TOWARDS ACHIEVING REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND RESPONDING TO GLOBALIZATION

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Relevant GRID website:
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Meetings website:
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WORKING TOWARDS ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF GLOBALIZATION AND BENEFITING FROM THE OPPORTUNITIES IT OFFERS

UN-ESCWA

UNITED NATIONS Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

TOWARDS ACHIEVING REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND RESPONDING TO GLOBALIZATION

ESCWA works towards overcoming the challenges posed by globalization and benefiting from the opportunities it offers. Enhancing regional integration is one of the essential building blocks aimed at assisting member countries in this respect. This objective is achieved through the following:

- Providing a forum for member countries to discuss and reach consensus on issues related to transport, trade and financing for development;
- Promoting policies and programmes in member countries aimed at strengthening the process of economic cooperation and integration among them;
- Conducting analytical and comparative studies, and addressing critical issues on issues related to the movement of people, capital and goods for facilitating regional trade and investment; bilateral and multilateral world trade issues; and transportation facilitation in the region;
- Providing technical assistance and capacity-building to member countries in order to enhance their ability in the areas of trade and WTO issues, trade and transport facilitation, transport infrastructure and financing for development;
- Updating member countries on the latest developments in WTO negotiations and on the stand of developed and developing countries on issues under negotiation;
- Advocating and raising awareness on trade, transport and financing for development;
- Issuing the flagship publication, entitled Annual review of developments in globalization and regional integration in the Arab countries, which provides an update on progress in achieving regional cooperation and integration; and reviews and analyses progress made by Arab countries, including ESCWA member countries, in integration with the globalized world economy. Moreover, it tackles regional integration from a sectoral point of view via the transport, communication, energy and water sectors; and highlights the main conclusions of the study as well as ESCWA's recommendations.

ENHANCING THE ABILITY OF MEMBER COUNTRIES TO IMPLEMENT POLICIES AND MEASURES RECOMMENDED BY THE MONTERREY CONSENSUS ON FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT

The ESCWA region is one of the lowest recipients of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the world. In that regard, ESCWA aims to assist member countries in increasing their abilities to attract foreign investment and to mobilize much needed domestic financial resources. ESCWA continues to advocate and increase the awareness of member countries with regard to the recommendations of the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development; and to follow up the Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries. Major activities focus on the following:

- Enhancing the attractiveness of member countries for FDI;
- Promoting international trade as an engine for development;
- Encouraging external debt relief and debt management;
- Mobilizing domestic financial resources for development.

ENHANCED CAPACITY OF MEMBER COUNTRIES TO IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR THE INTEGRATED TRANSPORT SYSTEM IN THE ARAB MASHREQ

The secretariat works under the guidance of the intergovernmental Committee on Transport towards the implementation of the ESCWA goals of assisting member countries in benefiting from globalization and of promoting regional integration through the facilitation of transboundary flows of goods and persons, and trade and transport. Efforts in that regard include the development of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM), which encompasses roads, railways, maritime and air transport, and seaports. The efforts of ESCWA have led to the adoption of several international agreements related to transport among the Arab Mashreq countries. With advocacy by and support from ESCWA, several member countries have established joint national public-private transport and trade facilitation committees. More particularly, activities in that regard focus on the following:

- Following up on and supporting the implementation of the different components of ITSAM, including roads, rails, maritime transport and multimodal transport;
- Implementing the United Nations Development Account project, entitled "Capacity-building in developing interregional land and land-cum sea transport linkages";
- Providing technical assistance to member countries, upon their request, on various transport issues;
- Simplifying procedures related to the clearance of goods at border crossings and through customs;
- Enhancing the use of knowledge management and information and communications technologies (ICTs) in supply chain management (This is in line with Goal 8, target 12 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)).

GREATER PARTICIPATION IN THE MULTILATERAL TRADING SYSTEM

Under the guidance of the Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade and Economic Globalization in the Countries of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, ESCWA assists and supports member countries in securing a greater participation in the multilateral trading system to safeguard their interests and improve their stand in the international trade system. With the expansion of regional and bilateral trade agreements, ESCWA continued to provide a common forum for member countries in preparation for WTO ministerial conferences. While Arabic has yet to become an official language of WTO, ESCWA periodically publishes, in Arabic, analytical papers on WTO issues and latest developments in the multilateral negotiation process and on development in the Doha Development Agenda. Additionally, the work of ESCWA involves tackling emerging trade facilitation issues, increasing trade efficiency and diversification concepts. In that regard, activities focus on the following:

- Following up on recent developments related to the Doha Development Agenda and the outcome of WTO ministerial conferences;
- Providing technical assistance and capacity-building on WTO agreements;
- Promoting trade facilitation as an engine for growth;
- Highlighting adjustment requirements pertaining to accession to WTO;
- Conducting analytical on regional trade agreements and its compliance with the multilateral trading system;
- Raising awareness in both the public and private sector on the impact of WTO agreements;
- Following up on the Development Account project between the United Nations regional commissions, entitled "Interregional partnership for promoting trade as an engine for growth through knowledge management and information and communication technologies".