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Regional Commission and LAS sign Valetta Declaration

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the League of Arab States (LAS) signed on 25 April 2019 the “Valetta Declaration”, which resulted from the first ever European Union-Arab High-Level Meeting on Disability rights organized by the Government of Malta in partnership with the two regional bodies. The “Valetta Declaration” established the “Valetta Forum” and reconfirmed the commitment of member States to the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030, especially in the areas of Inclusive Education; Inclusion in the Labor Market; Access to the Environment; and Independent Living.

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ESCWA highlights water-energy security and nexus in two events in Oman

The Oman Energy and Water Conference and the First EU-GCC regional workshop on “Addressing the Energy-Water Nexus through Integrated Approaches and Regional Cooperation” were held on 22-24 April 2019. These events focused on water and energy security also addressing the 2030 Agenda and environmental concerns particularly climate change. ESCWA presented on a water-energy-food security nexus in the Arab region for achieving sustainable development and regional cooperation. This was an occasion to inform participants on the findings of the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR) with focus on Oman.

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Applying Good Agricultural Practices

Officials from the Lebanese and Jordanian Ministries of Agriculture convened in Amman on 23 April 2019 to discuss best means of applying nationally adopted Good Agricultural Practices (GAP). Organized by ESCWA, the meeting concluded with a review of progress made in the formulation of GAP frameworks in both countries. The meeting also agreed on an active plan to scaling down its application through a joint training program at the local level.

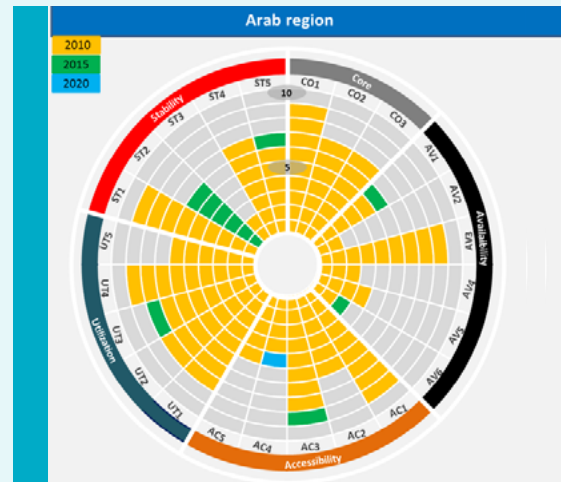
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Tracking Food Security in the Arab Region

Tracking Food Security in the Arab Region was the subject of an expert group meeting (EGM) ESCWA organized in Amman, Jordan, on 24-25 April 2019. This EGM, the 4th in a series of consultation meetings, put into context progress and challenges related to monitoring food security, using a proposed methodological framework. Participants reviewed the first report ESCWA prepared to monitor food security between 2010 and 2015 while providing an overview on the likely trend to the year 2020.

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Improving the business environment in Lebanon

Activating the role of the private sector was the focus of a conference by the Arab Planning Institute (API) and *Nouhoud* held on 24-25 April at the Grand Serail in Beirut. Chief Economic and Governing Planning at ESCWA Denise Sumpf discussed on a panel facilitated by Lebanese Minister of State for Information Technology Adel Afoune key regulatory and legislative conditions at the national level that need to support the private sector. Among other points, she highlighted the need for a strategy for digital transformation, a vote of confidence for trade, the political will for good governance, private investment as a complement to official development assistance, and implementation of sound macroeconomic policies.

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Promoting small-scale renewable energy applications in rural areas of Tunisia

Within the framework of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)-funded project Regional Initiative for Promoting Small-Scale Renewable Energy Applications in rural areas of the Arab Region (REGEND) aimed to improve the livelihood, social inclusion, and gender equality of rural communities by introducing renewable energies, ESCWA conducted a participative focus group meeting on 24 April 2019 to finalize the selection of the rural community that will host the pilot projects and capacity-building activities of the Project. Joined by its local Tunisian partners, the National Agency for Energy Management and the Regional Development General Commission, the Project team also conducted on 26 April 2019 site visits to selected local community Chorbane in Mehdia to interact and engage with the local community and the local organizations working there and to put in place the local facilitating team.

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Energy efficiency policies in the Tunisian buildings sector

ESCWA and the Tunisian National Agency for Energy Management (ANME) joined hands on 25 April 2019 to organize a workshop on the methodologies for developing, applying and evaluating Energy Efficiency (EE) policies in the buildings sector in Tunisia. This workshop is part of the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project on “Up-scaling Energy Efficiency in the Residential and Services Sectors in the Arab Region” to improve and optimize EE and up-scale its programs in the building stock. The workshop provided technical assistance to relevant national institutions and experts for the development of short, medium and long-term strategies and appropriate EE for the existing buildings, including necessary Monitoring Review and Verification schemes.

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Developing food security and SDGs-tailored concept notes

How to develop tailored concept notes on Food Security and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to frame the implementation of the new 2015-2023 strategy of the National Agriculture Research Centre (NARC) in Jordan was the discussion of a workshop organized by ESCWA on 24-25 April 2019 in Amman. 24 NARC technical staff developed their knowledge in preparing concept notes tailored towards the achievement of SDGs related to agriculture and food security.

Participants selected four core problems and designed together a structured layout that details associated problems and intended objectives with specific activities that are directly related to SDGs indicators and targets.

