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Press Release

Opening of ESCWA 26th Session

Jordan Chosen as chair, UAE and Bahrain as Vice-chair and Syria Rapporteur

Beirut, 17 May 2010 (United Nations Information Service)-- United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia opened this morning the senior officials' segment of its 26th Session at the UN House, Beirut. The Session's Ministerial segment will be held this Wednesday under the auspices of Lebanese Speaker Nabih Berri.

As is the custom at the beginning of every Session, the chairmanship is assumed by one of the member countries. By virtue of this rule, Jordan was chosen as chair for the coming two years, while United Arab Emirates and Bahrain were selected as vice-chair, and Syria as rapporteur.

Opening addresses were delivered by UN Under-Secretary-General and ESCWA Executive Secretary Bader AlDafa, and by representative of Yemen, Muhammad Al Hawiri, in his capacity as the chairman of the 25th Session.

AlDafa considered in his speech that the hard conditions the region is passing through gravely affect socio-economic development and that the high-level participation in the Session is a confirmation of member countries' commitment to the region's issues and priorities. Their participation also represents a strong commitment to the issues and priorities of the region and the need for joint efforts in order to achieve regional integration. AlDafa said, "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."

Al Hawiri said for his part that different international organizations, such as ESCWA, assume a big role in assisting the efforts of regional governments to achieve their development goals, and this role cannot be overlooked. The Yemeni official emphasized the importance of issues on the Session's agenda, namely the issue of youth, which is significant on the economic, social and development fronts, especially since youths represent the biggest social strata in ESCWA member countries.

The meeting presented the report of the Executive Secretary on the programme performance for the biennium 2008-2009, which gave an overview of the main achievements of seven subprogrammes: integrated management of natural resources for sustainable development; integrated social policies; economic development and integration; information and communication technology for development; statistics for evidence-based policymaking; advancement of women; and conflict mitigation and development. Participants discussed the follow-up to the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the Regional Commission at its twenty-fifth session, the technical

cooperation programme and regional advisory services to member countries, the financial status of the Regional Commission, and the reports of its subsidiary bodies on their sessions.

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