# Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

*The Committee at the National Model United Nations Conference*

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) operates under the supervision of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, along with four other United Nations Regional Commissions.[1] De facto, ESCWA is a framework for cooperation which aims to promote economic and social development in the region. As of 2012, the Commission is comprised of 17 predominantly Arab member states.[2] It currently has 7 subsidiary bodies, which, but for the Committee on Transport who meets each year, meet biannually.[3] The other six are the Statistical Committee; the Committee on Social Development; the Committee on Energy; the Committee on Water Resources; the Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development; and the Committee on Women.[4]

**Format:** The ESCWA is a Resolution Writing Committee.

**Voting:** Each Member State in the ESCWA has one vote.[5] The Voting Rights do not allow any Member State within the Commission veto power. Substantive decisions are made based on a majority vote of Member States who are present and voting.[6]

*Recent Developments*

Since September 2012, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia has started a new phase in its attempt to promote the Digital Arabic Content (DAC) Industry through Technology Incubators.[7] In 2003 ESCWA organized the first *Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Promotion of DAC* with the objective of helping develop a DAC Industry which would produce locally relevant content and applications whilst preserving the cultural specificity and wealth of the region.[8] This was part of the original project for the *Promotion of the DAC Industry through Incubation* which ended in 2010.[9] Due to the commendations the program received, in October 2012 an *Expert meeting on ESCWA Initiative for Promoting the Digital Arabic Content Industry through Technology Incubators* was held in Amman.[10] The new initiative aims at widening and diversifying regional and national participation via awareness campaigns and competitions. With the help of business incubators in the region, the competition will offer winners working in the DAC field a chance to develop and better establish their enterprises.[11] Within the same broader goal of promoting technology transfer in the region, ESCWA Executive Secretary Dr. Rima Khalaf signed in November 2012 a Memorandum of Understanding with the Technology Center and the Licensing Executives Society – Arab Countries. The aim of the Memorandum is to promote regional cooperation which would improve dialogue between innovators and investors in ESCWA countries and enhance technology transfer.[12]

Also, in preparation for the 2013 ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) whose theme is "Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture for promoting sustainable development and achieving the MDGs", the

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[1] United Nations, *United Nations Economic And Social Commission For Western Asia (ESCWA)*, 2011.
[2] Regional Commissions, *Resolutions Adopted At The Twenty-Seventh Session of Escwa*. 2012.
[3] United Nations, U*nited Nations Economic And Social Commission For Western Asia (ESCWA),* 2011.
[4] United Nations, *United Nations Economic And Social Commission For Western Asia (ESCWA)*, 2011.
[5] United Nations, *Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia*, rule 50, 2003.
[6] *United Nations, Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, rule 51, 2003.*
[7] ESCWA, *Promoting Digital Arabic Content Industry*, 2012*.*
[8] Information Society Portal for the ESCWA region, *Promoting digital Arabic content*, 2012.
[9] ESCWA, *Expert meeting on ESCWA Initiative for Promoting the Digital Arabic Content Industry Through Technology Incubators,* 2012.
[10] ESCWA, *Expert meeting on ESCWA Initiative for Promoting the Digital Arabic Content Industry Through Technology Incubators,* 2012.
[11] ESCWA, *Expert meeting on ESCWA Initiative for Promoting the Digital Arabic Content Industry Through Technology Incubators,* 2012.
[12] AMEinfo, *ESCWA Technology Center and LES-AC sign MoU to encourage innovation,* 2012.

ESCWA Technology Centre hosted the Regional Preparatory Meeting for Western Asia on November 26, 2012, in Amman.[13] At the preparatory meeting Mr. Fouad Mrad, Executive Director of ESCWA Technology Centre, moderated a round table discussion entitled "Enabling Productive Capacities in Science, Technology and Innovation in Western Asia" and Mr. Stelzer, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-agency Affairs from the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) moderated the topic "Harnessing Global Knowledge and Technologies for Regional Sustainable Development Initiatives."[14] As such, the meeting aimed to prepare regional participants to the AMR on specific aspects of the ECOSOC high-level segment in Geneva which are most relevant for ESCWA members.[15] On a topic closely related First Information Technology Officer at ESCWA, Rami Zaatari, commented that developing countries allocated a relatively small percentage of their Information and Communications Technology to the development of software, with Morocco and Egypt spending even less than 5%.[16]

Earlier in September 2012, having already agreed on a *Global Strategy for Improving Agricultural and Rural Statistics*, ESCWA cooperated with the Regional Office for the Near East of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAORNE) in the setting up of a high level expert consultative meeting to develop an *Action Plan for Improving Statistics for Food Security, Sustainable Agriculture, and Rural Development in the Near East and North Africa Region*.[17] This was an informal meeting which aimed to set the grounds for the regional planning and implementation of the global strategy. The goal of the meeting were to apply the global objectives at a regional level by elaborating a governance framework, developing a regional action plan with clear technical outcomes, formulating a draft regional implementation plan, and discussing the setup of a steering committee for the regional strategy.[18] As a result, it is expected that the next session of the ESCWA Statistical Committee will provide the mandate for preparing a plan for the region.[19]

In another event, ESCWA promoted its road safety platform. On November 14 and 15, ESCWA, in partnership with the Arab League, the Arab Union of Land Transport and the Global Road Safety Partnership, held a regional workshop on the Implementation of the *Action Plan for the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety* in the ESCWA region.[20] The discussion focused on evaluating progress made in the field of road safety management within the member states and the development of national capabilities and plans for the implementation of the UN Decade of Action 2011 – 2020.[21]

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[13] Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination, *Innovation and technology for sustainable development*, 2012.

[14] ESCWA Communications and Information Unit, *ESCWA Tech Center to Host Discussion on Science, Technology & Innovation for Sustainable Development,* 2012.

[15] ESCWA Communications and Information Unit, *ESCWA Tech Center to Host Discussion on Science, Technology & Innovation for Sustainable Development,* 2012.

[16] The UN Regional Commissions, *Information Economy Report Launched at ESCWA, Said Facebook Users Reached 481 Million*, 2013.

[17] FAO - Regional Office for the Near East, *Meetings and Events,* 2012.

[18] FAO - Regional Office for the Near East, *Meetings and Events,* 2012.

[19] Economic and Social Council, *Report of the Global Steering Committee on the progress made in the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics*, 2013.

[20] Global Road Safety Partnership, *GRSP – ESCWA: a strategic partnership,* 2012.

[21] Global Road Safety Partnership, *GRSP – ESCWA: a strategic partnership*, 2012.

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ESCWA (2012). Promoting Digital Arabic Content Industry. *ESCWA Weekly News*. 40 (52), Retrieved January 3, 2013 from: http://css.escwa.org.lb/weeklynews/wnews/uploads/WN40e12.pdf.
> *The ESCWA Weekly News Series is a reliable source for regular updates on ESCWA activities and vision. The issue cited here contains articles on topics which range from statistics in agriculture to the International Disaster Reduction Day. Also, delegates may find that the article at hand offers a good overview on the Arab Digital Content EGM.*

FAO - Regional Office for the Near East. (2012). *Meetings and Events.* Retrieved January 3, 2013 from: http://neareast.fao.org/Pages/events.aspx?ID=992&lang=EN&I=104117&DId=10000&CId=0&CMSId=5000199.
> *The page referenced here outlays what FAORNE expected and aimed for through the setting up of the EGM on improving Agricultural and rural development statistics in the Near East and North Africa Region. The website as a whole offers delegates a good source for events and programs currently running in the ESCWA region.*

Global Road Safety Partnership. (2012). *GRSP – ESCWA: a strategic partnership.* Retrieved January 3, 2013 from: http://www.grsproadsafety.org/news/grsp-%E2%80%93-escwa-strategic-partnership.
> *This source explains the cooperation between the GRSP and ESCWA and the details of the event they jointly organized in Jordan. As such it offers an insight into the manner in which ESCWA cooperates with civil society for the achievement of its goals. On the GRSP website delegates will also find more information about this partnership and its members.*

Information Society Portal for the ESCWA region. (2012). Promoting digital Arabic content (DAC). *RPOA_PROGRAMMES*. Outline. Retrieved January 3, 2013 from: http://isper.escwa.un.org/?tabid=76&language=en-US&pg=746a5528-2835-4393-991d-6c0bca91514c.
> *Found on the Information Society Portal for the ESCWA region, this source offers deeper insight into Promoting digital Arabic content (DAC). It contains, amongst other things, data on information measurement, a series of documents pertaining to the strategic framework and list of projects. The portal as a whole provides students with access to wide variety of information on any topic relevant to the ESCWA region.*

United Nations Economic and Social Council. (2013). *Report of the Global Steering Committee on the progress made in the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics. Statistical Commission Forty-fourth session 26 February-1 March 2013 (Item 3 (g) of the provisional agenda).* Retrieved January 3, 2013 from: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc13/2013-8-AgricultureStats-E.pdf.
> *This Report of the Global Steering Committee is a United Nations official document. It contains information on the evolution of regional action plans within the context of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics. Delegates will find it is a useful source for understanding inter-organ interactions and cooperation within a framework whose goal is to enable the utilization of statistical data in the policy making process.*

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United Nations. (2011). *United Nations Economic And Social Commission For Western Asia (ESCWA).* Retrieved January 3, 2013 from: http://www.un.org.lb/Subpage.aspx?pageid=48.

United Nations (2003). *Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia*. New York, Retrieved January 3, 2013 from: http://css.escwa.org.lb/english/ESCWARULEN.pdf.

United Nations Economic and Social Council. (2013). *Report of the Global Steering Committee on the progress made in the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics. Note by the Secretary-General*. Retrieved February 2, 2013, from: http://undocs.org/E/cn.3/2013/8.

United Nations Economic and Social Council. (2013). *Statistical Commission Forty-fourth session 26 February-1 March 2013 (Item 3 (g) of the provisional agenda)*. Retrieved January 3, 2013 from: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc13/2013-8-AgricultureStats-E.pdf.

# I. Promoting Sustainable Energy Production for Socio-Economic Development

***Recent Developments in the field of Sustainable Energy Production***

With the conclusion of the International Year of Sustainable Energy for All in December 2012, the United Nations reflected on the system-wide commitment to improving access to energy and energy efficiency, as well as the promotion of new and renewable energy sources.[22] In recognition of the importance of sustainable energy to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and strengthening human security, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched the Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) initiative, which sets out three objectives to achieve sustainable energy for all by 2030: "(i) ensuring access to modern energy services; (ii) doubling the rate of improvement in energy efficiency; and (iii) doubling the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix."[23] By December 2012, over 100 commitments had been made by governments, civil society organizations, international institutions, and firms within the private sector, in support of the Secretary-General's initiative.[24] In addition, many Member States have established policies to promote research and development of sustainable energy sources, including more progressive renewable energy targets.[25] Through the Sustainable Energy for All Initiative, a baseline report will be published in January 2013, which seeks to track progress on the three objectives.[26] In December 2012, the General Assembly, upon recommendation of the Second Committee, declared the decade 2014 – 2024 as the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All.[27] As part of this ongoing commitment, governments and regional organizations, such as ESCWA, are urged to promote new and renewable energy technologies in addressing social and economic development challenges.[28]

In November 2012, ESCWA participated in "Follow-up to Rio+20: Actions and considerations at the Regional Level," a meeting of the Executive Secretaries of the five Regional Commissions.[29] Recognizing the significant role ascribed to the Regional Commissions in the Rio+20 outcome document, this dialogue allowed the different commissions to share regional efforts and initiatives, as well as supporting the development of partnerships to support countries in the implementation of the Rio+20 outcomes.[30] ESCWA also played an important role in the meeting of the 18th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework on Climate Change and the 8th Conference of Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (COP18/CMP8), held in Doha, Qatar from 26 November – 7 December 2012.[31] In addition to participating in the negotiations, ESCWA co-chaired a side event on "Climate Change Vulnerability and Impact Assessment: Initiatives for Adaptation in the Arab Region," which presented initiatives for regional and national action.[32]

ESCWA has dedicated significant attention to the evidence base for sustainable energy promotion through the creation of appropriate energy statistics and indicators. In November 2012, ESCWA and the League of Arab States hosted the Second Working Group on Environment and Sustainable Development Indicators in Cairo, Egypt.[33] In December 2012, the International Energy Agency (IEA) announced their strengthened role in advising ESCWA on

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[22] United Nations General Assembly, *Promotion of new and renewable sources of energy: Report of the Secretary-General*, 2012, para. 3.

[23] United Nations General Assembly, *Promotion of new and renewable sources of energy: Report of the Secretary-General*, 2012, para. 28.

[24] United Nations, *Sustainable Energy for All: Commitments*, 2012.

[25] United Nations General Assembly, *Promotion of new and renewable sources of energy: Report of the Secretary-General*, 2012, para. 33.

[26] United Nations General Assembly, *International Year of Sustainable Energy for All: Report of the Secretary-General,* 2012, para. 28.

[27] United Nations Department of Public Information, *United Nations General Assembly Declares 2014-2024 Decade of Sustainable Energy for All*, 2012.

[28] United Nations General Assembly Second Committee, *Promotion of new and renewable sources of energy*, 2012, para. 9.

[29] United Nations General Assembly Second Committee, *Dialogue of Executive Secretaries: Follow-up to Rio+20: Actions and considerations at the Regional Level*, 2012.

[30] United Nations General Assembly Second Committee, *Dialogue of Executive Secretaries: Follow-up to Rio+20: Actions and considerations at the Regional Level*, 2012.

[31] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, *ESCWA Participates in COP 18*, 2012.

[32] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, *ESCWA Participates in COP 18*, 2012.

[33] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, *Weekly News: Indicators for Environment and Development*, 2012.

energy efficiency and renewable energy.[34] In February 2013, IEA and ESCWA will be co-hosting a training session on Energy Statistics, which will support national capacity in developing energy statistics and the formulation of national development plans.[35] ESCWA also hosted a regional training on "Promoting Energy Efficiency Investments for Climate Change Mitigation and Sustainable Development" in September 2012. The workshop provided capacity-building on energy efficiency in all economic sectors, with emphasis on the building sector, including a "mapping of current energy efficiency investment potential and challenges in the region."[36] This meeting coincided with an Expert Group Meeting on "Best Practices in Sustainable Consumption and Production in the ESCWA Region: Energy Efficiency."[37]

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[34] International Energy Agency, *Energy policies can strengthen economies of Middle East and North Africa*, 2012.

[35] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, *IEA-UNESCWA Energy Statistics Training: Concept Note*, 2012, p. 1.

[36] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, *Weekly News: Energy Efficiency Investments for Climate Change Mitigation and Sustainable Development*, 2012.

[37] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, *Weekly News: Energy Efficiency Investments for Climate Change Mitigation and Sustainable Development*, 2012.

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http://www.iiasa.ac.at/web/home/research/researchPrograms/Energy/Global_Energy_Assessment_FullReport.pdf.

> *This report seeks to "define a new global energy policy – one that transforms the way society things about, uses, and delivers energy." Drawing upon a broad range of disciplines and policy areas, the Global Energy Assessment is one of the most comprehensive analyses of energy challenges, opportunities, and strategies for public and private action. The first part provides a background on the major energy issues and challenges at the national, regional, and international levels, then the remaining sections address possibilities for sustainable energy, including new technologies and policies to link energy with sustainable development.*

International Renewable Energy Agency. (2012). *Renewable Energy Profiles: Middle East*. Retrieved January 10, 2013 from: http://www.irena.org/Remaps/middleeastmap.aspx.

> *These profiles, which cover a small number of ESCWA countries, offer insight into the current status of renewable energy programs within the ESCWA region. Although not a comprehensive survey of national actions and policies in the region, the profiles will provide delegates with an introduction into the types of programs that have been undertaken.*

United Nations High-Level Group on Sustainable Energy for All. (2013). *Baseline Report on Sustainable Energy for All*. [To be published January 2013.]

> *Coordinated by the World Bank and the International Energy Agency, with the support of key energy knowledge institutions, this baseline report will provide an initial assessment and reliable statistics on energy access, energy efficiency, and renewable energy. The report has three goals: (a) provide an overview of progress towards the three objectives of the Sustainable Energy for All initiative; (b) develop suitable methods for tracking progress through 2030; and (c) serve as a baseline for periodic tracking reports on each of the three objectives. This report will offer a comprehensive picture of the current status of energy access and renewable energy initiatives in the ESCWA region and internationally.*

United Nations General Assembly Second Committee. (2012). *Dialogue of Executive Secretaries: Follow-up to Rio+20: Actions and considerations at the Regional Level*. Retrieved January 9, 2013 from: http://www.un.org/regionalcommissions/2ndcomdocs.html.

> *The outcome document from the Rio+20 Conference, The Future We Want, highlighted the importance of the Regional Commissions and other regional cooperation in achieving progress on climate change and sustainable development goals. In November 2012, the Executive Secretaries of the five Regional Commissions, including ESCWA, met with the General Assembly Second Committee to discuss their proposals to implement the Rio+20 recommendations at the regional level. In addition to the presentation by the ESCWA Executive Secretary, the reports of the other four Commissions offer recommendations in addressing sustainable development challenges, including renewable energy and energy efficiency.*

United Nations. (2012). *Sustainable Energy for All: Commitments*. Retrieved January 12, 2013 from: http://www.sustainableenergyforall.org/actions-commitments/commitments.

> *This Web site serves as a depository for all commitments and actions taken to address the Secretary-General's three objectives under the Sustainable Energy for All Initiative. As of August 2012, this included commitments by more than 50 developing countries, as well as more than $50 billion from private sector investors and tens of billions from multilateral development banks, in addition to new public-private partnerships. Although ESCWA Member States have not taken a significant role in commitments under the Sustainable Energy for All Initiative, delegates may find this useful in considering future actions that could be taken on the national, regional, and international levels.*

World Energy Council. (2012). *World Energy Trilemma 2012: Time to get real – the case for sustainable energy policy*. Retrieved February 1, 2013 from http://www.worldenergy.org/documents/time_to_get_real__the_case_for_sustainable_energy_policy_vol_i.pdf.

> *The start of a two-part series, the 2012 Report explores the challenges of the "energy trilemma" – addressing energy security, social equity, and environmental impact mitigation. Drawing on expertise across the energy sector, the Report seeks to inform policy and investment decisions. In addition, the report includes the 2012 Energy Sustainability Index, which assesses the sustainability of the energy systems in 93 member countries.*

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## II. Countering Socio-Economic Marginalization to Strengthen Post-Arab Spring Democracies

In December 2012, on the occasion of the two- years anniversary of the Arab Spring, the Wilson Center gathered the views of 40 experts on the question of post-Arab spring democratization and asked: "Has the Arab Spring Lived Up to Expectations?"[38] The experiment yielded clear- cut responses which offer an overview of the historical evolution: "So far, the Arab Spring has not yielded real citizenship and equality" and "democracy has become a marketing strategy rather than a genuine need."[39]

Steps are being continuously taken in the region towards countering socio-economic marginalization to ensure a better democratic rule. This is happening especially through international political dialogue. In November 2012, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Global Programme on Democratic Governance Assessments organized the *Regional Governance Week: Social Accountability in a Changing Region - Actors and Mechanisms*, which took place in Cairo.[40] The purpose of the meeting was to have a variety of local, regional and international actors and operators discuss how social accountability could be strengthened in the Arab region and look at the role of mechanisms measuring accountability, such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), within this process.[41]

The Expert Group Meeting (EGM) and Capacity Development Workshop Citizen Engagement and the Post-2015 Development Agenda which analyzed institutional level prerequisites for a more efficient participatory governance was organized by the Division for Public Administration and Development Management of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DPADM). [42] The EGM continued from where the DPADM 2011 Seminar on "Challenges and Opportunities of Participatory Governance in North African countries: Engaging Citizens and their Organizations in Public Development Affairs through Adequate Institutions" left off.[43] The Seminar focused on, amongst other things, serving "citizens in inclusive and impartial ways" with an emphasis on socio-economically marginalized groups, such as women and youth in the region.[44] The EGM built on the discussions at the seminar and reviewed ESCWA's progress on the application of quantitative benchmarks on post Arab-Spring-state and citizen interaction.[45] During the EGM, the Emerging and Conflict-Related Issues Division of ESCWA asked that DPADM continue delivering analytical and technical support on the conductions of reforms to the Arab region.[46] Consequently, participants also endorsed the improvement of the Citizen Engagement Self-Assessment Questionnaire, an instrument which countries will be able to use to evaluate their preparedness for citizen-government discussion.[47]

Opinions on the topic of socio-economic marginalization and its consequences on the consolidation of democracy in the Arab Spring aftermath are in abundance. One think thank suggested that economic and political marginalization in the Yemen is seen particularly in regions where the terrorist group Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula have the most power.[48] Another research center reviews the current political situation in Arab countries that had revolutions and estimates that it is hoped that the same marginalized people who led the revolutions will manage to impose enough restraint on current governments so as to not stray away from the way to democratization.[49] Some scholars on the interaction between marginalization and the success of the democratic transition process have added the advent of social-media into the equation. They used data to show the key role social media played in the propagation of grievances of marginalized groups.[50]

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[38] Wilson Center Middle East Programme, *Has the Arab Spring Lived Up to Expectations*?, 2012, p. 13.

[39] Wilson Center Middle East Programme, *Has the Arab Spring Lived Up to Expectations*?, 2012, p. 13.

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[42] DPADM. *DPADM Monthly Update to CEPA Members,* 2011.

[43] DPADM. *DPADM Monthly Update to CEPA Members,* 2011.

[44] DPADM. (2011). *DPADM Monthly Update to CEPA Members,* 2011, p. 1.

[45] United Nations, *Citizen Engagement and the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, 2012, p. 5.

[46] DPADM, *DPADM Monthly Update to CEPA Members,* 2012, p. 2.

[47] DPADM, *DPADM Monthly Update to CEPA Members,* 2012, p. 2.

[48] Zimmerman, *Al Qaeda in Yemen: Countering the Threat from the Arabian Peninsula*, 2012.

[49] Elhadj, *The Arab Spring And The Prospects For Genuine Religious And Political Reforms*, 2012

[50] Mourtada and Salem, *Social Media in the Arab World: the Impact on Youth, Women and Social Change*, 2012, p. 270, 2012.

### Youth engagement

In August 2012, *the Arab spring: Youth participation for the promotion of peace, human rights and fundamental freedoms Symposium* was held in Tunisia with the purpose of increasing dialogue on the issues that young Arab leaders were signaling as quintessential to their age group's participation in the democratization process.[51] Amongst This Symposium was followed by a *Training of trainers for democratic youth participation,* which Tunisia hosted in Cooperation with the Council of Europe. The course was first in a row of activities aimed at helping young organizations in consolidating youth involvement and democratic social conscience projects and programs.[52] However, on the topic of youth in the Arab World, one scholar notes that there is a problem in the current discourse surrounding the programming that aims for their socio-economic development for the sake of inclusion.[53] The issue is the way youth is targeted in that it does not take into account class differences and alliances within this group, and that it tends to favor those within this group who agree with the elite and government agendas.[54]

### Persons with disabilities

In February 2012, the Arab Regional Conference for Equality in Cairo focused their discussions on *equal opportunities and full participation for persons with disabilities*. This was sponsored by the Arab Organisation for Disabled People, a regional coalition whose platform focuses on the empowerment of disabled people in the region. One of the topics placed the theme in a post-Arab spring context which underlined the importance of developing government interfaces for the strengthening of democracies.[55]

### Women

Women's role in the post-Arab Spring strengthening of democracies is one that does not escape most scholars. Whilst women participated in the revolution, the aftermath has found them in a weaker position than before. The Wilson Center noted that previously resolved issues of women's' rights and participation are being constantly revisited under the new leadership in the area. [56]

### Religion

Due to recent political developments, discourse on social marginalization in post-Arab Spring democracies is becoming more and more focused on the religious factors. During the year 2012, a four stage workshop was held in Luxembourg on the theme of *Islam, plurality and democracy.* The discussions tried to grasp the realities of political Islam and its impact on the emergence of new political regimes in the Arab countries.[57] As the latest constitutional referendum in Egypt, process which did not have the full support of Islamists and mostly ignored Non-Islamists, showed, religious marginalization makes many wonder even about the accurateness of the name Spring for the Arab revolutions.[58] In countries like Libya, Tunisia and Egypt, the constitutional question has been monopolized by the debate on religious identity which also affects the rights of religious minorities and of women.[59]

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[51] EU---CoE youth partnership, *Symposium "Arab spring: Youth participation for the promotion of peace, human rights and fundamental freedoms",,"* 2013.

[52] EU---CoE youth partnership. (2012). *Training of trainers for democratic youth participation*, 2012.

[53] Sukarieh, *From terrorists to revolutionaries: the emergence of "youth" in the Arab world and the discourse of globalization*, 2012, p. 431, 2012.

[54] Sukarieh, *From terrorists to revolutionaries: the emergence of "youth" in the Arab world and the discourse of globalization*, p. 431, 2012, p. 431.

[55] CBM, *Arab Regional Conference for Equality in Cairo*, 2012.

[56] Maktabi, *Do women count as people in Arab politics? Post-2011 democratization in light of pre-2011 tensions around family law reform in the Middle East and North Africa region*, 2013, p. 1.

[57] Europa Forum, *Conference on "Democracy (s), Freedom (s) and Religion (s)" of the University of Luxembourg and the College of Bernardine (V) - Workshop 4: Islam, democracy and plurality*, 2012.

[58] Ayad, *Arab revolutions: incomplete transitions*, 2012; .
Morsi, *A dubious yes: A flawed constitution will be endorsed, but the argument is far from over*, 2012.

[59] Ayad, *Arab revolutions: incomplete transitions*, 2012.

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> *This December 2012 DPADM Monthly Update offers delegates information about the activities of the DPADM. Here they will find ample information on the DPADM/ESCWA cooperation that preceded the Expert Group Meeting and Capacity Building Workshop on Citizen Engagement and the Post-2015 Development Agenda. As such it offers insight into the steps necessary for the setting up of a round-table, or any type of public event.*

Elhadj, E. (2012). The Arab Spring and The Prospects For Genuine Religious And Political Reforms. MERIA Journal. 16 (3)., Retrieved on January 13, 2013, fromAccessed on January 13th, 2013 at: http://www.gloria-center.org/2012/11/the-arab-spring-and-the-prospects-for-genuine-religious-and-political-reforms/
> *Written within the framework of Israel's first private institution of higher learning, the Interdisciplinary Center, in Herzliya, this article offers an excellent overview of the toll the Arab Spring has taken on the democratization process throughout the region. As such the author gives an account of the development of the Emergence of Arab Political Islam in the Twentieth Century as well as a prediction on the likeliness of genuine political reform. Delegates will find the article, and the entire website, as a good source for an inside view on the Arab revolutions and the way socio-economic marginalization plays a role in the democratization process.*

Gaportal. (2012). *Regional Governance Week: Social Accountability in a Changing Region - Actors and Mechanisms.* Retrieved on January 13, 2013, fromAccessed on January 13th, 2013 at: http://www.gaportal.org/events/detail/regional-governance-week-social-accountability-in-a-changing-region-actors-and-mechanisms
> *Published under the auspices of the UNDP Global Programme on Democratic Governance Assessments, this web source presents the discussion which took place during the Regional Governance Week which took place in Cairo in November 2012. It contains the objectives of the week as well as a brief presentation of the actors involved. Delegates will find the Government Assessment Portal as a key source hen researching indicators and governance evaluation tools.*

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> *This Aide Memoire for the Expert Group Meeting and Capacity Development Workshop Citizen Engagement and the Post-2015 Development Agenda refers to socio economic inclusion and governance participation for the sake of a more efficient democratization process. It is a useful source for delegates as it contextualizes the issue not only in regional terms but also in terms of other branches of human development that affect participatory levels.*

Wilson Center Middle East Programme. (2012). Has the Arab Spring Lived Up to Expectations? The views. *Viewpoints*. 2 (December), 1-29.
> *This special edition of the Wilson Center's Viewpoints series is a unique collection of experts' opinion on the outcomes of the Arab Spring thus far. With contributors ranging from Saudi Arabian Sociologists to the Director of Global Women's Leadership Initiative, this is an excellent source for delegates who are interested in the international dialogue that is currently underway regarding the post-Arab Spring democratization process.*

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# III. Towards Sustainable Water Management, Development, and Productivity

*Recent Developments*

The topic of sustainable water management, development and productivity remains a frequently discussed topic among the Member States of the Economic and Social Commission of Western Asia (ESCWA). In 2012, the Human Rights Council, through *Resolution A/HRC/RES/21/2*, reaffirmed the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, while calling upon Member States to prioritize the sustainable provision of safe water to the entire population.[60] Though expressing worries about the tremendous number of people without access to clean water and sanitation, the HRC highlighted the outstanding success of reaching the Millennium Development Goal of halving the number of persons without access to clean water.[61] The necessity to aim towards the accessibility and affordability of drinking water and the obligation to avoid marginalization and discrimination is nevertheless strongly emphasized.[62] This target is also stressed in the *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation* from August 2012, which calls for the implementation of non-discrimination and equality into the post-2015 development agenda for water, sanitation, and hygiene.[63] In recognition of the importance of these water-related actions to achieving the MDGs, eradicating poverty, and sustainable development, the General Assembly called for implementation of the International Year of Water Cooperation in 2013.[64]

In spite of the success in achieving the MDG on water, rural areas of the ESCWA region continue to lag behind, as highlighted in the *Progress on Drinking Water and Sanitation 2012 Update*, published by UNICEF, and the *United Nations World Water Development Report 4*.[65] Although the situation improved in 96% of urban households between 1990 and 2010, only 76% of rural households saw improvement.[66] Further, in most regions the target was only achieved due to a heavy reliance on bottled water and delivery of clean water by tanker trucks.[67] The *World Water Development Report* also addresses the crucial impact of displacement caused by various ongoing conflicts and food scarcity; high rates of displaced persons has resulted in water shortages in displacement camps and endangers negotiations and co-operation concerning shared water resources.[68]

ESCWA continues to prioritize sustainable water management, particularly the goal of water efficiency and the connections between water scarcity, food security and energy supply.[69] In the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), ESCWA held an *Intergovernmental Consultative Meeting on the Water and Energy Nexus in the ESCWA Region*.[70] Joint actions of the ESCWA Member States are to be established to guarantee sustainable development and to raise awareness of the problem.[71] Unfortunately, although the *Johannesberg Plan of Implementation* calls upon developing countries to establish water efficiency plans, very few ESCWA Member States have created such plans or taken steps to achieving these goals.[72] Another priority of the ESCWA Member States is the implementation of new technologies, such as desalination, and to minimize the

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[60] United Nations Human Rights Council. *Resolution A/HRC/RES/21/2*, 2012, p. 1.

[61] United Nations Human Rights Council, *Resolution A/HRC/RES/21/2*, 2012, pp. 2-3.

[62] United Nations Human Rights Council, *Resolution A/HRC/RES/21/2*, 2012, p. 3.

[63] United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, 2012, *Report of the Special Rapporeur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation*.

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[66] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *World Water Development Report 4: Managing Water Under Uncertainty and Risk*, 2012, p. 709.

[67] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *World Water Development Report 4: Managing Water Under Uncertainty and Risk*, 2012, p. 709.

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[69] United Nations Economic and Social Council, *Intergovernmental Consultative Meeting on the Water and Energy Nexus in the ESCWA Region Beirut, 27-28 June 2012*, 2012, p. 5.

[70] United Nations Economic and Social Council, *Intergovernmental Consultative Meeting on the Water and Energy Nexus in the ESCWA Region Beirut, 27-28 June 2012*, 2012, p. 4.

[71] United Nations Economic and Social Council, *Intergovernmental Consultative Meeting on the Water and Energy Nexus in the ESCWA Region Beirut, 27-28 June 2012*, 2012, pp. 7-8.

[72] United Nations Economic and Social Council, *Intergovernmental Consultative Meeting on the Water and Energy Nexus in the ESCWA Region*, 2012, p. 4.

effects of climate change and water related natural disasters.[73] Recognizing the importance of water concerns in Western Asia, ESCWA and the League of Arab States collaborated to launch the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR).[74] RICCAR is designed as a forum to address regional cooperation around the socio-economic and environmental vulnerabilities of water resources, create an Arab knowledge hub on climate and water, and provide an evidence-base for regional and national policy formulation.[75] In addition, the Arab Countries Water Utilities Association organized the second Arab Water Week from January 27 – 31, 2013 in Amman, Jordan.[76] The conference brought together decision makers and water management professionals from the Arab Region focused around three main themes: (i) Utilities Effectiveness and Efficiency; (ii) Innovative Technologies and Private Sector; and (iii) Water Science for Policy and Governance.[77]

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73 United Nations Economic and Social Council, *Intergovernmental Consultative Meeting on the Water and Energy Nexus in the ESCWA Region Beirut*, 27-28 June 2012, 2012, p. 8

[74] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, *Regional Initiative for the Assessment of the Impact of Climate Change on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region*, 2012.
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> *The report mainly addresses the problem of water scarcity around the world. The broad approach by the FAO provides an extensive overview of the resulting problems of food security and in agricultural regions. Furthermore the term of water scarcity is evaluated and diligently analyzed. Additionally to the causes of water scarcity recent developments regarding to policy and management responses are elaborated. The paper includes all facades of water scarcity and contributes towards the general understanding of the problem.*

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> *Unicef produced an overview of the developments in Global Drinking Water Trends, Global Sanitation Trends and the Equity Imperative between 1990 and 2010. The issue of the Millennium Development Goal drinking water and sanitation target is illustrated and explained. The whole report provides additional descriptions and evaluations, numerous statistics, and tables which cover the international and regional perspectives and progress on the issue. Disparities between rural and urban regions, between developed and developing countries and further differences are well-demonstrated by several diagrams.*

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2012). *World Water Development Report 4: Managing Water Under Uncertainty and Risk.* Retrieved on January 3, 2013 from http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002156/215644e.pdf

> *The World Water Development Report is released every three years in cooperation with the World Water Forum and supplies a compressive review of the water problem, and is seen as an overall picture of the conditions of the world's water resources and the aims to secure water access. The report assesses the recent changes and problematic issues of the international community concerning water and neighboring fields. Recent global and local developments about water, climate change, food and energy and difficult transnational water resources and their impacts in the ESCWA region are analyzed. New technologies and approaches are introduced and the necessity of joint strategies of private and governmental actors is accentuated. Apart from a broad overview of the water topic in an international context the report also evaluates the status of  the Arab region and West Asia.*

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> *The Status Report by UN Water stresses the connection of the Human Development Index (HDI) and water usage. In addition to the evaluation of agricultural use of water and the reliance of food imports, the paper suggests a linkage of water and energy which appears especially in hot and developing regions. The paper suggests possible measures and necessary changes in order to diminish negative environmental, social and political impact on affected regions and countries.*

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> *The analysis from UN water helps the understanding of the reasons behind the disparities in access to clean water and sanitation around the world. The report wants to draw attention to a crucial resource for all living beings, which was too long neglected and taken for granted by the international community. Policies, financing, human resources, equality and external support regarding the water issue are described concerning their status, development and future outlook. The WHO set a special focus on the impact of the human health and healthy living conditions.*

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