

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COUNCIL**

Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/ECW/2007/IG.1/INF.1
7 February 2007
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ARABIC

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Committee on Women
Third session
Abu Dhabi, 14-15 March 2007

INFORMATION NOTE**A. BASIC INFORMATION**

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) Committee on Women was established pursuant to resolution 240 (XXII) of 17 April 2003, which was adopted by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2003/9 of 18 July 2004, with a view to following up women-related regional and international conferences and the participation of ESCWA member countries therein, and coordinating the endeavours exerted by those countries and regional organizations in order to implement the resolutions adopted and recommendations made at such conferences. The Committee held its first, inaugural, session in December 2003, and its second in July 2004. The third session will be held at the headquarters of the General Women's Union, Abu Dhabi, on 14 and 15 March 2007.

The third session of the Committee on Women will consider the activities undertaken by the ESCWA Centre for Women between the second and third sessions of the Committee. The proposed 2008-2009 work programme for the Centre for Women will be presented for discussion and possible amendment prior to its adoption by the Committee on Women for submission to the forthcoming ESCWA session for adoption.

On the day before the session, namely, 13 March 2007, an expert group meeting will be held in Abu Dhabi, on the advancement of Arab women living in situations of war and armed conflict and future prospects and attended by Government and non-governmental experts. The recommendations made at the meeting will be submitted to the third session of the Committee on Women for discussion and adoption.

B. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In its capacity as the regional coordinator of preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women, which was held in Beijing in September 1995, and the follow-up thereto, ESCWA endeavours culminated in the adoption in 2005 by the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs of the League of Arab States of the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2005. One year after the Beijing conference the League of Arab States, in coordination with ESCWA, held in Amman, in the period from 25 to 29 September 1996, a conference aimed at devising a programme of work and mechanism for follow-up to the Beijing conference. The programme of work that was formulated at the Amman conference was adopted by the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs in 1997.

The second Arab conference in follow-up to Beijing was held in Beirut from 12 to 15 December 1998, convened by ESCWA and the League of Arab States, in preparation for the twenty-third special session of the United Nations General Assembly, Beijing + 5, which was held in New York from 5 to 9 June 2000, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 52/231 of 4 June 1998 concerning follow-up to the Fourth World

Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. ESCWA undertook the preparation of a regional report to evaluate achievements since the Beijing conference, which was distributed at the special session.

Preparations for Beijing + 10 were undertaken in two phases. In the first, ESCWA convened the first Arab preparatory meeting for Beijing + 10, which was held on 8 and 9 March 2003, with a view to monitoring the progress made in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women through a process of reviewing, studying and evaluating achievements and identifying obstacles to the goals that were set in 1995. In the light of the proposals that were put forward by Arab countries, ESCWA undertook the preparation of a document in which were set forth certain measures and new initiatives for overcoming obstacles to the advancement of Arab women, in order to promote implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2005.

In the second phase, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 58/148 of 22 December 2003 concerning follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the United Nations General Assembly, ESCWA convened the Arab Regional Conference Ten Years After Beijing: Call for Peace, which was held in Beirut from 8 to 10 July 2004. The Conference issued the Beirut Declaration on Arab women, that was adopted at the second session of the Committee on Women, which had constituted part of the work of the Conference. The Declaration is designed for implementation over the forthcoming decade, namely, to 2015, as part of the Beijing Platform for Action and in order to empower women, improve their status and increase their participation in political, economic and social life.

C. GOALS

At its third session, the Committee on Women aims to achieve the following goals:

(a) To begin consideration and identification of priorities to 2015, put forward new initiatives and measures to accelerate implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2005, and ways of overcoming challenges to implementation;

(b) To investigate ways of applying the Beirut Declaration - Arab Women Ten Years After Beijing: Call for Peace, which was adopted by the Arab countries at the second session of the Committee on Women, taking into consideration the Millennium Development Goals in the Arab region and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women;

(c) To investigate the best ways of advancing and improving the lot of Arab women living in conditions of war and armed conflict, given that, over the past decade, there have been a number of wars and armed conflicts in the Arab region which have had an impact on the status of Arab women;

(d) To review the report of the ESCWA Executive Secretary on the activities of the Centre for Women between the second and third sessions of the Committee on Women, and discuss and adopt the proposed programme of work for the Centre for the biennium 2008-2009.

D. PROVISIONAL AGENDA

The provisional agenda for the third session of the Committee on Women is set forth in E/ESCWA/ECW/2007/IG.1/L.1.

E. SESSION DOCUMENTS

A limited number of session documents will be available during the session from the documents distribution desk in the conference hall. Participants are requested to bring with them the complete set of documents that ESCWA will have sent to their Governments or organizations. All session documents are available on the ESCWA Internet site at: <http://www.escwa.org.lb/divisions/events/ecwsession/main.asp>.

Delegation members who wish to submit documents for distribution are requested to submit them to the Secretary of the Commission, Mr. Khaled Galal AbdelHamid, the session coordinator, or the conference hall official. A minimum of 100 copies should be provided in order to ensure distribution to every participant. Only United Nations documents may be distributed inside the conference hall.

F. PARTICIPANTS

Taking part in the third session in the capacity of Government experts will be representatives of national women's machineries, including ministries and women's councils and committees, from all the Arab countries.

Also participating as observers will be representatives of United Nations specialized agencies and programmes, national and regional Government organizations, United Nations Economic and Social Council-affiliated non-governmental organizations, other Government organizations, national and regional networks and relevant research centres, and a group of experts, consultants and academics, as well as representatives of certain national and regional, bilateral and multilateral donor agencies.

The ESCWA secretariat hopes that member country participation will be at the ministerial level and that delegations will comprise experts in women's development. The session will consider a number of the most important Beijing conference-related achievements, obstacles and challenges, and the issue of the impact of war and armed conflict on the situation of women and ways of developing that situation socially, economically and politically.

Those who are invited to participate in the session are responsible for the travel and subsistence expenses of their representatives.

G. DATE AND VENUE

The third session of the Committee on Women will be held at the headquarters of the General Women's Union, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on 14 and 15 March 2007. On 13 March 2007, immediately before the Session, an expert group meeting will be held in Abu Dhabi, on the advancement of Arab women living in situations of war and armed conflict and future prospects. Registration for the third session of the Committee on Women will commence at 9 a.m. precisely on Wednesday 14 March 2007 and the session will be inaugurated at 10 a.m. on the same day. Participants will be issued with identity badges which they are requested to wear prominently displayed throughout the session.

H. LANGUAGE

Both Arabic and English will be used at the session, and simultaneous interpretation will be provided between both languages.

I. UNITED ARAB EMIRATES ENTRY VISAS

Both ESCWA and the General Women's Union, Abu Dhabi, should be advised of the names of delegation members and their flight number and expected time and date of arrival. Participants should obtain United Arab Emirates entry visas from the United Arab Emirates embassy in their country. In case of any difficulty in obtaining a visa, because, for example, there is no United Arab Emirates embassy in your country, please contact Ms. Safa Rizk Sammour at the General Women's Union, Abu Dhabi, tel.: 971-50-5626670; fax: 971-2-4474491; e-mail: womenunion@wu.gov.ae. If such assistance is required, please send, by 5 March 2007 at the latest, two copies by express mail of the participant's passport showing the following information:

- (a) Name;
- (b) Surname/profession;
- (c) Place and date of birth;
- (d) Nationality;

- (e) Permanent address;
- (f) Passport number;
- (g) Place and date of passport issue;
- (h) Date on which passport expires (the passport must be valid for at least a further six months);
- (i) Length of stay in Abu Dhabi.

The two pictures should be sent to the General Women's Union, Department of Public Relations, P.O. Box 130, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates by Express Mail , and a clear copy of the passport should be sent by fax to the General Women Union in Abu Dhabi.

J. ACCOMMODATION AND TRANSPORTATION

The General Women's Union has secured a special price for session participants at Armed Forces Officer's Club and Hotel in Abu Dhabi, which is only 10 minutes from the meeting venue. Participants should make their own reservations through Mr. Firas Al Zuabi, mobile: 971-50-4151968; fax: 971-2-4073048; e-mail: sales@afoc.mil.ae; Internet site: www.afoc.mil.ae. The price includes value-added tax of 16 per cent.

Name of hotel	Contact in hotel	Single room	Double room
Armed Forces Officer's Club and Hotel P.O. Box 29810 Arabian Gulf Street Opposite the Sheikh Zaid Mosque, Misfah Street, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates	Mr. Firas Al Zuabi, Telephone: 971-2-4415900; Mobile: 971-50-4073048; fax : 971-2-4073048; e-mail: sales@afoc.mil.ae	UAE dirham 450 (breakfast UAE dirham 40)	UAE dirham 550 (breakfast UAE dirham 40)

Participants should settle all expenses directly with the hotel before leaving.

The General Women's Union will meet participants at the airport and transfer them to the hotel. It will also provide transportation between the hotel and the meeting venue on the days of the session. Participants should therefore provide Ms. Safa Rizk Sammour of the General Women's Union with their names, dates and times of arrival and departure and flight numbers. Contact details are: Tel. 971-50-5626670; fax 971-2-4474491; e-mail womenunion@wu.gov.ae.

K. COMMUNICATIONS

Please address all session-related communications to:

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