENE**  
Economic Development and Integration Division (EDID)

- Regional integration
- Economic development & poverty
- Economic governance & planning
- Modelling & forecasting

**HAIDAR FRAIHAT**  
Technology for Development Division (TDD)

- Information & communications
- Technology (ICT) policies
- Innovation
- ESCWA Technology Centre, Jordan

**JURAJ RIECAN**  
Statistics Division (SD)

- Demographic & social statistics
- Economic statistics

**MEHRINAZ EL AWADY**  
ESCWA Centre for Women (ECW)

- Gender equality
- Women's empowerment

**TARIK ALAMI**  
Emerging and Conflict-related Issues Division (ECRI)

- Conflict, occupation & development
- Governance & State-building

**PONTUS MOLIN**  
Administration Services Division (ASD)

- Budget & finance
- Human resources management
- General services
- Information & Communications Technology
- Conference services
- Joint medical services
- Procurement

# YEAR IN REVIEW

## JANUARY



António Guterres succeeds Ban Ki-moon as Secretary-General of the United Nations

Workshop on geographic information systems for an integrated transport system between the Arab States, **Cairo, 22 January**

Seventeenth session of the Committee on Transport and logistics, **Cairo, 23-24 January**

Violence against women – What is at stake, **Beirut, 25-26 January**

Launch of the Strategic Policy Alternatives Framework (SPAF) for Syria, **Beirut, 27 January**

## FEBRUARY

First session of the Committee on Technology for Development, **Dubai, 11-12 February**

Workshop on deployment of carbon capture, use and storage in the Arab region - Challenges and opportunities, **Manama, 19 February**

World Day of Social Justice, **20 February**

## MARCH

International Women's Day: Be bold for change, **Beirut, 6 March**

Farewell to Executive Secretary Rima Khalaf, **Beirut, 17 March**

Twelfth session of the Committee on Water, **Amman, 22-24 March**, and World Water Day event on wastewater treatment, **Amman, 22 March**

## JUNE

Workshop on developing a regional renewable energy investment pipeline, **Astana, 11-14 June**

World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, **Beirut, 15 June**

## MAY

Executive Secretary Mohamed Ali Alhakim assumes his functions at ESCWA, **1 May**

Supporting competition and competition policy in Palestine, **Amman, 3-4 May**

Arab Forum for Sustainable Development: Eradicating Poverty and Promoting Prosperity in a Changing Arab Region, **Rabat, 3-5 May**

Third meeting of the ESCWA Executive Committee, **Rabat, 6-7 May**

Arab High-level Forum on the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, **Beirut, 8-12 May**

Meeting on the state of gender justice in the Arab region: challenges and opportunities, **Beirut, 16-17 May**

## APRIL

Meeting on strengthening social protection for persons with disabilities, **Beirut, 11-12 April**

International Comparison Program: Regional workshop on estimating detailed national account expenditures, **Cairo, 26-27 April**

Meeting on open government: emerging technologies for greater government transparency and accountability, **Beirut, 26-27 April**

Partnerships for empowering a future State of Palestine: Sustainable Development Goal 17 and south-south and triangular cooperation, **Beirut, 27-28 April**

## DECEMBER

Workshop on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market, **Beirut, 5-6 December**

Meeting on the Second Arab Roadmap on Internet Governance – The next decade, **Beirut, 11 December**

## JULY

Facilitating the launch of the Arab customs union: impact analysis on public finance and the negotiation for a common external tariff, **Cairo, 2-3 July**

Second meeting of the Group of Experts on Disability, **Amman, 4-5 July 2017**

Impact of occupation on human development in Palestine, **Amman, 20-21 July**

Six years post-uprisings: are social movements still a driver of change and justice in the Arab Region? **Beirut, 18 July**

## AUGUST

Third Review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in Arab Countries, **Beirut, 3 August**

Workshops on enhancing the participation of Arab youth in public life and decision-making processes, **Amman, 8-10 August and Kuwait City, 22-24 August**

Workshop on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its alignment with national development plans, **Dead Sea, Jordan, 8-10 August**

Training on the Residential Production Property Index, **Tunis, 14-18 August**

## SEPTEMBER

Pilot training on the Toolkit for Mainstreaming Social Justice Principles in Development Plans and Policies, **Beirut, 12-14 September**

Workshop on enhancing the participation of Arab youth in public life and decision-making processes, **Tunis, 13-15 September**

Regional consultation on international migration, **Beirut, 26-27 September**

High-level Conference on Climate Change Assessment and Adaptation in the Arab Region, **Beirut, 26-28 September**

## NOVEMBER

ESCWA offsets its emissions and becomes climate neutral

Second Model ESCWA Conference, **Beirut, 6 November**

Regional seminar for parliamentarians in the Arab region on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, **Beirut, 8-9 November**

Fourth Arab Conference on Administrative Reform and Development, **Abu Dhabi, 19 November**

State-building and institutional development in post-conflict settings, **Beirut, 23-24 November**

Women's legal and political gains: reflections on the Moroccan experience and possibilities for change in Lebanon, **Beirut, 23-24 November**

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, **Beirut, 29 November**

## OCTOBER

Eighth session of the Committee on Women, **Beirut, 4-5 October**

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

Workshop on Islamic finance in the national accounts, **Beirut, 24-26 October**

Fostering public sector innovation in the Arab region, **Cairo, 30-31 October**



Human Rights Day, Beirut, 13 December

Fourth meeting of the ESCWA Executive Committee, **Beirut, 13-14 December**

World Arabic Language Day, **18 December**

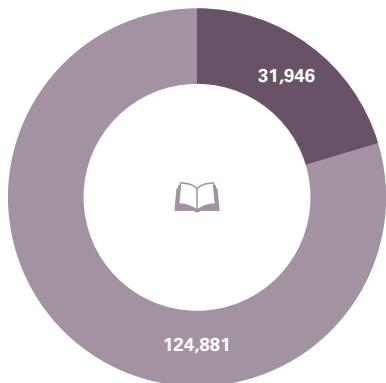
Eighteenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics, **Beirut, 20-21 December**

# ESCWA IN NUMBERS



## AUDIENCE OF ESCWA

### READERSHIP



- Library & Information Resources
- Downloads of our publications via the new website



## MEDIA

Traditional media remains a pillar for communication and outreach, and ESCWA was mentioned over 500 times in the written and audiovisual media.



1,357,600

205%

Twitter Impressions



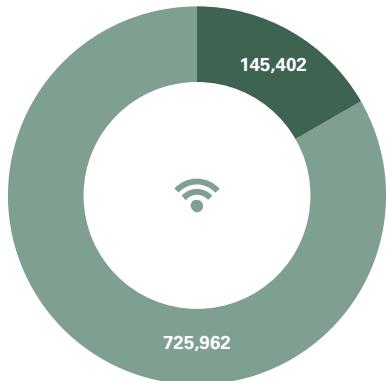
432,714

45%

Facebook Reach

INCREASE FROM 2016

### WEB PAGE VIEWS



- Users visited our new website
- ESCWA web page views in 2016



9,521

89%

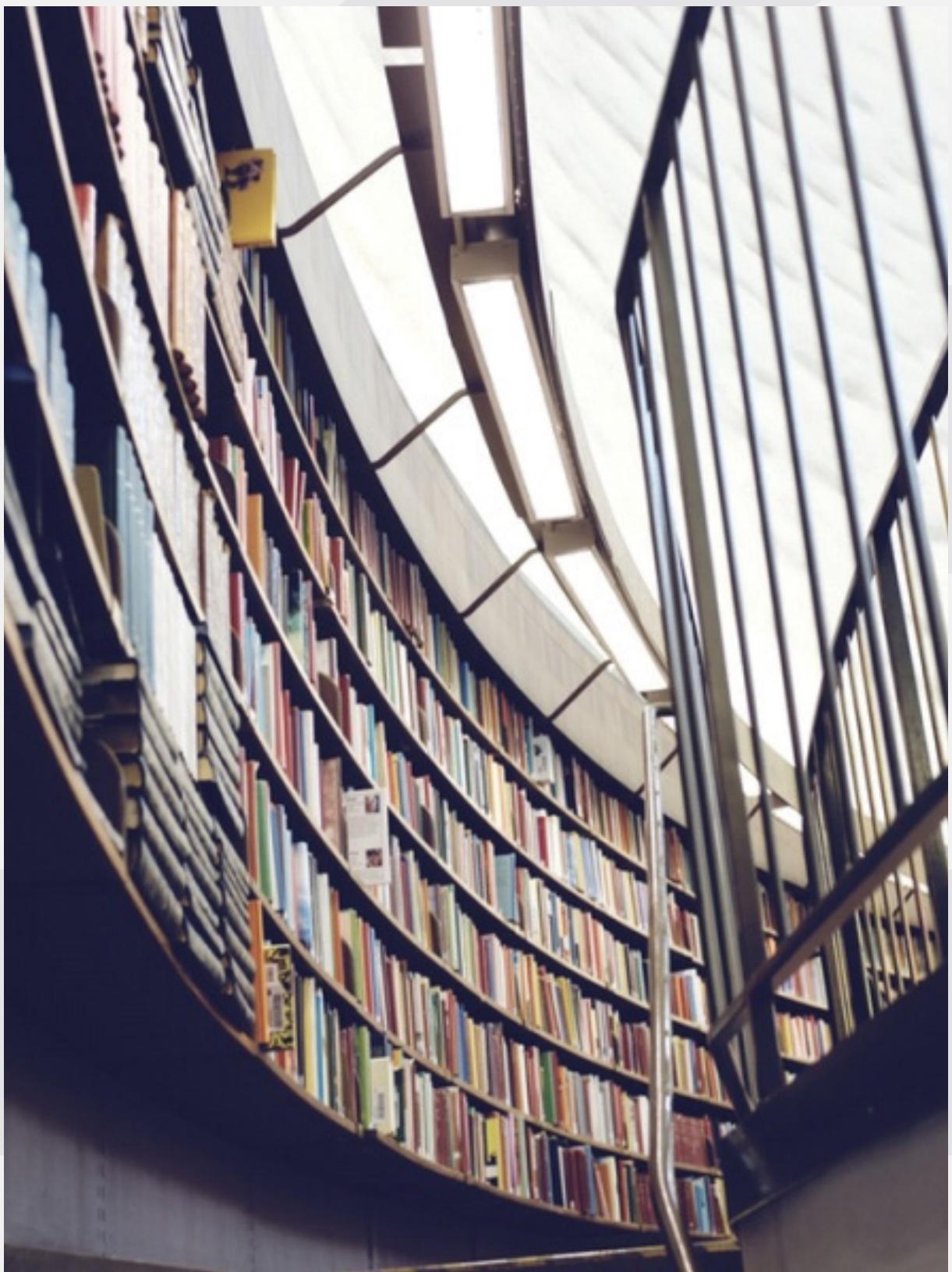
Twitter Followers

2,994

Facebook Followers

32%

INCREASE FROM 2016



# FINANCIAL INFORMATION

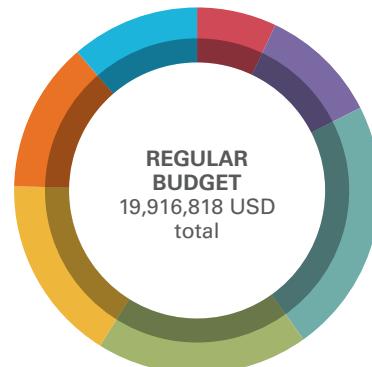
ESCWA is funded through the regular budget, the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation (RPTC), the Development Account, and extrabudgetary projects.

## REGULAR BUDGET

Voted on a biennial basis by the United Nations General Assembly, the regular budget provides ESCWA with resources to fulfill its mandate as articulated in the Strategic Framework. All other sources of funding support and complement the overall orientation laid out in the Framework.

**Figure 1. Regular budget per substantive area of work (US dollars)**

1,401,961 2,090,722 4,500,115 3,736,344 3,280,439 2,646,937 2,260,300

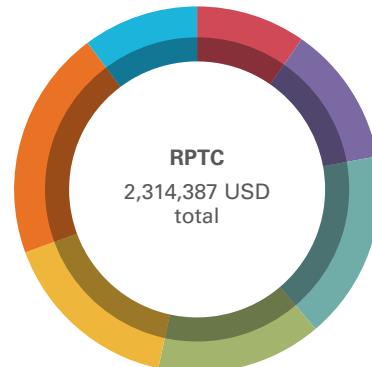


## REGULAR PROGRAMME OF TECHNICAL COOPERATION

The RPTC is aimed at providing support to member States in the formulation of sustainable socioeconomic development policies. It fosters cooperation, creates knowledge networks and promotes the sharing of experience between countries. The RPTC bridges gaps between member States' needs and regular budget resources. Through RPTC activities, ESCWA has mainstreamed cross-cutting issues such as gender, human rights and environmental sustainability.

**Figure 2. RPTC per substantive area of work (US dollars)**

223,964 287,649 386,200 338,172 370,323 471,660 236,419



## 2017 EXPENDITURES (UNITED STATES DOLLARS)

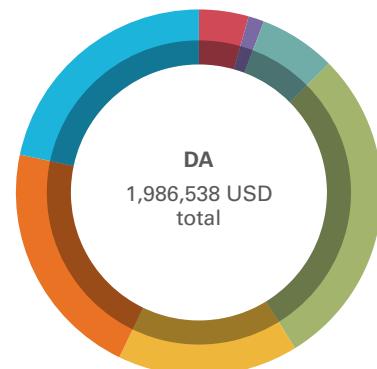
Category	Amount
Regular Budget	19,916,818
Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation	2,314,387
Development Account	1,986,538
Extrabudgetary Projects	3,204,611
<b>Total</b>	<b>27,422,354</b>

### DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT

The Development Account funds capacity development projects carried out through national, subregional, regional and interregional economic and social cooperation.

**Figure 3. DA per substantive area of work (US dollars)**

87,141 27,500 135,030 569,025 316,982 420,191 430,669

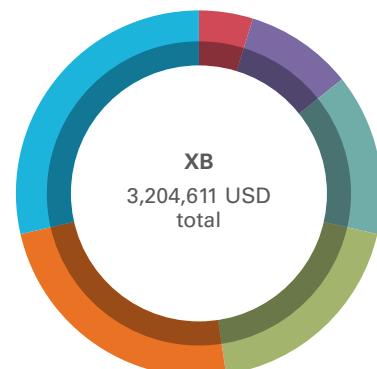


### EXTRABUDGETARY PROJECTS

Extrabudgetary projects support economic and social development initiatives under the seven subprogrammes of ESCWA, with new programmes dedicated to supporting member States in transition.

**Figure 4. Voluntary contribution per substantive area of work (US dollars)**

34,232.19 39,246.69 1,803,432.57 1,128,010.55 175,296.67 24,393.69



The above financial information provides expenditures, by source of funding, incurred from within the programme of work of ESCWA (its seven substantive programmes). It does not include other budgets managed by ESCWA, such as programme support, executive direction and management, policymaking organs, the security and safety budget, building maintenance, indirect support cost and cost recovery. Detailed financial information on ESCWA may be found in the audited financial statements of the United Nations for the financial year ending 31 December 2017 (vol. 1). Financial information may also be found in the Report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Commission - Financial status of the Commission, which, for 2016-2017, will be presented at the thirtieth session of ESCWA in 2018.

# STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

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The Strategic Framework of ESCWA provides direction to and structures the activities of the Commission. For the biennium 2016-2017, it was based on three pillars: regional integration, inclusive development, and good governance and resilience. Each subsequent chapter of this report is dedicated to a pillar, with the cross-cutting issues of statistics, gender and partnerships highlighted throughout.

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# INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

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The work of ESCWA in the field of inclusive development focuses on three priority areas: social justice, the knowledge economy and employment, and sustainable natural resources.

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## SOCIAL JUSTICE

### WORLD DAY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

ESCWA organized a special event to commemorate World Day of Social Justice on 20 February 2017, with the participation of Lebanon's Minister of State for Combatting Corruption. The event sought to underline the commitment of ESCWA to a rights-based approach to social justice, centered on equity, equality and participation. It also featured music, poetry and theatre performances, as well as a painting exhibition, highlighting art as a powerful vehicle for social expression and change.

Poverty alleviation and the reduction of inequalities are among the priorities of ESCWA in advocating for social inclusion and integration. Through targeted research, advocacy and technical cooperation, ESCWA seeks to ensure broad participation in decision-making processes and equitable access to social protection, information and knowledge. Emphasis is placed on least developed countries and vulnerable groups.

In 2017, ESCWA pioneered a project to assess the cost of violence against women. The resulting report presented a methodological breakthrough and was met with enthusiasm by civil society and government officials in the region. The support of ESCWA contributed to the adoption by Tunisia in July 2017 of a law on eliminating violence against women, which is considered one of the most progressive in the region. The text recognizes the "physical, moral and sexual violence" against women and provides measures for protection and redress.

Despite progress in the adoption of gender-sensitive legislation, Arab States continue to have one of the lowest female representation rates in parliament. Only Algeria, Tunisia and the Sudan exceeded 30 per cent of female representation in the lower house. In addition, legal protections against child marriage are weak in the region, where three out of four girls aged 10 to 17 years remain vulnerable to child marriage.

Adopting a holistic methodology developed at the University of Oxford, ESCWA, in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the League of Arab States and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), produced the Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report. The report, first of its kind in the region, provides an in-depth technical analysis of poverty in all its dimensions and root causes in various Arab countries and areas. It contains practical recommendations to step up efforts towards eradicating poverty and delivering on SDG 1.





MORE THAN  
4 OUT OF 10  
HOUSEHOLDS



IN THE ARAB REGION ARE AFFECTED  
BY MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY

In 2017, ESCWA worked on enhancing the capacity of member States to design and implement just, equality-oriented policies and programmes through workshops in Beirut, Khartoum and Tunisia, using three new toolkits that consolidate knowledge, prerequisites and good practices in these areas. Engagement with member States around such tools helped to foster national dialogue on ways of mainstreaming social justice and equality concerns into public policy.

Further actions and research geared towards social justice addressed the contribution of public expenditure policies to social development, the nature and scope of social protection policies and programmes, social protection for persons with disabilities in Arab countries, engagement with population councils, engagement with Parliamentarians on the 2030 Agenda, and a regular meeting of the ESCWA Committee on Social Development, during which new mandates on social inclusion, social justice, the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda were given to the ESCWA secretariat by member States.

## KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY & EMPLOYMENT

ESCWA member States present disparate levels of natural resource endowments yet share a vulnerability to commodity price fluctuations. Transitioning towards knowledge economies would open the door to diversification and the creation of job opportunities, notably for young people, and thus bolster productivity and competitiveness.

Since 2015, ESCWA has worked with the Governments of Egypt, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, and Oman on establishing National Technology Transfer Offices (NTTOs) to enhance innovation capacity through legislative and policy reform. These offices are linked to universities and research institutions, which facilitates partnership among researchers, and actors from the economic sector, industry and government. A report on the National Technology Development and Transfer System in Mauritania was released in 2017 and highlighted the positive experience of the country in the field.

Also in 2017, ESCWA and the League of Arab States launched their joint 2020 Arab Internet Governance Forum (IGF) Initiative, in line with the global IGF. A new charter for the Arab IGF was produced and the Second Roadmap on Internet Governance –The Next Decade was adopted. These instruments promote more inclusiveness in the Arab IGF process and guide it towards increased regional cooperation and coherence with global frameworks.

Other related ESCWA endeavours included capacity-building activities in the field of innovation in the public sector and digital opportunities, and an expert group meeting on innovation and technology. Some 60 international and regional experts gathered in Beirut to discuss innovative methods to harness technology to turn regional and global challenges into opportunities and work towards the SDGs in an integrated manner.



## SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCES

ESCWA works to increase resource consumption efficiency by leveraging new technologies and seeking to maximize the benefits on income and employment.

In partnership with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), ESCWA carried out a [development account project](#) on supporting Member States in developing and strengthening environment statistics and integrated environmental-economic accounting for improved monitoring of sustainable development, which included holding a regional meeting in 2017. Thanks to donor support, ESCWA also continued to work on the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socioeconomic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR) and the MDG+ Initiative, which engage Arab countries in cooperation around common objectives related to climate change, water resources and the delivery of water services.

### /RICCAR/

RICCAR, the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socioeconomic Vulnerability in the Arab Region, is structured around the following four pillars of work: (a) baseline review and set up of a regional knowledge hub; (b) integrated assessment consisting of impact assessment and vulnerability assessment components; (c) awareness raising and information dissemination; and (d) capacity-building and institutional strengthening. ESCWA serves as coordinator of the Initiative, and provides regular reporting to the Arab Ministerial Water Council and Arab Permanent Committee on Meteorology on RICCAR-related activities.

### /THE MDG+ INITIATIVE/

The MDG+ Initiative is the short name of the Regional Initiative for Establishing a Regional Mechanism for Improved Monitoring and Reporting on Access to Water Supply and Sanitation Services in the Arab Region. It is aimed at providing reliable information on access to water services based on a set of regionally approved indicators, a harmonized methodology, and data collected and vetted by national monitoring teams. Such information will serve to monitor water-related SDGs and targets.

Working with the League of Arab States and the United Nations Environment Programme, ESCWA organized the Preparatory Meeting on the Regional Environmental Issues and Priorities for the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, on 23 and 24 April 2017 in Cairo. The meeting resulted in an outcome document, which was presented to the Arab Forum. It highlighted the importance of the environmental dimension in implementing the 2030 Agenda and emphasized the sustainable management and consumption of natural resources as a necessary condition to maintain livelihoods, specifically those of the rural poor, women and refugees.

[ESCWAs also convened the High-level Conference on Climate Change Assessment and Adaptation in the Arab Region](#) in Beirut, from 26 to 28 September 2017. Ministers, diplomats and experts in the fields of environment, water and development from the region and beyond participated in the event, during which the [Arab Climate Change Assessment Report](#) was launched.

Seeking to strengthen the capacity of its member States to mainstream energy-related SDGs into their national development plans, ESCWA convened a [regional capacity-building workshop](#) on the Water-Energy Nexus Operational Toolkit: Resource Efficiency, in Manama, on 20 and 21 February 2017. Participants examined ways to improve efficiency during the production and consumption of water and energy resources and services, processes in sewage treatment plants and the financial aspect of those issues. Case studies from Arab countries were showcased and discussed.



# REGIONAL INTEGRATION

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In the context of both rapid globalization and instability in several Arab countries, the second pillar of the Strategic Framework of ESCWA, regional integration, constitutes a critical means to foster sustainable development, boost production and income, and address the twin challenges of poverty and unemployment. The Arab region lags significantly behind others in terms of economic integration. To remedy this, ESCWA helps to formulate trade policy at the subregional, regional and interregional levels to strengthen national capacities and increase the competitiveness of domestic markets. ESCWA also assists member States in implementing resolutions arising from high-level regional and global forums. The implementation of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA), and the creation of an Arab customs union and a common market are among the long-term objectives of the work of ESCWA in that area.

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## POLICY COHERENCE

ESCWA works for improved cross-border infrastructure, and increased comparability of data and conformity with international standards.

In its 2017 report on Rethinking Fiscal Policy in the Arab Region, ESCWA examines the alignment of member States' current fiscal policies with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Research indicates that many Arab countries lag behind in making the required links between taxation policy and development objectives. Taking into account local specificities, the report identifies course corrections in economic reform, social investments and governance geared towards structural transformation and sustainable development.

In its normative work on the subject of policy coherence, ESCWA proposed ways to attract foreign direct investment and trigger economic transformation; assessed the implications of the newly implemented value-added tax (VAT) schemes in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries; and conducted research on social housing policies. An expert group meeting on competition as a means for private sector development was held in Cairo on 22 and 23 November 2017. The meeting provided an unprecedented opportunity for the heads of competition and investment promotion agencies from 12 member States to discuss synergies between competition and private sector development, resulting in a shared understanding of policy priorities for both member States as implementers and ESCWA as enabler.

The Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the Arab Region 2016-2017 assessed the impact of fiscal reforms in Arab countries, notably the new value added tax (VAT) schemes in GCC countries, the VAT reform in Egypt and the personal income taxes reform in Tunisia.

ESCWA has developed a harmonized consumer price index and produces annual purchasing power parities to gauge the size of economies in the Arab region. This enhances the comparability of regional, subregional and national inflation, thereby enhancing evidence-based policymaking. These indicators play a key role in measuring and alleviating poverty; monitoring the growth of different economic sectors focusing on their comparative advantages; and encouraging economic cooperation between member States. The computed indices also improve the monitoring of SDG achievement and reveal opportunities for policy adjustment and adaptation.

ESCWA also developed a prototype for SDG simulation to assist Governments in striking balances between potentially conflicting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to reach an optimal combination of targets.



## AGREEMENTS & STRATEGIES



ESCWA promotes the 2030 Agenda as an opportunity to rethink local, national, regional and global development policy based on the imperatives of productivity and job creation, reduction of poverty and discrimination, improvement of public health, and realization of social justice. The 2030 Agenda forms the backbone of the current regional integration strategy promoted by ESCWA, which spearheads efforts to assist member States in its implementation, notably by tracking it in Arab least developed countries using micro-level data.

In May 2017, ESCWA convened the [Arab Forum for Sustainable Development](#) in Rabat, in cooperation with the League of Arab States, regional United Nations entities and the Government of Morocco. As a unique regional multi-stakeholder platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda, the Forum contributed to developing regional consensus on development priorities under the theme of the [2017 High-level Political Forum](#), "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world". Participants discussed national experiences in aligning the work of institutions and development plans with the SDGs and took stock of voluntary national reviews by Arab countries as an incentive to assessing progress and accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

In 2017, ESCWA continued to measure the level of integration of the region's markets in international trade and global value chains, and to assess the readiness of national transportation infrastructure for integration into these chains.

Migration continued to be at the heart of the work of ESCWA throughout 2017, as Arab countries remained countries of destination and of origin for an ever-increasing number of migrants and asylum-seekers. In preparation for the [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#) in the Arab Region, ESCWA convened a [consultation](#) which brought together a wide range of stakeholders, including high-level government representatives, international and regional organizations, civil society networks, the private sector, employers' and workers' organizations, experts and academia. The consultations enhanced awareness of the global process leading to the adoption of the Global Compact and served to discuss key migration priorities and challenges in the region, which should be reflected in the Global Compact negotiations, while harmonizing views and aligning policy responses.

ESCWA also advanced regional policy approaches to the management of ageing in the context of the [Third Review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing](#); it maintained its focus on intraregional policy coherence with regards to persons with disabilities, and it advocated strongly for energy subsidy rationalization in the region.



# GOOD GOVERNANCE & RESILIENCE

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The third pillar of the Strategic Framework of ESCWA focuses on promoting good governance, accountability and transparency in public institutions, and on helping these institutions withstand natural and man-made crises. This is accomplished through work in the priority areas of fostering institutional development, promoting participation and citizenship, documenting the socioeconomic impact of conflict and occupation, and strengthening resilience to natural and man-made crises.

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## INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT



ESCWA works on strengthening institutional frameworks, as strong institutions are necessary for States to achieve successful democratic transitions or to weather political tensions and conflicts. It strengthens member States' capacity to adopt policies centered on their citizens and provide them with good public services.

Research on planning in 2017 identified well-known and lesser-known features of development planning in Arab countries. ESCWA explored international good practices and reflected on country-specific contexts to develop a typology of good planning criteria for the region. This exercise revealed lack of structure in individual country plans, weak linkages to international frameworks, too few measurable indicators to monitor achievements, and insufficient publication of planning documents. Building on these findings, which also highlight deficits in transparency and participation, ESCWA proposed a road map for integrative planning in the Arab region, in alignment with the 2030 Agenda.

In November 2017, an expert group meeting on State-building and institutional development in post-conflict settings addressed possible scenarios in Libya and Yemen. It highlighted that protracted conflict in those countries and elsewhere in the region had caused loss of lives, de-development and severe livelihood disruptions, and had yielded fragmented communities and eroded social fabrics. Post-conflict reconstruction phases were tackled within the framework of SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions. Discussions focused on the key issues of institutional accountability, inclusiveness and cohesion, good governance and access to justice.

## PARTICIPATION & CITIZENSHIP

ESCWA advocates for good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights, as well as transparency, participative political processes, accountability, political reform and social cohesion. In doing so, it seeks to help States empower civil society and advance gender equality.

ESCWA supports member States in implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda through the consultative, participatory development of national action plans (NAP). In Lebanon, for instance, the NAP process throughout 2017 involved consultations with parliamentarians, governmental entities, civil society organizations, media, academia, and refugee groups.

In 2017, ESCWA focused on fostering economic and social dialogue in Libya, identifying pathways towards decentralization in Iraq, and increasing public participation in democratic governance, notably through youth participation initiatives in Jordan, Kuwait and Tunisia.

### STRENGTHENING YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Throughout 2017, ESCWA convened a series of workshops on enhancing the capacity of Arab youth to participate in public life and decision-making processes. Training sessions took place in Amman, Kuwait City and Tunis in August and September, and resulted in the development of a toolbox for good practices in youth empowerment. The large number of young female and male civil society advocates who attended the workshops commended ESCWA for the relevance and timeliness of the initiative. They proposed that such workshops be replicated at the national level, and recommended the establishment of a regional coalition to promote the empowerment of youth.

Alongside youth participation, gender equality is a central concern when it comes to participation and citizenship. ESCWA continues to gather experts around this issue, producing new knowledge and advocating for progressive policy reform.

### HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

Marking the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ESCWA organized a bright and colourful event with over 50 guests from the local community, including women and children from Dar Al Amal and the Children and Youth Center of Shatila Camp, two non-governmental organizations

that are active in safeguarding rights.

The Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCWA underlined the importance of the occasion: "Today we bring our voices together to remind everyone, everywhere, that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights," she said. "All of us can uphold that fundamental truth and build a better global community."

Palestinian youth aged between 8 and 17 performed Dabke dances with traditional garments and painted a mural, which read #StandUp4humanrights, in bright yellow, orange and blue. Women who had found refuge at Dar al Amal shared their personal stories of violence, abuse and marginalization but also of resistance and survival. These vivid tales highlighted the need for each of us to stand up for human rights, every day.

Much progress has been realized since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948, and the document has been translated into over 500 languages. Nevertheless, recognition of the inherent dignity and equal rights of all human beings is still far from universal, with millions around the world continuing to suffer, notably in the Arab region, due to governance deficits and ongoing conflicts.



## RESILIENCE TO CRISES & OCCUPATION



Migration is a positive global phenomenon.

It powers economic growth, reduces inequalities, connects diverse societies and helps us ride the demographic waves of population growth and decline.



SECRETARY-GENERAL  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
**ANTÓNIO GUTERRES**

Two of the most significant development challenges facing ESCWA member States today are conflict and occupation. The region also registers the highest displacement figures in the world, with over 25 million forcibly displaced individuals.

The Commission helps member States to mitigate the impact of crises and occupation, while shedding light on the root causes of conflict. This is accomplished by strengthening peacebuilding initiatives, notably the National Agenda for the Future of Syria, (NAFS). This initiative engages Syrian experts and stakeholders in developing policy alternatives in preparation for a post-agreement phase. In 2017, NAFS launched the Strategic Policy Alternatives Framework (SPAFA) to analyse the root causes and impact of the Syrian conflict and present policy choices for Syria post-conflict.

Desertification and land degradation present further threats to the region. Mitigation and adaptation measures are an important component of the work of ESCWA on climate change: the Commission continues to develop knowledge on these issues and provide evidence-based policy recommendations to Governments and other stakeholders, notably civil society and the public sector.





## FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT, A SOURCE OF LASTING RESILIENCE

In 2017, ESCWA advised member States on new modes of economic governance to mobilize domestic resources, curb illicit financial flows, boost domestic and international private finance, enhance international development cooperation, turn trade into an engine for sustainable and inclusive growth, and ensure that debt remains a sustainable means to finance development. These pillars of the [Addis Ababa Action Agenda](#) and the new global financing for development (FfD) framework were captured in the first edition of the [Arab Financing for Development Scorecard](#), a regional toolbox to monitor the implementation and progress of financing for development outcomes that takes into account regional contexts and realities.

The scorecard is a novel tool to assess direct and indirect cross-border resources and financing available to the Arab region. Based on an extension of the “net resource transfer” methodology adopted by the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the scorecard captures direct and indirect flows to gauge the effects of financing decisions on SDG implementation. It was presented by the [Executive Secretary of ESCWA to the Second Committee](#) (Economic and Financial) of the General Assembly in October 2017.

The scorecard shows how, in recent years, financial inflows to the Arab region have decreased in comparison with the outward flows: for every dollar in FfD gained, the region effectively lost \$2.9 that could have otherwise been harnessed to finance sustainable development priorities. It also estimates that, by 2030, 92 million new job opportunities will need to be created for young persons in the region. This is a central challenge which ESCWA has helped to quantify; it will remain a central policy priority for the Commission and its member States over the short and medium term.

# FEATURED PUBLICATIONS



## Status of Arab Women Report 2017

### Violence Against Women

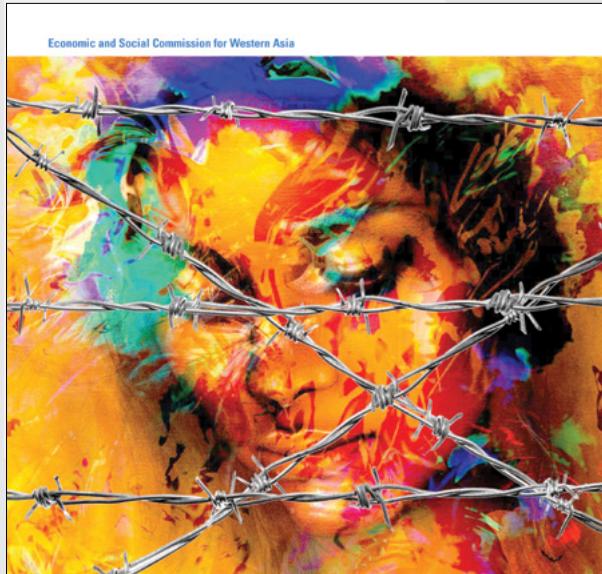
What Is at Stake?



## Climate Change-Related Statistics in the Arab Region

A Proposed Set of Indicators

Special Issue of the Compendium of Environment Statistics in the Arab Region 2017



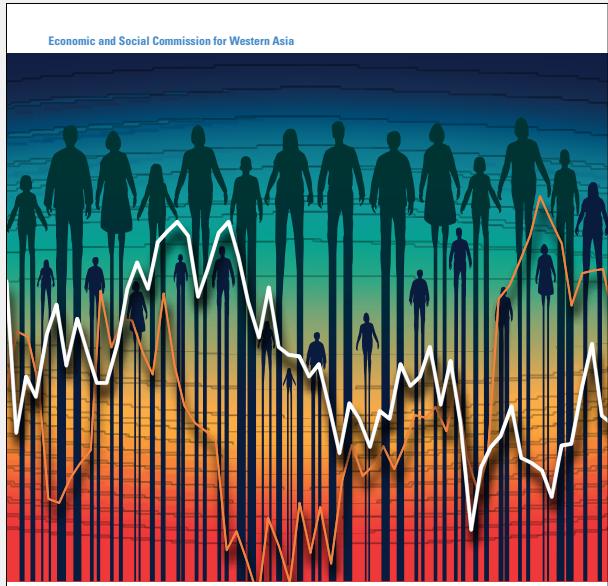
## Women, Peace and Security

The Role of Institutions in Times of Peace and War in the Arab Region



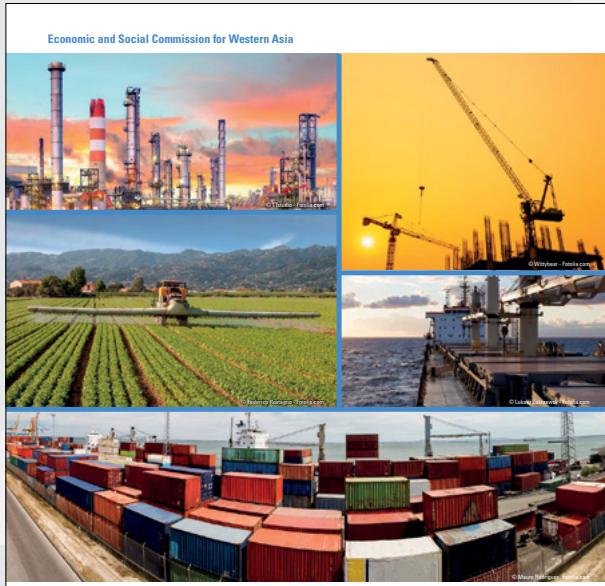
## The Innovation Landscape in Arab Countries

A Critical Analysis



### **Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the Arab Region**

2016-2017



### **Assessing Arab Economic Integration**

Towards the Arab Customs Union

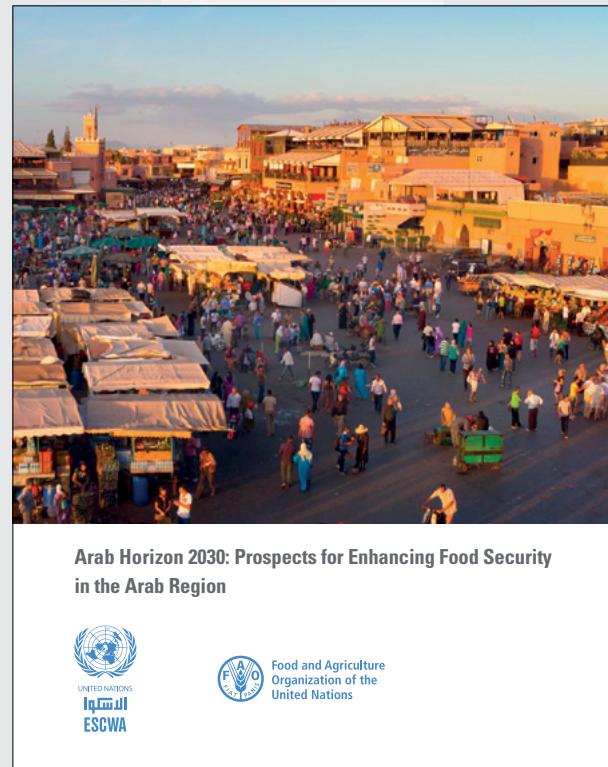
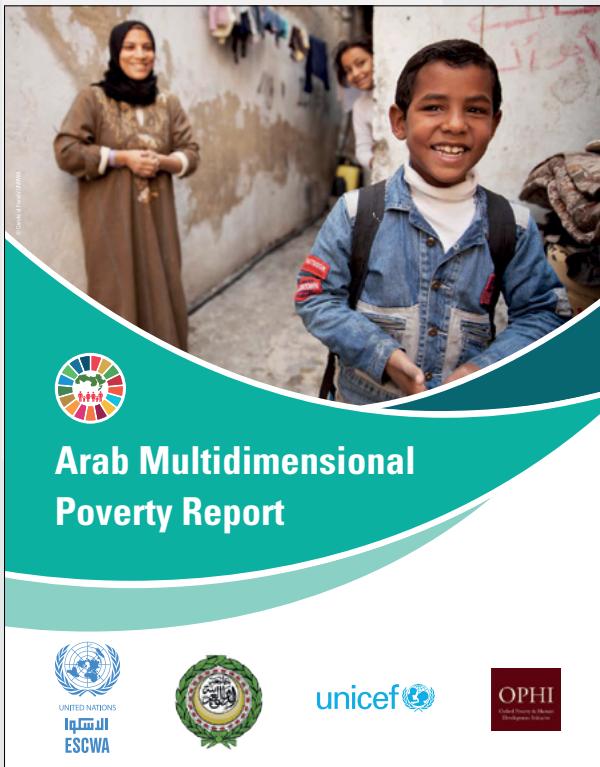
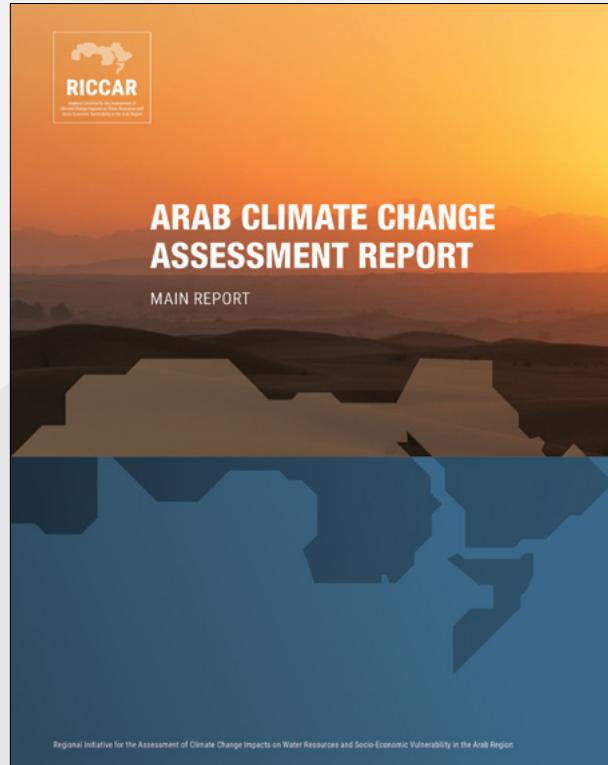


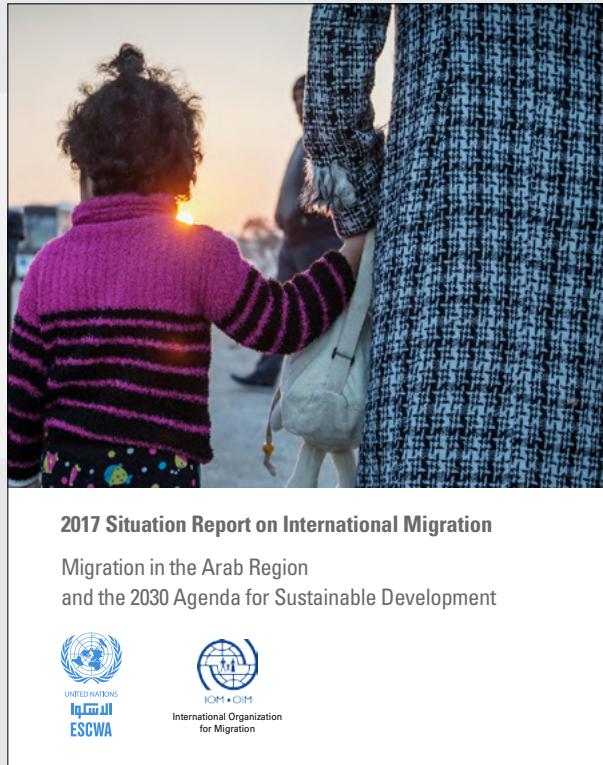
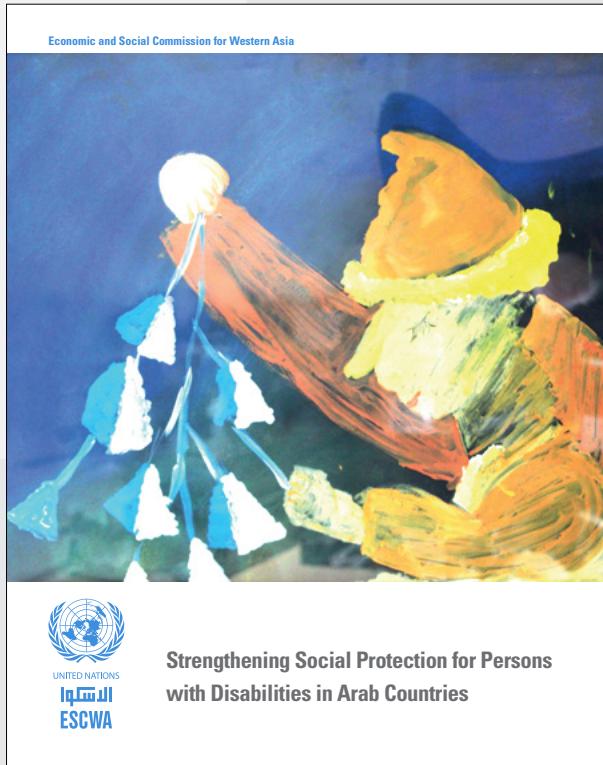
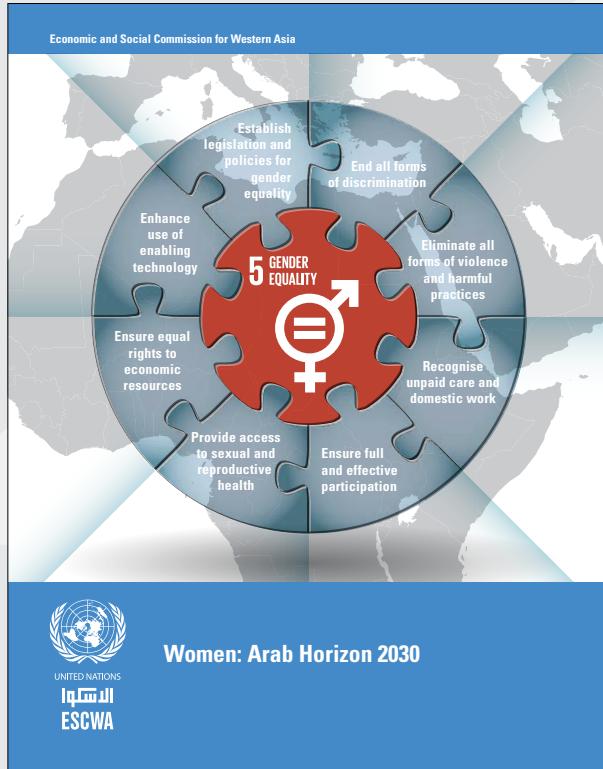
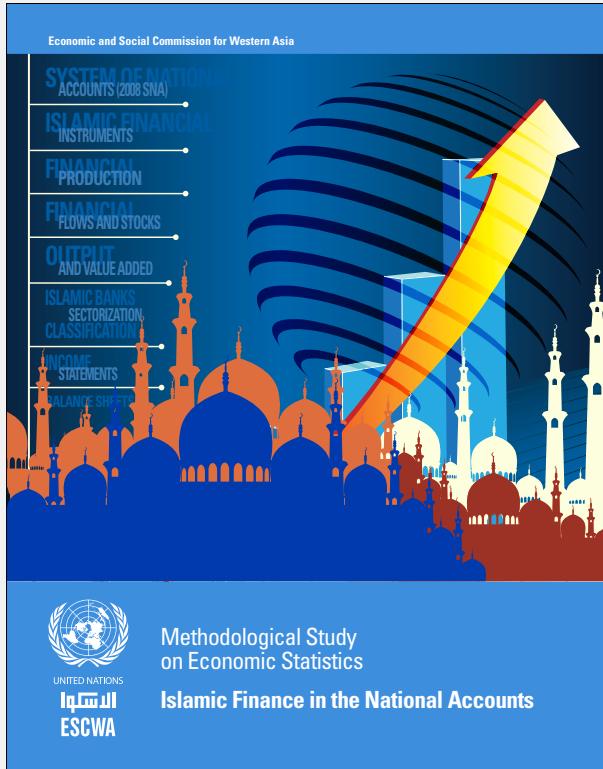
### **Innovation Policy for Inclusive Sustainable Development in the Arab Region**



### **Women's Political Representation in the Arab Region**

# FEATURED PUBLICATIONS







18-00160

