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**MESSAGE TO 26TH MINISTERIAL SESSION OF THE
UN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA
Beirut, 19 May 2010**

*Delivered by Mr. Bader Omar Al Dafa,
Executive Secretary, ESCWA*

It is a pleasure to convey my best wishes to all the participants in this ministerial session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.

You have come together to advance social progress and development throughout the region. You meet at a time when major challenges, including climate change, water scarcity and the food crisis, continue to threaten the region. The recession continues to affect every part of the world. Now more than ever, we must boost decent work, foster social inclusion, and reduce inequalities. And we must make a special effort to expand hope and possibilities for young people.

I am encouraged that your policy discussions will focus on youth, and that you are promoting a joint conversation among young people, experts and policymakers to improve opportunities for youth throughout the ESCWA region. Your discussions will also benefit the wider global dialogue on youth issues. The United Nations International Year of Youth begins on 12 August 2010. Through this effort, we hope to recognize the contributions and advance the full and effective participation of youth in all aspects of society. I strongly welcome the adoption of a declaration on Youth that renews the commitment to effective long-term policies tailored to the priorities and aspirations of young people.

I also welcome your focus on human and institutional capacity. Public sector modernization and administrative reform are central for the attainment of national development goals and for the building of resilient States. I count on you to provide credible and creative policy options that are tailored to local needs and that will lead to more effective government, stronger communities and a brighter future for all in the ESCWA region.

Thank you for your hard work, collaboration and determination. I wish you a productive session.