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Summary of the work of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia for the period 2021–2022

Summary

In 2021–2022, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) supported its member States in the socioeconomic recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, while continuing to deliver support in its key areas of work, which include renewable energy, water management, food security, gender equality, employment, regional integration, transport connectivity, macrofiscal policies, competition policies and development opportunities and challenges for Arab least developed countries.

In March 2022, ESCWA led the organization of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development. The Forum held in 2022 focused on the theme of recovery and resilience and highlighted policy options and good practices for an equitable and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and for better resilience to future shocks.

The Commission increased its collaboration with the United Nations system, primarily through the Regional Collaborative Platform for Arab States. ESCWA served with the Platform as an integral member of the joint secretariat and as a co-convener of the issue-based coalitions on migration, macroeconomics and climate. Each coalition delivered strong support and technical guidance to member States. In addition, ESCWA has been increasing its engagement with resident coordinators. ESCWA is an active member of the United Nations country teams in the region and has provided specific technical support to several resident coordinator offices, primarily in the common country analysis process. ESCWA has also developed personalized country data platforms, which supported the development of common country analyses and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.

In the context of shrinking fiscal space and an increased focus on social expenditure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ESCWA social expenditure model has been strengthened and is in increasing demand from member States. The model provides a comprehensive measure of public social expenditure in seven key areas.



In 2021, ESCWA continued to develop the platform for the model and stepped up its support to Arab countries by building the capacity of policymakers to tailor and operationalize the model and reinforce its implementation at the national level. Specifically, ESCWA assessed the efficiency and effectiveness of social expenditure in Jordan and Tunisia and conducted national data and methodology technical capacity-building workshops.

During the reporting period, the Commission worked closely with regional and global partners to enhance collaboration and joint work. ESCWA has a strong partnership with the League of Arab States in the region in areas including migration, older persons, statistics and information and communications technology. ESCWA also works closely with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development on statistics and economics, and collaborates frequently with sister regional commissions. ESCWA is continuing to expand its work with external partners, including academia, think tanks and the private sector.

Going forward, ESCWA is seeking to further increase its agility and shock responsiveness as the globe and the region continue to suffer from compounding shocks. The Commission will also focus on the efficiency of response and the growing demand for digital and interactive platforms.

I. Introduction

1. In 2021, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia ESCWA continued to support its member States on issues related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Specifically, ESCWA continued to integrate considerations of the recovery from the pandemic into planned interventions across all relevant areas of its work. For example, ESCWA assessed the compounding effects of the pandemic on poverty and enhanced the measurement of human development to assess the direct consequences of shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering the prolonged restrictions on travel and in-person meetings, ESCWA adapted its approach and redeployed resources towards capacity-building and the production and dissemination of knowledge.

2. In addition to the COVID-19-related support, the Commission continued its engagement with member States in core areas of work, including: (a) access to renewable energy sources and cross-boundary water management and food security, against the backdrop of the changing climate; (b) legal and policy frameworks addressing gender equality and promoting the empowerment of women and girls; (c) employment perspectives, with a particular focus on persons in situations of vulnerability; (d) regional integration and transport connectivity; (e) macrofiscal policies promoting investment in essential social services; (f) competition policies; and (g) development opportunities and challenges for the Arab least developed countries.

3. ESCWA led the organization of the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, which continues to be the primary regional mechanism for the follow-up to and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Arab region. Organized from 15 to 17 March 2022, the Forum focused on the theme of recovery and resilience. It highlighted policy options and good practices for an equitable and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and for better resilience to future shocks.

4. During the deliberations at the Forum, the need to expand social protection programmes to include all was emphasized, as was the importance of shifting to Sustainable Development Goal budgeting and improving the management and efficiency of public spending. The need to reform education systems, invest in inclusive technology infrastructure and bridge the gender digital divide was also highlighted. Enhanced coordination between all relevant ministries to advance a green, inclusive recovery from COVID-19 was also emphasized, together with the need to strengthen the policy and regulatory framework to attract green finance. The issues of data availability, data collection, funding and enhanced coordination between data-producing agencies were stressed. Lastly, the importance of public-private partnerships was highlighted.

5. The Commission devoted resources in support of coordination at the regional level, through the Regional Collaborative Platform for Arab States, and with resident coordinator offices. ESCWA made available custom-made country-focused data platforms, which supported the development of common country analyses and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.

II. Advancing implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the region

Addressing the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and helping member States to recover

6. ESCWA critically analysed measures and policies adopted to address the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath in the Arab region, focusing on inequality and social justice.¹ It assessed the sustainability of those policies and their capacity to respond to the needs of communities in the region, and provided action-oriented policy recommendations.

7. In November 2021, ESCWA, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), under the issue-based coalition on social protection of the Regional Collaborative Platform, organized the first Arab ministerial forum on social protection, an interregional high-level meeting related to social protection measures to build back better, taking into consideration the impact of the pandemic on the region. The forum concluded with regional consensus on key recommendations related to coverage, financing, governance and shock responsiveness, set forth in a ministerial declaration on the future of social protection in the Arab region.²

8. The Commission contributed to the United Nations policy brief on COVID-19 social protection and economic policy responses of Governments.³ ESCWA made available to member States thematic policy briefs on social protection in the Arab region related to older persons, social protection responses during the pandemic, universal health coverage and the role of social protection information systems in the expansion of cash transfer programmes during the pandemic. In collaboration with other regional commissions, ESCWA helped to scale up social protection mechanisms, including social protection floors.

9. ESCWA assessed the interplay of social policy dimensions, global experiences and regional responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in the region and developed policies for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.⁴ It also analysed the quality and coherence of social registries in the region.⁵

Supporting member States in addressing long-standing social inequalities

10. ESCWA provided member States with a comprehensive evidence-based analysis of multidimensional poverty and a guide on how to assign and evaluate social protection policies on the basis of multidimensional poverty.⁶

11. In Lebanon, ESCWA evaluated the effect on poverty of three emerging crises – namely, the economic crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic and the Beirut port explosion – and developed a six-dimensional framework with policy recommendations to address

¹ *The COVID-19 Pandemic in the Arab Region: An Opportunity to Reform Social Protection Systems*, Social Development Report 4 (United Nations publication, 2021).

² Issue-based coalition on social protection in the Arab region, “Ministerial Forum Declaration: the future of social protection in the Arab region: building a vision for a post-COVID-19 reality”, 30 November 2021.

³ United Nations, “COVID-19 social protection and economic policy responses of Governments: lessons for social protection readiness and building forward better – global policy brief”, 2020.

⁴ Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), “The COVID-19 pandemic in the Arab region: an opportunity to reform social protection systems”, 2022.

⁵ ESCWA, “Role of social protection information systems in expansion of cash transfer programmes during COVID-19 pandemic: experience from selected Arab countries”, 2021.

⁶ ESCWA, “Applying multidimensional poverty in the design, implementation and evaluation of social policies and poverty targeted social assistance: a primer”, 2022.

poverty.⁷ ESCWA also examined the impact of the Beirut port explosion and the COVID-19 pandemic on private sector sales and full-time employees in the key sectors in Lebanon.⁸

12. ESCWA analysed the migration trends and patterns to and from the region and mapped migration-related policies, with a focus on migrants and refugees in the COVID-19 crisis.⁹ In partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and members of the Regional United Nations Network on Migration, ESCWA raised awareness of the modalities of the International Migration Review Forum and explored means to ensure optimal participation and representation of the Arab region.

13. ESCWA has further developed and advanced its skills monitor for the Arab region, enabling Member States to: (a) monitor demand for skills; (b) detect gender bias in employment; (c) enhance inclusiveness for persons with disabilities; (d) link jobs with the Sustainable Development Goals; and (e) diversify skills. ESCWA also analysed what type of skills are most in demand in the Arab region and how these skills relate to the fourth industrial revolution.

14. ESCWA analysed the status of gender equality across 22 Arab countries through gender-related indicators linked to issues inherent in the Sustainable Development Goals.¹⁰ In November 2021, ESCWA and other United Nations regional agencies and international non-governmental organizations analysed the main developments that affected women and girls during the period 2010–2020 through the pillars of health and well-being, learning and livelihoods, freedom from violence and access to justice, and participation and leadership.¹¹

15. ESCWA helped the Jordanian National Commission for Women to develop its strategic plan and associated workplans for the period 2022–2025, and is helping the Commission to draft a second national action plan to advance the women and peace and security agenda.

16. ESCWA supported the implementation of the Lebanese Sexual Harassment Act and analysed laws and regulations to provide the basis for a broad range of gender-sensitive legal and regulatory reforms in support of the implementation by the National Commission for Lebanese Women of its national action plan on women and peace and security.

17. To understand the impact of the conflict in Gaza on women, men, boys and girls and identify their gender-specific needs, ESCWA conducted a gender analysis and supported the Ministry of Women's Affairs of the State of Palestine in organizing an international conference to highlight the status of Palestinian women in the aftermath of the Israeli military escalation in May 2021.¹²

18. In 2021, ESCWA supported Morocco, Oman and the Syrian Arab Republic in combating violence against women and girls. ESCWA provided technical support, costing, analyses and policy advice. Between 2019 and 2021, capacity-building activities on gender-sensitive statistics were carried out in Egypt, Iraq and Jordan.

⁷ ESCWA, "Multidimensional poverty in Lebanon: a proposed measurement framework, and an assessment of the socioeconomic crisis", 2021.

⁸ ESCWA, "Lebanon's formal private sector: the bitter reality of 2020", 2021.

⁹ ESCWA, *Situational Report on International Migration: Building Forward Better for Migrants and Refugees in the Arab Region*, 4th ed. (forthcoming).

¹⁰ *The Arab Gender Gap Report 2020: Gender Equality and the Sustainable Development Goals* (United Nations publications, 2021).

¹¹ ESCWA and others, *Situational Analysis of Women and Girls in the MENA and Arab States Region: A Decade Review 2010–2020* (2021).

¹² ESCWA, "Gendered needs during the May 2021 conflict in the Gaza Strip", 2021.

19. In partnership with the relevant country offices of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), ESCWA assessed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the social, political and economic situation of women in Iraq and Yemen.¹³

20. ESCWA conducted a mapping of relevant stakeholders working on shock-responsive social protection in the Sudan and proposed a platform to enhance coordination and complementarity. The Commission also provided technical support for the development of a national social protection strategy. ESCWA conducted analysis of vulnerable groups and developed materials for collecting data on potential beneficiaries. Lastly, ESCWA enhanced knowledge of the various issues faced by young people in the Sudan and built the capacity of decision makers and youth organizations to formulate, implement and evaluate national youth policies.

21. ESCWA, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the League of Arab States developed a regional draft law for older persons, which provides a template for institutionalizing the rights and protection needs of older persons. In 2021–2022, ESCWA provided member States with a guiding template to develop their national review reports and built the capacities of the focal points from Arab countries on older persons' issues, as part of the launch of the fourth regional review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002 in the Arab region. ESCWA analysed the socioeconomic situation of older persons and the demographic transition in the region, and offered a concrete policy road map for policymakers.¹⁴ Lastly, ESCWA analysed and evaluated national legislation, laws and barriers hindering the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market and developed materials on workplace disability inclusion.

22. In 2021–2022, ESCWA supported member States in developing policies and strategies for older persons. In Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and the Sudan, ESCWA helped the relevant ministries to develop and launch national strategies and policies for older persons.

23. In partnership with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), ESCWA analysed themes relevant to sustainable development in Lebanon as an overwhelmingly urban country and advocated a focus on the needs of cities in policy deliberations about crisis response and recovery in the country.¹⁵

Supporting member States in addressing the structural inefficiencies of economies in the region

24. ESCWA galvanized its member States to endorse the first region-wide financing for development framework, providing key policy recommendations and guidance, including concerted actions grounded in the 2030 Agenda to be advanced internationally, regionally and nationally in the short and medium terms to support COVID-19 recovery.

25. ESCWA developed a regional framework for a debt swap mechanism and key performance indicators for climate action and progress in the Sustainable Development Goals in the Arab region. The Commission helped to implement the mechanism in Jordan by developing a national debt swap proposal in consultation

¹³ ESCWA and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), "Impact of COVID-19 on women in Iraq and Yemen", six studies by UN-Women and ESCWA. Available at <https://publications.unescwa.org/projects/icwi/index.html>.

¹⁴ ESCWA, *Population and Development Report: Issue No. 9 – Building Forward Better for Older Persons in the Arab Region* (forthcoming).

¹⁵ ESCWA and United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), *The State of the Lebanese Cities Report* (Beirut, 2021).

with a Jordanian national task force and the ESCWA advisory committee on the debt swap mechanism. The proposal includes potential debt swap amounts, existing eligible loans and a set of programmes on the use of debt swap proceeds within the key performance indicators framework.

26. ESCWA analysed routinely monitored economic and social variables in the Arab region in a global context and focused on taxation and challenges and opportunities in raising tax revenue.¹⁶ ESCWA provided policy recommendations on mobilizing tax revenues, reducing leakages and improving tax compliance to enhance fiscal space to finance the Sustainable Development Goals. The analysis contributed to efforts by member States to reform economic institutions and develop and implement policies based on the principles of good governance as integral to economic planning and policymaking that supports inclusive and sustainable development.

27. The Commission has worked closely with the Resident Coordinator Office in Egypt to support costing of the Sustainable Development Goals. Such costing has helped to focus attention on the scale of the additional resources to be mobilized to achieve the Goals and has assisted in the prioritization of resources for financing and the optimization of their use. Costing of the Goals is an important element of developing a national strategy for financing the Goals within the integrated national financing framework of Egypt. It is also a critical element in transitioning to Goal-centric budgeting and developing medium-term revenue and expenditure strategies.

Addressing the pressing climate and environmental issues and their impact in the Arab region

28. At the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, ESCWA held high-level events on climate mainstreaming in national development planning and on bridging the gap on climate finance, at which perspectives and key initiatives were presented jointly with the United Nations regional commissions. In March 2022, ESCWA also co-organized, in coordination with global and regional partners and under the leadership of the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Middle East and North Africa Climate Week, which included activities on building the capacity of Arab negotiators, bridging knowledge gaps on adaptation through the Lima Adaptation Knowledge Initiative, and ensuring a resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and a just and green transition.

29. With the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), ESCWA prepared an action plan for the implementation of the declaration on joint coordination between the agriculture and water sectors adopted in Cairo in 2019 and the guidelines on improved water allocation for agriculture.

30. In 2021, ESCWA continued to liaise with regional partners to promote the inclusion of agriculture sector issues in climate change negotiations and regional preparations for the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. ESCWA analysed challenges facing the Arab agriculture sector and informed Arab experts of the implications for Arab States of the Koronivia joint work on agriculture.¹⁷

31. ESCWA also contributed to system-wide results by supporting member States in developing and updating nationally determined contributions.

¹⁶ *Realities and Prospects: Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the Arab Region 2020–2021* (United Nations publication, 2021).

¹⁷ ESCWA and Sweden Sverige, “Koronivia joint work on agriculture: an Arab regional perspective”, 2021.

32. ESCWA prepared and provided guidelines and training materials for Jordan and Tunisia to promote energy efficiency practices in the residential sector.

33. In October 2021, ESCWA examined the interlinkages between food security and social justice in the Arab region with government officials and international experts. ESCWA also developed a road map for the adoption of a nexus approach to food justice, the right to food and food sovereignty as a major pathway towards more equality and social justice in food systems.

34. ESCWA analysed and explored how food trade could be better used as an instrument to enhance food availability and nutrition quality by building on the existing trading frameworks, and examined actions that could be taken to enhance food security through trade, including mitigating price shocks and enhancing reliance on traditional diets.

35. In preparation for the United Nations Food Systems Summit of 2021, ESCWA and partners led a consultative process across the Arab region, which included thematic and country-specific dialogues. The outcome of those dialogues was presented at the pre-summit session on 26 July 2021, at which regional stakeholders shared their perspectives, experiences and issues with regard to transforming Arab food systems. There were calls for concerted efforts among the diverse stakeholders, the adoption of innovative technological approaches to agriculture, the establishment of an Arab centre for food security and the empowerment of young people in the process of food system transformations.

36. In 2021, ESCWA led a collaborative initiative with the regional commissions that resulted in the launch of a joint policy brief for the United Nations Food Systems Summit in New York.¹⁸ The brief highlights the need to enhance regional engagement in sharing lessons learned for a sustainable food systems transformation, leading to inclusive and resilient food systems that help to ensure equitable livelihoods for all and a healthy and sustainable planet.

Improving data, statistics and technology to address development challenges

37. ESCWA formulated the strategic framework for improving civil registration and vital statistics in the Arab countries for the period 2021–2025, as part of its continuous efforts to increase the production of Sustainable Development Goal indicators in the Arab region¹⁹ and as a continuation of the regional strategy to improve civil registration and vital statistics for the period 2014–2019. The efforts of ESCWA had an impact on the achievements made in some countries such as Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia and the State of Palestine, where the completeness and comprehensiveness of civil registries and record linkages improved.

38. ESCWA prepared a generic law on official statistics for Arab countries and provided guidance on developing statistical legislation to support the modernization of statistical systems in the region.²⁰ In partnership with the Statistics Division, ESCWA improved countries' skills in mapping and converting Sustainable Development Goal data in accordance with international standards to facilitate the exchange of data and metadata at the national and global levels.

39. In response to the worsening social and economic conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the decreasing prospects for the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals under the current trends, ESCWA sought to build Palestinian institutional capacities and support the upcoming planning cycle. As part

¹⁸ ESCWA, "Transforming food systems", 2021.

¹⁹ ESCWA, "A strategic framework for improving civil registration and vital statistics systems in the Arab region for the period 2021–2025", 2022.

²⁰ ESCWA, "Guide on the generic law for official statistics in the Arab countries", 2021.

of this endeavour, ESCWA provided tools and knowledge for increased policy contextualization and policy recommendations on, in particular, reducing the asymmetrical Palestinian economic dependence on Israel. It also conducted capacity-building activities on aligning Palestinian development plans and sectoral strategies with the Goals and mainstreaming the Goals therein.

40. In 2021, ESCWA continued to support member States in developing their national policies and regulations to harness the use of digital technologies for sustainable development. For example, it supported the State of Palestine and Jordan in developing their national artificial intelligence strategies. It also helped Jordan, Libya and Morocco to update their legal frameworks to address the requirements of new technologies. ESCWA provided technical assistance to Iraq in developing a regulatory framework for the Internet of things. To gauge progress in the digital transformation of public agencies, ESCWA conducted a new assessment of the Government Electronic and Mobile Services Maturity Index.

41. In 2021, ESCWA led regional and national capacity-building activities and one-to-one country follow-up meetings to help Governments to prepare the second round of their national digital development reviews for 2021–2022. National digital development agendas for Iraq and Mauritania have been developed closely with ESCWA.

III. Strengthening the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda

Tools, products and capacity-building materials developed to help countries to address the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and advance recovery

42. In July 2021, during the high-level political forum on sustainable development, ESCWA launched a platform entitled “The COVID-19 Stimulus Tracker: Global Observatory on Social Protection Policy Responses”, which provides States and stakeholders with detailed information on responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and new social protection measures taken to mitigate its effects.²¹ The tracker is based on a harmonized set of social protection measures agreed upon by the five regional commissions, helping to advance the analysis of social protection policies and their effectiveness in a comparative context of regions and countries.

43. In its efforts to support member States’ plans to reposition the pursuit of the 2030 Agenda while recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, ESCWA provided a vast range of technical tools that afforded timely and hands-on policy responses to policymakers. Among the tools that were rolled out and expanded in 2021 are: the ESCWA skills monitor; the Multidimensional Poverty Index assist tool; the tool for analysing the status of institutions from a gender equality perspective and helping them to achieve gender equality; the social justice policy gap assessment tool; and the Gender Justice and the Law tool.

44. ESCWA developed an analytical framework to assist member States in analysing data in social registers, improving the application process and verifying potential beneficiaries, and in strengthening their social protection systems. Capacity-building support was provided to members of the Group of Experts on Social Protection Reform, policymakers and individuals responsible for implementing targeted social protection programmes and managing registers and information systems in Arab countries.

²¹ See <http://tracker.unescwa.org/>.

45. ESCWA analysed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security in the region and highlighted the weaknesses and vulnerabilities underlying local, national and regional food systems and their susceptibility to shocks.²²

46. ESCWA provided training for government and national federation workers and other relevant stakeholders on raising awareness of the dangers of COVID-19 through trainer-training courses and on mainstreaming the principle of leaving no one behind into strategic planning.

Tools, products and capacity-building materials developed to support member States in addressing social inequalities

47. ESCWA launched the Arab National Development Planning Portal in 2021, a tool that provides information to policymakers, researchers and other stakeholders on planning processes and assists in policy analysis and scholarly work.²³ The portal collects, regulates, simplifies and clarifies data by providing clear access to information on strategic planning in the member States. It contains an extensive database of updated national plans and links national development plans to relevant Sustainable Development Goals to help policymakers to analyse and monitor national and regional priorities.

48. The Commission designed a tool for building a multidimensional poverty index to help decision makers to calculate and monitor multidimensional poverty and monetary poverty at the national level, in an advanced, transparent and participatory manner with Arab countries. A set of user guides and training modules on the tool have been developed to demonstrate how it can be used.

49. ESCWA analytically re-examined human development achievements and provided the empirical and conceptual backbone of the World Development Challenges Report, which proposes a development challenges index that is well-suited to evaluating and addressing the complex challenges facing developing countries in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The human development dimensions and indices analysed include healthy life expectancy, quality education, income distribution, the Environmental Sustainability Index, good governance, human capital and real gross domestic product per capita, and a domestic conflict index.²⁴

50. In collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, resident coordinator offices and United Nations country teams, ESCWA supported integrated and coherent policy planning by government and civil society organization representatives engaged in mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and increased their capacity to adapt relevant integrated planning methodologies and tools.

51. In partnership with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ESCWA raised awareness and developed capacities among senior public servants from the Arab region with regard to the need for effective institutional arrangements for holistic policy coherence to implement the 2030 Agenda. ESCWA and the Department also provided a set of methodologies and tools that can contribute to a change in the environment, culture and mindset of public servants to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

²² Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and ESCWA, *Arab Food Security: Vulnerabilities and Pathways* (Beirut, 2021).

²³ See <https://andp.unescwa.org>.

²⁴ See www.unescwa.org/human-development.

52. ESCWA contributed to the development of a diagnostic and planning tool to build urban economic resilience and recovery.²⁵ The tool has a two-fold objective: (a) to help cities to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their institutional and operating arrangements from the perspective of economic recovery and resilience building, as well as to assess the structure and functioning of city economies to gain a clear understanding of the economic performance or standing of each city and how this affects vulnerability and resilience; and (b) to define a process for the design and implementation of recovery plans and strategies to address the identified gaps, accelerate better recovery and improve longer-term resilience.

53. In 2021–2022, ESCWA strengthened the capacities of local authorities in three Arab cities on urban economic resilience and assessed the performance of the selected cities in terms of economic resilience during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. ESCWA also developed recovery plans accordingly.

54. ESCWA highlighted the centrality of smart digital solutions and smart sustainable cities for urban resilience to member States through a technical analysis of smart sustainable cities in the Arab region and the development of smart digital solutions that could help to achieve both resilience and inclusion during pandemics.²⁶

55. In October 2021, ESCWA supported the Ministry of Social Solidarity of Egypt in developing and implementing equality-oriented policies under Sustainable Development Goal 10. In addition, to support peer learning and South-South knowledge exchanges, ESCWA facilitated a working session between the Centre for the Implementation of Public Policies for Equity and Growth in Argentina and the Ministry of Social Solidarity in Egypt. Experiences and lessons learned were shared on conditional cash transfer mechanisms to reduce inequality in education and health using the Latin American model.

56. ESCWA developed the Arab Digital Inclusion Platform to support policymakers in Arab countries in developing and strengthening national policies and guidelines to enhance digital accessibility, with a specific focus on persons with disabilities, who are still among the most marginalized population groups. The platform is based on the national policy model for digital access in the Arab Region and the national technical guidelines for digital access in the Arab Region models, in addition to several tools related to digital accessibility.²⁷

57. ESCWA, in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, developed a training package in Arabic consisting of 14 modules on inclusive education for children with disabilities, targeting policymakers, school managers and teachers.

58. In 2021, ESCWA trained statistical experts in Iraq on the collection of disability data by designing a disability question form in the census and statistical experts in Egypt on the implementation of a stand-alone survey for persons with disabilities.

59. In 2021–2022, in collaboration with the Nama' Youth Centre in Qatar, ESCWA conducted an ecosystem mapping, developed materials, carried out capacity-building activities and established a social incubator.

60. To support the Ministries of Labour in Lebanon and Qatar, ESCWA mapped the skills needed in those countries and highlighted the skills deficit and possible

²⁵ UN-Habitat and others, *Urban Economic Recovery and Resilience: Diagnostic and Planning Tool* (2021).

²⁶ ESCWA, "Smart sustainable cities and smart digital solutions for urban resilience in the Arab region: lessons from the pandemic", 2021.

²⁷ See www.unescwa.org/portal/adip.

matching, reskilling and upskilling options for unemployed nationals using the ESCWA skills monitor.

61. The Commission developed a policy toolkit on mainstreaming ageing into policymaking.²⁸ The toolkit is designed to support policymakers and relevant stakeholders in developing and assessing policies from the perspective of older persons. ESCWA also supported member States in developing, launching, implementing and evaluating national strategies and laws relating to older persons through direct technical support and capacity-building.

62. In 2021–2022, ESCWA carried out capacity-building activities on the social protection programme rapid assessment framework in Jordan, on adaptive social protection for effective disaster risk management in the Sudan and on multidimensional poverty and social protection in Saudi Arabia.

63. In collaboration with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), ESCWA critically analysed the economic and social impact of open government based on selected good practices and lessons learned, and proposed policy recommendations for advancing open government. In addition, ESCWA launched the Arab Open Government Portal, which includes relevant references and case studies.²⁹

Tools, products and capacity-building materials developed to support member States in addressing economic challenges in the region

64. ESCWA developed tools to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and advance the achievement and financing of the Sustainable Development Goals at the national and regional levels. These tools include:

(a) National Sustainable Development Goal costing calculators: a set of country-specific dynamic tools that draw on a range of sciences and methods advanced by custodian agencies for the Sustainable Development Goal indicators to estimate the cost of achieving the Goals;

(b) Sustainable Development Goal financing simulators: national financing simulators developed to offer dynamic mediums to estimate financing potentials and options to achieve national sustainable development priorities;

(c) The Sustainable Development Goal synergies and optimization toolkit: an econometric tool to capture the efficiency gains resulting from the optimization of Goal interlinkages (synergies and trade-offs);

(d) Sustainable Development Goal financing dashboard: a dashboard that helps countries to strengthen the planning and budgeting processes and overcome existing impediments to financing sustainable development and the Goals at the country level;

(e) Sustainable Development Goal financing solver and public investment efficiency barometer: a tool that supports countries' efforts in assessing their public spending efficiency and identifying the opportunities lost in financing.

65. ESCWA has developed integrated national financing frameworks for pilot countries identified under the Initiative on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond. ESCWA contributed to the global guidance materials and led national and regional support to roll out analytical findings and empirical tools in support of national Sustainable Development Goal financing strategies. ESCWA also developed the Arab financing for development gateway, which offers quantitative

²⁸ ESCWA, "Mainstreaming ageing in policymaking in Arab countries: policy toolkit", 2021.

²⁹ See <https://opengov.unescwa.org/>.

diagnostics to analyse the financing of sustainable development at the national and regional levels. The gateway provides a statistical compendium of all financing for development platforms and a channel for communicating the outcomes of the integrated national financing frameworks.³⁰

66. In 2021, ESCWA provided member States with an assessment of business legislative frameworks related to competition, consumer protection, foreign direct investment and the combating of corruption.³¹ ESCWA also established the Arab Legislation Portal, a repository of existing legislation in the Arab region related to each field of study.³²

Tools, products and capacity-building materials developed to address climate and environmental issues and their impact in the Arab region

67. In 2021, ESCWA led 30 initiatives to empower women entrepreneurs in the energy sector, with direct benefits for gender equity, affordable and reliable access to clean energy and the application of sustainable water, food and environmental practices. These initiatives were part of the Regional Initiative for Promoting Small-Scale Renewable Energy Applications in Rural Areas of the Arab Region, which supports expanded access to renewable energy.³³

68. ESCWA provided a policy toolkit and business model for member States and guidelines for policymakers to integrate small-scale renewable energy into rural development, and to design and develop specific financing instruments for building energy efficiency in the Arab region. ESCWA also developed a methodology for monitoring energy consumption patterns in the residential sector in both Jordan and Tunisia, through a combination of an appropriate periodic survey mechanism and sample energy consumption measurements. Training sessions on the different elements of the methodology were also provided.

69. To enhance the resilience of the agricultural sector in the Arab region, ESCWA built the capacities of local communities (mainly women cooperatives) and extension workers in Jordan, Lebanon and the State of Palestine to use selected innovative green technologies during 2021. ESCWA developed and made available to member States technical booklets describing the design and use of five agricultural technologies.

70. In 2021, as part of its project to monitor the impact of disasters on land cover in coastal zones in Egypt, ESCWA focused on remote sensing data to support official statistics for monitoring the impact of extreme events on people, land and infrastructure in the Nile basin.³⁴ The work received an award from Google Earth Engine in 2020 for technical support and training. This support enables policymakers in Egypt to improve damage assessment, reduce disaster risk and strengthen resilience, enabling more effective monitoring and reporting on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

71. In collaboration with the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development and the Office of Information and Communications Technology, ESCWA organized a challenge for young people to encourage them to raise awareness of the issues of desertification, land degradation and drought in the Arab region.

³⁰ See <https://ffd.unescwa.org/>.

³¹ *Arab Business Legislative Frameworks* (United Nations publication, 2021).

³² See <https://alp.unescwa.org/>.

³³ See www.unescwa.org/regend.

³⁴ ESCWA, “ESCWA wins at GEO-GEE competition”, 17 July 2020.

Tools, products and capacity-building materials developed to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda with improved data, statistics and technology

72. In 2021–2022, ESCWA enhanced the quality of data and access in the Arab Sustainable Development Goal gateway, which includes: an interactive monitoring tool for assessing progress in the achievement of the Goals at the regional and national levels, with regional and country Goals-related profiles; a comprehensive Goals-related data portal; an e-handbook on Goals-related metadata; an indicator tool; a register of censuses and surveys; a section on financing for development; knowledge and learning material on the Goals; a calendar of events related to the Goals; and a repository of evidence-based policy material.³⁵

73. In 2021, the Commission upgraded existing tools to assist in the generation of key development indicators and the reduction of data gaps, as part of the Arab Sustainable Development Goals Monitor, a regional hub for national reporting platforms involving 22 Arab countries. The regional hub's objective is to provide technical assistance on Goals-related data and metadata.

74. In 2021, ESCWA focused on peer learning and capacity-building for the new generation of voluntary national reviews by promoting enhanced and productive interaction between government stakeholders responsible for coordinating the review process and preparing national Sustainable Development Goal reports. In addition, ESCWA worked on expanding the membership of the community of practice to include non-governmental experts on the reviews and developed a workplan to fully activate the community of practice.

75. The Commission deployed a free, full access data repository on social, economic, environment and multidomain statistics to facilitate public access to data collected from primary sources, such as national statistical offices in member States, government institutions in the Arab region, and specialized studies by United Nations organizations and other international entities. The data repository comprises comprehensive visualizations and tools to create customized dashboards. This led to the development of customized statistical profiles of member States in 2021, which informed the development of common country assessments and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for nine member States (Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates).³⁶

76. ESCWA has developed a novel geostatistical data clearing house on social, economic and environmental statistics, which has been incorporated into the new ESCWA data ecosystem hub.³⁷

77. In line with the Data Strategy of the Secretary-General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere and the subsequent ESCWA data strategy, ESCWA reformed its data and statistics topology to introduce a large-scale data platform and technology infrastructure known as the ESCWA data ecosystem.³⁸

³⁵ See www.unescwa.org/arab-sdg-gateway.

³⁶ See, for example, <https://profile.unescwa.org/iraq/>.

³⁷ See <https://data.unescwa.org/>.

³⁸ ESCWA, “ESCWA data strategy: inspired by the 2020–2022 data strategy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations”, 2021.

IV. Spotlight on enhancing coherence between macrofiscal policies and social expenditure priorities

78. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many Governments provided unplanned emergency outlays that added to the already tight fiscal space, increasing deficits and debt and constraining macroeconomic growth. These responses also underscored the need to strengthen existing social protection systems, optimize social expenditures and ensure full and inclusive coverage, all while maintaining fiscal discipline.

79. In this context, the ESCWA social expenditure model proved to be a very useful analytical tool. The model provides a comprehensive measure of public social expenditure in the following areas: (a) education; (b) health and nutrition; (c) housing and community amenities; (d) labour market interventions and employment generation; (e) social protection and food security; (f) arts, culture and sports; and (g) environment protection. In 2021, ESCWA continued to develop the platform for the model and stepped up its support for Arab countries by building the capacity of policymakers to tailor and operationalize the model and reinforce its implementation at the national level.

80. The indicators are mapped to key beneficiaries across individuals, households and communities. The framework is flexible and can be adapted to national specificities. Member States are invited to establish the social expenditure model in their national contexts as a tool to improve the targeting of budgets to achieve higher economic growth and the Sustainable Development Goals.

81. Through its social expenditure model digital platform, ESCWA assesses and informs areas of budget allocation reforms and supports the revision of line ministries' budget allocation frameworks to optimize the impact on beneficiaries and ensure that no one is left behind. In 2021, ESCWA assessed the efficiency and effectiveness of social expenditure in Jordan and Tunisia and conducted national data and methodology technical capacity-building workshops for additional countries.

82. In 2021, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNICEF, ESCWA assessed the landscape of social expenditure and provided policy recommendations aimed at improving the equity, efficiency and effectiveness of social expenditure in the Arab region.³⁹ Actionable recommendations were made on topics such as the regional landscape of social expenditure, efficiency, social justice, gender-responsive budgeting, fiscal incidence, digitization and fiscal sustainability.

83. Going forward, ESCWA will help two additional member States to establish a social expenditure monitoring platform. In addition, regional consultations will be organized to discuss how to link social expenditure monitoring to policy analysis and reform, followed by national capacity development.

V. Leveraging partnerships for sustainable development

84. ESCWA engages with a wide variety of partners on programmes aimed at advancing the progress of member States towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda.

³⁹ ESCWA, United Nations Development Programme and United Nations Children's Fund, "Social expenditure monitor for Arab States: toward making public budgets more equitable, efficient and effective to achieve the SDGs", (forthcoming).

Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic

85. The five regional commissions worked together with partner organizations of the e-Trade for All initiative to contribute to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) global review of COVID-19 and e-commerce.⁴⁰

86. As part of the Digital Cooperation and Development Forum of 2021, ESCWA organized, together with UNCTAD, a plenary session on e-commerce after the COVID-19 pandemic to help countries of the region to leverage e-commerce and optimize its economic benefits for all and a special event entitled “Asia-Arab dialogue on digital economy”, offering opportunities for stakeholders from the two regions to exchange experiences and learn how to advance the digital economy to build more inclusive and resilient societies.

Addressing social inequality

87. In December 2021, ESCWA partnered with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Arab Centre for Social Policies and the Eradication of Poverty to improve the measurement of multidimensional poverty by helping public officials to measure multidimensional poverty and its relevance to social protection systems in Arab countries.

88. In partnership with the Economic Research Forum, ESCWA provided member States with technical guidance on the measurement of wealth inequality, the proper estimation and harmonization of income poverty lines across countries and years, the projection and simulation of multidimensional poverty, and the implications for social protection programmes.

89. In January 2022, ESCWA, in cooperation with Malta and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, fostered collaborative efforts in the European Union and the Arab region for policy exchange, technical cooperation, capacity-building and research to uphold the rights of persons with disabilities.

90. ESCWA partnered with the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit to facilitate an inclusive Libyan socioeconomic dialogue. The dialogue produced a vision with the strategic goals and objectives of a State of justice and equal citizenship, social protection and social justice, an alternative diversified economic model, and institutional reform, transparency and good governance.

91. ESCWA collaborated with UN-Habitat on strengthening national and local government capacities to plan humanitarian responses, advance stabilization efforts and develop medium-term reconstruction and recovery plans and policies, and on enhancing the technical and institutional capacities of national, subnational and local governments to strengthen their national urban policymaking processes.

92. Following a collaborative and consultative process with national stakeholders, UNDP, UN-Women and UNFPA, ESCWA studied the link between gender justice and the law.⁴¹ It has developed a robust methodology to enhance the adherence of States to international frameworks. Through this work, ESCWA encourages policy and institutional reforms to enhance equal rights for women and address structural barriers to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

93. In October 2021, ESCWA and the Arab Administrative Development Organization forged a partnership to conduct joint capacity-building activities for Arab States on integrating social justice into strategic planning in national planning

⁴⁰ *COVID-19 and E-Commerce: A Global Review* (United Nations publication, 2021).

⁴¹ See www.unescwa.org/gender-justice-law.

processes. Such support will strengthen the knowledge and skills of member States in addressing social justice gaps using the ESCWA policy gap assessment tool and the guide on mainstreaming social justice into development planning.

94. ESCWA collaborated with other regional commissions on strengthening national planning processes and the capacity of policymakers in target countries to design integrated and implementable national development plans, and on enhancing national capacities to measure and monitor progress and improve performance with respect to regional integration.

95. Under the Regional Collaborative Platform, IOM, ILO and ESCWA jointly convened the issue-based coalition on migration. The coalition led the assessment and analysis of migration in the region and developed policy recommendations for member States, set forth in the Situation Report on International Migration in the Arab Region 2021, in collaboration with the Regional United Nations Network on Migration for the Arab States.

Advancing economic prosperity in the region

96. ESCWA partnered in 2022 with regional organizations to inform practitioners of new issues in economic statistics adapted to the priorities and needs of the region through joint capacity-building initiatives. For example, it partnered with the Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf on the statistical treatment of Islamic finance in national and international accounts in the context of the update of the System of National Accounts, and co-authored with the Islamic Development Bank methodological documents on measuring digital trade in the Arab region.

97. ESCWA partnered with the International Institute for Environment and Development, the Potomac Group, the Economic Commission for Africa and UNDP to produce a guide for debt managers and environmental decision makers on linking sovereign debt to climate and nature outcomes.⁴² In addition, ESCWA and the International Institute for Environment and Development organized capacity-building activities on exploring innovations in linking sovereign debt to climate and nature outcomes and on enhancing the applicability of debt finance instruments by using a framework based on key performance indicators, thereby guiding Governments towards green outcomes.

98. ESCWA collaborates with the African Development Bank on a regular basis on issues related to the implementation of the International Comparison Programme in participating countries from both the Arab and the African regions. ESCWA and the African Development Bank consult each other on methodological issues and engage with price experts from Egypt, Morocco, the Sudan and Tunisia, where training and data validation are conducted by both regions simultaneously to ensure the consistency and reliability of price and expenditure data for the computation of purchasing power parity and related indicators.

99. Together with UNCTAD and OECD, ESCWA organized the second Arab competition forum, within the framework of the initiative to improve competition and the protection of consumers in the region. The goal of the forum was to develop a regional multi-stakeholder platform to facilitate the coordination and implementation of competition-related initiatives at the national and regional levels.

⁴² International Institute for Environment and Development and others, *Linking Sovereign Debt to Climate and Nature Outcomes: A Guide for Debt Managers and Environmental Decision Makers* (London, 2022).

100. In 2021, ESCWA partnered with the Arab Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions to advance the role of supreme audit institutions in monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to expand the stakeholder base working on the Agenda in the region.

101. Under the Regional Collaborative Platform, UNDP and ESCWA jointly convened the issue-based coalition on macroeconomics and social protection in 2021. The coalition identified trends, patterns and gaps in the allocation of budget resources to achieve social development objectives and support vulnerable populations. The coalition also conducted a review of critical macroeconomic and institutional challenges in balancing social sector spending and capital investments, including aspects related to gender, vulnerable groups, the quality and efficiency of public investment, macrofiscal risks associated with debt vulnerabilities and options for prioritizing public expenditure.

Tackling climate change and environmental challenges

102. With the Economic Commission for Europe, ESCWA tracked food loss hotspots along the supply chains of two important products in Morocco, namely, soft wheat and dates, assessing the underlying reasons for the losses and providing recommendations to reduce them. ESCWA provided the Government of Morocco with a road map to develop an action plan for food loss prevention along the two supply chains that were analysed.⁴³

103. ESCWA also collaborated with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on enhancing the capacity of the Governments and national institutions of selected member States to optimize energy consumption patterns in the existing building stock in the residential and services sectors.

104. Under the Regional Collaborative Platform, ESCWA worked closely with FAO and UNEP in the issue-based coalition on food security, climate action and environment in 2021. The coalition supported the formulation of the Arab position on climate change and the meeting of the Arab negotiating group, in coordination with League of Arab States, held on 17 and 18 October 2021 in preparation for the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The coalition also led capacity-building efforts to advance resource efficiency and resilience in rural communities in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the Sudan.

Measuring and achieving the 2030 Agenda

105. ESCWA organized the 2022 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development in partnership with the League of Arab States. Deep collaboration and coordination are ensured through the ESCWA-led task force for the Forum, which comprised 16 United Nations entities in addition to the League in 2022.⁴⁴

106. The Executive Secretary of ESCWA is a Vice-Chair of the Regional Collaborative Platform for Arab States, and ESCWA is part of the joint secretariat of the Platform, together with UNDP and the Development Coordination Office. In 2021, the Platform supported member States and United Nations country teams on a diverse range of issues, including recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, tackling inequality, mitigating climate change, linking humanitarian and development work and building the evidence base with research and analytical work.

⁴³ *Working Paper-Food Loss in Morocco* (United Nations publication, 2022).

⁴⁴ See <https://afsd-2022.unescwa.org/>.

107. In 2021, ESCWA partnered with the World Summit Awards foundation to launch the digital Arabic content award for sustainable development during the 2021 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development.⁴⁵ The award highlighted the role of digital technologies and platforms in advancing sustainable development and promoting the creation of high-quality content on the Sustainable Development Goals.

108. In collaboration with the Saudi Development and Reconstruction Programme for Yemen, ESCWA launched a regional process to support the least developed countries in the Arab region in implementing the 2030 Agenda. The process resulted in the founding elements for a common vision for beneficiary and donor countries, funds and programmes, and in a report and policy brief on the Arab least developed countries.

Producing high-quality data and improving the use of technology in the region

109. With the Task Force on Population and Housing Censuses for Arab Countries formed by the ESCWA Statistical Committee, ESCWA continued to scale up its promotion of the use of modern technologies, administrative data and a geospatial dimension to enhance the availability of census data for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

110. In the context of assessing progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, the statistics divisions of all five regional commissions worked on harmonizing the methods for the interpretation and presentation of data. The tracker in the Arab Sustainable Development Goals Monitor uses a common approach to track progress since 2000 and determine the likelihood of achieving the Goals, and shows the gap between the predicted and the target values. In 2021, ESCWA targeted Goal indicators for which data were lacking by organizing focused regional capacity-building activities with specialized United Nations agencies to address methodological, coordination and data flow challenges. ESCWA organized 36 capacity-building sessions to support countries on 79 indicators in collaboration with 13 custodian agencies, namely, UNFPA, the World Bank, UN-Habitat, FAO, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, UNEP, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UN-Women, ILO, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and UNDP. These sessions were attended by approximately 1,500 participants.

111. In 2021, the Chiefs of Statistics of the five regional commissions, the Statistics Division and other stakeholders within the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions strengthened collaboration to optimize the coordination of statistical and data resources within the United Nations to support the national statistical offices of member States.

112. In 2021–2022, ESCWA held, in collaboration with the League of Arab States and partnering countries, organizations and experts in the field of information and communications technologies for development, several bootcamps and expert meetings to develop successive drafts of the Arab digital agenda (the Arab information and communications technology strategy), with the aim of finalizing it in early 2023.

113. In collaboration with the League of Arab States and several major players in the World Summit on the Information Society and the Arab Internet Governance Forum, ESCWA convened the inaugural Arab International Digital Cooperation and Development Forum under the slogan “Shaping our digital future”. The Forum is a multi-stakeholder platform made possible by ESCWA for policy dialogue on high-priority issues affecting the lives of people in the Arab region.

⁴⁵ See www.unescwa.org/events/digital-arabic-content-award.

114. ESCWA maintained its active role in the Partnership on Measuring Information and Communications Technology for Development, assuming the role of Vice-Chair of the United Nations Group on the Information Society in 2021. This multi-stakeholder initiative, which includes the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and UNCTAD, was launched in 2004, following the World Summit on the Information Society, to improve the availability and quality of information and communications technology data and indicators. In 2021, ESCWA contributed to the report of the Partnership presented at the fifty-third session of the Statistical Commission. ESCWA also held a joint session with the Partnership during the Digital Cooperation and Development Forum. The session on improving the availability of information and communications technology data to support regional digital development was attended by UNCTAD, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ITU and ESCWA.

115. ESCWA forged a new partnership with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to cooperate on trade data, building on the strong working relationships that ESCWA has with national statistical offices in the Arab region. In this context, ESCWA collected and processed trade statistics for its member countries for 2019–2021 and uploaded them directly to the UN Comtrade Database operated by the Statistics Division.

116. ESCWA collaborated with other regional commissions on enhancing the capacity of Arab countries to incorporate standardized statistical concepts and terminology in the Arabic language into national statistical production, and on enhancing the capacity of developing countries to strengthen statistical institutional environments to measure, monitor and report on the Sustainable Development Goals.

VI. Conclusions

117. Shock responsiveness is becoming pivotal for the Commission. In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent crisis in Ukraine, ESCWA will continue to strengthen its ability to respond to unforeseen and difficult-to-predict crises. United Nations entities such as ESCWA must undertake risk mitigation measures and build their capacity to reinforce their operational and programmatic resilience in order to better serve member States in situations of crisis.

118. Similarly, efficiency of response is vital in a changing global environment. Being able to respond to demands and changing environments in an efficient and effective manner is paramount to the effectiveness of the Commission. There is an increasing need for flexibility in both programme implementation and back office services. The Commission must continue to evolve and become more agile, while respecting United Nations procedures and policies.

119. Digitalization is becoming increasingly useful. There is growing recognition and use of the Commission's online platforms on the part of both member States and United Nations country teams. Interactive tools, data and knowledge platforms and policy simulators are providing evidence-based information, analyses and options for action to users in real time. The demand for these will continue to increase, and the Commission is planning accordingly.

120. ESCWA is continuing to enhance its contribution to, and coordination with, resident coordinators and United Nations country teams through its own work and the Regional Collaborative Platform. Responding to requests from Governments as one United Nations system, in an optimal manner, making use of all the talents in the system, including at the regional level, will improve the efficiency and quality of the response.