

## Regional economic and social activities

The five UN regional commissions continued in 2009 to provide technical cooperation, including advisory services, to their member States, promote programmes and projects, and provide training to enhance national capacity-building. Three of them held regular sessions during the year—the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) did not meet in 2009, but were scheduled to meet in 2010. The executive secretaries of the commissions held periodic meetings to exchange views and coordinate activities and positions on major development issues.

ECA organized its annual session as part of the joint meetings of the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. The session met in June on the theme “Enhancing the effectiveness of fiscal policy for domestic resource mobilization” and adopted a ministerial statement on a wide range of issues. Meeting in April on the theme “Towards sustainable agriculture and food security in the Asia-Pacific region”, ESCAP adopted a resolution on implementation of the Bali Outcome Document in addressing the food, fuel and financial crises. During its March/April session, ECE considered the economic situation of Europe, held three panel discussions on the topic, and adopted conclusions on economic development in the region and on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

ECLAC conducted a study on the food crisis, and summarized eight studies on climate change mitigation in the publication *Economics of climate change in Latin America and the Caribbean—Summary 2009*, which was presented at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. ESCWA continued to support implementation of transport agreements, such as the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq. A key development was the adoption of an agreement on the Arab railway network.

The regional commissions also addressed the economic and social effects of the global economic and financial crisis that had begun in late 2008. Within the context of their mandates, the commissions took actions to mitigate the effects of the crisis in their regions and support stabilization and economic recovery.

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### Regional cooperation

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In 2009, the United Nations continued to strengthen cooperation among its regional commissions, between them and other UN entities, and with regional and international organizations.

On 26 March (**decision 2009/208**), the Economic and Social Council decided that the theme for the regional cooperation item of its 2009 substantive session would be “Regional perspectives on the global economic and financial crisis, including the impact on global public health”. Accordingly, the Council held an interactive dialogue with the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions on that subject on 10 July.

**Meetings of Executive Secretaries.** The Executive Secretaries held three regular meetings, all in New York, during the year: one in February, and two at the margins of the Economic and Social Council session in July and of their dialogue on climate change with the Second (Economic and Financial) Committee of the General Assembly in October [E/2009/15, E/2010/15]. They focused on the regional commissions’ actions and efforts to support UN system-wide coherence at the regional and global levels, as well as their contributions to and perspectives on climate change, the global challenges of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, and ongoing monitoring of the impacts of the economic and financial crisis and other prior crises, such as food and energy security. In addition, a joint side event was organized at the margin of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (Copenhagen, Denmark, 7–19 December) (see p. 1015), during which the Executive Secretaries launched the regional commissions’ joint publication assessing the impacts of climate change and highlighting adaptation and mitigation policy responses in the various regions. Two other joint publications were also launched in 2009 by the regional commissions: one during the United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development (24–26 June) (see p. 947), assessing the impact of the financial crisis and highlighting policy responses; and the other in December, highlighting interregional cooperation among the commissions in the area of energy efficiency.

### Review and reform of the regional commissions

In a May report [E/2009/15], the Secretary-General updated actions taken by the regional commissions to implement the guidance given by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 1998/46 [YUN 1998, p. 1262] on mainstreaming the regional dimension into the work of the United Nations and enhancing the coherence of UN activities at the regional level. The report focused attention on the experience and evolution of various regional coordination mechanisms, including synergies and complementarities between the mechanisms and regional directors' teams in support of country work, as well as the interaction between the mechanism and the High-Level Committee on Programmes of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) on enhancing policy coherence. In February, at the Committee's seventeenth session, a decision was reached on furthering the linkage between the global and regional levels allowing the work of the Committee on certain global issues with important regional dimensions to be addressed in a coherent manner at the regional level through the regional coordination mechanisms. CEB endorsed the decision at its first regular session (Paris, 4–5 April).

An addendum [E/2009/15/Add.1] contained the texts of resolutions and decisions adopted at recent meetings of the regional commissions calling for the Council's action or attention.

By **decision 2009/262** of 31 July, the Council took note of the Secretary-General's report and addendum. By the same decision, it took note of the following reports: economic situation in 2008–2009 in the Economic Commission for Europe region [E/2009/16]; overview of the economic and social conditions in Africa, 2009 [E/2009/17]; summary of the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific, 2009* [E/2009/18]; Latin America and the Caribbean: economic situation and outlook, 2008–2009 [E/2009/19]; and the summary of the survey of economic and social developments in the ESCWA region, 2008–2009 [E/2009/20].

The Council adopted a resolution on the Europe-Africa fixed link through the Strait of Gibraltar (see p. 971) and a decision on the venue and dates of the sixty-sixth (2010) session of ESCAP (see p. 980).

(For the summaries of economic surveys and the texts of the resolutions, see the relevant sections of this chapter.)

### Global economic and financial crisis

In his May report [E/2009/15], the Secretary-General reported on regional efforts to address the worst global economic and financial crisis since the

Great Depression [YUN 2008, p. 1102] that had exacerbated the effects of recent spikes in food and fuel prices with severe consequences for the poorest and most vulnerable populations, and had rapidly spread to developing countries and emerging market economies, adversely affecting export revenues, tourism, employment, capital flows and foreign direct investment and remittances. Each region was affected differently by the multiple crises and was responding according to its particular circumstances. Although growth was expected to decline in all regions due to the crisis, hardest hit was the ECE region where emerging European economies had suffered from a sudden halt in capital inflows. Annual real growth in the region was forecast to fall from -1.5 to -3.5 per cent. A consensus emerged on the need for actions at the global, regional and national levels in order to recover from the crisis and prevent the recurrence of a similar crisis in the future. To that end, the five UN regional commissions advocated a number of policy recommendations from a regional perspective, which were contained in the Secretary-General's report.

In a later report [E/2010/15], the Secretary-General provided information on the global recovery from the economic and financial crisis, including engagement by the various regions in coordinated measures and strategies. Those responses encompassed emergency meetings of the finance and planning ministers in the regions supported by some of the regional commissions; the European Recovery Plan; the establishment of the Latin American and Caribbean Summit for Integration and Development; expanding the Chiang Mai Initiative; and the recapitalization of the regional and subregional development banks in order to raise credit lines and expedite lending procedures.

There was an increased realization about the need for greater regional cooperation, coordination and coherence to increase countries' coping capabilities and regions' resiliency. The regions that, overall, had fared better during the crisis, such as Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, were better integrated and coordinated at the regional level than sub-Saharan African countries and some Arab and many Eastern European countries. On the other hand, open economies and regional entities that were highly integrated into global markets, such as China, the European Union (EU), Japan and Mexico, were more severely affected by the crisis that originated in the United States because they were more exposed to the contagion channels. The report highlighted the importance of balancing the benefits of regional integration with the potential risks that it entailed through adequate regional institutional arrangements and regulations that kept pace with the evolution—in terms of liquidity, depth and sophistication—of the global and regional financial and commercial markets.

## Africa

The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) organized its 2009 annual session as part of the joint meetings of the African Union (AU) Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, according to Economic and Social Council resolution 2007/4 [YUN 2007, p. 1014]. ECA held its forty-second session/Second Joint Annual Meetings of the AU and ECA Conference of Ministers (Cairo, Egypt, 2–7 June) [E/2009/38-E/ECA/CM/42/5] under the theme “Enhancing the effectiveness of fiscal policy for domestic resources mobilization”. It had before it an issues paper prepared by the ECA secretariat on the theme [E/ECA/COE/28/4] and the report of the twenty-eighth meeting of the Committee of Experts of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development [E/ECA/CM/42/2/Rev.1] (Cairo, 2–5 June). Two high-level panel discussions and a ministerial policy debate took place on the Conference’s theme, and resolutions were adopted on: enhancing domestic resource mobilization [E/2009/38 (res. 862(XLII))]; the proposed programme of work and priorities for the 2010–2011 biennium [res. 863(XLII)]; repositioning of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning [res. 864(XLII)]; the global financial and economic crises [res. 865(XLII)]; and the MDGs [res. 866(XLII)].

The session adopted a ministerial statement [E/ECA/CM/42/3], in which Ministers commended the secretariat’s report on progress in Africa towards the MDGs [E/ECA/COE/28/8] and committed to strengthening their planning systems, implementing their national development plans and devolving MDG-based planning to lower tiers of government. Recognizing that the global crisis had changed the international environment in which policies were designed and implemented, the Ministers indicated that urgent actions were needed to mitigate the crisis’ impact on their economies and protect vulnerable groups. They reaffirmed the commitments made at the meeting of the Committee of Ten African Ministers of Finance and Planning and Governors of Central Banks (Cape Town, South Africa, 16 January) to deepen economic reforms, strengthen regulations of financial institutions, harmonize fiscal and monetary policies, improve governance and accountability, diversify their export structure, make more judicious use of public revenue and improve debt management. Ministers also reaffirmed their commitment to advance regional integration, including in the context of the Minimum Integration Programme and the establishment of a fund for financing the Programme. Ministers also

called for action to be taken related to climate change, the establishment of a mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the African Charter on Statistics, the organization by ECA of an African regional review meeting on least developed countries, support for the Aid for Trade initiative and the fast-track establishment of the African Investment Bank.

**Communication.** In a letter to the Security Council dated 1 October [S/2009/511], the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) transmitted the communiqué of the twenty-ninth Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Southern African Development Community (Kinshasa, DRC, 7–8 September).

## Economic trends

In 2009, Africa’s gross domestic product (GDP) was negatively affected by the global recession and slowed down markedly, decelerating from 4.9 per cent in 2008 to 2.4 per cent, according to the overview of the economic and social conditions in Africa [E/2010/17]. Nonetheless, some areas showed resilience compared with previous episodes of economic recession, including better management of commodity price booms and prudent fiscal approaches, particularly by the oil-producing countries. A few oil-importing countries, including Djibouti, Ethiopia, Malawi, Morocco, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia posted GDP growth of more than 5 per cent because of a variety of country-specific factors. Consequently, the pace at which GDP grew differed across countries and subregions, with oil-exporting countries expanding more vigorously than oil-importing countries. During the year, GDP growth decelerated or declined in four of the five subregions. West Africa displaced East Africa as the fastest-growing subregion, expanding by 5.6 per cent in 2009 compared to 5.3 per cent in 2008 and mirroring the performance of Nigeria, the largest economy in the subregion that grew by 6.7 per cent, owing to expansion of oil output as well as the performance of the non-oil sector. West Africa was followed by East Africa that decelerated from 6.4 per cent growth in 2008 to 4.3 per cent in 2009; North Africa from 5.2 to 3.6 per cent; and Central Africa from 5.2 to 1.8 per cent. Growth in Southern Africa declined, falling to -1.1 per cent in 2009 owing to the -1.8 per cent contraction of the South African economy and the resulting subregional spillover effects.

The *Economic Report on Africa*, a joint publication of ECA and AU, devoted its 2009 edition to the theme “Developing African Agriculture through Regional Value Chains”. The *Report* tracked Africa’s economic and social performance within the global context and made policy recommendations for the management of African economies.

## Activities in 2009

The ECA programme of work in 2009 was organized under ten subprogrammes: trade, finance and economic development; food security and sustainable development; governance and public administration; information, science and technology for development; economic cooperation and regional integration; gender and women in development; subregional activities for development; development planning and administration; statistics; and social development [E/ECA/COE/29/7]. In other activities, ECA continued to support the project to establish a Europe-Africa fixed link through the Strait of Gibraltar (see p. 971).

### Trade, finance and economic development

In 2009, ECA continued its efforts to strengthen the capacity of member States to design and implement appropriate policies to achieve sustained economic growth for poverty reduction, in line with the priorities of the Millennium Declaration [YUN 2000, p. 49] and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) [YUN 2001, p. 900]. Its work under the subprogramme aimed at achieving higher and sustained economic growth through enhanced capacity for macroeconomic and sectoral policy analysis, international trade and finance.

A major accomplishment in the area of macroeconomic policy analysis was the preparation and publication of the 2009 edition of the *Economic Report on Africa*, jointly prepared with the AU Commission. ECA also contributed to the preparation of the *African Economic Outlook, 2009*, which focused on innovations in information and communication technologies in Africa. ECA and the African Development Bank (AfDB) jointly organized the African Economic Conference (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 11–13 November) on the theme: "Fostering development in an era of financial and economic crises". The conference provided a forum for dialogue among researchers, economists and policymakers and made recommendations on addressing the challenges facing Africa due to the global economic crisis.

On international trade, ECA, in partnership with the AU Commission and the African Trade Policy Centre, prepared an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) negotiation template which was later endorsed by the African ministers of trade as guidelines in negotiations with the EU towards comprehensive EPA agreements. ECA contributed to the second global review on Aid for Trade in July, which resulted in a Global Work Programme on Aid for Trade for the period 2009–2011. ECA also organized in September an expert group meeting on enhancing Africa's participation in the World Trade Organization (WTO) process. The outcome document informed the prepa-

rations for the meeting of the African Ministers of Trade in October, which in turn resulted in a communiqué that outlined Africa's common position for the Seventh WTO Ministerial Conference (Geneva, 30 November–2 December). With regard to financing for development, ECA focused on the global economic crisis, providing support to member States to cope with the crisis and undertaking a regional assessment on its impact, which served as an input to the consolidated UN report, *The Global Economic and Financial Crises: Regional Impacts, Responses and Solutions*.

In a June resolution on the global financial and economic crisis [E/2009/38 (res. 865(XLII))], the Conference of Ministers requested African countries to participate in the UN General Assembly's high-level meeting on the crisis in June; urged the AU Commission and ECA to explore debt standstill and debt restructuring arrangements; requested multilateral and regional development-finance institutions to increase the quantity and access to unconditional financing for Africa; and encouraged African governments to remove all obstacles to intra-African trade. On the MDGs [res. 866(XLII)], the Conference requested ECA and AU to promote peer learning and experience-sharing on the goals. It also mandated ECA, the AU Commission and AfDB to help Africa prepare for the 2010 UN system-wide midterm review of progress towards the MDGs.

### New Partnership for Africa's Development

As the coordinator of UN agencies and organizations working in Africa in support of NEPAD, a programme for the continent's development that was initiated by African leaders in 2001 [YUN 2001, p. 900], ECA provided support for the implementation of NEPAD priorities through its analytical work and technical assistance in different areas, with particular focus on socio-economic development and political governance issues. It also collaborated with UN agencies and other partners, in particular AfDB and the regional economic communities, in supporting NEPAD infrastructure development.

(For more information on NEPAD, see p. 899.)

### Food security and sustainable development

ECA continued to strengthen the capacity of States to formulate and implement policies, strategies and programmes that incorporated the synergies between agriculture and the environment with a view to fostering sustainable development in Africa. Activities in 2009 focused on promoting food security and agricultural development, enhancing capacity for land management and providing policy support in the implementation of Africa's climate change agenda. ECA, in partnership with the Food and Agriculture

Organization of the United Nations (FAO), carried out activities to follow up on the Declaration on investing in agriculture adopted at the meeting of AU heads of State and Government (Sirte, Libya, 1–3 July). The Declaration aimed at accelerating the development of strategic agricultural commodity value chains within the framework of the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme. ECA collaborated with UN system entities and other partners in the publication of a compendium of best practices in public-private partnership in agro-industry and agribusiness in Africa, and the launching of the African Agribusiness and Agro-industries Development Initiative in 2010. ECA also convened the sixth session of the Committee on Food Security and Sustainable Development in October.

On land policy management, efforts focused on the launch of a pan-African Land Policy Framework and Guidelines, a joint initiative of the AU Commission, ECA and AfDB; the draft framework was adopted at the AU Summit in July. Consequently, the Land Policy Initiative raised the profile of African land issues at the subregional, regional and global levels, including contributing to the drafting of a new land bill in Kenya.

### *Climate change*

In the run-up to the United Nations Climate Change Summit held in Copenhagen in December (see p. 1015), ECA organized a series of preparatory activities throughout 2009 to help inform Africa's common negotiating position and build a coalition around Africa's main concerns and expectations from the Summit and beyond. In an effort to ensure that Africa would participate effectively in the negotiations and adopt well-informed positions for Copenhagen, the ECA secretariat in May submitted a progress report on climate change and development [E/ECA/COE/28/9], which provided an update on implementation of the ClimDev–Africa programme since the 2008 conference [YUN 2008, p. 1155] and underscored issues of concern for Africa and Africa's emerging common position on the key issues under negotiation [E/ECA/COE/28/9]. Outcomes of the Summit relevant to Africa included an agreement on the continuation of the Kyoto Protocol; the need to enhance international cooperation on adaptation to reduce the vulnerability of developing countries; and the need for adequate funding for developing countries to support enhanced action. In view of its role in the follow-up to the Copenhagen commitments, in particular in supporting the negotiation of a comprehensive international climate change regime beyond the Kyoto Protocol and the development of a comprehensive framework for African climate change programmes, ECA developed a programme of work for the new African Climate Policy Centre to carry forward post-

Copenhagen work and provide African countries with technical assistance to address climate change.

ECA also helped to organize the Third African Ministerial Conference on Financing for Development (Kigali, Rwanda, 21–22 May), which focused on the theme “Climate change, an additional challenge for meeting the MDGs”.

### **Governance and public administration**

ECA's objective under the subprogramme was to improve and sustain progress towards good governance and to ensure popular participation in the governance and development process to strengthen the foundations of sustainable development. ECA provided support to the African Peer Review Mechanism process and published the second edition of the *African Governance Report*, a publication that assessed and monitored the progress of governance in Africa. The report, which covered 35 African countries, found that within the last five years Africa recorded marginal progress on governance. Gains on political governance had been mixed. While the scope for political representation and competitive electoral politics, human rights and the observance of the rule of law had improved, party and electoral systems remained weak and poorly institutionalized, with elections emerging as a conflict trigger, rather than a conflict resolution mechanism. On the other hand, economic governance, public sector management, private sector development and corporate governance had been marked by progressive policies leading to a steady growth in the economies of many countries. In other activities, ECA organized meetings and workshops on issues relevant to the development of civil society. As part of efforts to define a structured process of engagement between ECA and civil society organizations, the African Centre for Civil Society was resuscitated during the year to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations.

### **Information, science and technology for development**

ECA continued to strengthen the capacity of member States to formulate, implement and evaluate strategies and plans in the area of information for development. With support and assistance from ECA, seven countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Ivory Coast, the Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda) made progress in the implementation of their national information and communication infrastructure plans and policies by adopting strategies for the application of information and communication technology (ICT) in various sectors. ECA also organized the first session of the Committee on Development Information, Science and Technology (Addis Ababa, 28 April–1 May) on the

theme “Scientific development innovation and the knowledge economy”, which was attended by more than 600 policymakers, decision makers, scientists, lawyers and journalists. In collaboration with the AU Commission, ECA organized the extraordinary Conference of AU Ministers in charge of Communications and Information Technologies (Johannesburg, South Africa, 6 November). The meeting adopted the Oliver Tambo Declaration, which committed African countries to ICT development within the framework of the African Information Society Initiative and the Global e-Policy Resource Network. The Declaration also called on ECA and AU Commission to prepare a draft regional convention and regulatory framework for cyber activities, to be adopted before the end of 2012.

### Economic cooperation and regional integration

ECA continued to promote effective economic cooperation among member States and to strengthen the process of regional integration in Africa through enhanced intra-African trade and physical integration, with particular emphasis on infrastructure and natural resources development in line with the AU vision. ECA assisted African countries to develop an “African Mining Vision 2050”, which was adopted by the AU at its February summit meeting. The Vision provided a framework for the promotion of transparent, equitable and optimal exploitation of mineral resources. In collaboration with AfDB, ECA and the AU Commission embarked on the preparation of the fourth edition of the *Assessment of Regional Integration in Africa*, which addressed critical challenges related to regional integration, including intra-African trade.

The sixth session of the Committee on Trade, Regional Cooperation and Integration (Addis Ababa, 13–15 October), held at ECA headquarters, considered matters pertaining to ECA activities in advancing the AU’s continental agenda on economic cooperation and integration, as well as the promotion of trade within and outside Africa. The meeting also examined progress made in regional integration in Africa and reviewed developments in intra-African trade.

### Transport and communications

In the area of infrastructure development, an objective of ECA was to help establish an efficient, integrated and affordable transport and communications system as a basis for Africa’s physical integration, and to facilitate national and international traffic. On transport development, ECA, in collaboration with the AU Commission and *Federation Internationale de*

*l’Automobile*, organized a conference on road safety (Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 7 July). Over 100 policymakers and experts from African ministries attended and recommendations to improve road safety in Africa were adopted for implementation by member States.

### Europe-Africa fixed link

In response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2007/16 [YUN 2007, p. 1011], the Secretary-General submitted a May report [E/2009/63] by the Executive Secretaries of ECA and ECE on the activities carried out from 2006 to 2009 in connection with the project to establish a Europe-Africa fixed link through the Strait of Gibraltar. Under the authority of the Spanish-Moroccan Joint Committee, the work was undertaken by two engineering firms—one Spanish and the other Moroccan. The activities mainly involved the preliminary pilot project update for the tunnel option; the environmental impact, traffic forecasting and regional effects studies; the project website; an overall evaluation of the project; as well as experimental work in Malabata and Tarifa and studies of the cartography, geodesy and currents in the Strait of Gibraltar. The environmental study evaluated measures needed to counter the environmental impact of the project, while the socio-economic and traffic-forecasting studies would define the remaining variables needed to evaluate the project. A programme of future activities was under preparation as part of the overall evaluation.

### ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL ACTION

On 28 July [meeting 39], the Economic and Social Council adopted **resolution 2009/11** [draft: E/2009/L.21] without vote [agenda item 10].

#### Europe-Africa fixed link through the Strait of Gibraltar

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* its resolutions 1982/57 of 30 July 1982, 1983/62 of 29 July 1983, 1984/75 of 27 July 1984, 1985/70 of 26 July 1985, 1987/69 of 8 July 1987, 1989/119 of 28 July 1989, 1991/74 of 26 July 1991, 1993/60 of 30 July 1993, 1995/48 of 27 July 1995, 1997/48 of 22 July 1997, 1999/37 of 28 July 1999, 2001/29 of 26 July 2001, 2003/52 of 24 July 2003, 2005/34 of 26 July 2005 and 2007/16 of 26 July 2007,

*Referring* to resolution 912(1989), adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 1 February 1989 regarding measures to encourage the construction of a major traffic artery in south-western Europe and to study thoroughly the possibility of a fixed link through the Strait of Gibraltar,

*Referring also* to the Barcelona Declaration, adopted at the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference, held in Barcelona, Spain, on 27 and 28 November 1995, and to

the work programme annexed thereto, which is aimed, inter alia, at connecting Mediterranean transport networks to the trans-European network in order to ensure their interoperability,

*Referring further* to the European Commission communication of 31 January 2007 related to strengthening transport cooperation with neighbouring countries, prepared on the basis of the conclusions of the November 2005 report of the High-level Group on the Extension of the Major Trans-European Transport Axes to the Neighbouring Countries and Regions, and to the conclusions of the first Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on Transport, held in Marrakech, Morocco, on 15 December 2005, as well as to the Regional Transport Action Plan for the Mediterranean Region 2007–2013, adopted by the Euro-Mediterranean Transport Forum at its eighth meeting, held in Brussels on 29 and 30 May 2007,

*Referring* to the final declaration adopted at the Ministerial Conference of the “Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean”, held in Marseille, France, on 3 and 4 November 2008, and the emphasis placed on transport projects in the Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean of 13 July 2008,

*Referring also* to the meeting held in Luxembourg on 8 June 2008 between the Ministers of Transport of Morocco and Spain and the Vice-President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Transport with regard to the official presentation to the European institutions of the project for a fixed link,

*Taking note* of the follow-up report prepared jointly by the Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic Commission for Africa in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2007/16,

*Noting* the conclusions of the studies carried out by the Western Mediterranean Transport Group on Europe-Maghreb transport and cooperation agreements and on transport conditions for European nationals of Maghreb origin when they travel to the Western Mediterranean in the summer and the action plan for the period 2009–2011, adopted at the sixth Conference of Ministers of Transport of the Western Mediterranean, held in Rome on 20 May 2009,

*Noting also* the conclusions of the studies carried out by the European Commission (INFRAMED, MEDA TEN-T, REG-MED and DESTIN) for the development of an integrated transport network in the Mediterranean basin,

*Taking note* of the Regional Transport Action Plan, which constitutes a road map for intensifying cooperation in the Mediterranean with regard to infrastructure planning, regulatory reform and transport services, as well as the list of priority projects annexed thereto, including the fixed link through the Strait of Gibraltar,

1. *Welcomes* the cooperation on the project for the link through the Strait of Gibraltar between the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Governments of Morocco and Spain, and specialized international organizations;

2. *Also welcomes* the progress made in the project studies as a result, in particular, of deep-sea drilling, which has given a decisive impetus to geological and geotechnical exploration and to the technical, economic and traffic update studies currently being finalized;

3. *Further welcomes* the organization by the International Tunnelling Association, under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic Commission for Africa, of the seminar held in Madrid in January 2005 on soundings and treatments;

4. *Commends* the Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic Commission for Africa for the work done in preparing the project follow-up report requested by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2007/16;

5. *Renews its invitation* to the competent organizations of the United Nations system and to specialized governmental and non-governmental organizations to participate in the studies and work on the fixed link through the Strait of Gibraltar;

6. *Requests* the Executive Secretaries of the Economic Commission for Africa and the Economic Commission for Europe to continue to actively take part in the follow-up to the project and to report to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2011 on the progress made on the project studies;

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to provide formal support and, to the extent that priorities permit, the resources necessary, from within the regular budget, to the Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic Commission for Africa, in order to enable them to carry out the activities mentioned above.

## Gender and women in development

A defining aspect of ECA work under this subprogramme was supporting member States to achieve gender equality through gender mainstreaming and empowerment of women, as well as strengthening their capacity for monitoring and reporting on progress in the implementation of agreed plans and strategies for the advancement of women. ECA activities included the launch of the 2009 edition of the *African Women's Report*, which was based on the African Gender and Development Index and used both qualitative and quantitative means of data collection and analysis as a framework for measuring gender inequality; the launch of the *Guidebook* for mainstreaming gender in macroeconomic policies—a compendium of methodologies and tools that utilized time-use data, gender aware modelling and gender budgeting to measure and integrate women's unpaid work in national planning instruments and macroeconomic policies; capacity-building on gender statistics; and the operationalization of the African Women's Rights Observatory.

ECA organized the Eighth Africa Regional Conference on Women (Beijing+15) (Banjul, Gambia, 16–20 November), bringing together some 1,000 delegates to assess progress achieved, identify challenges in the implementation of the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action [YUN 1995, p. 1170] and propose key actions for Africa to focus on during the next five years. The conference outcome document, the Banjul Declaration, formed the basis of the member States' plan of action and served as Africa's input into the

global review of the Platform by the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2010. The sixth session of the Committee on Women and Development (Banjul, November) was also held to consider the new structure of the Committee, review ECA accomplishments in 2008–2009, and provide guidance on the 2010–2011 biennium work priorities.

### Subregional development activities

ECA's five subregional offices (SROs), located in Central Africa (Yaounde, Cameroon), East Africa (Kigali, Rwanda), North Africa (Rabat, Morocco), Southern Africa (Lusaka, Zambia) and West Africa (Niamey, Niger), continued to promote and accelerate the process of regional integration by spearheading the delivery of ECA's operational activities targeted at the specific priorities of each subregion, within the overall framework of the implementation of NEPAD and achievement of the MDGs. A major priority of the SROs during the year was the operationalization of the multi-year programme of cooperation agreed between SROs and their respective regional economic communities. All five offices had developed extensive multi-year programmes of support and collaboration with major RECs in their subregions. The offices also organized and serviced various meetings and workshops, including the annual sessions of the Intergovernmental Committees of Experts.

### Development planning and administration

The objective of the subprogramme on development planning and administration, implemented by the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP), based in Dakar, Senegal, was to enhance national capacity to formulate and implement development policies and economic management strategies. Despite its fragile financial situation, IDEP continued to design and implement programmes that supported policymakers' priorities in the area of economic policy and to spearhead efforts in capacity-building. In April, 13 trainees from nine countries graduated from its 18-month Master of Arts degree programme in economic policy and management.

As requested by the ECA Conference of Ministers in resolution 858(XLI) in 2008 [YUN 2008, p. 1103], a report on repositioning IDEP [E/ECA/COE/28/14] was issued in May, providing information on steps taken to alleviate its financial difficulties and a plan for its repositioning. A resource mobilization campaign encouraging member States to pay their contributions had begun to yield results with several countries having paid their contributions and/or arrears. The report also outlined proposals for IDEP repositioning made by the Institute's newly appointed Director, includ-

ing initiatives in the areas of policy research, training and capacity-building, outreach and dissemination, as well as further revisions to the IDEP repositioning document and continued mobilization of resources to support the repositioning.

In a June resolution [E/2009/38 (res. 864(XLII))] on repositioning IDEP, the Conference of Ministers endorsed the vision and strategic orientation presented by the Director; urged member States to pay their contributions; and requested the Director to report on the new orientation and priorities, as well as implementation of the IDEP repositioning exercise at the Conference's 2010 session.

### Statistics

The objective of ECA's work under the subprogramme was to improve the production, dissemination and use of key demographic, social, economic and environmental statistics, including the MDG indicators, in accordance with internationally agreed standards and good practices. Priority activities included promoting, coordinating and advocating for statistical activities in Africa; building a data hub at ECA for the provision of development data on Africa; implementing the 1993 System of National Accounts in Africa; supporting statistical training programmes; establishing a regional programme for population and housing censuses; and providing technical assistance in various areas of statistics.

ECA organized the fifth Africa Symposium on Statistical Development (Dakar, Senegal, 19–21 November), which adopted the Gorée Island Declaration, committing African countries to undertake a census in the 2010 round within five years and use the most effective ICT tools to collect and process census data. In order to facilitate the provision of harmonized data series, a repository of data from African countries was established under the aegis of the African Statistical Coordination Committee. The repository had data aggregated at the continental, subregional and national levels. Similarly, in collaboration with AfDB and the AU Commission through a data collection mechanism, a first-ever joint *African Statistical Yearbook* was produced in 2009. The Commission was also involved in the organization of the Forum on Statistical Training and Human Resources in Africa in June and an expert group meeting on census data processing in November, which reviewed the ECA *Handbook on Census Data Processing*. Another initiative to facilitate the exchange of technical information and best practices amongst African statistical practitioners was the publication of the *African Statistical Journal*, of which ECA was a co-editor. ECA continued to disseminate statistics-related news through its quarterly *African Statistical Newsletter*.

## Social development

ECA's objective under this subprogramme was to strengthen the capacity of States to formulate policies and programmes for poverty reduction and promote social inclusion and integration to ensure equitable social services for all segments of society, in line with internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. To assist States in monitoring and tracking progress in implementing international and regional social development commitments, ECA, together with the AU Commission and the United Nation Population Fund (UNFPA), organized in October the 15-year review of the implementation the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action [YUN 1994, p. 955]. Also in October, ECA organized the first meeting of the Committee on Human and Social Development, which drew over 130 participants from 49 African countries. The meeting emphasized the need to intensify efforts to achieve the MDGs and the ICPD Programme of Action and requested ECA to provide assistance to States in the design and implementation of MDG-consistent poverty reduction strategies.

ECA produced two significant reports during the year: *The African Youth Report 2009: Expanding Opportunities for and with Young People in Africa*, which drew attention to challenges faced by African youth and contributed to the development of the draft AU Plan of Action for Youth Development, 2009–2018; and the *International Migration and Development in Africa: Human Rights, Regional Integration and Impacts of the Financial Crisis*, which took a critical look at the varied migration dynamics on the continent and proposed measures for enhancing the integration of international migration issues into regional and subregional development policies and frameworks. ECA also launched its HIV and AIDS Learning and Resource Service to provide up-to-date information on HIV/AIDS prevention and care.

## Programme and organizational questions

### Programme of work, 2010–2011

The Conference of Ministers had before it the ECA proposed programme of work and priorities for the 2010–2011 biennium [E/ECA/COE/28/15]. In a June resolution [E/2009/38 (res. 863(XLII))], the Conference noted the efforts of ECA to consolidate the gains resulting from its repositioning by scaling up its action towards achieving greater effectiveness and impact in programme delivery. It also endorsed the programme of work and priorities for the 2010–2011.

## Construction of office facilities at ECA

In response to General Assembly resolution 63/263 [YUN 2008, p. 1545], the Secretary-General submitted an October report on construction of additional office facilities at ECA headquarters in Addis Ababa [A/64/486]. The report described progress in implementing the project and two principal factors that had delayed the project: the need to pursue a revised tender process because the bids received in September 2008 were significantly higher than the approved budget; and the cancellation of the procurement process in April 2009 following the findings of the Procurement Task Force that had led to the suspension of the vendors by the Vendor Review Committee. It also outlined actions taken to address issues identified during the management review process. The estimated cost of the project remained at \$14,333,100 and the revised project schedule indicated a construction completion date in December 2011, followed by an interior set-up of up to six months.

ACABQ, in its December report on the project [A/64/7/Add. 12], expressed the expectation that the new arrangements put in place as the result of the reviews would enable the construction to be completed as per the revised scheduled.

On 24 December, the Assembly, in **resolution 64/245**, section VII (see p. 1407), took note of the Secretary-General's report and endorsed ACABQ's recommendations.

## Asia and the Pacific

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) held its sixty-fifth session [E/2009/39] in Bangkok, Thailand, in two parts: the senior officials segment from 23 to 25 April; and the ministerial segment from 27 to 29 April, under the topic "Towards sustainable agriculture and food security in the Asia-Pacific region". In her concluding remarks at the ministerial round table, the ESCAP Executive Secretary stated that the challenge of food security required actions to increase access to food in the short term; strengthen and develop sustainable agriculture in the medium-term; and mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change on agricultural production in the long-term.

On 29 April, in a resolution on implementation of the Bali Outcome Document in addressing the food, fuel and financial crises [E/2009/39 (res. 65/1)], the Commission took note of the Document [E/ESCAP/65/15/Add.1], which had resulted from the December 2008 high-level regional policy dialogue on the food-fuel crisis and climate change, and invited countries of the region and international and regional organizations to consider implementation

of its recommendations. ESCAP also requested the Executive Secretary to assist members in implementing the Document's recommendations; conduct studies and share experiences on improving food and energy security, on responding to the financial crisis, and on sustainable agriculture; convene a regional dialogue to discuss progress made in the Asian and Pacific region in addressing the economic crisis and its impact on achieving internationally agreed development goals; and report to the Commission on implementation of the resolution at its sixty-sixth (2010) session.

The Commission also discussed issues pertinent to its subsidiary structure; least developed and landlocked developing countries; management issues; work of the ESCAP regional institutions; and activities of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission [E/ESCAP/65/27].

### Economic trends

According to the summary of the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific, 2010* [E/2010/18], developing economies of the region emerged in 2009 as the world's fastest growing; their annual growth rate as a whole was 4.0 per cent. The economies of China and India, growing at 8.7 per cent and 7.2 per cent, respectively, were the engines of economic growth. However, other developing economies in the region were in negative territory, contracting by 0.6 per cent. The regional impact of the global economic crisis varied across countries, reflecting each country's vulnerability to external shocks according to its dependence on export-led growth and exposure to financial and exchange-rate instabilities. Although the nature of the recovery process held issues of fundamental concern and a complex set of policy challenges remained, recovery was on the horizon and the outlook for 2010 had improved significantly with developing Asian and Pacific economies forecast to grow by 7.0 per cent.

### Policy issues

Despite the economic gains achieved, some problematic policy issues faced the region, including inflation from demand and supply sides. A key threat to the sustainability of regional growth was the return of inflationary pressures as the recovery gathered steam. Consequently, a critical decision for each economy was when and how to turn off the tap of fiscal stimulus and tighten monetary policy. Other than increase in demand-side inflationary pressures, another factor behind rising prices was the return of supply-side pressure from commodity price volatility. ESCAP urged policymakers to be vigilant in the post-crisis phase; as oil prices had increased steadily during 2009, a return to high food prices could follow and required close monitoring.

Another policy issue was the possibility of the emergence of asset bubbles. Abundant foreign capital had been attracted to the region because of its relatively strong growth prospects. However, as the scale of inflows continued to rise, the risk would also increase that any unexpected change in interest rates, or a sudden appreciation in value of the United States dollar, could trigger an exit of capital across target countries. The issue of managing the benefits from foreign portfolio investments and minimizing attendant risks to macroeconomic stability was a huge challenge for the region.

Other areas of concern included budget deficits across the region, projections of substantial declines in import demand in the United States over the next few years that would affect Asian and Pacific countries, and the critical questions for policymakers to address in the context of when, in what sequence, and at what pace to start to withdraw stimulus programmes that had been key support for growth after the crisis. Even if advanced countries achieved substantial economic recovery, their demand for imports from the region was not expected to return to pre-crisis levels. In order to unwind global imbalances, many of the developed economies needed to restrain debt-fuelled consumption. Countries in the region needed to seek new sources of growth to rebalance their economies in favour of increased domestic and regional consumption, while policy changes needed to induce a long-term structural rebalancing of economies. Such a strategy required addressing global and regional imbalances.

At its 2009 session, the Commission considered the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific, 2009* [Sales No. E.09.II.F.11].

### Activities in 2009

#### Macroeconomic policy, poverty reduction and development

The Commission had before it documents on: recent macroeconomic developments and other issues to be raised at the first session of the Committee on Macroeconomic Policy, Poverty Reduction and Inclusive Development [E/ESCAP/65/1]; addressing the financial crisis and its convergence with other threats to development [E/ESCAP/65/30]; analysis of the regional impact and policy responses to the crisis [E/ESCAP/65/30/Add.1]; and progress and challenges in achieving the MDGs [E/ESCAP/65/31].

The Commission noted the immediate and long-term impact of the global financial crisis on countries in the region in terms of employment, poverty reduction and the achievement of the MDGs. The Commission urged global coordination of macroeconomic policies to combat the crisis and called for the international community to jointly undertake measures to

enhance liquidity in international money and credit markets, support cross-border capital flows to ensure investment and growth, upgrade the international financial architecture, and improve the international financial regulatory and supervisory framework. It also underlined the need for greater coordination on global financial reform and was of the view that in order to effectively tackle the crisis, trade as an engine of growth needed to be supported and protectionist pressures should be resisted.

The first session of the Committee on Macroeconomic Policy, Poverty Reduction and Inclusive Development (Bangkok, 24–26 November) [E/ESCAP/66/5] focused on the impact of the financial and economic crisis on Asian and Pacific economies and policy responses and options; implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001–2010; implementation of Commission resolution 65/4 on strengthening of the Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Secondary Crops Development in Asia and the Pacific (CAPSA) (see p. 979); and programme planning and monitoring. The Committee recommended enhancing regional cooperation with regard to exchange rate policies and crisis management, as well as strengthening the intermediation of regional savings to address the region's investment and consumption needs. In that regard, the Committee requested the secretariat to take a leading role to support the development of a regional financial architecture, including a regional crisis management mechanism. It further recommended that the secretariat strengthen its efforts with regard to the sharing of experiences on the effectiveness of measures being employed to deal with the adverse impact of the crisis. In other activities, ESCAP organized the Asia-Pacific High-level Forum on ICPD at 15: Accelerating Progress towards the ICPD and MDGs (Bangkok, 16–17 September).

### Trade and investment

The Commission had before it a note by the ESCAP secretariat on regional trade and investment: trends, issues and ESCAP responses [E/ESCAP/65/2] and an end-of-decade report on the implementation of Commission resolution 56/1 [YUN 2000, p. 931] on the Decade of Greater Mekong Subregion Development Cooperation, 2000–2009 [E/ESCAP/65/3]. The Commission recognized the importance of trade and investment in alleviating poverty and reviving economic growth and development and emphasized the need to keep economies open and refrain from protectionist measures and the abuse of trade remedies. In particular, the Commission recognized the role of the multilateral trading system in promoting global trade and the importance of a swift and successful conclusion of the Doha Development Agenda nego-

tiations [YUN 2001, p. 1432]. It noted the various initiatives that had been implemented for the development of the Greater Mekong Subregion and called for them to be continued.

The first session of the Committee on Trade and Investment (Bangkok, 4–6 November) [E/ESCAP/66/8] reviewed developments in trade and investment and related policy issues, and made recommendations with respect to inclusive and sustainable trade and investment. Topics addressed included: trade and investment for achieving inclusive and sustainable development beyond the crisis; developing policies for trade and investment; the role of the multilateral trading system in governing international trade; enhancing intraregional trade and investment; facilitating trade and investment; business survival and development; and programme planning and monitoring.

### Transport

The Commission had before it reports on the first session of the Committee on Transport (Bangkok, 29–31 October 2008) [E/ESCAP/65/4] and on the implementation of the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, phase I (2007–2011) [E/ESCAP/65/5]. At its first session, the Committee reviewed issues related to transport, including development, poverty, the environment and society, and discussed measures needed to address those issues. It also supported the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary (2009) of the Asian Highway.

The Commission noted the importance of transport in accelerating economic and social development and facilitating regional integration and expressed general support for the Committee's findings and recommendations. It also noted the outcome Declaration from the Ministerial Conference on Global Environment and Energy in Transport (Tokyo, 15–16 January); expressed satisfaction with the forthcoming entry into force of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network on 11 June; and welcomed Japan's offer to further strengthen partnerships with member countries in promoting low-carbon and low-pollution transport systems. In other activities, ESCAP convened the Expert Group Meeting on Improving Road Safety (Bangkok, 2–4 September), which noted the usefulness of compiling guidelines outlining best practices in road safety improvement in the region.

The first session of the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport (Bangkok, 14–18 December) [E/ESCAP/66/11] endorsed, among other things, the continued implementation of the Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific and phase I of the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development (2007–2011). It also supported the development of an intergovernmental agreement on

dry ports to facilitate a coordinated approach to an international integrated intermodal transport and logistics system. A major outcome of the Forum included the Bangkok Declaration on Transport Development in Asia.

### Environment and development

The Commission had before it an ESCAP secretariat note entitled “Turning crisis into opportunity: greening economic recovery strategies” [E/ESCAP/65/6]; the report of the Coordinating Committee for Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia [E/ESCAP/65/INF/4]; and the report of the Mekong River Commission [E/ESCAP/65/INF/5]. The Commission noted that green recovery strategies, which included the Global Green New Deal referred to by the Secretary-General (see p. 793), had been actively promoted by UN agencies, and called on world leaders to consider a massive redirection of investment away from unsustainable production and consumption patterns into job-creating programmes that would restore the natural systems underpinning the global economy. Such strategies had been replicated by several countries in the ESCAP region.

The first session of the Committee on Environment and Development (Bangkok, 2–4 December) [E/ESCAP/66/12] discussed trends and reviewed the progress made in the field of environment and development, including progress in implementing the green growth approach, which had been adopted at the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in 2005 [YUN 2005, p. 1099]. It also discussed challenges in the provision of water, sanitation and energy services, as well as housing, for the poor, and the measures needed to address those issues.

### Information and communications technology

The Commission had before it the report of the first session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology (Bangkok, 19–21 November 2008) [E/ESCAP/65/7]; the summary of progress in the implementation of Commission resolutions relating to information and communications technology [E/ESCAP/65/8]; and the report of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development [E/ESCAP/65/22]. At its first session, the Committee reviewed challenges faced by the Asia-Pacific region in developing an inclusive and development-oriented information society, as envisioned in the outcome documents of the World Summit on the Information Society [YUN 2005, p. 933], and recommended that the ESCAP secretariat establish follow-up mechanisms at the regional level to review implementation of the Summit outcomes in 2015.

The Commission recognized the important role played by ICT, including space-based technology, in supporting inclusive and sustainable economic and social development and in ensuring effective disaster management in Asia and the Pacific. It noted the progress of member States in implementing the outcomes of the World Summit and the need to strengthen regional cooperation to assist States in human resources development and capacity-building. It also recognized the importance of ICT human resources development, as well as the critical role of the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development in building an information society. The Governing Council of the Centre at its fourth session (Incheon, Republic of Korea, 13 November) recommended that the operations of the Centre continue beyond 2011.

### Disaster risk reduction

The Commission had before it the report of the first session of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction (Bangkok, 25–27 March) [E/ESCAP/65/9]; the summary of progress in the implementation of Commission resolution 64/2 [YUN 2008, p. 1110] on regional cooperation in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters in Asia and the Pacific [YUN 2005, p. 1016] [E/ESCAP/65/10]; the report of the Typhoon Committee [E/ESCAP/65/INF/2]; and the report of the Panel on Tropical Cyclones [E/ESCAP/65/INF/3]. In March, the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction reviewed the status of regional initiatives related to achieving the Hyogo Framework and made recommendations on promoting regional cooperative mechanisms and knowledge-sharing arrangements; establishing an Asia-Pacific gateway on disaster risk reduction; launching a publication on best practices and lessons learned in regional disaster risk reduction and management; enhancing partnerships and collaboration with the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (see p. 908), other UN entities, and regional and subregional organizations to improve assistance in the area of disaster risk reduction; and building regional consensus.

The Commission recognized that the Asia-Pacific region was the most disaster-prone region in the world and noted the concern expressed over the increasing threat of natural disasters such as flooding, landslides and sinking islands as a result of climate change in the Pacific, as well as the importance of disaster risk reduction for achieving development goals in the region. On 29 April [E/2009/39 (res. 65/5)], in follow-up to Commission resolution 64/10 [YUN 2008, p. 1111] on the review of the operational details of the feasibility study for the establishment of an Asian and Pacific

centre for information, communication and space technology-enabled disaster management in Iran, the Commission noted that Iran had requested additional time to provide the Commission with the supplementary information requested and invited Iran to revise its draft resolution and submit it for consideration at the Commission's sixty-sixth (2010) session.

### **Social development**

The Commission had before it the report of the first session of the Committee on Social Development [E/ESCAP/65/11] and the summary of progress in the implementation of resolutions relating to social development issues [E/ESCAP/65/12]. During its session, the Committee considered the following: a framework for action towards an inclusive society; issues on managing emerging and persistent risks to ensure inclusive social development; and reducing disparities and exclusion. It made recommendations in a number of areas including social protection and promotion of gender equality in the region, particularly in the pursuit of the MDGs, as well as ESCAP as a regional platform for dialogue on social policy instruments to address food security challenges; ESCAP facilitating the exchange of information and developing innovative practices on disability, and providing technical assistance for creating a data collection system and formulating a feasible definition of disability; and ESCAP promoting implementation of human rights and other instruments on persons with disabilities.

On 29 April [E/2009/39 (res. 65/3)], the Commission adopted a resolution on the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Final Review of the Implementation of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003–2012 [YUN 2003, p. 1014]. In that regard, it welcomed the offer of the Republic of Korea to host the meeting in conjunction with the Assembly of the Asia and Pacific Disability Forum and the World Congress of Rehabilitation International; and requested the ESCAP Executive Secretary to examine all offers to host the meeting and report to the Commission in 2010.

In other activities, the first meeting of the Pacific Island Forum of Disability Ministers (Rarotonga, Cook Islands, 21–23 October) endorsed the Pacific Regional Strategy on Disability 2010–2015. With regard to gender concerns, ESCAP organized, in partnership with the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the Asia-Pacific High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and Its Regional and Global Outcomes (Bangkok, 16–18 November). The meeting's agreed outcome, the Bangkok Declaration on Beijing+15, represented the Asia-Pacific region's input to the global review of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2010.

### **Statistics**

The Commission had before it the report of the first session of the Committee on Statistics (Bangkok, 4–6 February) [E/ESCAP/65/13] and the annual report of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific [E/ESCAP/65/26], which reviewed the administrative and financial status of the Institute, as well as the implementation of its work programme in 2008. At its session, the Committee reviewed major issues related to statistics in the Asia-Pacific region, including statistical development, regional cooperation and capacity-building; gender statistics; economic statistics; vital statistics; statistics on measuring the progress of societies; and programme planning for the ESCAP Statistics Division. The Committee decided to establish a bureau to assist it in performing its functions between its biennial sessions. The Committee also decided to adopt a coordinating governance structure and to establish a technical advisory group to provide guidance on issues related to the development of economic statistics in the region. The Committee recommended actions in statistical development, regional technical cooperation and capacity-building; vital statistics; measuring progress of societies; and programme planning.

On 29 April [E/2009/39 (res. 65/2)], the Commission took note of the Committee's report and the annual report of the Institute, encouraged members to increase financial support to the Institute, and noting that the Institute would celebrate its fortieth anniversary in 2010, encouraged members to contribute to the preparations for the celebration. In other developments, the fifth session of the Institute's Governing Council (Phuket, Thailand, 16–17 November) endorsed the long-term workplan for the academic years 2010–2014 and the two-year workplan for the academic years 2010–2011, with the assumption that funding and partnership requirements would be met fully.

### **Least developed, landlocked and small island developing countries**

In April, the Commission had before it the documents of the Special Body on Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries on the food-fuel-financial crisis and climate change: addressing threats to development [E/ESCAP/65/15]; the Bali Outcome Document [E/ESCAP/65/15/Add.1]; a secretariat note on regional cooperation for shared prosperity and social progress [E/ESCAP/65/16]; and a summary of progress in the implementation of resolutions relating to countries with special needs [E/ESCAP/65/17]. In the context of the impact on least developed, landlocked and small island developing countries, the reports addressed respectively, the sudden convergence of the

food, fuel and finance crises against the backdrop of climate change; the dialogue to find strategies to address the impact of those crises; the global economic crisis; and implementation of Commission resolutions relating to countries with special needs.

The Commission noted that the impact of the food and fuel crisis varied greatly among the least developed and landlocked developing countries of the region as some countries were net exporters of food, while others, such as the least developed of the small island developing States, imported most of their food. It also noted that the food, fuel and economic crises posed significant threats to prospects of achieving MDGs in the least developed countries and landlocked developing countries. The Commission was informed about measures undertaken by countries in support of least developed and landlocked developing countries, as well as efforts by countries and the ESCAP secretariat to implement Commission resolutions relating to countries with special needs.

On 29 April [E/2009/39 (res. 65/6)] the Commission adopted a resolution on support for the establishment of an international think tank of landlocked developing countries, which endorsed Mongolia's proposal to establish such a think tank in Ulaanbaatar to enhance the analytical capability of landlocked developing countries. The Commission requested the ESCAP Executive Secretary to provide advisory and technical support for establishing the think tank in collaboration with regional and global stakeholders. It also adopted a resolution on implementation of the Bali Outcome Document in addressing the food, fuel and financial crises (see p. 974).

## Agriculture and development

**Ministerial round table.** During its ministerial segment (27–29 April), the Commission held a ministerial round table on the session's theme, "Towards sustainable agriculture and food security in the Asia-Pacific region". Opening the segment, the Executive Secretary presented the study entitled *Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security in Asia and the Pacific* [Sales No. E.09.II.F.12]. Despite an enormous capacity for food production, the region was home to a large number of food insecure people. The root causes of food insecurity identified in the study were: poverty; low farm revenues that discouraged small- and medium-scale farmers from investing in agriculture; environmental degradation and competition for natural resources; protectionist trade policies; volatile fuel prices and speculation; and declines in investment in agricultural research and development. The study indicated that food insecurity was likely to increase if long-term trends towards increased population and prosperity continued. It identified four priority

actions at the regional level to ensure food security: developing a foundation for social protection to address food security issues, promoting sustainable agriculture, promoting food self-sufficiency, and developing and monitoring indicators on food security and socioeconomic development. The Commission also had before it a secretariat note that summarized the study's key findings [E/ESCAP/65/29].

**Senior officials segment.** At its senior officials segment (23–25 April), the Commission had before it secretariat notes on the United Nations Asian and Pacific Centre for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery (UNAPCAEM) [E/ESCAP/65/24] and the Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through CAPSA [E/ESCAP/65/25]. During the year, the UNAPCAEM Governing Council held its fourth (Chiang Rai, Thailand, 12–13 February) and fifth (Bangkok, 14–15 December) sessions. Meanwhile, at its fifth session (Bangkok, 4 March), the CAPSA Governing Council made recommendations for the revitalization of the Centre, including turning it into a member-driven regional centre that focused on poverty alleviation through secondary crops.

On 29 April [E/2009/39 (res. 65/4)], the Commission adopted a resolution on strengthening CAPSA, which endorsed the Governing Council's conclusions and recommendations on revitalizing the Centre, including that the Centre's primary focus would be on networking with national agricultural research centres in the region and beyond; promoting and coordinating research; highlighting and disseminating their research findings; and converting the results of primary research into relevant policy options for the region. The Commission also adopted the revised statute of the Centre, the text of which was annexed to the resolution.

## Economic and technical cooperation

The Commission had before it an overview of ESCAP technical cooperation activities and extrabudgetary contributions in 2008 [E/ESCAP/65/21]. In her introduction of the report, the Executive Secretary said that in 2008, ESCAP technical cooperation work had focused on partnership-building to promote "Delivering as one" at the regional level. Key achievements included support for post-Cyclone Nargis recovery and livelihood creation; efforts to address the challenges of the food, fuel and financial crises and climate change; and work in the areas of the Asian Highway and the Trans-Asian Railway network, strengthening capacities of national statistical systems, social protection, capacity-building through the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade, and administration of the Multi-Donor Voluntary Trust Fund on Tsunami Early Warning Arrangements in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia.

Total contributions received by the secretariat for technical cooperation activities in 2008 from the regular budget as well as voluntary sources amounted to \$12.2 million, a decrease from \$15 million in 2007. Of that amount, some \$4.3 million (35 per cent) was received from the UN system and \$6.7 million (55 per cent) was received from donors and participating developing countries. Other intergovernmental organizations and NGOs provided \$1.2 million (10 per cent). In addition to cash contributions, some ESCAP member States and one NGO also provided, on a non-reimbursable loan basis, a total of some 156 work-months of the services of experts in various disciplines.

### Science and technology

The Commission had before it a secretariat note on the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology [E/ESCAP/65/23], on its activities in 2008. During that period, the Centre assisted countries in the region in responding to the challenges of rapidly integrating into the new global economy by focusing on technology transfer support services for small- and medium-sized enterprises; the promotion of national innovation systems and green grass-roots innovation; and the provision of information, networking and the sharing of experiences relating to technology.

At its April 2009 session, the Commission was briefed by the head of the Centre on key achievements in 2008. The Centre had facilitated technology exchanges in the region utilizing ICT technologies through its web-based technology market and the development of an institutional cooperation mechanism on renewable energy technologies. In other activity, in accordance with Commission resolution 64/3 [YUN 2008, p. 1110] on promoting renewables for energy security and sustainable development, the Centre completed a preliminary programme of work in 2009, involving 15 member countries, entitled "Supporting the Development of an Institutional Cooperation Mechanism to Promote Renewable Energy in Asia and the Pacific". The Centre's Governing Council convened its fifth session (Bangkok, 18 December).

### Programme and organizational questions Proposed programme of work, 2010–2011

In April, the Commission endorsed ESCAP's draft work programme for the 2010–2011 biennium [E/ESCAP/65/18 & Add.1] for submission to intergovernmental review bodies at the global level and noted that it was aligned with the 2010–2011 strategic framework and responsive to the development needs and challenges facing the region. On implementation

of work programme, the Commission noted the need to ensure a balanced approach, with attention given to the needs of least developed, landlocked and small island developing countries.

### ESCAP subregional offices

The Commission had before it a secretariat note on the proposed road map for the establishment of three new ESCAP subregional offices in East and North-East Asia, North and Central Asia, and South and South-West Asia [E/ESCAP/65/20], as well as a report by an independent consultant on the most feasible and strategic locations for the new offices [E/ESCAP/65/20/Add.1 & Corr.1]. The Commission noted that the independent consultant's report had recommended that the secretariat explore and consider in greater depth the "preferred" option for each subregion. The final decision in determining the most appropriate location would be conditional upon the conclusion of the relevant agreements with the prospective host Governments.

### ESCAP sixty-sixth session

On 29 April, the Commission, having considered a secretariat report on the dates, venue and theme for its sixty-sixth (2010) session [E/ESCAP/65/28], decided that the next session would be held in Incheon, Republic of Korea, in April/May 2010. It also decided that the theme topic for the session would be "Addressing challenges in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals" [E/2009/39 (dec. 65/1)].

On 28 July, the Economic and Social Council considered ESCAP's recommendation and approved to hold its sixty-sixth (2010) session in Incheon (**decision 2009/231**).

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## Europe

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The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) at its sixty-third session (Geneva, 30 March–1 April) [E/2009/37] organized its discussion of the economic situation in Europe around an opening segment, followed by three panel discussions on: economic integration in the wider Europe; promoting competitive knowledge-based innovative economies; and enhancing economic cohesion. Panel discussions were also held on climate change in the ECE region. The Commission adopted two conclusions, on economic development in the ECE region and on climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as two decisions, on the work of ECE and on officers of the Commission and the Executive Committee.

The Commission considered a note by the Executive Secretary on issues calling for action by the Commission [E/ECE/1452], namely the holding in 2010 of ECE's fourth Regional Implementation Meeting for Sustainable Development; and approval of the revised Terms of Reference of the Timber Committee [ECE/TIM/2008/7]. The Commission decided to organize the fourth Regional Implementation Meeting in preparation of the eighteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (Geneva, 1–2 December) and approved the revised terms of reference of the Timber Committee. The Commission also decided to amend Rules 10 and 12 of its Rules of Procedure, as well as Article 9 of its Terms of Reference.

### Economic trends

A report on the economic situation in the ECE region: Europe, North America and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) [E/2010/16] indicated that, of the five UN regions as defined by the regional commissions, the ECE region was the most negatively impacted by the financial crisis with real growth declining from 3.2 per cent in 2007, to 1.2 per cent in 2008, and to -3.6 per cent in 2009. Despite the severity of the financial shock, the aggressive use of monetary and fiscal policy, a relatively high level of economic cooperation among the region's Governments, and assistance from international and regional financial institutions allowed the crisis to be contained. Fifteen of the region's 56 economies were forced to turn to the International Monetary Fund for some form of assistance. The forecast was for growth of 2.3 per cent in 2010 and 2.6 per cent in 2011. However, eleven, or about 20 per cent of the region's economies, were expected to have negative growth again in 2010.

### Activities in 2009

#### Trade

The Committee on Trade, at its third session (Geneva, 25–26 February) [ECE/TRADE/C/2009/12], considered reports of its subsidiary bodies that dealt with: trade facilitation and electronic business; regulatory cooperation and standardization policies; and commercial agricultural quality standards. In response to an ECE Executive Committee request for the 2009 annual session of the Committee on Trade to take a decision on its future: to either revitalize and maintain the Committee, or dissolve it, the Committee considered a report on its future [ECE/TRADE/C/2009/2] that summarized those two options. The Chairman reviewed the issues at stake, noting that although the future of the Committee had been questioned, there was no doubt about the usefulness of its subsidiary

bodies. During the debate, various points were raised in favour of and against the revival of the Committee. As there was no consensus, the Chairman indicated that he would transmit all the arguments in favour and against maintaining the Committee to the meeting of the ECE Executive Committee on 27 February and ask it to initiate work on possible ways forward.

In other action, the Committee on Trade endorsed: the report of the 2008 United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) plenary session [ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2008/40] and the UN/CEFACT 2010–2011 work programme [ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2008/16]; the report of the 2008 sessions of Working Party 6 (WP.6) [ECE/TRADE/C/WP.6/2008/18] and of WP.7 [ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/2008/25]; the 2009–2010 work programme and priorities of WP.6 [ECE/TRADE/C/WP.6/2008/14/Rev.1]; and the 2010–2011 work programme of WP.7 [ECE/TRADE/C/2009/7]. The Committee approved its 2010–2011 work programme [ECE/TRADE/C/2009/10] and the renewal of the mandates and terms of reference for the Advisory Group on Market Surveillance and the Ad hoc Team of Specialists on Standardization and Regulatory Techniques [ECE/TRADE/C/2009/11]. The Committee decided to hold its fourth session from 25 to 26 February 2010.

In April, at its sixty-third session [E/2009/37], the Commission requested the ECE Executive Committee to take the necessary measures to improve efficiency of the Trade subprogramme and to take a consensus decision on the future of the Committee on Trade.

#### Timber

The Timber Committee, at its sixty-seventh session (Geneva, 13–16 October) [ECE/TIM/2009/9], held a policy forum on “The Forest Sector in the Green Economy” in collaboration with the FAO European Forestry Commission. The forum addressed challenges faced by the forest sector in the context of the global economic crisis and identified opportunities for its contribution to a greener economy. Participants discussed medium- and long-term development strategies, including the role and policy options of governments. The Committee took note of the Chairman's summary of the Forum's conclusions, which was annexed to the report.

The ECE/FAO Team of Specialists on Forest Products Markets and Marketing organized a green building workshop on 12 October, on “Responding to Climate Change: Wood's Place in a Global Approach to Green Building”, in conjunction with the Timber Committee session. The Committee had before it a secretariat note [ECE/TIM/2009/2] which provided background information for its discussion. Following a briefing by the Chairman of the workshop, the Committee

endorsed the workshop's conclusions and recommendations and requested that they be distributed widely, including to the fifteenth (2009) Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (see p. 1015) for consideration in the negotiations.

Having reviewed a secretariat note [ECE/TIM/2009/7] on its activities since the sixty-sixth (2008) session [YUN 2008, p. 1118] and the programme of work, the Committee approved the list of planned outputs for the period October 2009–December 2010. The Committee also reviewed and approved the lines of activities on forests and climate change under the joint ECE/FAO Integrated Programme of Work on Timber and Forestry, as well as the discontinuation of the forest sector country profiles and the separate collection and dissemination of forest fire statistics.

Other issues considered by the Committee included the ECE/FAO role and strategic direction in the light of the changing international environment [ECE/TIM/2009/4]; forest market developments in 2009 and prospects for 2010 [ECE/TIM/2009/5]; matters arising from ECE's sixty-third session [ECE/TIM/2009/3]; and performance evaluations [ECE/TIM/2009/8].

## Transport

The seventy-first session of the Inland Transport Committee (Geneva, 24–26 February) [ECE/TRANS/206], reviewed, among other topics: ECE reform in the field of transport; implementation monitoring mechanisms of the key legal instruments in transport; gender issues; reorganization of the Transport Division and its strategy; assistance to countries with economies in transition; the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) and environmental aspects of transport; review of the transport situation in ECE countries; global warming and transport; the impact of globalization on transport, logistics and trade; restrictions on the international road transport of goods; and transport security. It considered action taken by its working parties on issues such as: global road safety; intermodal transport and logistics; fuel quality standards; harmonizing navigation rules for inland water transport; transport of dangerous goods; transport of perishable foodstuffs; transport of people with reduced mobility; and rail transport security.

In its resolutions on the 2010 E-Road Traffic Census [ECE/TRANS/206 (res. 259)] and the 2010 E-Rail Traffic Census [ibid. (res. 260)], the Inland Transport Committee invited Governments to take a census in 2010 of traffic on the E-Roads and the E-rail lines on their national territory and to supply the results to the ECE secretariat by 1 November 2011 and 30 June 2012, respectively.

In other activity, the ECE Inland Transport Committee and the Committee on Trade co-organized the Joint Trade and Transport Conference on the Impact of Globalization on Transport, Logistics and Trade (Geneva, 24 February). THE PEP focused its activities on assisting States with implementing the Amsterdam Declaration adopted at the Third High-level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment (Amsterdam, Netherlands, 22–23 January). The Declaration focused on sustainable urban transport solutions in the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe.

## Energy

The Committee on Sustainable Energy, at its eighteenth session (Geneva, 18–20 November) [ECE/ENERGY/80], devoted its energy security dialogue to “Energy Security and the Financial Crisis” and examined the impact of the financial crisis on energy infrastructure investment and how energy companies and Governments reacted to energy security risk. It also discussed cooperation and coordination with other bodies, including the Commission's other sectoral committees; the activities of the Committee's subsidiary bodies; the regional advisory services programme in the field of energy; and the Committee's 2010–2011 work programme.

The Committee endorsed the requests for two-year mandate renewals by its Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Harmonization of Fossil Energy and Mineral Resource Terminology and Ad Hoc Group of Experts on the Supply and Use of Gas and renewed the mandate of the Energy Efficiency 21 (EE21) Steering Committee for three years. The Committee also approved the establishment of a new subsidiary body—the Group of Experts on Global EE21—with a mandate of three years.

Addressing the activities of its subsidiary bodies, the Committee expressed satisfaction with the results of the fifth three-year phase of the EE21 Project (2006–2009); endorsed the 2009–2012 Project Plan; and endorsed the request of the EE21 Steering Committee to rename the Project the “Energy Efficiency 21 Programme”. It noted the progress achieved in the implementation of the work programme of the Working Party on Gas (WPG) in 2008 and 2009 and approved the WPG 2009–2012 work programme. With regard to the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Harmonization of Fossil Energy and Mineral Resources Terminology, the Committee approved its change of name to “Expert Group on Resource Classification”.

## Environment

The Committee on Environmental Policy, at its sixteenth session (Geneva, 20–23 October) [ECE/CEP/155], considered the environmental perfor-

mance review (EPR) of Uzbekistan and adopted related recommendations. It discussed implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and their contributions to the climate change agenda; ongoing cross-sectoral activities; and environmental indicators and monitoring, including the first meeting of the intersectoral Joint Task Force on Environmental Indicators (31 August–2 September) [ECE/CEP/2009/9]. The Committee agreed on the two themes for the Seventh Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (EFE): sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems; and greening the economy: mainstreaming the environment into economic development, which would be held in Astana, Kazakhstan, in September 2011. It also established a Steering Group to oversee the preparation of the Astana Assessment of Assessments report for the Conference. In other decisions, the Committee agreed to integrate climate change into EPRs; adopted the updated criteria for country eligibility for financial support; endorsed the environment programme performance for 2008–2009; and adopted its 2010–2011 work programme.

The Working Group on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment held its tenth session (Geneva, 3–4 September) [ECE/CEP/AC.10/2009/2]. With regard to the Astana state-of-the-environment assessment, the Working Group stressed the need to involve countries in the preparatory process in order to ensure the provision of valid, relevant and legitimate data. On the Guidelines for developing national strategies to use air quality monitoring as an environmental policy tool [ECE/CEP/2009/10] prepared by the Working Group, the Committee decided to consider their adoption at its Extended Bureau meeting in March 2010.

The Committee on Environmental Policy also convened a special session (Geneva, 27–29 January) [ECE/CEP/S/152 & Corr.1], which considered the EPR of Kyrgyzstan; approved the EFE reform plan annexed to the report; and adopted its work programme for 2009. At its April session [E/2009/37], the Commission endorsed the EFE reform plan.

### Housing and land management

The Committee on Housing and Land Management, at its seventieth session (Geneva, 23–25 September) [ECE/HBP/160], held a seminar on “Climate Neutral Cities” in conjunction with the session of the Committee. The seminar explored the overlap between energy efficiency in buildings, spatial planning and urban transport to provide States with policy guidelines on those issues. The Committee welcomed ECE’s decision at its sixty-third session (see p. 980) to develop an action plan on energy efficiency in housing; agreed to include climate neutrality in its work

programme under the item of urban environmental performance; and agreed to develop a study on energy efficiency in housing, identifying means and tools for adaptation and mitigation of climate change in cities.

The Committee also discussed various issues, including country profiles on the housing sector; improvement of urban environmental performance; land registration and land markets; housing modernization and management; monitoring implementation; building and construction safety; and cross-sectoral activities. The Chairperson of the Working Party on Land Administration reported on its sixth session (Geneva, 18–19 June) [ECE/HBP/WP.7/2009/9] and noted that a study with guidance on the application of fees and charges for cadastre and registration services had been issued [ECE/HBP/WP.7/2009/4]. The outcome of the first workshop on energy efficiency (Sofia, Bulgaria, 21–22 April) [ECE/HBP/2009/6] was also presented.

The Committee reviewed its 2008–2009 work programme and the draft work programme for 2010–2011, and approved the strategic framework for 2012–2013. In other activity, the International Forum on Energy Efficiency in Housing (Vienna 23–25 November) resulted in a draft action plan for energy-efficient housing in the ECE region.

### Statistics

The Conference of European Statisticians, at its fifty-seventh session (Geneva, 8–10 June) [ECE/CES/76], considered the implications of the meetings of its parent bodies—the March/April session of ECE and the February session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (see p. 1257). Two seminars were convened during the session, one on “Balancing principles of professional autonomy and accountability with the mandate to produce policy relevant data”, and the other on “Strategic issues in business statistics”. The Conference discussed the outcomes of in-depth reviews by the Conference Bureau on housing statistics [ECE/CES/2009/4 & Add.1]; agriculture statistics [ECE/CES/2009/5]; and statistics on labour cost [ECE/CES/2009/6]; as well as the in-depth review of statistical dissemination, communication and publications [ECE/CES/2009/7].

The *Principles and Guidelines on Confidentiality Aspects of Data Integration Undertaken for Statistical or Related Research Purposes* were circulated to countries for written consultation in April, and the revised version [ECE/CES/2009/3/Rev.1] was endorsed by the Conference. The Guidelines would be reviewed by the Conference in 2011. The Conference also endorsed the *Guidelines on the Use and Dissemination of Data on International Immigration to Facilitate their Use to Improve Emigration Data of Sending Countries*, sub-

ject to amendments [ECE/CES/2009/10/Add.2.] and the *Manual on Victimization Surveys*, subject to amendments [ECE/CES/2009/12/Add.2].

The Conference considered the report of the ECE Statistical Programme on 2008 and plans for 2009 [ECE/CES/2009/44] and endorsed the plans for the rest of 2009. It also endorsed the terms of reference of the Conference steering groups, task forces, groups of experts and organizing committees created by the Conference Bureau. The topics identified for seminars during the Conference's 2010 plenary session included "the impact of the global crises on statistical systems" and "spatial statistics/role of a spatial dimension in official statistics".

In other activity, the ECE Training Workshop on Dissemination of MDG Indicators and Statistical Information for Central Asian and other CIS countries (Astana, Kazakhstan, 23–25 November) and the Joint ECE/Eurostat Work Session on Statistical Data Confidentiality (Bilbao, Spain, 2–4 December) were held.

### **Economic cooperation and integration**

The Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration, at its fourth session (Geneva, 28–30 September) [ECE/CECI/2009/2], organized the policy discussion segment of the session as a High-level International Conference on "Promoting innovation-based entrepreneurial opportunities in the ECE region". With regard to programme implementation, the efforts of the Teams of Specialists and networks of experts increasingly focused on capacity-building, drawing on the results of normative work, and on combining the exchange of good practices in different substantive areas with elements of training. The Committee discussed issues such as innovative development and knowledge-based competitiveness; protection of intellectual property rights and strengthening their role in innovative development; entrepreneurship and small- and medium-sized businesses development; financial intermediation in support of innovative development; best practices in public-private partnerships; fostering international economic integration in the ECE region; and capacity-building activities. It also reviewed the status of its virtual platform for exchange of information.

The Committee took note of the proposal to establish an ECE Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) Centre and invited the Team of Specialists on PPPs to further consider the proposal at its December session. It also took note of the results of the 2008–2009 biennial performance evaluation [ECE/CECI/2009/5] and of the proposals for improving its work therein, and decided that its fifth session would take place from 1 to 3 December 2010.

### **Programme and organizational questions ECE reform**

At its 2009 session [E/2009/37], the Commission had before it a note by the Executive Secretary on the review of ECE reform [E/ECE/1451] that presented the main achievements of the reform; work directions that required further strengthening in their implementation; and new work directions and challenges in the ECE region. It also included two pending issues to be addressed by the Commission: the review of the frequency of the Commission's sessions and its engagement, in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), in the development of an early warning mechanism.

The Commission expressed satisfaction with the implementation of ECE reform, welcomed the achievements of the ECE reformed work programme, and encouraged further progress, including in the three cross-sectoral issues identified in the reform: MDGs, gender issues, and private sector and non-governmental involvement. It decided to postpone the review of the effects of the biennialization of the Commission sessions until its sixty-fourth (2011) session. It also decided not to pursue the development of an early warning mechanism with OSCE.

### **Latin America and the Caribbean**

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) did not meet in 2009. The Commission's thirty-third session was to be held in 2010.

ECLAC's 2008 and 2009 activities were described in its biennial report [E/2010/40].

### **Economic trends**

A report on the economic situation in and outlook for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2009–2010 [E/2010/19], indicated that after six years of uninterrupted growth, GDP fell by 1.9 per cent in 2009. The impact of the international crisis and ensuing drop in growth had an adverse effect on the labour market and the estimated unemployment rate in the ECLAC region rose to 8.3 per cent. Domestic activity levels also dropped in some countries due to tighter credit conditions in the private banking sector. The heaviest contractions in economic activity occurred in Mexico and some of the Central American and Caribbean countries, while South America registered positive growth rates. Many countries implemented countercyclical policies that allowed them to partially offset the negative components of domestic demand

and speed up the recovery process, which took hold in some countries during the second quarter, and in nearly all by the third quarter of the year. Consequently, growth was projected at 4.1 per cent in 2010.

### Activities in 2009

An ECLAC report on the Commission's work in 2008 and 2009 [E/2010/40] addressed activities undertaken and progress made under its 12 subprogrammes: regional integration and cooperation; production and innovation; macroeconomic policies and growth; equity and social cohesion; mainstreaming the gender perspective in regional development; population and development; public administration; sustainable development and human settlements; natural resources and infrastructure; statistics and economic projections; subregional activities in Mexico and Central America; and subregional activities in the Caribbean.

### Regional integration and cooperation

The ECLAC International Trade and Integration Division continued to strengthen the Commission's role as a forum for policy discussion and the exchange of experiences, as well as a catalyst for consensus-building. The Division's efforts were oriented towards supporting and strengthening the competitiveness of the region in the global economy through research and publications as well as technical cooperation. The flagship publication, *Latin America and the Caribbean in the World Economy 2008–2009: Crisis and opportunities for regional cooperation*, was released in August. It presented a medium-term view of international economic conditions and examined the variables that were most likely to have an impact on global scenarios and affect the position of the Latin America and Caribbean economies in the world economy. A document on the international crisis and regional cooperation, published under the title “Crisis internacional y oportunidades para la cooperación regional”, which was prepared for both the summit for Latin America and the Caribbean on integration and development (Costa do Sauípe, Brazil, December 2008) and the Fifth Summit of the Americas (Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, April 2009), was one of the Division's most frequently consulted publications. An inventory of measures taken by ECLAC countries to address the crisis, particularly in the area of trade, was also prepared and regularly updated during the year. The Division played a pioneering role in providing assistance to several countries in organizing public-sector institutional processes, strategic national visions, and public-private partnerships and consensus based on analysis of extraregional success stories of public-private partnerships. It also provided technical cooperation through the organization of seminars and workshops.

In other activities, ECLAC held the Twelfth Annual Conference on Global Economic Analysis “Trade Integration and Sustainable Development: Looking for an Inclusive World” (Santiago, Chile, 10–12 June), and served as a panellist at the inaugural session of the third China–Latin America Business Summit (Bogotá, Colombia, 25–26 November).

### Production and innovation

The ECLAC Production, Productivity and Management Division continued efforts to strengthen the capacity of Governments to formulate and implement policies and strategies to enhance the productivity and competitiveness of their countries' production structures. It increased awareness among countries of the region by providing analyses on relevant topics, including the global economic crisis; offered medium- and long-term policy recommendations for sector development; and served as a forum for discussion and regional consensus. In collaboration with FAO and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, ECLAC published *The Outlook for Agriculture and Rural Development in the Americas: A Perspective on Latin America and the Caribbean (2009)*, which was prepared for the Fifth Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas (Montego Bay, Jamaica, 28–29 October). The document provided decision-makers in the Americas with a reference report on trends in the agricultural sector and rural areas.

Through its Information Society Programme, ECLAC received technical cooperation requests from countries in the region interested in improving their national ICT programmes. Support was provided to Argentina on issues such as employment conditions in small and medium-sized enterprises and employment of women; Ecuador for the creation of clusters and local production systems; Nicaragua for formulation of its national science and technology plan, launched in December; and Uruguay for the establishment of an enterprise monitoring centre. ECLAC also signed a comprehensive technical cooperation agreement with the Government of El Salvador covering a number of areas, including innovation, science and technology, and social inclusion.

### Macroeconomic policies and growth

In the context of the financial and economic crisis, the ECLAC Economic Development Division focused on providing rapid analytical and technical support to Latin American and Caribbean countries in order to assist them in assessing the impacts of the crisis and formulating policy response. The Division presented analytical studies on unemployment insurance and minimum wage and trade union issues, among other

topics, through a workshop on the situation of labour market institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean (Santiago, April). The workshop analysed policy options for labour market integration and the role of such policies in a crisis context. ECLAC also contributed to the policy debate on the role of fiscal policy in the region in the context of a global crisis through the organization of three high-level meetings in Montevideo, Uruguay in May; San Salvador, El Salvador in August; and Santiago, Chile in September.

The Division continued to disseminate up-to-date information on macroeconomic policy topics and to promote information-sharing through a number of documents, including the publication *The reactions of the Governments of the Americas to the international crisis: an overview of policy measures* [LC/L.3025/Rev.6], which was updated monthly, as well as *Macroeconomic policies in times of crisis: options and perspectives* [LC/W.275]. The latter publication analysed the economic situation of the region at the onset of the global turmoil; the channels through which the crisis spread and its negative effects on the region; the relationship between macroeconomic fluctuations and fiscal policy; and the limitations of public policies as a means of containing the effects of the crisis. The *Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2008–2009* [LC/G.2410-P] was an important source of information and analysis relating to the economic situation in the region.

### Equity and social cohesion

In 2009, as countries began to feel the effects of the global financial crisis on the social situation, the ECLAC Social Development Division focused on two areas of work: monitoring how the social impact of the crisis was affecting poverty levels, unemployment and vulnerability; and monitoring and supporting countercyclical social policies and programmes and social safety nets established in previous years. The Division contributed to a fuller understanding of the region's structural social problems through its research and dissemination activities. The 2009 edition of the publication *Social Panorama of Latin America* linked trends in poverty and income distribution with social protection systems and emphasized how those systems responded to the social impacts of the crisis; it included a section on the "care economy", with information on paid and unpaid work from a gender perspective, which highlighted inequalities and persistent imbalances in the sexual division of labour.

Several ECLAC publications focused on issues relating to social inclusion and a "sense of belonging". In November alone, three publications on topics such as the new constitutionalism in Latin America, identity and belonging, cosmopolitanism and difference, and

contemporary challenges for social cohesion were released. In addition, ECLAC held an international seminar on "The Sense of Belonging in the Twenty-first Century" at its headquarters in Santiago. In other activities, a workshop on e-health was held in November, and within the framework of the 2009 Global Forum on ICT and Innovation for Education (Monterrey, Mexico, September), the Division organized a regional panel on "Learning and teaching with ICTs: challenges for Latin America". The Division also disseminated and shared information through the website of the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Social Institutions, which comprised over 1,332 institutions from 33 countries and served as a platform for knowledge-based social management.

### Mainstreaming gender in regional development

The ECLAC Division for Gender Affairs continued to generate knowledge and enhance capacity for gender equality and the empowerment of women, and to contribute to gender mainstreaming in the countries of the region. The Division contributed, in particular, to raising the profile of issues on the policy agendas of the region's countries, such as the care economy and women's unpaid work, which were particularly relevant in the context of the economic and financial crisis. In response to the Quito Consensus [YUN 2007, p. 1031], a set of policy recommendations addressing the need to generate evidence and integrate a gender perspective in social protection policies, was being implemented in many countries through policy reforms, labour policies, social protection pension schemes and monetary transfers. ECLAC provided support and technical cooperation for those efforts. A high-level seminar on analysis of the impact of the economic crisis from a gender perspective (Mexico City, July) yielded new knowledge and a commitment by civil society to replicate the debate at the country level. The debate had already occurred in Colombia, the Dominican Republic and Bolivia and similar meetings were planned in other countries of Central and South America.

The Commission also convened the forty-third meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (Port of Spain, 7–8 July) [LC/L.3177], which discussed the main regional challenges as identified by Governments in their response to a questionnaire; preparations for the eleventh (2010) session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean in Brasília; presentation of the website of the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean; and a progress report on the UN Secretary-General's campaign to end violence against women.

In other efforts, ECLAC promoted the adoption of a gender perspective by countries of the region, and 15 countries had integrated supplementary gender indicators into their databases and documents relating to monitoring progress towards the MDGs. Seven programmes that used those indicators to monitor Goal 3 (promote gender equality and empower women) had been established.

### Population and development

The ECLAC Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre–Population Division was guided by mandates arising from international agreements, especially the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development [YUN 1994, p. 955] and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002 [YUN 2002, p. 1194]. ECLAC provided technical cooperation services to countries of the region on a wide range of population-related topics. On the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the Conference, ECLAC prepared a comprehensive report and organized a regional seminar on progress in implementing the Programme of Action in the region with the support of the UNFPA (Santiago, 7 October). In addition, the Division prepared a technical guide, which helped countries of the region to evaluate progress achieved with respect to population and development policies as well as identify key challenges to the implementation of the Programme of Action and actions to be taken to achieve its goals by 2014. The Division helped to improve national capacity for conducting the 2010 round of censuses through the organization of regional workshops dealing with key census-related issues. Recommendations arising from the workshops were presented to representatives of national statistical institutes at the fifth meeting of the Statistical Conference of the Americas (Bogotá, 10–13 August).

Several activities focused on migration and ethnic issues, including support for the development and follow-up of the Plan of Action of the Ibero-American Forum on Migration and Development. The Division developed a database on indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants that included information on migration, health, employment and other variables.

### Public administration

The Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) continued its role as the leading voice in ECLAC for development planning, performance-informed budgeting and public management in the region, at both the national and subnational levels, through its research, technical cooperation and training activities. It sought to foster a long-term balance between the State, civil society

and the market economy through the art of governing for sustainable economic, social and institutional development.

ILPES/ECLAC offered comprehensive training through more than 200 international, national and e-learning courses during the 2008–2009 biennium, which benefited 4,746 trainees from 23 different countries. In other activities, the Institute provided technical cooperation services to Governments and other stakeholders from 12 ECLAC countries; conducted applied research that resulted in the publication of more than 13 documents; and supported and developed knowledge networks, including a new application on the Institute's website—Network for Interchanging and Disseminating Excellent Experiences for Achieving the MDGs—designed to increase knowledge and sharing of experiences among public officials and development experts.

The Division conducted regional, territorial and sectoral economic and social planning activities related to State modernization and public policymaking. It also provided support to countries of the region in their efforts to reform public administration and to achieve greater fiscal transparency.

### Sustainable development and human settlements

The ECLAC Sustainable Development and Human Settlements Division continued to work on interrelationships between economic growth, environmental protection, urban development and social equity. It carried out technical cooperation and studies that strengthened the capacity of the countries of the region to assess their progress towards sustainable development. It also coordinated the third Regional Implementation Forum on Sustainable Development (Antigua, Guatemala, 26–27 November), at which an ECLAC document was presented to serve as the basis for discussion of the main advances, lessons learned and challenges for the region in the areas of, among others, mining, transport, chemicals and waste management.

The Division conducted eight studies on climate change mitigation, including evaluation of carbon markets and economic adaptation in the ECLAC region, which were summarized in the publication *Economics of climate change in Latin America and the Caribbean—Summary 2009* [LC/G.2425] that was presented at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Copenhagen, 7–18 December) (see p. 1015). It co-organized the Meeting of Ministers and High-level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean, at which a substantive study on the housing deficit and urban management was presented.

In other efforts, the Division provided support to enable countries to cope with the estimated increase of 40 million inhabitants in urban populations over the next five years; launched a course to help design projects and programmes on human security, energy efficiency and climate change; and developed and maintained networks of technical experts, which had helped to alleviate problems stemming from frequent political changes within government institutions.

### **Natural resources and infrastructure**

The ECLAC Natural Resources and Infrastructure Division produced analyses and research and provided technical cooperation services to Governments, civil society and academia aimed at improving public policy formulation in the management of natural resources and the provision of public utility and infrastructure services. ECLAC prepared a document on transnational infrastructure projects, which analysed investment in infrastructure in various countries and proposed a methodology for distributing the economic impacts of those investments among countries. The methodology was disseminated to 80 participants during a training course in August. In coordination with other partners, the Division prepared the document "Contribution of energy services to the MDGs and to poverty alleviation in Latin America and the Caribbean", which was released in October.

To support the Peruvian National Superintendency of Sanitation Services in the analysis of a new water law, water utilities regulation, sustainable tariff-setting, watershed conservation and institutional mechanisms for the promotion of private-sector participation in the provision of drinking water supply and sanitation services, ECLAC organized a seminar on international investment protection agreements, sustainability of infrastructure investments and regulatory and contractual measures (Lima, Peru, January), which was attended by government and sectoral representatives.

### **Statistics and economic projections**

The ECLAC Statistics and Economic Projections Division continued its work in the systematization and dissemination of statistics and supported countries of the region in strengthening their national statistical systems and capacities in the areas of national accounts, household surveys, the production of environmental statistics and the development of indicators for measuring progress towards the MDGs. By the end of the 2008–2009 biennium, 28 countries had data available for calculating most MDG indicators, 18 more than at the end of 2007.

The Division continued to publish the *Statistical Yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean*, which remained an important source of statistical information as evidenced by some 866,460 downloads of the document per year—a total 50 per cent higher than the target of 600,000 yearly downloads set for the biennium. In addition, the Division's website exceeded its target of 15,000 monthly visits by almost 2,500, indicating increased interest among users in the data disseminated through the website.

The fifth meeting of the ECLAC Statistical Conference of the Americas (Bogotá, 10–13 August) [LC/L.3125] held three seminars on: the development of national statistical systems: recent experiences, learning and assessment; the 2010 census round; and the use of administrative records for statistical purposes. With regard to the examination of the Conference's biennial programme of activities, the meeting discussed institution-building, human resource training, technical and methodological capacities for generating high-quality statistical information in the region, and cooperation between member countries of the Conference and international agencies. The Conference welcomed the initiative of ECLAC to remedy the shortage of experts in census information management by holding three intensive regional courses in demographic analysis for development starting in 2010 or 2011, and appealed to international agencies and organizations for securing the necessary funding.

### **Subregional activities**

#### *Caribbean*

The ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, continued to strengthen its contribution to policymaking in the subregion through the delivery of substantive research outputs, technical cooperation, and training and capacity-building support. Studies were prepared on public-private partnerships and on rising global food and oil prices and the resulting impact on Caribbean economies. A study on the food crisis, which conveyed information on the policy shifts required to mitigate the impact of higher food prices on food security, was presented to the Fifth Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas (Jamaica, October).

The subregional headquarters provided a wide range of training and development activities. It helped to enhance the capacities of public officials and technical staff in the Caribbean during the 2008–2009 biennium with some 569 persons, including 263 women, benefiting from training and consultations. A training workshop on the socio-economic impact of disasters using the ECLAC methodology was convened (Jamaica, October). In addition, ECLAC held a high-

level seminar on development policy in the Caribbean (Trinidad and Tobago, October) that brought together 36 high-profile experts, policymakers and academics of the subregion to explore the evolution of development thinking in the Caribbean.

The subregional headquarters continued to highlight developments in the world economy with respect to international trade, tourism, remittance flows, foreign direct investment and external financing. At the Fifth Summit of the Americas in April, presentations by the subregional headquarters during the side events—on gender mainstreaming, social exclusion, the impact of the global financial crisis and progress towards the achievement of the MDGs—helped to inform the policy debate. The subregional headquarters also initiated a review of the economics of climate change in the Caribbean, which focused on economic issues relevant to climate change, examined the economic principles of uncertainty and the precautionary approach, and addressed the key drivers behind climate change.

### *Mexico and Central America*

In 2009, the global economic and financial crisis became the main concern for public policymakers, owing to its recessive impact on countries in the northern region of Central America and the Caribbean, which resulted from the subregion's dependence on the United States economy. The ECLAC subregional headquarters in Mexico redirected its activities to respond to the crisis. It prepared a document on confronting the crisis, which presented the causes of the crisis, the channels through which it was transmitted and its economic and social effects, together with a set of policy recommendations. The subregional headquarters reoriented reports, technical cooperation, expert meetings, projects and training activities to the new scenario; provided tools and timely inputs for policy analysis, design and implementation; and provided technical cooperation services to Governments.

In other activity, ECLAC continued to respond to Government requests for the evaluation of the socio-economic and environmental impacts of extreme climatic events in the subregion. The subregional headquarters constructed scenarios, assessed the economic impacts of climate change for the region and discussed policy options with key stakeholders in the Central American region. The ministers of environment requested and received an interim report as input for their negotiations during the United Nations Climate Change Conference in December (see p. 1015) and for the formulation of regional and national strategies.

The subregional headquarters cooperated with beneficiaries to strengthen their understanding and analytical knowledge with regard to the development agenda and policy options. Assistance was directed to-

wards a wide range of economic and social stakeholders, including policymakers, public officials, NGOs, civil society associations, academics, researchers and experts. By the end of 2009, some 730 beneficiaries from the subregion had received services in the areas of poverty reduction and economic development and 850 beneficiaries had received services relating to trade, integration and sustainable development.

## **Western Asia**

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) did not meet in 2009, in accordance with its decision in 2005 [YUN 2005, p. 1120] to hold its biennial sessions in even years in order to be in harmony with the submission of the UN strategic framework. The Commission's twenty-sixth session was to be held in 2010. ESCWA 2008–2009 activities were described in its biennial report [E/ESCWA/26/5(Part I)].

### **Economic trends**

In 2009, the ESCWA region saw a decline in growth according to the summary of the survey of economic and social developments in the ESCWA region, 2009–2010 [E/2010/20]. The region's GDP averaged 1.9 per cent, compared to 6.0 per cent in 2008. Developing countries were affected by the plunge of financial and real estate asset prices and the collapse of commodity prices, including energy, metal and food, while the shortages of liquidity at local and international money markets became a destabilizing factor for financial sectors and national economies.

The end of the credit crisis and a gradual recovery in the world demand led to a resumption of positive, forward-looking activities in developing countries, in particular China and India. Dollar liquidity had shown signs of recovery since the second quarter of 2009; the price of crude oil had stabilized; and the monetary and fiscal authorities of ESCWA member countries had successfully defended the region's banking sector. However, the economic situation remained uncertain with ongoing de-leveraging of the financial sector of several countries in the region. Several countries, mainly the region's non-oil exporters, had become more reliant on capital inflows to finance their current account deficits. The economic sentiment of the region during the fourth quarter of 2009 could be described as cautious optimism and GDP was forecast to rise to 4.6 per cent in 2010.

### **Activities in 2009**

In 2009, ESCWA activities under its 2008–2009 work programme [E/ESCWA/26/5(Part I)] focused on

seven subprogrammes: integrated management of natural resources for sustainable development; integrated social policies; economic development and integration; ICT for regional integration; statistics for evidence-based policymaking; the advancement of women; and conflict mitigation and development.

### **Natural resources management for sustainable development**

The ESCWA Sustainable Development and Productivity Division was responsible for implementing this subprogramme, which aimed at improving the sustainable management and use of natural resources in the region, and promoting regional cooperation and harmonization in the management of water, energy and the production sectors. The submission of regional reports on agriculture, rural development, land, drought and desertification to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development contributed to raising awareness and building capacity on the implementation of land management policies and measures for improved rural development. Two meetings were convened, one on sustainable land management as a best practice to enhance rural development in the ESCWA region (Beirut, Lebanon, 25–27 March) and one on adopting the sustainable livelihoods approach for promoting rural development in the ESCWA region (Beirut, 21–22 December) [E/ESCWA/SDPD/2009/WG.6/10].

ESCWA worked to assist Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen in adopting measures to improve water supply and sanitation in their national water policies. In addition, partnerships with NGOs and institutions resulted in the adoption of initiatives to enhance the competitiveness of small and medium-sized agricultural and manufacturing enterprises, using environmentally-sound technology. ESCWA activities also led to a number of initiatives involving the use of modern tools and techniques to enhance productivity and competitiveness in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors, focusing on *zaatar* cultivation and garment manufacturing.

### **Social policy**

The ESCWA Social Development Division was responsible for implementing this subprogramme, which aimed at strengthening coherent and integrated national social policies that were region-specific and culturally sensitive, and encouraging community development action with a view to reducing social inequity and enhancing social stability. In the management of social policy, advocacy efforts and policy advice on integrated social and population policies, five countries either adopted measures to support the integration of social policy or pursued technical

assistance from ESCWA in that field. The advocacy and capacity development efforts of the Commission supported member countries in the formulation of national youth policies and in the preparation of national reports.

Advocacy and capacity development in the area of youth-targeted policies and programmes was received positively by 13 member countries. ESCWA implemented a regional project in which focal points were trained on the collection of youth policy-related information and the translation of the findings into national reports. ESCWA also organized, in collaboration with the Family Development Foundation in the United Arab Emirates, the expert group meeting on Reinforcing Social Equity: Integrating Youth into the Development Process (Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 29–31 March) [E/ESCWA/SDD/2009/3], which contributed to improving decision-making and guiding national efforts towards the adoption of strategies aimed at integrating youth issues into the development process. To foster regional dialogue, ESCWA organized the Arab Forum on Social Policy (Beirut, 28–29 October), which focused on the importance of integrated social policy and protection for regional development.

### **Economic development and integration**

The ESCWA Economic Development and Globalization Division was responsible for implementing this subprogramme, which aimed at strengthening macroeconomic policymaking for short-term economic growth and sustainable economic development in member countries, negotiation of trade and investment agreements, and facilitation of trade. ESCWA contributed to the 2009 issue of the publication *World Economic Situation and Prospects* and the November issue of the *Regional Economic Forecast*, which focused on assessing the impact of the global financial crisis and food inflation. Four ESCWA national training workshops contributed to the upgrading of the negotiation skills of 90 Government officials on bilateral investment agreements and double taxation avoidance.

ESCWA continued to support the implementation of the ESCWA transport agreements. A key development was the adoption by the Arab Economic, Social and Development Summit (Kuwait, 19–20 January) of an agreement on the Arab railway network, based on the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq. The number of countries that had adopted the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq increased to 12 and the number of policy measures adopted by member countries in relation to implementation of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq had increased to 40 by the end of 2009, compared with 31 in 2007. The Commission also held a workshop on setting regional and

national road traffic casualty reduction targets in the ESCWA region (Abu Dhabi, 16–17 June) [E/ESCWA/EDGD/2009/4].

In other activity, ESCWA assessed trade policy trends, trade facilitation and liberalization measures and accession processes in member countries, and provided related policy advice and advocacy. The Commission provided a forum in which the Arab business community could be briefed on the latest developments concerning WTO negotiations and discuss their implications, as well as on issues concerning the global economic crisis. ESCWA also organized a workshop on Measurement of e-Commerce and External Trade Indicators (Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 30 March–1 April) [E/ESCWA/SD/2009/7], which discussed the importance of e-commerce statistics related to international merchandise trade and the preparation and publication of external trade indicators. The sixth session of the Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade and Economic Globalization in the Countries of the ESCWA Region (Beirut, 6–7 July) [E/ESCWA/EDGD/2009/IG.2/7] was also convened.

### ICT and related development issues

The ESCWA Information and Communication Technology Division was responsible for implementing this subprogramme, which aimed at narrowing the digital divide to build an inclusive development-oriented information society and knowledge-based economy. The Information Society Portal for the ESCWA Region was launched, offering a dynamic, bilingual (English/Arabic) regional e-service database. The Expert Group Meeting on Developing the Information and Communication Technologies Sector in the ESCWA region (Beirut, 11–12 March) highlighted the challenges facing the development of a self-reliant and sustainable ICT sector in the region and proposed solutions to overcome those obstacles. With regard to the Conference on Regional Follow-up to the Outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society (wsis) (Damascus, Syria, 16–18 June) [E/ESCWA/ICTD/2009/13], the principal outcomes were the Regional Plan of Action and the Arab ICT Strategy; a roadmap for the implementation and follow-up of wsis-related activities; and the creation of the Global Alliance for ICT and Development Regional Arab Network.

In partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, ESCWA implemented a project on ICT for education in Iraq which would establish several learning centres throughout the country and was expected to increase ICT literacy of teachers and other staff. ESCWA also held the second meeting of the Technical Cooperation Knowledge-sharing Network (TC Network) (Beirut,

16–18 February) [E/ESCWA/PPTCD/2009/1/Rev.1] to follow up on implementation of the recommendations made at the preparatory meeting in 2007 and to enhance coordination among TC Network members. The TC Network website was launched during the meeting.

### Statistics

The ESCWA Statistics Division was responsible for implementing this subprogramme, which aimed at improving the production and use of harmonized and comparable economic, social and sectoral statistics, including gender-disaggregated data, thereby allowing for informed and evidence-based decision-making. ESCWA assisted member countries in achieving 67 per cent implementation of the fundamental principles of official statistics. It also established a virtual library on national statistical systems, facilitated information exchange on best practice, disseminated guidelines and supported capacity-building of national statistical offices. In its role as secretariat to the Regional Task Force on Population and Housing Censuses, ESCWA hosted the fifth meeting of the Task Force (Beirut, 23–24 March).

The Regional Working Group of the ESCWA Statistical Committee (Beirut, 10 February) [E/ESCWA/SD/2009/2] discussed topics on coordinating the positions of ESCWA countries for the upcoming session of the United Nations Statistical Commission; determining the positions of the region's countries on the *Delhi Group Manual on Surveys of Informal Employment and the Informal Sector*; preparing for the Fourth Forum on Arab Statistical Capacity-Building; and following up on the World Forum on Measuring and Fostering the Progress of Societies.

In other activity, ESCWA organized the Expert Group Meeting on Poverty Measurement (Beirut, 28–29 April) [E/ESCWA/SD/2009/8], which brought together regional and international experts and concluded with a set of recommendations on statistics and poverty measurement. The Commission also held expert group meetings on energy statistics in March [E/ESCWA/SD/2009/WG.1/4] and on gender statistics in October [E/ESCWA/SD/2009/WG.2/5] and [E/ESCWA/SD/2009/WG.3/3].

### Advancement of women

The ESCWA Centre for Women (ECW) was responsible for implementing the subprogramme, which aimed at increasing the focus on women and gender issues with a view to reducing the gender imbalance and empowering women. ECW organized the fourth session of the Committee on Women under the theme “Promoting Economic Participation of Arab Women”, (Beirut, 21–23 October) [E/ESCWA/OES/2010/1], which discussed the ways in which mem-

ber countries and regional and international organizations could contribute to creating a more supportive environment to enable women to access economic and financial resources, and be involved in economic activity. The Committee also approved the proposed programme of work for ECW for the 2010–2011 biennium and adopted a resolution on the follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the Arab region, which would be submitted to the twenty-sixth ESCWA session in 2010, and which called for the Commission to establish an index on gender and development and study the feasibility of a gender observatory for the Arab region.

ECW supported member countries in reporting to international organizations, with particular focus on the national reports required to be submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the progress reports in follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action. Following requests from member countries, ECW undertook several advisory missions, including training workshops on gender mainstreaming national development plans, support for report-writing for international organizations, and training on leadership and decision-making. The activities of ECW continued to raise member country awareness of the importance of internationally agreed conventions; the fact that in 2009 Qatar ratified CEDAW and Jordan lifted its reservation on the movement of persons reflected the success of those efforts. ECW also produced an in-depth study and organized an expert group meeting with participants from countries faced with ongoing conflict to identify and explore the ways in which the role of women could be strengthened in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

### **Conflict mitigation and development**

The ESCWA Section for Emerging and Conflict-related Issues (ECRI) was responsible for implementing the subprogramme, which aimed to increase understanding by member countries of the impact of conflict and enhance their capacity to identify, assess,

predict and respond to challenges posed by conflict with a view to reducing its impact on development. In 2009, ESCWA expanded its endeavours to strengthen State institutions in member countries. The human and institutional development interventions implemented by the Commission through ECRI work had yielded focused policy recommendations, enhancing the skills of public sector officials and contributing to supporting locally led management reform of public institutions. Within its 2008–2009 workplan, ESCWA trained 607 civil servants from member countries through its institutional development programmes, providing them with the tools needed to instigate modernization and reform strategies and processes in their respective administrations. More than 20 per cent of those trained had since become trainers, creating a cadre of experts capable of disseminating the knowledge and skills acquired. During the 2008–2009 biennium, the subprogramme had received 13 requests from member countries for technical assistance in the area of institutional development, reflecting its success in designing and implementing tailored intervention, training modules and programmes to enhance the capacity of member countries to assess and respond to the socio-economic and political challenges posed by conflict and instability in the region.

In other activities, ECRI organized the Expert Group Meeting on “Strengthening Good Governance Practices in Conflict Affected Countries: Current Priorities and Future Interventions” (Beirut, 27–28 February) [E/ESCWA/ECRI/2009/3]. The meeting brought together local, regional and international experts and representatives of ESCWA member countries to discuss issues relating to the roles of good governance, human rights, social and economic development and peacebuilding. The subprogramme also organized, in collaboration with the Heinrich Boell Foundation, a brainstorming session on the root causes of ethnic and sectarian tensions in the ESCWA region (Beirut, 26 August) [E/ESCWA/ECRI/2009/4] to discuss and solicit input and comments on a draft study entitled “Unpacking the Dynamics of Ethno-Sectarian Tensions: A Youth-Focus Group Analysis”.