

**STATEMENT OF MR. BADER OMAR ALDAFA  
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL  
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA (ESCWA)  
AT THE OPENING OF THE SENIOR OFFICIALS' SEGMENT  
OF THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION  
BEIRUT, 17 MAY 2010**

Your excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the twenty-sixth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) here at United Nations House in Beirut. The primary objective of the Commission is to provide services to its member countries and their people on a bi-dimensional level, combining both regional and international perspectives. These constitute the starting point for the activities of ESCWA and the basis upon which it seeks to accomplish its developmental mission, a mission that involves each and every individual and organization.

Your participation in this meeting is, I believe, clear evidence of the efforts that are continuously being exerted to ensure the success of the activities of the Commission. It is also confirmation of our strong commitment to the issues and priorities of the region and the need for joint efforts in order to achieve regional integration.

The ESCWA region has long been witness to periods of political turmoil and violent conflict. Today, a number of factors contribute to the persistence of these conditions of insecurity and instability, which have had such dire effects on economic and social development in our region.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Under such conditions, continuous re-examination of the priorities of our programmes and plans is needed. Integrated social policies require the utmost attention, as do such other issues as providing employment opportunities for young people and the generations to come in order to secure a bright future for them; involving young people in development programmes and plans; increasing the participation of women in economic, social and political life; and mitigating the negative effects of inflation and high prices.

For these reasons and many others, ESCWA continually monitors conditions, changes and aspirations in the region so as to fully reflect them in its programmes and activities. It is also working to achieve regional integration through appropriate legislative frameworks with a view to bringing to fruition the universal commitment to make the right to development a right for all.

In addition, ESCWA provides support to its member countries to mobilize resources and make optimal use of the immense assets they possess, in particular their human resources. It is clear that the people-based approach that emerged following the international economic and financial crisis must constitute the basis for achieving sustainable economic and social development in the region.

The agenda of this session includes a number of priorities and issues of concern to the region and its countries. It is my hope that your deliberations on those priorities and issues will have a positive impact on the general direction of the programmes and activities of the Commission.

In conclusion, I would express my firm belief that ESCWA does not work in a vacuum. On the contrary, it is the voice of those it represents, continually seeking to work with them in full partnership on setting priorities, and planning, implementing and evaluating activities so as to be an active support to them in the present and a solid partner to them in the future.

I am confident that your discussions and deliberations over the next two days will be instrumental in directing the work of ESCWA in the period ahead in accordance with the priorities and concerns of your countries.

Once again, I welcome you all to the twenty-sixth session of the Commission. I wish you a pleasant stay in Beirut and a truly successful meeting.

Thank you.