

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Introduction

The United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) held its 28th Ministerial Session on 15-18 September 2014.¹ Additionally, several subcommittees of ESCWA met throughout the end of 2014 and into the beginning of 2015.² This update will review the resolutions and presentations of the 28th Ministerial Session, highlight outcomes of conferences and meetings with other UN agencies and civil society, and review the implementation of these outcomes and thematic discussions from the UN on the ESCWA region.

Recent Activities

Each ESCWA Ministerial Session has a thematic discussion that establishes the direction of the meeting and subsequent work.³ For the 28th Session, the thematic discussion was on “Challenges of Social Justice in the Arab Region.”⁴ The outcome document, the *Tunis Declaration on Social Justice in the Arab Region*, states that ministers and officials from Member States will commit to social, economic, and developmental ESCWA actions that reflect the ideals of social justice.⁵ Focusing on social justice is a result of traditions within Arab and Islamic cultures, and is reflective of the UN centering on the post-2015 development agenda.⁶ The Declaration states that by implementing the post-2015 agenda throughout the mechanisms and monitoring systems utilized by the ESCWA secretariat, the region will be able to more fully achieve success in development and social justice.⁷

In addition to the adoption of the *Tunis Declaration*, at the 28th session, ESCWA held presentations on the integration of the thematic discussion into the ESCWA framework and adopted eight resolutions.⁸ Two of the newly adopted resolutions created structural changes to specific governing bodies within ESCWA.⁹ Resolution 315 (XXVIII), on “Establishing an Intergovernmental Committee on Technology for Development,” creates the Committee on Technology for Development.¹⁰ The new committee is mandated to monitor technological advances and provide a platform for information and technology sharing within the ESCWA region, with the cooperation of the League of Arab States (LAS), the Council of Arab Ministers of Communication and Information Technology, and the Arab Administrative Development Organization.¹¹ Resolution 320 (XXVIII) renamed the Technical Committee as the Executive Committee and amended its terms of reference meant to strengthen and restructure the Committee, in order to oversee the subcommittee.¹² The resolution expands the purview of the Committee’s duties and functions, including reporting to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), maintaining consistency among subcommittees, and reviewing the work of subsidiary committees.¹³ In November 2014, ECOSOC adopted the resolution on the name change for the Executive Committee and its structural changes.¹⁴ Additionally, ESCWA resolution 321 (XXVIII) formally recommended that ECOSOC rename ESCWA to the Economic and Social Commission for Arab States, because some ESCWA Member States believe that the name change more fully reflects the character of the region.¹⁵ Two side events also occurred during the 28th session: the Arab Consultative Meeting on an Accountability Framework for the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the commemoration of

¹ UN ESCWA, *About the Session*, 2014.

² Ibid; UN ESCWA, *Meetings and Events: Calendar of Meetings – 2015*, 2015.

³ UN ESCWA, *ESCWA 28th Ministerial Session wraps up with “Tunis Declaration”, Noteworthy Outcome*, 2014.

⁴ UN ESCWA, *About the Session*, 2014.

⁵ UN ESCWA, *Resolutions Adopted at the Twenty-Eighth Session of ESCWA*, 2014, p. 2.

⁶ UN ESCWA, *ESCWA 28th Ministerial Session wraps up with “Tunis Declaration”, Noteworthy Outcome*, 2014; UN OHCHR, *Embracing a new paradigm for development*, 2013.

⁷ UN ESCWA, *ESCWA 28th Ministerial Session wraps up with “Tunis Declaration”, Noteworthy Outcome*, 2014.

⁸ Ibid; UN ESCWA, *About the Session*, 2014.

⁹ UN ESCWA, *Resolutions Adopted at the Twenty-Eighth Session of ESCWA*, 2014, pp. 6-15.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 6.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 6-7.

¹² Ibid., pp. 14-15.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ UN ECOSOC, *Opening Coordination and Management Meeting, Economic and Social Council Adopts Three Draft Resolutions, Including Texts on Conferences in Asia, Latin America (ECOSOC/6651)*, 2014.

¹⁵ UN ESCWA, *Resolutions Adopted at the Twenty-Eighth Session of ESCWA*, 2014, p. 16; UN ESCWA, *ESCWA 28th Ministerial Session wraps up with “Tunis Declaration”, Noteworthy Outcome*, 2014.

ESCWA's fortieth anniversary.¹⁶ ESCWA also recently published the report "Arab Middle Class: Measurement and Role in Driving Change."¹⁷

ESCWA and its committees were active through the rest of 2014 and into 2015.¹⁸ ESCWA was a part of the Sixth Expert Group Meeting on the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR) in October of 2014.¹⁹ The objective of this meeting was to monitor and report on regional data concerning major weather events and climate change; provide information on vulnerability to climate change in agriculture, disaster, and environmental health sectors; and establish an Arab Climate Outlook Forum.²⁰ ESCWA also joined the four other UN regional commissions for the Fifth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development in early November 2014.²¹ ESCWA and the UN Economic Commission for Europe introduced a new project at the Arab Climate Outlook Forum, which will strengthen investment and funding capacities for sustainable development and energy infrastructure.²²

The ESCWA Centre for Women (ECW) took part in the Beijing +20 Expert Group Meeting for Review and Validation of the Arab Regional Report on 22-23 October 2014.²³ The ECW met with LAS, the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), Member State representatives, experts, and civil society organizations (CSOs) in order to discuss the "Regional Review Report on the Implementation of Beijing Platform for Action in the Arab Region."²⁴ The meeting emphasized the involvement of women in all stages of development and policy-making; the equal representation of women and for women in government after revolutions; and the involvement of women in economic and poverty eradication policies.²⁵ From 2-3 February 2015, ESCWA hosted the Arab High-Level Conference on Beijing +20: Toward Justice and Equality for Women in the Arab Region, the final regional event in the lead up to the review of the Beijing Platform for action to be held in March 2015 at the Commission on the Status of Women.²⁶

Other events ESCWA participated in include an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on the Impact of the Crisis in Syria on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Third Annual Meeting of the Arab Internet Governance Forum.²⁷ Looking ahead, ESCWA will host the Observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in November 2015.²⁸ In May 2015, ESCWA, LAS, and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) will co-convene the Second Session of the Arab High-Level Forum on Sustainable Development, in which participants will discuss the regional implementations of switching from the MDGs to the post-2015 agenda and will report on the progress of sustainable development within the ESCWA region.²⁹

¹⁶ UN ESCWA, *Arab Consultative Meeting on an Accountability Framework for the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, 2014.

¹⁷ UN ESCWA, *ESCWA 28th Ministerial Session wraps up with "Tunis Declaration", Noteworthy Outcome*, 2014; UN ESCWA, *Arab Middle Class: Measurement and role in driving change*, 2014, p. 14.

¹⁸ UN ESCWA, *Meetings and Events: Calendar of Meetings – 2014*, 2014; UN ESCWA, *Meetings and Events: Calendar of Meetings – 2015*, 2015.

¹⁹ UN ESCWA, *Sixth Expert Group Meeting on the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR)*, 2014, p. 1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²¹ UNECE, *Meetings & Events: Fifth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development*, 2014.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ UN ESCWA, *Expert Group Meeting for Review and Validation of the Arab Regional Report*, 2014.

²⁴ *Ibid.*; UN Women, *Future organization and methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women (E/RES/2013/18)*, 2013.

²⁵ UN ESCWA, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Regional Review*, 2014.

²⁶ UN ESCWA, *Arab High Level Conference on Beijing +20: Toward Justice and Equality for Women in the Arab Region*, 2015.

²⁷ UN ESCWA, *Expert Group Meeting on the Impact of the Crisis in Syria on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Launch of the "Cost of conflict in Syria: The impact on the economy and MDG goals."* 2014; UN ESCWA, *The Conflict in Syria: Implications on the Macro-economy and MDGs*, 2014; UN ESCWA, *Bolster Food and Water Security in the Arab Region*, 2014; UN ESCWA, *Third Annual Meeting of the Arab Internet Governance Forum*, 2014.

²⁸ UN ESCWA, *Meetings and Events: Calendar of Meetings – 2015*, 2015; UN ESCWA, *Resolutions Adopted at the Twenty-Eighth Session of ESCWA*, 2014, p. 16.

²⁹ UN ESCWA, *Second Session of the Arab High-Level Forum on Sustainable Development*, 2015.

Recent Policy Outcomes

One of ESCWA's main focuses in 2015 is the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals (SDGs), as indicated by the adoption of resolution 314 (XXVIII), the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development, which reaffirms ESCWA's commitment to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and the Dubai Document for the Arab Regional Implementation of Rio+20.³⁰ This resolution requests for ESCWA's Secretariat to host a High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in collaboration with LAS; to monitor the progress of sustainable development in the region; and to prepare a data report for the 29th Ministerial Session in 2016.³¹ The ESCWA Committee on Energy and the ESCWA Committee on Water Resources will be directly affected by the renewed commitment to sustainable development and accessibility of renewable resources.³² ESCWA's involvement in RICCAR, the EGM on Syria, and future involvement in the Second Session of the Arab High-Level Forum on Sustainable Development, matches the focus on mobilization and partnership with the sustainable development and post-2015 development agenda as promoted by ECOSOC and the UN.³³

Conclusion

Moving forward, ESCWA has several new changes to implement: a new committee for technological development, connecting strategic framework and substantive changes to the theme of social justice, and a recommitment to achieving sustainable development in the region.³⁴ Additionally, the various ESCWA committees will continue to provide cooperation and collaboration between Member States and the UN system, as with the ECW and Beijing+20.³⁵ ESCWA will continue to work with other regional entities, such as LAS, in order to promote regional unity and cooperation when dealing with regional and international challenges. As established in the 28th Ministerial Session, ESCWA will implement the thematic discussion of social justice and the post-2015 development agenda throughout its work, partnerships, and meetings during 2015.³⁶

³⁰ UN ESCWA, *Resolutions Adopted at the Twenty-Eighth Session of ESCWA*, 2014, p. 4.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³² UN ESCWA, *Social Justice in the Policies of Arab States: Intergenerational Justice and Access to Natural Resources (E/ESCWA/28/8/Panel.3)*, 2014, p. 1.

³³ UN ECOSOC, *Sustainable Development, 2015; UN ECOSOC, Millennium Development Goals and post-2015 Development Agenda*, 2015.

³⁴ UN ESCWA, *About the Session*, 2014; UN ESCWA, *Resolutions Adopted at the Twenty-Eighth Session of ESCWA*, 2014, pp. 14-15.

³⁵ UN ESCWA, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Regional Review*, 2014.

³⁶ UN ESCWA, *ESCWA 28th Ministerial Session wraps up with "Tunis Declaration", Noteworthy Outcome*, 2014; UN OHCHR, *Embracing a new paradigm for development*, 2013.

Annotated Bibliography

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2014). *Resolutions Adopted at the Twenty-Eighth Session of ESCWA*. Retrieved 7 January 2015 from: http://www.escwa.un.org/about/gov/sessions/editor/Download.asp?table_name=sess26_menu&field_name=ID&FileID=193

As a collection of all ESCWA resolutions adopted during the 28th Ministerial Session, this is a helpful resource for delegates. Also found in this document is the Tunis Declaration on Social Justice in the Arab Region, which was adopted during the same Ministerial Session. Delegates should note the preambulatory clauses for the key resolutions, as they will help further preparation and an understanding of how these resolutions connect with to the work of ESCWA and other UN agencies.

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2014). *Sixth Expert Group Meeting on the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR) (E/ESCWA/SDPD/2014/WG.10/INF.1)*. Retrieved 7 January 2015 from: <http://css.escwa.org.lb/SDPD/3431/EGM6-InfoNote-30Oct14.pdf>

This information note provides extensive information on the RICCAR and ESCWA's involvement with this regional initiative. Along with the objectives for this particular meeting, this document also provides the background of the RICCAR, as well as information on why climate change is an important issue for the ESCWA region. Also listed within this document are the 11 regional and UN partnerships developed by ESCWA, which include LAS, UN Environmental Programme, and the Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands. Delegates might find this informative when considering energy consumption and conservation.

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2014). *Social Justice in the Policies of Arab States: Intergenerational Justice and Access to Natural Resources (E/ESCWA/28/8/Panel.3)* [Presentation]. Retrieved 7 January 2015 from: http://www.escwa.un.org/about/gov/sessions/editor/Download.asp?table_name=sess26_documents&field_name=ID&FileID=268

While working with the theme of social justice, this particular panel looks at the equity of accessibility of energy, land, and water. The document provides the background and cause for the creation of the panel on the effects of accessibility of natural resources has on social justice in the region. Also, there are questions from the discussion that will help delegates further their research with special regards to access to energy. Overall, this document is important in helping define the role ESCWA plays in connecting social justice and sustainable development for Member States.

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2014). *About the Session* [Website]. Retrieved 7 January 2015 from: <http://www.escwa.un.org/about/gov/sessions/>

In this source, delegates will find a breakdown of the important elements of the 28th Ministerial Session. It lists the various parts of the session, such as a showing of a short documentary about the fortieth anniversary of ESCWA, and roundtable discussions covering the four key elements of the Ministerial Session. Also highlighted are session participants and their role in discussions and events during the Ministerial Session. This website will be helpful for delegates looking for a description of events of the most recent ESCWA session and links for further research.

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, Center for Women. (2014). *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Regional Review* [Website]. Retrieved 7 January 2015 from: <http://www.escwa.un.org/divisions/ecwnewsdetails.asp?id=91&division=ecw>

Highlighted within this article by the ESCWA Center for Women are general comments made by representatives from ESCWA's ECW, LAS, and UN-Women, who were present for the Regional Review. Each representative commented on the condition of women in the ESCWA region. Overall, each speaker noted that women need to be a part of each stage of development and policy-making, with regards to development and poverty. Delegates may find this beneficial, as it assists in understanding how women should be incorporated into future projects for the ESCWA region.

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<http://www.un.org/en/mainbodies/secretariat/>

I. Social and Economic Implications of Refugee Influx in the ESCWA Region

Introduction

A recent conference focusing on child refugees brought to light the devastating ongoing increase in the number of child refugees in the region, and the importance of unique developmental needs must be met. The conference was held on the 15th of October 2014.³⁷ The United Nations' (UN) Member States, and regional civil society actors also renewed and increased their commitments towards humanitarian aid. However, compared to the significant increase of both Syrian and Iraqi refugees due to the security situation, these promises may still not be enough. The impact on host communities in the region is being felt more acutely, and that must be factored in remedying the situation. Finally, the Economic and Social Commission of Western Asia (ESCWA) has recommended certain studies to gain a more comprehensive picture of the events, with a view to aid its Member States' future policy-making.

The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that there are a total of 15.2 million refugees around the world, about which half are children. Under the theme of "Investing in the Future," more than 300 delegates from different states and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and including experts in child protection and refugee affairs met for a two day conference at Sharjah, in the United Arab Emirates.³⁸ They reaffirmed the importance of realizing international standards and principles related to improving the protection and wellbeing of the refugee children in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.³⁹ The principles stress that refugee children are to enjoy rights to: international protection, family unity, quality education, health and psychosocial support.⁴⁰ In particular, it is crucial to ensure that all refugee children can be registered at birth in countries of asylum.⁴¹ And finally, protection measures against all forms of violence, exploitation, abuse of refugee children and adolescents ought to be implemented.⁴²

On 9 December 2014, Member States met at UNHCR's headquarters and pledged to increase their available places for resettling Syrian refugees from 62,000 to almost double that, at 100,000.⁴³ This is significant for the refugees themselves, and the several ESCWA refugee host countries, as a show of solidarity for them both, remarked the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres.⁴⁴ The High Commissioner had previously called for 130,000 places to be provided which entail resettlement, visas, private donations, and labor mobility programs.⁴⁵

On the regional level, Red Crescent societies in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries met in December, to review the situation in Syria and Iraq among other issues.⁴⁶ Outcomes included exploring the possibility of acquiring a land plot to establish a new joint GCC refugee camp in Lebanon.⁴⁷ This shows the strong contribution that civil society can have on alleviating some of the coordinative and logistical burdens of the refugee influx.

Recent Developments

Impact of Hosting Refugees

Lebanon's generous hosting of over 1.5 million *de facto* Syrian refugees has seen the economic and social costs of doing so reach a breaking point.⁴⁸ Since the start of the crisis, the number of poor currently in Lebanon has risen by nearly two-thirds.⁴⁹ Syrian refugees, at least 220,000 Palestinians, and 336,000 Lebanese live under \$2.4 a day.⁵⁰ The labor force has doubled in size since 2011, and the unemployment rate has risen to a third of that.⁵¹ Economic

³⁷ UNHCR, *Investing in the Future: Protecting Refugee Children in the Middle East and North Africa*, 2014.

³⁸ UNHCR, *Sharjah Meet: UNHCR Calls for Urgent Protection Action For Refugee Children*, 2014.

³⁹ UNHCR, *Investing in the Future: Protecting Refugee Children in the Middle East and North Africa*, 2014.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ UNHCR, *Governments At Geneva Meeting Agree To Take in 100,000 Syrian Refugees*, 2014.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Gulf Times, *Qatar Red Crescent Attends Regional Meeting in Kuwait*, 2014.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Lebanon and the United Nations, *Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2015-16*, 2014, p. 3.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

losses equal to \$7.5 billion, a disastrous number.⁵² All the previous are threatening the country's internal stability, with increasing societal tensions due to the competition for resources and services.⁵³

This has led the government to propose the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), requesting some \$2.14 billion in financial assistance, to achieve three key objectives.⁵⁴ They are: 1) Ensuring humanitarian assistance and protection to the most vulnerable; 2) Strengthening the capacity of local and national delivery systems of basic public services; and 3) Reinforcing Lebanon's economic, social, institutional and environmental stability.⁵⁵ The funding is to be directed to two groups: humanitarian assistance to 2.2 million vulnerable individuals with acute needs, and investment in services and economies to reach 2.9 million people in the most poverty-stricken areas.⁵⁶ Having said so, only 46% of the funds requested for the 2014 Regional Response Plan were received, a decrease from 72% the year before, so it remains to be seen whether this need will be met.⁵⁷

Economic and Social Conditions of the Refugees

In the ESCWA region, every minute, another child is forced to flee their country.⁵⁸ Half of Syrian refugee children are receiving no education, creating what experts are calling a "lost generation."⁵⁹ UNHCR now estimates that out of the 3.3 million people of concern (PoC), 10% of them are acutely vulnerable and need resettlement.⁶⁰ They include torture survivors, those with serious medical needs, and women without means to provide to their children.⁶¹ The crisis in Iraq has also had a telling impact on the refugee situation in the region.⁶² For the first time in Jordan, the majority of new refugees are from Raqqa, north Iraq, instead of Dara'a in south Syria.⁶³ Sixty percent of them cite the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) as the reason for displacement, and almost 60% also come from ISIS-controlled territories in Iraq.⁶⁴ They report public threats, homes being burnt, kidnapping and forced marriage, and forced conversion into Islam.⁶⁵ In Turkey, 103,000 Iraqi refugees have been registered since the start of the year, with an overwhelming majority citing ISIS attacks, fear of attacks, or sectarian violence as the reason for displacement.⁶⁶

Conclusion

Border authorities in Lebanon have officially started for the first time turning away Syrian refugees, referring to stricter visa regulations.⁶⁷ In a televised news conference, Lebanese Interior Minister, Nohad Machnouk, said that, "We have enough. There's no capacity anymore to host more displaced."⁶⁸ What may have started as a humanitarian issue, is now swiftly developing into a security and stability crisis. Despite developments on the global and regional stage regarding humanitarian and development aid to stabilize the region, in the words of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, "Syria has become the worst humanitarian tragedy of our times."⁶⁹

Focusing on a broader perspective, and as befitting the Commission's advisory role, the Emerging and Conflict-Related Issues Division (ECRI) of ESCWA issued a working paper in November 2014, proposing a quantitative study of the Neighborhood Effect (NE).⁷⁰ It conceptualizes NE as the social, economic and other effects that events

⁵² Lebanon and the United Nations, *Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2015-16*, 2014.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ UNHCR, *Sharjah Meet: UNHCR Calls for Urgent Protection Action For Refugee Children*, 2014.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ UNHCR, *Inter-Agency Regional Update-Syrian Refugees*, 2014.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² UNHCR, *Sharp Increase in Iraqi Refugees Fleeing ISIS into Jordan and Turkey*, 2014.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Al Arabiya News, *Lebanon Puts New Limits On Syrians Fleeing War*, 2015.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ UNHCR, *Conference on the Syrian Refugee Situation – Supporting Stability in the Region*, 2014.

⁷⁰ UN ESCWA, *Beyond Governance and Conflict: Measuring the Impact of the Neighborhood Effect in the Arab Region*, 2014, p. 3.

in a country's neighborhood have on it.⁷¹ This is particularly relevant to the ESCWA region due to the following factors: an acute governance deficit, conflict spillovers and conflict-driven displacement.⁷² In fact, 41% of all Arab countries have experienced internal conflicts in from 2011-2013; about 5% of the population is either internally displaced persons (IDPs) or refugees.⁷³ In conclusion, delegates should be mindful of the above developments; how many more thousands are forced to flee from their homes, how not only have their needs increased, but also their host countries', and finally, how ESCWA can contribute to the humanitarian efforts and strategic tackling of this tragedy.

⁷¹ UN ESCWA, *Beyond Governance and Conflict: Measuring the Impact of the Neighborhood Effect in the Arab Region*, 2014, p. 3.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

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Government of Lebanon and the United Nations. (2014). *Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2015-16*. Retrieved 7 January 2015 from: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=7722>

This strategic plan, developed by the government of Lebanon and a host of international partners, gives a comprehensive look on the social and economic costs of hosting the influx of refugees. ESCWA member Lebanon hosts over 1 million Syrians; 1.2 million are registered. Delegates would do well to check similar iterations by other countries in the region, such as Jordan, and apply this plan's objectives to future regional plans.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2014). *Inter-Agency Regional Update-Syrian Refugees*. Retrieved 6 January 2015 from: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=7705>

UNHCR has issued an inter-agency regional update on the refugee situation in Syria, as of 9 December, 2014. It includes key figures, highlights on the latest achievements by UNHCR and its partners, such as the World Food Programme (WFP), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and governments of host countries Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. It is also segmented into key areas of assistance; education, food security, and health for example. Although brief, this is an essential source for delegates to begin their updated research on the international efforts to mitigate the Syrian refugees' plight.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2014). *Sharjah Meet: UNHCR Calls For Urgent Protection Action for Refugee Children* [Article]. Retrieved 8 January 2015 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/en/news/460-sharjah-meet-unhcr-calls-for-urgent-protection-action-for-refugee-children>

UN High Commissioner António Guterres spoke at the commencement of the Sharjah Conference titled "Investing in the Future: Protecting Refugee Children in MENA." He outlined the unique challenges and tragedies that face the global and regional child refugee population, such as lack of access to education, development, and intense psychosocial trauma from displacement and forced family breakup. Delegates must have the sobering threat of a lost, and radicalized generation of children at the forefront of their plans for the future.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2014). *Sharp Increase in Iraqi Refugees Fleeing ISIS into Jordan and Turkey* [Report]. Retrieved 7 January 2015 from: <http://www.unhcr.org/54214cfe9.html>

Where Iraq was previously a host country for Syrian refugees, the rise of the Islamic State in northern Iraq has changed the dynamic entirely; the rate of Iraqi refugee influx has surpassed the Syrian one. This briefing from the UNHCR points out that it is not simply a question of increasing numbers and needs for humanitarian assistance. The majority of the refugees are Kurds, or other minority religious groups, not Sunni Arabs. This presents an extra dilemma to delegates where societal and sectarian tensions are likely to be more pronounced.

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2014). *Beyond Governance and Conflict: Measuring the Impact Of The Neighborhood Effect In The Arab Region* [Working Paper]. Retrieved 9 January 2015 from:

http://www.escwa.un.org/divisions/ecri_editor/Download.asp?table_name=ecri_documents&field_name=id&FileID=272

This working paper by the ESCWA secretariat attempts to shine a new light on the current events in the ESCWA region, using analytical methods. It introduces the concept of the neighborhood effect, where no country is unaffected by the policies or events of its neighbors. It is both highly relevant to the region and an opportunity for Member States to contribute meaningfully to the global conversation about the ESCWA region's troubles, instead of it being outsourced.

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II. Meeting Growing Energy Demands

Introduction

Energy is a critical element of the overall welfare of Member States in the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) region.⁷⁴ Energy is connected to economic growth and job development, as well as social development and stability of individual Member States.⁷⁵ However, as energy demands increase globally and regionally, Member States are faced with challenges of meeting energy needs while maintaining socio-economic growth and development.⁷⁶ ESCWA continues to be a forum through which Member States can collaborate in meeting energy demands, developing new sources of renewable energy, promoting energy efficiency, and attaining sustainable energy resources.⁷⁷ Through the 28th Ministerial Session, subsequent ESCWA meetings, and involvement in the UN and international community, Member States continue to make strides in meeting the growing energy needs of populations in the ESCWA region.⁷⁸

During the 28th Ministerial Session of ESCWA, resolution 314 (XXVIII), on “The Arab Forum on Sustainable Development,” was adopted on 18 September 2014.⁷⁹ The adoption of this resolution reinforces the Commission’s commitment to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), General Assembly resolution 66/288 *The Future We Want*, the *Dubai Document for the Arab regional implementation of Rio+20*, and ESCWA resolution 305 (XXVII) on *Sustainable development in the region and follow-up and implementation of the decisions of the Rio+20 Conference*.⁸⁰ Resolution 314 (XXVIII) also reinforces the role of the ESCWA secretariat, including in hosting the Arab Forum on Sustainable Development and monitoring and reporting regional and state progress towards sustainable development.⁸¹ During the 28th Session, ESCWA held a roundtable discussion on the “Social Justice in the Policies of the Arab States: Intergenerational Justice and Access to Natural Resources.”⁸² The roundtable discussion highlighted the connection of access to energy with sustainable development and social justice.⁸³ It also emphasized the necessity to implement regional and international cooperation in building energy infrastructure for energy demands in the ESCWA region.⁸⁴ On 17 September 2014 at the Fifth Beirut Energy Forum, ESCWA facilitated a discussion on “The Role of Renewable Energy in Socio-Economic Development in the Arab Region.”⁸⁵ Topics discussed included encouraging policies that promote renewable energy (RE) development; the importance of sustainable energy management on socio-economic growth; energy efficiency (EE) policies implementation; and using small and medium enterprises (SMEs) for developing rural energy access and infrastructure.⁸⁶

In November 2014, ESCWA joined the four other UN regional commissions for the Fifth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development.⁸⁷ This forum met to continue to expand upon and implement the objectives established in the Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) initiative.⁸⁸ As part of the Forum, ESCWA and the UN Economic Commission for Europe introduced a new project on “Prompting Renewable Energy Investments for Climate Change Mitigation and Sustainable Development.”⁸⁹ The new project will create opportunities to improve government and private sector capacities for investing and funding for renewable energy development.⁹⁰

⁷⁴ UN ESCWA, *Sustainable Development Policies: Energy*, 2015.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ UN ESCWA, *Resolutions Adopted at the Twenty-Eighth Session of ESCWA*, 2014, p. 4.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4; UN ESCWA, UNEP, et al., *Dubai document for the Arab regional implementation of Rio +20*, 2013; UN ESCWA, *Resolutions Adopted at the Twenty-Seventh Session of ESCWA*, p. 4.

⁸¹ UN ESCWA, *Resolutions Adopted at the Twenty-Eighth Session of ESCWA*, 2014, p. 5.

⁸² UN ESCWA, *Social Justice in the Policies of Arab States: Intergenerational Justice and Access to Natural Resources (E/ESCWA/28/8/Panel.3)*, 2014, p. 1; UN ESCWA, *About the Session*, 2014.

⁸³ UN ESCWA, *Social Justice in the Policies of Arab States: Intergenerational Justice and Access to Natural Resources (E/ESCWA/28/8/Panel.3)*, 2014, p. 3.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ UN ESCWA, *What’s New: ESCWA at the 5th Beirut Energy Forum*, 2014.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ UNECE, *Meetings & Events: Fifth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development*, 2014.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Other UN agencies and entities recently held conference and summits related to growing global energy needs. The UN Secretariat hosted the Climate Summit 2014: Catalyzing Action on 23 September 2014.⁹¹ A key issue of this summit focused on energy, especially sustainability through EE.⁹² The Secretariat introduced a plan called the “Global Energy Efficiency Accelerator Platform” which promotes the SE4ALL agenda and establishes a platform in which the public and private sectors cooperate towards funding and investment for EE projects and policies.⁹³ In December 2014, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held the Lima Conference.⁹⁴ Regionally, the Tenth Arab Energy Conference was held in Abu Dhabi on 21-23 December 2014, and was sponsored by the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC), the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD), the League of Arab States (LAS), and the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO).⁹⁵ The focus of this conference was on the impact on Arab countries from the oil and gas markets, energy consumption and sustainability, and developing and improving energy resources.⁹⁶ The dominating conversation from the conference involved the international oil market and the direct impact it has on the economies of the members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).⁹⁷ With energy resources being a major part of the economies of OPEC and OAPEC members, concerns for short-term and long-term economic futures were important to outcome of this conference.⁹⁸ Also, in January 2015, the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week was held in Masdar City, allowing academics, experts, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private sector investors, and policymakers from different Member States to address approaches to sustainable energy.⁹⁹ During the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week was the 8th World Future Energy Summit, which is an exhibition of new and innovative “green” technologies, especially solar energy, developed by academics, NGOs, and the private sector.¹⁰⁰ The Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week also played host to other conferences and events, such as the International Renewable Energy Agency, the International Water Summit, and the Abu Dhabi Renewable Energy Conference.¹⁰¹

Recent Developments

Implementing Renewable Energy

Masdar City in Abu Dhabi is the location of a regular sustainable development summit; the location was chosen because in 2009 it was the site for the first large-scale solar project in the ESCWA region.¹⁰² Yet, with the prices of natural gas low and the prices of solar panels high, several governments and private sectors have not in the past seen solar power as an affordable investment, and therefore since 2009, there have not been many more large-scale solar projects.¹⁰³ As a result, countries such as Egypt, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates relied on low-cost natural gas resources to fuel their domestic electricity grids.¹⁰⁴ However, in recent years, the cost of solar panels and construction materials for solar plants has decreased considerably, and the cost of using natural gas for electricity has increased.¹⁰⁵ As a result, the Egyptian government has announced its plans for a 2,000 megawatts (MW) large-scale solar photovoltaic (PV) power plant and 300MW rooftop solar power projects.¹⁰⁶ This movement towards solar power was made possible by the 176 companies helping fund the solar project with the Feed-in-Tariff program, which is a system in which citizens are paid for switching to solar energy.¹⁰⁷ The governments of Jordan, Morocco, and Qatar are expected to make similar announcements later in 2015.¹⁰⁸ Growth in solar power industry is important

⁹¹ UN Climate Summit 2014, *About*, 2014.

⁹² UN Climate Summit 2014, *Energy: Sustainable Energy for All, Global Energy Efficiency Accelerator Platform*, 2014, p. 2.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

⁹⁴ UN FCCC, *Meetings: Lima Climate Change Conference*, 2014; UN FCCC, *Lima Calls for Climate Action Puts World on Track to Paris 2015*, 2014.

⁹⁵ Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries, *Tenth Arab Energy Conference*, 2014.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Tenth Arab Energy Conference Convened, *FUELSNews: Market News and Information*, 2014.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Masdar Company, *Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week 2015*, 2015.

¹⁰⁰ Technical Review: Middle East, *WFES 2015 to address energy and sustainable development challenges*, 2015.

¹⁰¹ Masdar Company, *Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week 2015*, 2015.

¹⁰² Fotuhi, *Solar power to shine through in the Middle East in 2015*, 2014.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

because it provides another source of energy for the region, especially for non-oil or non-natural gas rich countries.¹⁰⁹ Solar energy will also bring in more business and more jobs, which will contribute to socio-economic growth and alleviate energy needs and economic struggles with the oil market price and quantity fluctuations in the ESCWA region.¹¹⁰

Global Energy Prices and Impact on Economies

Oil prices on the international market have fallen dramatically in the past seven months, from \$110 per barrel of crude oil in mid-2014 to below \$50 per barrel of crude oil.¹¹¹ Prices have fallen because of increase in oil shale production for the United States, the low demand of oil due to minimal global economic growth, and OPEC's unwillingness to cut production.¹¹² In the short-term, OPEC cutting oil production would not significantly increase the price in oil and it may not harm the economies of big oil producing countries, such as Saudi Arabia, because of the built-up financial revenues to withstand the drop in oil prices.¹¹³ However, other oil producing countries in the ESCWA region, such as Iraq, do not have the financial fortitude to withstand a large decrease in prices.¹¹⁴ In the long-term, oil-importing countries will be hurt due to low energy costs causing inflation in the least developed regions and in regions directly affected by the Syrian war.¹¹⁵ Additionally, oil accounts for 65% of electricity production in Saudi Arabia, 71% in Kuwait, 94% in Lebanon, and 100% in Yemen, which means that as the cost of oil goes up, so does the cost of electricity.¹¹⁶ Regional and domestic long-term oil-driven policies and oil-dependent infrastructure are unsupportable, and will have a drastic negative impact domestically and regionally unless steps are taken to find other sources of energy that can meet the overall growing demands.¹¹⁷

Conclusion

Meeting growing energy demands in the ESCWA region will continue to be a matter of regional and international discussion in 2015. Although a few Member States of ESCWA can support their economies with short-term drastic changes within the global market prices of energy resources, several others are shifting away from dependence on volatile energy markets because of the socio-economic instability created by sharply rising and falling prices.¹¹⁸ ESCWA Member States are incorporating forms of RE, such as solar power, in order to achieve domestic sustainable energy systems.¹¹⁹ However, incorporating some forms of RE is only part of the commitment made by the ESCWA region to move towards fully-sustainable energy as established by SE4ALL and ESCWA resolutions 305 and 314.¹²⁰ Going forward, Member States still need to incorporate policies promoting EE, energy conservation, equity of energy accessibility, and investment funding for future energy projects in order to meet the growing energy demands and continue prompting sustainable development for persons in the ESCWA region.¹²¹

¹⁰⁹ Fotuhi, *Solar power to shine through in the Middle East in 2015*, 2014.

¹¹⁰ Ibid; Mayor, *Can solar power replace oil in the Middle East?*, 2014.

¹¹¹ Bowler, *Falling oil prices: Who are the winners and the losers?*, 2015.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid; Mayor, *Can solar power replace oil in the Middle East?*, 2014.

¹¹⁶ Mayor, *Can solar power replace oil in the Middle East?*, 2014.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid; Bowler, *Falling oil prices: Who are the winners and the losers?*, 2015; Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid; Mayor, *Can solar power replace oil in the Middle East?*, 2014.

¹²⁰ UNECE, *Meetings & Events: Fifth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development*, 2014; UN ESCWA, *Resolutions Adopted at the Twenty-Eighth Session of ESCWA*, 2014, p. 4.

¹²¹ UNECE, *Meetings & Events: Fifth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development*, 2014; UN ESCWA, *Social Justice in the Policies of Arab States: Intergenerational Justice and Access to Natural Resources (E/ESCWA/28/8/Panel.3)*, 2014, p. 3; UN Secretariat, *Energy: Sustainable Energy for All, Global Energy Efficiency Accelerator Platform*, 2014, p. 5.

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Bowler, T. (2015, January 19). Falling oil prices: Who are the winners and the losers? *BBC News*. Retrieved 25 January 2015 from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-29643612>

As oil prices continue to drop, implications have a global reach. Within this article, Bowler highlights the key issues surrounding the cause of the decreasing prices but also the consequences. Outlined in this source are various countries and regional blocs affected by the fluctuation in oil prices. This not only shows delegates how Member States in ESCWA are affected, but also how members of OPEC, as well as international trading partners, are impacted.

Fotuhi, V. (2014, December 31). Solar power to shine through in the Middle East in 2015. *The National*. Retrieved 6 January 2015 from: <http://www.thenational.ae/business/energy/solar-power-to-shine-through-in-the-middle-east-in-2015>

In this article, Fotuhi discusses crucial reasons why several countries within the Middle East have been reluctant to incorporate renewable energy (RE sources) into their energy infrastructure. High costs of RE equipment and construction, plus low costs of non-renewable resources of energy, are connected to the slow transition to sustainable energy policies and capacities. This is an important resource for delegates to review while conducting their research; it is also important to look at current market prices and investment viability of RE sources in order to understand regional and domestic policies.

Mayor, V. (2014, December 7). Can solar power replace oil in the Middle East? *Al Jazeera*. Retrieved 6 January 2015 from: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/12/can-solar-power-replace-oil-mid-201412752357541154.html>

In this resource, Mayor highlights the importance of long-term policy sustainability regarding energy, and specifically policies regarding oil for ESCWA Member States. This article assists in understanding the challenges to current energy policies: changes and competition in markets, growth in population and development, and rate of consumption verses rate of production and exportation. This article explains that REs, like solar power, could not only supplement energy needs in the short-term, but in the long-term could replace non-renewable sources of energy. Mayor points out how this is a beneficial endeavor for Middle Eastern countries and should be embraced instead of discouraged.

United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2014). *Social Justice in the Policies of Arab States: Intergenerational Justice and Access to Natural Resources (E/ESCWA/28/8/Panel.3)* [Panel]. Retrieved 7 January 2015 from: http://www.escwa.un.org/about/gov/sessions/editor/Download.asp?table_name=sess26_documents&field_name=ID&FileID=268

One of the key issues for this panel was access to energy, which is an important part of sustainable development and meeting the demands for energy. The panel discussed ways in which the ESCWA region could cooperate in developing approaches to energy accessibility. Also discussed were methods of funding energy projects that reached persons in rural and vulnerable locations. It is important for delegates to remember equity of accessibility while researching and promoting policies within the ESCWA framework.

United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa, Economic Commission for Europe, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2014). *Joint Statement of the Executive Secretaries of the United Nations Regional Commissions for the 5th International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development* [Statement]. Retrieved 6 January 2015 from: http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/energy/se/pdfs/ee21/Forum_November_Tunisia/Joint_Statement_Fifth_International_Forum_Final_All.pdf

The joint statement reaffirms a commitment from the regional commissions and their Member States to the energy initiative SE4ALL. It highlights the recommended responsibilities of the Member States to meet this initiative. It also points to key challenges facing the majority of Member States. Although not specific to ESCWA members, the general guidelines for steps to be

made for domestic and regional changes to the energy infrastructure will be beneficial to delegates in their research and during the conference.

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<http://www.technicalreviewmiddleeast.com/events/eventnews/wfes-2015-to-showcase-solutions-to-accelerate-sustainable-energy>

III. Countering Radicalization through Social and Economic Development

Introduction

This update covers developments in the region, with regards to a rise in radical extremism and efforts to identify ways of countering undertaken by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the International Labor Organization (ILO). Most importantly, the update contains efforts that are being made on global, regional, and domestic levels to counter radicalization through social and economic development.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held its annual youth forum in October, in Istanbul, Turkey.¹²² Elshad Iskandarov, the forum's Secretary-General, called for coming up with strategies to counter radical groups' misusing the name of Islam.¹²³ The incursions into Kobani, a Syrian border town miles from south Turkey, made this all the more urgent, given the context of the conference.¹²⁴ Iskandarov outlined four different types of radical extremists; revenge seekers, adventure seekers, self-identity seekers, and ideology seekers.¹²⁵

Recent Development

Radicalization in the ESCWA Region

The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is using social media, especially Twitter, on an unprecedented level.¹²⁶ Its successes include consistent trending and high-volume proliferation of its content.¹²⁷ In one instance, the real-time top search for the word "Baghdad" in Arabic yielded a poster for them announcing their mobilization towards the city.¹²⁸ In this day and age, that is translated into bigger visibility and credibility, which in turn leads to more funding, and more recruitment.¹²⁹ Despite the Iraqi government blocking of access to Facebook, Twitter, and other websites, jihadists are still circumventing restrictions and boosting the group's image.¹³⁰ At their stage of usage, there are no current solutions to stemming this.¹³¹

Despite Tunisia standing as the lone success in transitioning to democracy among Arab Spring countries, Tunisian officials say at least 2,400 citizens have travelled to join ISIS.¹³² This is the highest number of foreign fighters joining ISIS worldwide.¹³³ Family and acquaintances of the fighters cite a better standard of living and the opportunity to fulfill the dream of a unified Muslim and Arab state.¹³⁴ They also believe that ISIS is the one chance for social justice, and an escape for domestic repression.¹³⁵

Social Development to Counter Radicalism

Religious and traditional leaders have a pivotal role in countering radicalization and terrorism.¹³⁶ The OIC Permanent Representative to the UN held a workshop on 29 September 2014 that was attended by leaders from Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Somalia, and Yemen.¹³⁷ They discussed their experience in diffusing conflicts on the ground, and work during humanitarian crises.¹³⁸ The workshop provided the participants the unique opportunity to not only

¹²² Daily Sabah, *Islamic countries must cooperate against 'so called radical' ISIS militants: OIC*, 2014.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Towbridge, *Jihadists On The Move In Iraq With Weapons, Hashtags*, 2014.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Kirckpatrick, *New Freedoms in Tunisia Drive Support for ISIS*, 2014.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ OIC, *OIC Permanent Observer Mission Highlights The Role Of Religious And Traditional Leaders In Countering Radicalization And Violent Extremism*, 2014.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

share their best practices, but also hear about the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers.¹³⁹ Along the same lines, an experiment in the town of Aarhus, Denmark, is proving the veracity of the above.¹⁴⁰ Police and city officials reached out to a radical mosque with associations to 30 foreign fighters.¹⁴¹ They hold monthly sessions on religious ideology, Danish law, and freedom of speech, to dissuade the mosque’s youthful members from joining ISIS.¹⁴² Not one Danish returnee has been arrested; they are offered voluntary psychological counselling, plus training and vocational opportunities.¹⁴³ The city, treating the returnees as wayward youths, not terrorist suspects, has made efforts to improve housing conditions in its ghetto areas, and promotes their integration into society.¹⁴⁴ The security concerns of such policies cannot be dismissed; but after 30 young people going to Syria in 2013, that number is down to just one, a year later.¹⁴⁵

Within the ESCWA region, Egyptian president Abdelfatah El-Sisi made two landmark moves to combat radicalism at the beginning of 2015.¹⁴⁶ In his recent speech on 1 January to Muslim clerics, he called for a state-backed “revolution” in Islamic discourse, ridding it of extremist instructions of intolerance and violence that legitimize groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda.¹⁴⁷ This is to be accomplished via a contemporary reading of religious texts, and via the direction of the state-influenced institution, the 1,000-year-old Al-Azhar system.¹⁴⁸ Critics point out to the usually ponderous and piecemeal approach of Al-Azhar to promoting moderate Islam through outreach and not through head-on confrontation of controversial issues.¹⁴⁹ To address this, there are plans to revise religious textbooks and remove allusions to slavery or discrimination against different faiths, and even offer a university-level Islamic culture course.¹⁵⁰ Secondly, on 6 January 2015, El-Sisi became the first Egyptian president to visit and congratulate Egyptian Coptic Christians during Christmas Eve ceremonies.¹⁵¹ This displayed political will to create a nationalist sentiment to moderate against a religious one.¹⁵²

Economic Development to Counter Radicalism

ESCWA issued a report titled “Arab Middle Class: Measurement and Role in Driving Change” in December 2014.¹⁵³ It outlined how a strong middle class promotes social, political and economic development, stability and harmony.¹⁵⁴ Since the Arab Spring, the size of the Arab middle class has shrunk from 45.1% to 36.7%, a significant decrease.¹⁵⁵ Regional development models have yielded an aggregate improvement in education and health, but households are both economically and politically disenfranchised.¹⁵⁶ The growing trend in informal private labor, plus five of six World Bank governance indicators that show negative linear trends underscore this.¹⁵⁷

There are two key recommendation areas: sound macroeconomic policies that drive investment and job creation, and social protection for poorer classes, which are considered the middle class of tomorrow.¹⁵⁸ A fiscal reserve of 4.6% to 9.5% of Arab country gross domestic product (GDP) is required for social assistance, and ESCWA research shows that this amount is available in most countries.¹⁵⁹ These policies are recommended for the aim of preserving

¹³⁹ OIC, *OIC Permanent Observer Mission Highlights The Role Of Religious And Traditional Leaders In Countering Radicalization And Violent Extremism*, 2014.

¹⁴⁰ Faiola & Mekhennet, *Denmark Tries A Soft-Handed Approach To Returned Islamist Fighters*, 2014.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ El Deeb & Keath, *Egypt’s President Issues Ambitious Call To Reform Islam*, 2015.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ UN ESCWA, *Arab Middle Class: Measurement and Role in Driving Change*, 2014, p. 1.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 21.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 24, 25.

¹⁵⁹ UN ESCWA, *Arab Middle Class: Measurement and Role in Driving Change*, 2014, p. 25.

the already-stretched social contract of the citizens aspiring for greater social and economic mobility and empowerment.¹⁶⁰

ILO issued a working paper in 2014 titled “Labor Demand and Social Dialogue: Two Binding Constraints For Decent Work For Youth In The Arab Region.”¹⁶¹ It succinctly summarized how endemic poor macroeconomic policies, coupled with inadequate governance, led to high unemployment and subsequent unrest.¹⁶² As mentioned above, most Arab youth with higher education do not find the types of jobs that they aspire to and befit their qualifications.¹⁶³ Low wages and poor job conditions are a result of poor productivity growth, compared to total economic growth.¹⁶⁴ The author recommends a shift in focus from labor supply to labor demand development, through several key avenues.¹⁶⁵ Employers have to be incentivized to demand higher skilled and higher paid labor.¹⁶⁶ This can only be accomplished via sustainable and inclusive industrial, trade, investment, and migration policies.¹⁶⁷ Corrupt “clientelistic” and rent-seeking practices that deprive the majority of populations of social protection and access to adequate public services must end.¹⁶⁸ And finally, the demographic window of opportunity, or the “youth bulge” will close in most Arab states by the year 2045.¹⁶⁹ Young people must be considered the solution and not the obstacle to development.¹⁷⁰ They improve a labor force’s overall productivity, skills, and adaptability.¹⁷¹ Their lower dependency ratios also ultimately lead to higher savings and subsequent investment.¹⁷² Unless the labor demand and supply mismatch becomes at the forefront of development agendas, societal discontent and youth disillusionment will continue with adverse results.¹⁷³ The ILO, World Bank and International Monetary Fund have time and time again advocated for the importance of social dialogue in terms of collective bargaining and central coordination.¹⁷⁴

Conclusion

ESCWA delegates must realize the enormous responsibility that Member States have to counter radicalism, in almost every social and economic policy that their governments pursue. The lack of credible social institutions that empower individuals’ right to socio-economic mobility stretches the social contract between a state and its citizens. Repressive security authorities only fan the flames. Finally, appealing radical ideology has never been easier to access, follow, and adopt, with disastrous consequences. The examples in this update show how political will from actors across the political spectrum can counter radicalization and create more inclusive, prosperous communities.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁶¹ Tzannatos, *Labor Demand And Social Dialogue: Two Binding Constraints For Decent Work For Youth In The Arab Region*, 2014, p. 1.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 20-24.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

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Faiola, A. & S. Mekhennet. (2014, October 19). Denmark Tries A Soft-Handed Approach To Returned Islamist Fighters. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved 8 January 2015 from:

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/denmark-tries-a-soft-handed-approach-to-returned-islamist-fighters/2014/10/19/3516e8f3-515e-4adc-a2cb-c0261dd7dd4a_story.html

This story provides an alternative and increasingly adopted approach to counter terrorism, not only in terms of ideology, or treating returnees as hostile militants, but as products of their environments. Meaningful dialogue and structural social assistance, facilitated by visionary political will, is achieving results. Delegates should be mindful of the policies put in place to counter radicalization not simply through punitive measures, emphasizing the developmental significance of how to counter radicalization, compared to the much-maligned security direction.

Kirkpatrick, D. (2014, October 21). New Freedoms in Tunisia Drive Support for ISIS. *The New York Times*.

Retrieved 9 January 2015 from: http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/22/world/africa/new-freedoms-in-tunisia-drive-support-for-isis.html?_r=0

This news piece provides a handy and first-hand summary of the gamut of reasons why in Tunisia, young Muslim men, rich and poor, are answering ISIS' recruitment drive. From a depressing economic outlook, to distorted interpretations of Islamic ideology, this source illustrates the depth of the problem in countering radicalization; too many factors are intermingled to come up with a single limited solution. However, it is a good starting point, with links embedded on the website version, which direct delegates to key resources focused on flashpoints of radicalization.

Towbridge, A. (2014, June 16). Jihadists On The Move In Iraq With Weapons, Hashtags. *CBS News*. Retrieved 9 January 2015 from: <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/isis-jihadists-on-move-in-iraq-using-weapons-and-twitter-hashtags/>

This news item details the impressive coordination and results of the social media campaign for the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). It covers their on the ground activities, actual results, plus the effect of these media blitzes. It also features reactions from terrorism and social media experts, on how this campaign could be managed or attacked. Delegates will undoubtedly be aware of ISIS' online presence; there is a unique opportunity within ESCWA to address this issue in the context of Internet governance.

Tzannatos, Z. (2014). *Labor Demand And Social Dialogue: Two Binding Constraints For Decent Work For Youth In The Arab Region* [Working Paper]. Retrieved 9 January 2015 from: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_329982.pdf

This working paper provides very sound and technical arguments to the origins of the Arab Spring. Focusing on the youth demographic, within the context of unemployment, and in light of the socio-political Arab scene, delegates should find this a very valuable source. It is highly relevant for the Commission due to the wealth of policy options it provides, that fall neatly within ESCWA's mandate to proscribe.

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2014). *Arab Middle Class: Measurement and Role in Driving Change* [Presentation]. Retrieved 7 January 2015 from:

<http://css.escwa.org.lb/EDGD/3566/AMCLaunch.pdf>

ESCWA's most recent contribution to the macroeconomic picture of the Middle East is important for several reasons. First, this presentation is rich with data that while a challenge to digest sometimes provides a crucial examination of the Arab middle class. Second, delegates must definitely champion the recommendations proposed by ESCWA secretariat. The presentation may be very informative, yet the analysis provided is but a starting point.

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Tzannatos, Z. (2014). *Labor Demand and Social Dialogue: Two Binding Constraints for Decent Work for Youth in the Arab Region* [Working Paper]. Retrieved 9 January 2015 from: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_329982.pdf

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (2014). *Arab Middle Class: Measurement and Role in Driving Change* [Presentation]. Retrieved 7 January 2015 from: <http://css.escwa.org.lb/EDGD/3566/AMCLaunch.pdf>