

Regional economic and social activities

The five regional commissions continued in 2008 to provide technical cooperation, including advisory services, to their member States to promote programmes and projects and provide training to enhance national capacity-building in various sectors. Four of them—the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), 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)—held regular sessions during the year. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) did not meet in 2008, but was scheduled to do so in 2009.

The Executive Secretaries of the commissions continued to meet periodically to exchange views and coordinate activities and positions on major development issues. In July, the Economic and Social Council held a dialogue with the Executive Secretaries on the theme “The regional dimension of the themes of the high-level segment for 2008”.

In 2008, ECA organized its annual session as part of the first 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. At its March–April session, ECA met on the theme “Meeting Africa’s New Development Challenges in the 21st Century”, and adopted a ministerial statement in which Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and to the AU New Partnership for Africa’s Development programme as the shared framework for development and global partnership.

Meeting in April on the theme “Energy security and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific”, ESCAP adopted a resolution calling upon all members and associate members to cooperate in developing renewable energy technologies through the sharing of policy and technological experiences.

During its June session, ECLAC held a regional consultation in preparation for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, holding panel discussions on financing and cooperation, mobilization of domestic resources, systemic issues, and gender policies in financing for development. In addition, ECLAC approved the admission of the Cayman Islands as an associate member.

At its May session, ESCWA reviewed financing for development in the region, in preparation for the Follow-up International Conference, and strengthening regional cooperation for achieving the MDGs. It launched a portal for information gathering and issued a report on the MDGs in the Arab region as at 2007. In July, the Economic and Social Council approved the admission of the Sudan as a member of ESCWA.

The regional commissions also found themselves dealing with the effects of the financial crisis that reached significant global proportions towards the end of the year. Within the context of their mandates, the Commissions began to consider what actions they might take to mitigate the effects of that crisis in their regions.

Regional cooperation

In 2008, the United Nations continued to strengthen cooperation among its regional commissions, between them and other UN entities, and with regional and international organizations.

On 8 February (**decision 2008/209**), the Economic and Social Council decided that the theme for the regional cooperation item of its 2008 substantive session would be “The regional dimension of the themes of the high-level segment for 2008”. Accordingly, the Council held a dialogue with the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions on that subject on 7 July.

Meetings of Executive Secretaries. As noted by the Secretary-General in his annual report on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields [E/2008/15], the 2008 annual meeting of the regional commissions, held by the current coordinator—the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)—took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 16 and 17 June. The Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions also met in New York on the margins of the Economic and Social Council session in July, and of the Second Committee of the General Assembly in October. Notable on their agenda were the regional commissions’ coordinated actions and efforts to support UN system-wide coherence at the regional and glo-

bal levels, as well as their substantive contributions to, and regional perspectives on, the challenges of climate change, food and energy security, and the ongoing economic and financial crisis. Those issues were also addressed as part of their dialogues with the Council and the Second Committee.

The Executive Secretaries and selected senior staff held their first retreat at the United Nations System Staff College in Turin, Italy, in September, and identified the following main areas for the regional commissions to foster their interregional cooperation and exchange of best practices: statistics, including statistical alignment with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and international standards; energy security and efficiency; transport infrastructure, border crossing and facilitation; aid for trade; disaster risk reduction; and social policy. In addition, two side events were organized at the margins of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus [YUN 2002, p. 953], held in Doha, Qatar, from 29 November to 2 December (see p. 1072), in which the regional commissions discussed the issues of financing for development and the economics of gender, and the role of regional cooperation and global partnership in financing for development.

Addenda to the Secretary-General's report [E/2008/15/Add.1,2] contained the texts of resolutions and decisions adopted at recent meetings of the regional commissions that called for the Council's attention or action.

By **decision 2008/234** of 23 July, the Council took note of the Secretary-General's reports on: regional cooperation and the economic situation in Europe, 2007–2008 [E/2008/16]; the economic and social conditions in Africa, 2008 [E/2008/17]; the economic and social survey of Asia and the Pacific, 2008 [E/2008/18]; the economic situation and outlook of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2007–2008 [E/2008/19]; and the survey of economic and social developments in the ESCWA region, 2007–2008 [E/2008/20].

The Council also adopted resolutions on: the venue of the twenty-fifth (2008) session of ESCWA (see p. 1135); the restructuring of the conference structure of ESCAP (see p. 1114); the admission of the Sudan as a member of ESCWA (see p. 1134); and the venue of the thirty-third (2010) session of ECLAC (see p. 1129).

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

Global economic and financial crisis

In a later report [E/2009/15], the Secretary-General drew attention to the unfolding of the worst global economic and financial crisis since the Great Depression.

The crisis, which became full-blown in September, was rapidly spreading to developing countries and emerging market economies, which were affected by lower export revenues because of lower volumes and prices, less tourism, increased unemployment, and decreased capital flows, foreign direct investment and remittances, along with fiscal budgetary constraints.

Although unprecedented measures had been taken to avert the worsening of the crisis, the global recovery would be protracted and further policy action would be required to help restore confidence and to relieve the financial markets of the uncertainties that were affecting the prospects for economic recovery. While the prices of food and fuel had decreased since the peak they reached in July, the commodities markets remained highly volatile and uncertain. According to World Bank figures, higher food prices were estimated to have increased global poverty by some 130 million to 135 million people. Meanwhile, fuel prices experienced sharp swings, with oil prices peaking in July and declining by 70 per cent at the end of the year. According to the International Energy Agency, current global trends in energy supply and consumption were patently unsustainable—environmentally, economically and socially.

Each region in the world was affected differently by the multiple crises and each was responding according to its particular conditions and circumstances. However, lessons learned by some regions from previous crises had increased their resilience to the current one. Regional responses had proven to be a valuable means of buffering countries against the impact of the economic and financial crisis, but much remained to be done. Strong regional platforms and South-South cooperation could serve as a basis to address development challenges and implement innovative solutions through enhanced and strengthened coordination and collaboration. The report examined how the different regions were affected by the crises, how they were responding, how those initiatives could be further enhanced and how the five UN regional commissions were supporting Member States in those efforts.

Establishment of posts

By **resolution 63/260** of 24 December, the General Assembly established a number of posts for development-related activities, effective 1 January 2009, under the following budget sections: 17, Economic and social development in Africa; 18, Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific; 19, Economic development in Europe; 20, Economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean; and 21, Economic and social development in Western Asia. It also established posts, effective 1 July 2009, for the following sections: 10, Least developed countries, landlocked develop-

ing countries and small island developing States; 11, United Nations support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development; and 12, Trade and development. The Assembly decided not to abolish the post of the Special Adviser on Africa at the Under-Secretary-General level, and not to approve the non-post resources for travel of staff, consultants and experts and contractual services, excluding the regional commissions.

Africa

The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) organized its 2008 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-first session/First Joint Annual Meetings of the AU and ECA Conference of African Ministers (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 31 March–2 April) [E/2008/38-E/ECA/CM.41/5] under the theme “Meeting Africa's New Challenges in the Twenty-first Century”. It had before it an issues paper prepared by the ECA secretariat on the theme [E/ECA/COE/27/2], and also considered the report of the twenty-seventh meeting of the Committee of Experts of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development [E/ECA/COE/27/5] (Addis Ababa, 26–29 March). A high-level thematic debate covered the issues of empowering the poor; growth, employment and poverty; climate change and development; and HIV/AIDS. A ministerial panel discussion was organized on the impact of the recent rise in oil and food prices on African economies; and Africa's debt situation. Resolutions were adopted on: financing for development [E/2008/38 (res. 854(XLI))]; climate change and development in Africa [res. 855(XLI)]; science with Africa: strengthening research and development, and innovation for Africa's socio-economic development [res. 856(XLI)]; the proposed strategic framework/biennial programme plan for the period 2010–2011 [res. 857(XLI)]; the special meeting of the Governing Council of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning [res. 858(XLI)]; African Charter on Statistics [res. 859(XLI)]; the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) [res. 860(XLI)]; and the assessment of progress on regional integration in Africa [res. 861(XLI)].

The session adopted a ministerial statement [E/ECA/CM/41/3] in which Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, and to the AU New

Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) [YUN 2001, p. 899] programme as the shared framework for development and global partnership. They also reiterated their commitment to making employment creation a central objective of their economic and social policies, and welcomed the new opportunities for accelerating economic growth and employment creation as a result of rapidly expanding South-South cooperation. Given the finite nature of gas and oil resources, they underscored the need to pursue alternative sources of energy, and committed to implementing all the pillars of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme to address the escalating food prices. The Ministers also underscored the need to prepare for participation in the global review of the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development, to be held in Doha, Qatar, from 29 November to 2 December (see p. 1072), and committed to efforts to mobilize domestic savings, strengthen their financial systems, stem capital flight, promote Pan-African stock exchange and reduce the transaction costs of remittances. Expressing concern about desertification and deforestation, they reaffirmed their commitment to integrate climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies into their national and regional development frameworks.

Economic trends

In 2008, a period in which world growth declined to 2.5 per cent from 3.7 per cent in 2007, Africa's gross domestic product (GDP) fell from 6 to 5.1 per cent, according to an overview of the economic and social conditions in Africa [E/2009/17]. The main driver of Africa's growth was the rise in commodity prices, especially oil, with oil-exporting countries growing at 5.9 per cent—compared to 4.4 per cent for the non-oil countries—and thus accounting for 61.4 per cent of the continent's overall growth. Other factors beneath that sustained growth momentum included good macroeconomic policies and institutional reforms. During the year, GDP growth decelerated in three of five subregions. West Africa grew from 5.2 to 5.4 per cent and Central Africa from 3.9 to 4.9 per cent. GDP growth rates decreased in North Africa (to 5.4 per cent), East Africa (to 5.7 per cent) and Southern Africa (to 4.2 per cent). Overall, East Africa maintained the highest growth rate in 2006–2008, owing to expansion in agriculture, horticulture and services, especially finance, telecommunications and construction, as well as healthy inflows of aid and strong growth in tourism and foreign direct investment.

The *Economic Report on Africa*, a joint publication of ECA and the AU aiming to disseminate key findings of ECA's research activities, devoted its 2008 edition to *Africa and the Monterrey Consensus: Tracking Performance*

and Progress [Sales No. E.08.II.K.1]. The *Report* considered the main developments in the world economy; recent economic performance and growth prospects in Africa; and major global development challenges. It also discussed Africa's progress in meeting the goals of the Monterrey Consensus, adopted at the 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development [YUN 2002, p. 953] and the results of the ECA survey on African policymakers' views on its implementation.

Activities in 2008

The ECA programme of work in 2008 was organized under 10 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/2009/38].

Trade, finance and economic development

ECA continued in 2008 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 NEPAD. Its work under this subprogramme aimed at promoting higher and sustained economic growth through enhanced capacity for macroeconomic and sectoral policy analysis, international trade and finance.

In 2008, ECA contributed to the preparation of the African Economic Outlook for 2008–2009, providing substantive inputs to the analyses on the short-term and medium-term outlook. In the area of trade, several policy inputs were provided to ongoing initiatives. Key among those was an audit report on the interim Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) with the European Union and a set of draft policy recommendations on the way forward for the EPA negotiations prepared by the ECA secretariat and submitted to the AU Conference of Ministers of Trade and Finance in April. The ECA African Trade Policy Centre, a field project supported by Canada, expanded its trade-related capacity-building services in 2008, with more than 20 African countries benefiting from training. The Centre also collaborated with GAINDE 2000—a Senegalese customs computer system providing automated solutions for efficiency in trade and transport—in organizing the International Single Window Conference in Dakar in November.

Through research support and advocacy, ECA contributed to an effective participation by African countries in the Follow-up International Conference

on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus (see p. 1076). It also contributed to the review of commitments by African countries and made several presentations outlining Africa's views and concerns on implementation of the Monterrey Consensus. In addition, the third African Economic Conference was jointly organized with the African Development Bank (AfDB) in Tunis in November, bringing together more than 300 economists and policymakers to discuss issues related to the theme of the Conference: "Globalization, institutions and economic development of Africa". The international financial crisis was also a key focus of attention, as a special meeting of African finance ministers and central bank governors was convened on the first day of the Conference to discuss Africa's response to the crisis.

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 initiated by African leaders in 2001 [YUN 2001, p. 899], ECA provided strong and tangible 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. 1007).

Food security and sustainable development

The objective of the subprogramme on food security and sustainable development was to strengthen the capacity of States to implement policies, strategies and programmes that took account of the synergies between agriculture and environment. Best practices for selected commodities were assessed in West Africa, Central Africa and Southern Africa, with a focus on palm oil and banana plantain in Cameroon, maize in Malawi, cassava in Nigeria, rice and tomato in Senegal, and milk in South Africa. To promote biotechnology uptake in Africa, ECA developed a UN-Biotech/Africa website and embarked on production of a related newsletter.

ECA acted in the context of the AU/NEPAD Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) to strengthen the development of value chains for strategic food commodities. It also collaborated with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to champion the development of ma-

for agricultural and food products value chains in East Africa; with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) to promote development in the agribusiness sector; and with the AU/NEPAD and the AfDB to establish an African common market for agricultural products. Within the CAADP framework, it continued to promote the AU/ECA/AfDB Joint Initiative on Land Policy in Africa, aimed at improving the management of land and land resources.

Climate change

The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, at its twelfth session (Johannesburg, South Africa, 10–12 June) [UNEP/AMCEN/12/9], approved the Climate for Development in Africa (ClimDev-Africa) programme, a joint AU/ECA/AfDB initiative developed with the Global Climate Observing System to facilitate development of policies, practices, services, observation networks and communication with stakeholders to enable effective climate change mitigation and adaptation in Africa.

In August, ECA participated in negotiations in Accra, Ghana, which advanced work on a strengthened international climate change deal under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as on emission reduction rules and tools under the Kyoto Protocol. In November, it played an important role in organizing the Preparatory Meeting on Climate Change for African National Focal Points and Negotiators and the African Conference of Ministers in Charge of Environment on Climate Change.

Jointly with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Drylands Development Centre and the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (see p. 1026), ECA organized the Third African Drought Adaptation Forum (Addis Ababa, 17–19 September), which brought together some 80 policymakers, Government officials, UN agencies, donors, practitioners from local and international non-governmental and community-based organizations, the media and researchers from around Africa and the Arab States to exchange experience, findings and ideas on how to adapt to the increasing threat of drought and climate change in the drylands of Africa.

Governance and public administration

ECA's objective under this subprogramme was to promote good governance practices for all sectors of society, including civil service, the public sector, the private sector and civil society; and to support the African Peer Review Mechanism process by assisting member States in all stages of the process.

ECA expanded its project on "Assessing and monitoring progress towards good governance in Africa", which was designed to inform policymaking on governance-related issues and would culminate in the 2009 publication of the second edition of the African Governance Report, aimed at helping African countries develop, sustain and internalize the norms of good governance.

ECA engaged major stakeholders in the fight against corruption, including the judiciary, national anti-corruption institutions, Parliaments and the pan-African association of national anti-corruption institutions. In October, it organized in Addis Ababa, jointly with the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, an International Conference on Institutions, Culture and Corruption in Africa, to discuss the issue from an African perspective and develop policies and strategies.

Information, science and technology for development

ECA's work under this subprogramme aimed at strengthening and sustaining an African information society, as well as developing capacity for the formulation, adaptation and implementation of appropriate science and technology policies and programmes. ECA fulfilled its objective of improving States' capacities to formulate, implement, coordinate and evaluate policies and strategies for information for development.

In response to requests by African countries to initiate a programme on cyber security, ECA launched an African Cyber Security Strategy programme in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique. As part of the recent ECA repositioning, more emphasis was placed on strengthening States' capacity to harness the potential of science, technology and innovation for their socio-economic development, mainly through eight science and technology programmes implemented in 2008.

Economic cooperation and regional integration

The objective of ECA under this subprogramme was to promote effective economic cooperation among States and strengthen the process of regional integration in Africa through enhanced intra-African trade and physical integration, with particular emphasis on the development of infrastructure and natural resources. With ECA's support, Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania ratified a protocol to create a Central African corridor aimed at increasing intra-regional trade in the subregion. ECA's coordinating role contributed to the conclusion of an understand-

ing to create a common free trade area among three regional economic communities: the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the East African Community (EAC).

In June, under the auspices of ECA, experts from 21 African countries and 8 African organizations involved in transport facilitation attended an African regional meeting in Addis Ababa to review the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries [YUN 2003, p. 875]. In September, in collaboration with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ECA organized a regional forum in Addis Ababa on “Interconnections and electricity access for sustainable development”, under the United Nations Development Account project on “Capacity-building for interregional electricity access and supply in Africa”. The forum adopted a set of recommendations on how to expand electricity transmission lines and gas pipelines between African countries. It was attended by some 30 policymakers and energy experts representing national power utilities, sub-regional power pools, river basin organizations, regional economic communities and a group of 10 leading electric companies from the Group of Eight (G-8) most industrialized countries.

Gender and women in development

ECA's activities under this subprogramme aimed at contributing to the achievement of women's advancement and gender equality. In August, at the Conference of Ministers of Gender and Women's Affairs, ECA launched an African Women's Rights Observatory, to serve as a comprehensive source of data on research findings and resources, institutions, developments and events related to women's rights in Africa, and to track the progress of African countries in the area of women's human rights. In partnership with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and UNDP's regional gender programme for Africa, ECA embarked on a study to assess progress in implementing the MDGs in Africa, taking account of the gender dimension in all the indicators of those goals.

The Beijing Platform for Action [YUN 1995, p. 1170] was a key framework used by ECA in its efforts to enhance States' ability to implement and monitor the implementation of regional and global resolutions, conventions, instruments and protocols on women's human rights. In preparation for the review of the Beijing Platform for Action, ECA developed an evaluation process which it presented to its Committee on Women and

Development in August. The Committee adopted the process and encouraged ECA to work with speed towards ensuring a successful review.

In November, the Sixth African Development Forum considered the theme “Action on gender equality, women's empowerment and ending violence against women in Africa”. The Forum brought together over 800 participants and provided an opportunity for the continent to take stock of progress made towards achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, ending violence against women, identifying the challenges constraining implementation of policies and strategies, and articulating actions to hasten the translation of African countries' commitments into reality. It recommended three priority actions: launching an Africa-wide, three-year campaign to eliminate violence against women and girls, addressing the underlying economic and social causes of their vulnerability and strengthening the legal system and provision of supportive services; scaling up efforts to improve financing for gender equality; and strengthening the collection of reliable data on gender equality, women's empowerment and violence against women and girls.

Subregional development activities

ECA continued to carry out its activities at the subregional level through its five subregional offices, located in Central Africa (Yaoundé, Cameroon), East Africa (Kigali, Rwanda), North Africa (Rabat, Morocco), Southern Africa (Lusaka, Zambia) and West Africa (Niamey, Niger). Their activities aimed primarily at strengthening States' capacities for 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.

The subregional offices also provided guidance to ECA's overall programme delivery, while continuing to operate as subregional nodes for knowledge management and networking to strengthen ECA's outreach. In tracking progress towards the achievement of the MDGs at the country level, they continued to collaborate with other UN agencies through such means as the Common Country Assessment, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and Delivering as one.

All five offices developed extensive and elaborate multi-year programmes of support and collaboration with major regional economic communities in their subregions, and ECA concluded multi-year programmes of support with the Central African Monetary and Economic Community, the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries, COMESA,

EAC, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the Indian Ocean Commission, SADC, the Community of Sahel-Saharan States and the Maghreb Arab Union.

Development planning and administration

The objective of this subprogramme, implemented by the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP), based in Dakar, Senegal, was to enhance national and regional capacities to formulate and implement development policies and economic management strategies. Despite its fragile financial situation, the Institute 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, 10 trainees from eight countries graduated from its 18-month Master of Arts degree programme in economic policy and management.

Five courses plus a course in economic report writing in the areas of industrial policy, applied econometrics, debt management, regional integration and project monitoring and evaluation were delivered in 2008. A bilingual session on industrial policy analysis in Africa, sponsored by IDEP with technical assistance from UNIDO, contributed to developing a critical mass of policymakers who would be better equipped to design and manage industrial development policies in Africa. The course was attended by 25 participants from 25 countries, including 10 women. In July, IDEP organized, in collaboration with ECOWAS, a short course on economic report writing for the benefit of National Coordinating Committees operating under the ECOWAS Multilateral Surveillance Mechanism. The course, aimed at enhancing the capacity of Committee officials to produce quarterly economic reports, brought together 31 participants from eight French-speaking countries in the ECOWAS subregion.

Statistics

The objective of ECA's work under this 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 practice, and in order to promote the implementation of the new Reference Regional Strategic Framework for Statistical Capacity-building in Africa.

ECA continued to coordinate the work of the Statistics Cluster of the MDG Africa Working Group,

designing a business plan for the Cluster, making recommendations to the MDG Africa Steering Group, and monitoring progress in the implementation of the business plan. It was also involved in a study of discrepancies among national and international data arising from monitoring of work towards the MDGs in Africa. Together with AfDB, it produced a two-year programme of work aimed at reinforcing the capacity of African countries to report on the Goals.

ECA published the quarterly *African Statistical Newsletter* as a medium for the exchange of knowledge, experience and best practice in statistics and statistical development, with articles written by statisticians from different countries and organizations in and outside Africa. It also continued to work with AfDB to publish the *African Statistical Journal*, an outlet for technical and research work. ECA also followed up progress in creating awareness among statisticians about gender issues and integrating them into national statistical programmes. A high-level policy dialogue on gender statistics was held in Kampala, Uganda, in June, and a first regional workshop on gender statistics in Addis Ababa in December.

Social development

ECA's objective under this subprogramme was to strengthen the capacity of States to formulate policies and programmes for poverty reduction and for delivering equitable social services and integrating social dimensions in the development process, in line with internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. In May, it organized an international conference on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in collaboration with Leonard Cheshire International. That resulted in the adoption of the Addis Ababa Call to Action, designed to help promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities in Africa and ensure that their concerns were integrated in development policies.

The Commission produced a number of significant reports in 2008: "Youth employment opportunities" focused on promoting decent employment for young women through entrepreneurship training and microfinance; "The state of older people in Africa, 2007–2008: Regional review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing" drew attention to the issue of ageing as a major emerging challenge for Africa; and "Placing social integration at the centre of Africa's development agenda" noted that, despite recent years of relatively high economic growth in Africa, chronic poverty persisted in many countries, partly because Governments and development partners did not pay adequate attention to socially excluded groups.

Programme and organizational questions

Strategic Framework, 2010–2011

The twenty-seventh meeting of the Committee of Experts of the First Joint Annual Meetings of the AU Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 26–29 March) [E/2008/38] considered the proposed ECA Strategic Framework/Biennial Programme Plan for the period 2010–2011 [E/ECA/COE/27/17], to be submitted to the Committee on Programme and Coordination at its June session, and eventually recommended to the General Assembly for approval. The Framework reaffirmed the ECA mandate and scaled up its assistance to African States and their development partners to formulate and implement policies and programmes leading to sustainable economic growth and social development. It noted that ECA would continue to promote regional integration in support of the AU vision and priorities, to meet Africa's special needs and emerging global challenges and to develop a stronger subregional presence by empowering its subregional offices and strengthening its partnerships with the AU, the AfDB and other UN agencies.

The Committee noted that the Framework clearly articulated ECA's priorities for the biennium, took account of some emerging challenges to Africa's development and offered opportunities for collaboration between ECA and Member States. It observed that transport remained a major challenge to Africa's development, and underscored the need to improve air transport services and address aviation safety within the continent. The Committee also underscored the need to translate the Framework into specific and concrete activities, and urged ECA to promote South-South cooperation, including intra-African cooperation, as a strategy for achieving the Framework's objectives.

In response to the issues raised by the Committee, ECA assured the meeting that comments and suggestions made would be taken into consideration and concrete outputs derived from the Framework would be presented in the programme budget. ECA would continue to implement the results-based management framework. It further informed the Committee that transport concerns were addressed under its subprogramme 5, on economic cooperation and regional integration. The Committee recommended the Framework to the Conference of Ministers for its consideration and endorsement.

By resolution 857(XLI), the ECA Conference of Ministers at its forty-first session (Addis Ababa, 31 March–2 April) endorsed the proposed Strategic Framework, taking into account the preceding discussion and related observations.

Asia and the Pacific

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) held its sixty-fourth session in Bangkok, Thailand, in two parts: the senior officials segment from 24 to 26 April and the ministerial segment from 28 to 30 April [E/2008/39]. The session's theme was "Energy security and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific". Introducing the theme at the Ministerial Round Table, the ESCAP Executive Secretary stressed the need to create a virtuous cycle of sustainable energy that would place greater reliance on renewable energy and improved energy efficiency, and strengthen efforts to mitigate climate change.

On 30 April, in a resolution on promoting renewables for energy security and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific [E/2008/39 (res. 64/3)], the Commission called upon all members and associate members to cooperate proactively in developing various renewable energy technologies through the sharing of policy and technological experiences; and to encourage and participate actively in subregional, regional and intraregional initiatives on capacity-building, renewable energy demonstration projects and public-private partnerships to improve their reliability and affordability. The Commission also called on them to closely involve developing countries in the development of new and renewable energy technologies, products and services, to make them cost-competitive; to encourage the rapid dissemination of new and renewable energy technologies to developing countries; to make their research institutions accessible to developing countries; and to facilitate, by working with intellectual property rights holders, the transfer of new and renewable energy technologies to developing countries by considering, on a voluntary basis, the reduction of technical and licensing costs.

The Executive Secretary was asked to coordinate with the multilateral funding agencies to enhance financial and technology flows for the development and deployment of new and renewable energy technologies in developing countries; to facilitate synergies with regional groupings to promote the development of renewable energy technologies; to establish an institutional cooperation mechanism with the active engagement of expert research institutions in the region on renewable energy technologies; and to increase participation in public-private partnerships and initiatives to expand the use of renewable technologies through innovative policy options and practical measures.

The Commission also discussed thematic and cross-cutting issues (poverty reduction, globalization,

emerging social issues, and countries with special needs); management issues; and technical cooperation activities. In the ministerial segment, it considered the theme of the session, and such policy issues as key challenges for inclusive and sustainable economic and social development since the Commission's previous session; the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2008* [Sales No. E.08.II.F.7]; and achieving the MDGs in the region.

Economic trends

According to the summary of the economic and social survey of Asia and the Pacific, 2009 [E/2009/18], the Asia-Pacific region, for the second time in a decade, had been hit by financial crisis. Although the crisis had its roots outside the region, its magnitude left no economy untouched, and the region continued to experience significant downward pressures on growth, with social consequences that were still unfolding. The increasing spill-over of the effects of the financial crisis into the real sector, together with long-term challenges posed by climate change and huge volatilities in food and fuel prices dimmed the prospect that the MDGs would be attained by 2015.

Activities in 2008

Poverty reduction

During its sixty-fourth session (24–30 April), the Commission had before it the report of the Committee on Poverty Reduction on its fourth (2007) session [YUN 2007, p. 1017] and secretariat notes on: the summary of progress in the implementation of resolutions relating to the theme of poverty reduction [E/ESCAP/64/2]; financing for development 2008 [E/ESCAP/64/3]; and aid effectiveness [E/ESCAP/64/4].

With respect to the Committee's report, the Commission noted the socio-economic progress of countries in the region, including in the achievement of MDGs. It said that higher food and oil prices were adversely affecting poverty reduction in some countries and that increased regional cooperation would help address that issue. The Commission emphasized that the revitalization of agriculture was key to efforts to address food shortages and contain food inflation. It also noted that microfinance and microcredit were effective tools for poverty reduction.

As for its previous resolutions on poverty reduction, the Commission noted the progress made in the implementation of its resolutions 63/4 [YUN 2007, p. 1017], on achieving the MDGs in the ESCAP region; 62/9 [YUN 2006, p. 1160], on regional follow-up to the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable De-

velopment of Small Island Developing States [YUN 2005, p. 946]; and 62/11 [YUN 2006, p. 1159], on implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001–2010 [YUN 2001, p. 770].

On the subject of financing for development, the Commission observed that savings had increased while the region had attracted more foreign resources for development, particularly foreign direct investment. International trade had increased and external debt had fallen substantially. Steps had also been taken to address systemic issues at both the national and regional levels. However, challenges remained with regard to achieving progress in all of those areas. Nevertheless, some developing countries had made the transition from being recipients of development assistance to being donor countries themselves.

Addressing the question of aid effectiveness, the Commission noted that effective and sustainable assistance should be demand-driven and accompanied by efforts to build absorptive capacity to ensure that aid was used to maximum effectiveness. It also noted the importance of strengthening existing partnerships as well as exploring new ones, in particular under South-South and trilateral North-South-South cooperation frameworks.

Managing globalization

The Commission had before it the reports of the Committee on Managing Globalization on its fourth session [E/ESCAP/64/5, E/ESCAP/64/6], held in two parts in 2007 [YUN 2007, p. 1018]. It also had before it a series of documents relating to four subprogrammes in that area, namely: trade and investment; transport and tourism; environment and sustainable development; and information, communication and space technology [E/ESCAP/64/7, E/ESCAP/64/8 & Corr.1, E/ESCAP/64/9, E/ESCAP/64/10, E/ESCAP/64/11, E/ESCAP/64/12].

Trade and investment

The Commission recognized the importance of sustained trade and investment liberalization for economic and social development. It noted the progress achieved and the initiatives undertaken by developing countries and countries with economies in transition in reducing tariffs and liberalizing and facilitating trade, including through participation in the ongoing Doha round of negotiations and the conclusion of regional and bilateral trade agreements, and it took note of the assistance that some of those countries had provided for neighbouring countries in an effort to promote trade among developing countries.

The Commission noted the importance of trade facilitation, including simplification of trade and customs procedures and documents; e-commerce, including single-window systems; and the elimination of non-tariff barriers to trade. It also noted the policies of various countries in support of an improvement in the investment climate.

Transport and tourism

Noting the importance of transport for economic, social and trade development, the Commission expressed support for the work of the secretariat in the development of the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway. It acknowledged that the Asian Highway and the Trans-Asian Railway networks were building blocks for the development of an international integrated intermodal transport and logistics network for the region, as envisioned in the 2006 Busan Declaration on Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific [YUN 2006, p. 1161]. It recognized the role of the Trans-Asian Railway network in connecting people and expanding trade, and noted the importance of road and transport linkages for creating opportunities for economic activities such as trade, investment and tourism, which would benefit people along the routes. The Commission noted the importance of road safety and expressed its support for the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Improving Road Safety in Asia and the Pacific [ibid.]. It also noted that the General Assembly, in its **resolution 62/244** of 31 March on improving global road safety (see p. 1340), had welcomed the offer of the Russian Federation to host the first high-level (ministerial) conference on road safety in Moscow in 2009, in order to exchange experiences and foster cooperation.

On 30 April [E/2008/39 (res. 64/4)], the Commission adopted a resolution on the implementation of the 2007 Seoul Declaration on Public-Private Partnerships for Infrastructure Development in Asia and the Pacific [YUN 2007, p. 1019]. It urged members and associate members to place high priority on national development agendas on infrastructure development; promote the role of public-private partnerships and recognize that they could complement Governments' efforts in developing infrastructure facilities and services; and implement policies on public-private partnerships. It encouraged members and associate members to engage in regional cooperation initiatives, and requested the Executive Secretary to work with donor countries and development partners to assist members and associate members in meeting infrastructure development challenges; assist them in their capacity-building programmes; provide technical support to help assess their public-private partnership readiness; and undertake a periodic review of the progress made.

Also on 30 April [ibid. (res. 64/5)], the Commission established the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport as a regional mechanism within the framework of the Commission's conference structure. It requested the Executive Secretary to convene the Forum's first session in 2009 and subsequently on a regular basis, and to ensure that a regional policy-oriented agenda was placed before the Forum.

Environment and sustainable development

The Commission acknowledged the importance of environment and sustainable development as a key cross-cutting issue in dealing with globalization in Asia and the Pacific, and highlighted the importance of the consensus reached at the 2007 United Nations Climate Change Conference [YUN 2007, p. 1060]. It also noted the importance of regional cooperation in energy security for fostering sustainable development in the region.

On 30 April [res. 64/2], the Commission adopted a resolution 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]. The Commission encouraged the countries in the region to host the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction once every two years on a rotational basis.

Also on 30 April [res. 64/3], the Commission, in a resolution on promoting renewables for energy security and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific, called upon its members and associate members to cooperate in the development of renewable energy technologies through the sharing of policy and technological experiences; to encourage and participate actively in subregional, regional and intraregional initiatives in the areas of capacity-building, renewable energy demonstration projects and public-private partnerships so as to promote renewable energy technologies; to involve developing countries in the development of new and renewable energy technologies, products and services that would eventually make their deployment cost-competitive; and to encourage the rapid dissemination of new and renewable energy technologies to developing countries.

Information, communications and space technology

During its session, the Commission recognized the important role played by information, communications and space technology in economic and social development and in bridging technological gaps among countries of Asia and the Pacific.

On 30 April [res. 64/10], the Commission adopted a resolution on the review of the operational details of the feasibility study for the establishment of an Asian and Pacific centre for information, communications and space technology-enabled disaster management. It invited Iran to review the operational details of the latest proposal for the centre, to clarify the implications, if any, of such changes on the scope, functions and value-added products and services to be offered, along with timelines for scheduling the introduction of information-sharing activities, and to submit them to the Commission's 2009 session.

By a decision of the same date [dec. 64/2], the Commission deferred consideration of the draft resolution sponsored by Iran, entitled "Establishment of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Information, Communication and Space Technology-enabled Disaster Management", to its 2009 session.

Emerging social issues

The Commission had before it the report of the Committee on Emerging Social Issues on its fourth session (Bangkok, Thailand, 26–28 November 2007) [E/ESCAP/64/13] and secretariat notes on: the summary of progress in the implementation of resolutions relating to emerging social issues [E/ESCAP/64/14]; the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS: an assessment of the progress made by ESCAP members: challenges and opportunities [E/ESCAP/64/15]; and the follow-up to the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and the Global Forum on International Migration and Development [E/ESCAP/64/16].

Noting the importance of addressing the threat posed by HIV/AIDS in the light of its impact on social and economic development in the region, the Commission welcomed the technical and financial assistance provided by Japan in the fight against HIV/AIDS—with \$800 million having been contributed through the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria since 2002. It also recognized the multi-faceted linkages between international migration and development, in particular the impact of migration on poverty reduction, and noted the progress in the implementation of its resolution 63/7 on international migration and development for least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries and small island developing States [YUN 2007, p. 1019]. It also recognized that persons with disabilities represented one of the most marginalized and underserved group, marked by high levels of illiteracy, poor nutritional status, high unemployment rates and low occupational mobility.

On 30 April [res. 64/8], the Commission adopted a resolution on the regional implementation of the Bi-

wako Millennium Framework for Action [YUN 2002, p. 991] and Biwako Plus Five: Further Efforts towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific [YUN 2007, p. 1021]. It called on its members and associate members to develop and implement inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based policies on disability in line with the recommendations contained in the Framework and Biwako Plus Five.

Also on 30 April [res. 64/9], the Commission addressed the midpoint review of the implementation of the Plan of Action on Population and Poverty, adopted at the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference [YUN 2003, p. 1013]. The Commission requested its Executive Secretary to assist members and associate members in building their capacity to integrate population factors into development planning; to conduct analytical studies and to compile and disseminate relevant demographic and population-related information and data with a view to identifying key demographic trends and emerging issues in the region; and to convene an expert group meeting to review the implementation of the Plan of Action.

Least developed, landlocked and island developing countries

For its consideration of countries with special needs—LDCs, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States—the Commission had before it the report of the Special Body on Pacific Island Developing Countries on its tenth session (Bangkok, 22–23 April) [E/ESCAP/64/17] and a secretariat note [E/ESCAP/64/18] on "Emerging issues in the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action" [YUN 2003, p. 875]. The note outlined the Programme's five priority areas—fundamental transit policy issues; infrastructure development and maintenance; trade and trade facilitation; international support measures; and implementation and midterm review—and provided an overview of the issues encountered in its implementation in the ESCAP region.

Citing the seriousness of the unprecedented rise in food and fuel prices, the Commission requested the secretariat to hold, on an urgent basis, a high-level consultative meeting to address, through partnerships, the challenges of the food and fuel crisis prevailing in Asian and Pacific developing countries, including LDCs. It noted that accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) provided an important opportunity for integrating into the global economy and for sharing the benefits of increased trade. It also noted that the pace of the accession was largely in the hands of each acceding developing country, and was based on that country's implementation of WTO compliant provisions and the successful completion

of its bilateral market access negotiations with WTO members.

The Commission took note of the outcome document of the Regional Preparatory Expert Meeting of Euro-Asian Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries for the Mid-term Review of the Almaty Programme of Action (Bangkok, 22–23 April) [E/ESCAP/64/INF/6].

Technical cooperation

The Commission had before it an overview of ESCAP technical cooperation activities, including extrabudgetary contributions in 2007 [E/ESCAP/64/32]. Introducing that report, the Executive Secretary said that ESCAP technical cooperation work ensured that its analytical and normative work was well grounded in national realities. During the year, partnerships with UN and other entities had been a key element of its technical cooperation strategy. The total contributions received for those activities from the regular budget and voluntary contributions amounted to some \$15 million. The cost of the delivery of ESCAP programmes in 2007 was approximately \$17.6 million, an increase of some 30 per cent over 2006.

A total of \$5.5 million had been expended through grants to countries and agencies under the Multi-Donor Voluntary Trust Fund on Tsunami Early Warning Arrangements in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia. Those grants had been provided to support tsunami advisory services, the dissemination of warnings and other disaster communications at the regional and national levels, capacity-building in standard operating procedures and related tools, and community-based hazard mapping. ESCAP also worked closely with the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation of UNDP to promote South-South cooperation in such areas as Pacific connectivity through information and communications technology and disaster risk reduction.

Ministerial round table

During its ministerial segment, from 28 to 30 April, the Commission held round tables on the session's theme, "Energy security and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific". Opening the segment, the Executive Secretary said that the region's energy security challenges were the result of rapid growth in demand for energy, skyrocketing energy prices, and uncertainties with regard to other development concerns. There were grave threats to development prospects for countries in the region on all fronts—economic, social and environmental, including climate change. Some countries, in particular the least developed and

landlocked countries and small island developing States, were expected to bear the brunt of the effects of rising energy insecurity.

The Executive Secretary stressed the need for a shift towards a new sustainable energy paradigm, to create a virtuous cycle of sustainable energy that would discourage waste and high energy consumption with their far-reaching economic and environmental costs. Such a paradigm shift would emphasize the quality of economic growth, place greater reliance on renewable energy and improved energy efficiency, and strengthen efforts to mitigate climate change; and it would require regional cooperation. Promoting public-private partnerships to expand the energy infrastructure and energy trade in the region was of utmost urgency. That included the vision of the session's theme study, the creation of a trans-Asian energy system spanning the entire region and linking together the various subregions through a common energy infrastructure.

The Asia-Pacific Business Forum 2008 (Bangkok, Thailand, 27 April), a side event of the Commission's session, was held on the theme "Energy security: opportunities through regional energy cooperation and public-private partnerships" and was attended by some 250 participants from member States, the private sector, civil society, intergovernmental organizations and UN bodies. Addressing the Forum, the Co-chair stressed that the region should expand access to renewable energy sources without jeopardizing long-term prosperity and environmental sustainability, and that energy security, access and efficiency were vital components of a long-term regional strategy. A change was needed from independent to interdependent energy policies by building trust within the region, and Government policies should facilitate energy infrastructure investment, including small-scale projects that would introduce important new supplies of energy. Collective efforts were needed for climate change mitigation and adaptation, and States should have a role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions through the new energy system paradigm.

Policy issues

In a policy statement to the Commission, its Executive Secretary identified four kinds of imbalances in the Asia-Pacific region that needed to be addressed if the region was to achieve the MDGs. The first was the considerable economic imbalance across the region: while the region was the most dynamic in the world, it still had 640 million people living on less than \$1 a day. The problems in the agricultural sector, which provided the main livelihood of the poor, warranted urgent attention. The second was social imbalance: in many places, social grievances and exclusion

continued along the fault lines of ethnicity, religion and class, together with systemic discrimination and violence against women and girls. Social exclusion and discrimination prevented access to basic services and put many communities at risk. The third kind of imbalance pertained to ecological issues: the region was suffering from a mounting ecological burden that exceeded its ecological carrying capacity. Rapid economic growth and population expansion were exerting increasing pressure on natural resources and on economic and social progress. The challenge for the region's developing countries was to move away from the use of fossil fuels to less polluting sources of energy, while maintaining their growth and development. The fourth was "empathy imbalance": while sizeable sections of the bureaucracy were sensitive to the needs of the marginalized and the disadvantaged, there were many who did not empathize with them or understand their struggles to secure their rights.

The Executive Secretary also highlighted the steps she had taken to strengthen the Commission. First, a more strategic and focused programme direction had been established to guide the delivery of ESCAP services to member States, transforming the Commission into a key player that could support them in shaping a more balanced and integrated economic and social order. Second, strong and strategic partnerships with other regional players had been developed to create greater and more lasting impact. Third, she had revitalized the role of the Regional Coordination Mechanism, which ESCAP chaired, transforming it into a regional platform for system-wide coherence and partnerships. Fourth, she was preparing ESCAP to serve as the regional platform for South-South cooperation and meaningful discussions on the transfer of technologies within the region.

Key challenges

The Commission had before it the report of its Executive Secretary on key challenges for inclusive and sustainable economic and social development since its previous session [E/ESCAP/64/35]. It noted with concern the adverse socio-economic impact of rising food and oil prices. Against that backdrop, it recognized the importance of energy security and sustainable development. The Commission observed that disasters could have a negative impact on sustainable development, and emphasized the importance of regional cooperation for disaster management. It also noted that the transfer of technology and sharing of best practices were crucial to boosting agricultural productivity, promoting alternative energy and improving energy efficiency, and that the building of infrastructure was an important precondition for the development of the energy sector.

Economic and social survey

The Commission had before it a secretariat note [E/ESCAP/64/36] on the summary of the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2008*. The note took stock of the economic and social situation in the region, assessed the risks to its economy and provided an overview of the region's agricultural sector and possible ways to address the emerging food crisis by reviving that sector. During 2007, the developing economies in Asia and the Pacific had recorded an impressive economic performance, but the region had since entered a phase of uncertainty, with a possible slowdown in the global economy, increased risks in international financial markets and relentlessly rising food and oil prices. Observing that the region was still home to about two thirds of the world's poor, the Commission was concerned that high food and energy prices, if continued, could undermine efforts to reduce poverty and achieve the MDGs.

Achieving the MDGs

The Commission had before it a secretariat note entitled "A future within reach: progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the Asian and Pacific region" [E/ESCAP/64/37]. In addition, a High-level Panel on Millennium Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific, organized as part of the Commission's session, drew attention to the challenges and opportunities for achieving the MDGs in the region.

In her keynote speech, the Executive Secretary observed that achieving the MDGs by 2015 was the cornerstone of the region's development strategy, and that accelerating progress towards the Goals was a shared agenda. The midpoint to 2015 had been crossed and there was mixed news on achievement. Significant progress had been made in reducing income poverty, raising enrolment rates in primary and secondary schools and increasing the participation of women in the economy. Nevertheless, 641 million people in the region still lived below the poverty line, 97 million children below the age of five were underweight, and another 4 million died every year before reaching the age of five. A quarter of a million women died every year during childbirth and as a result of pregnancy-related complications, and 6 million people were living with HIV/AIDS. She noted that children, women, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups were the most severely affected by hunger, and women faced widespread discrimination. The development gains made during the last decade or two could be reversed and income poverty could surge if the current high prices of food and energy were not addressed.

By a 30 April resolution on achieving the MDGs in the ESCAP region [res. 64/6], the Commission requested that the Executive Secretary reinforce regional partnerships on the MDGs; assess progress towards achieving all Goals and targets in the ESCAP region and transmit a progress assessment to the Economic and Social Council; assist countries in the region in achieving the Goals, in particular LDCs, landlocked developing countries and Pacific island developing countries; and advocate for the Goals in order to focus the attention of policymakers and other stakeholders.

By a resolution of the same date [ibid. (res. 64/7)], on financing for the achievement of the MDGs by 2015 in the ESCAP region, the Commission urged the developed countries that had not done so to make efforts towards the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) as official development assistance (ODA) to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of GNP to LDCs. It encouraged developing countries to build on progress achieved in ensuring that ODA was used effectively to help achieve development goals and targets, and requested that its Executive Secretary explore the feasibility of establishing a regional MDG resource facility.

Programme and organizational questions

Programme performance, 2006–2007

During its sixty-fourth session (Bangkok, 24–30 April) [E/2008/39], the Commission took note of the ESCAP programme performance report for the biennium 2006–2007 [E/ESCAP/64/20], which included highlights of programme achievements by thematic areas, as well as results and lessons learned under each of the eight subprogrammes during the biennium.

Monitoring and evaluation

The Commission had before it a secretariat note on the biennial evaluation report for 2006–2007 [E/ESCAP/64/21], which focused on the main findings and recommendations from those evaluation exercises and provided an overview of the secretariat's monitoring and evaluation system, which was launched by the Executive Secretary in July 2007.

The Commission also had before it a secretariat note presenting the outcome of an inspection of results-based management practices at ESCAP undertaken by the Office of Internal Oversight Services [E/ESCAP/64/30]. The Commission took note of the plan of action developed by the secretariat in response to the report, and of its current status of implementation.

Draft Strategic Framework, 2010–2011

During its session, the Commission had before it the draft strategic framework for ESCAP for 2010–2011 [E/ESCAP/64/22/Rev.1]. The Executive Secretary informed the Commission that efforts had been made to ensure a more focused and results-oriented draft strategic framework, building on the comparative advantages of ESCAP. A draft had been reviewed by the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission at its special session on 19 March, and major changes, as suggested by the Advisory Committee, had been incorporated into the draft framework. The Commission generally endorsed the draft, subject to the comments and reservations set out in its annual report.

ESCAP sixty-fifth session

On 30 April, the Commission, having considered a secretariat note on the dates, venue and theme topic for its sixty-fifth (2009) session [E/ESCAP/64/33], decided that it would be held in Bangkok in April/May 2009, bearing in mind the celebration of various national holidays in countries of the region in April and early May. It decided that the theme topic for its sixty-fifth session would be: "Sustainable agriculture and food security" [dec. 64/1].

Revised conference structure

On 30 April [res. 64/1], the Commission decided to revise its conference structure, with immediate effect, to conform to the pattern outlined in annex I to the resolution, and requested the Executive Secretary to take into account the revision in the future programme of work and strategic framework. It also requested the Executive Secretary, bearing in mind the goal of maximizing the UN impact on the economic and social development of the region, to reorganize the secretariat so as to enhance its capability to service the subsidiary structure; to provide members and associate members with a preliminary assessment of the organizational and staffing implications of the revision within the next six months; and to undertake systematic monitoring and evaluation of the conference structure and its link to the ESCAP programme priorities. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to report to the Commission at its sixty-seventh (2011) session on the implementation of the resolution, and decided to review its conference structure at its sixty-ninth (2013) session.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL ACTION

On 22 July [meeting 38], the Economic and Social Council adopted **resolution 2008/7** [draft: E/2008/15/Add.1] without vote [agenda item 10].

Restructuring of the conference structure of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

The Economic and Social Council,

Noting the adoption by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific at its sixty-fourth session, held in Bangkok from 24 to 30 April 2008, of resolution 64/1 on the restructuring of the conference structure of the Commission,

1. *Endorses* Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific resolution 64/1, on the restructuring of the conference structure of the Commission, as set out in the annex to the present resolution;

2. *Also endorses* the annexes to resolution 64/1, on the conference structure of the Commission, on issues to be addressed by the committees subsidiary to the Commission, and on the terms of reference of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission.

ANNEX

Resolution 64/1 on the restructuring of the conference structure of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

[For the text of resolution 64/1 and the annexes thereto, see chapter IV of the annual report of the Commission for the period 24 May 2007 to 30 April 2008.]

Cooperation with regional bodies

The Secretary-General, in his August consolidated report [A/63/228-S/2008/531 & Corr.1] on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations, outlined UN relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Economic Cooperation Organization and the Pacific Islands Forum.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION

On 26 November [meeting 60], the General Assembly adopted **resolution 63/35** [draft: A/63/L.40 & Add.1] without vote [agenda item 114 (c)].

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

The General Assembly,

Bearing in mind the aims and purposes of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, as enshrined in the Bangkok Declaration of 8 August 1967, in particular the maintenance of close and beneficial cooperation with existing international and regional organizations with similar aims and purposes,

Recalling all previous resolutions on cooperation between the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations,

Noting with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General,

Noting with satisfaction that the activities of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations are consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations,

Welcoming efforts to strengthen partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations, and in this context welcoming also efforts to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations system and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations,

Welcoming also the participation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in the high-level meetings between the United Nations and regional organizations, as well as the collaboration between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to promote dialogue and cooperation among regional organizations in Asia and the Pacific,

Welcoming further the Association of Southeast Asian Nations as an observer in the General Assembly,

Recalling the First and Second Association of Southeast Asian Nations-United Nations Summits, held in Bangkok on 12 February 2000 and at United Nations Headquarters on 13 September 2005, respectively, and the commitment of leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Secretary-General of the United Nations to further broaden cooperation between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the United Nations,

1. *Welcomes* the signing on 20 November 2007 of the Charter of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations by leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations at the Thirteenth Association of Southeast Asian Nations Summit, held in Singapore from 18 to 22 November 2007, which represents a historic milestone for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, reflecting a common vision and commitment to the development of an Association of Southeast Asian Nations community so as to ensure lasting peace, stability, sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and social progress in the region;

2. *Continues to encourage* both the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to further strengthen and expand their areas of cooperation, and in this context welcomes the signing on 27 September 2007 of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the United Nations on Association of Southeast Asian Nations-United Nations cooperation at United Nations Headquarters, which aims at establishing a partnership between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the United Nations that will encompass the full range of cooperation based on mutual benefits;

3. *Commends* the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations for their efforts to hold regular meetings, on an annual basis, with the presence of the Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, during the regular session of the Assembly, with a view to further strengthening the cooperation between the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations;

4. *Continues to encourage* the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to convene Association of Southeast Asian Nations-United Nations Summits regularly, and underlines the importance of the presence thereof of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and heads of relevant United Nations departments, funds and

programmes, and specialized agencies, and in this context welcomes the decision to convene the Third Association of Southeast Asian Nations-United Nations Summit, to be held in Thailand on 17 December 2008;

5. *Recognizes* the value of partnership between the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in providing timely and effective responses to global issues of mutual concern, in the context of partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations, and thus encourages the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to explore concrete measures for closer cooperation, particularly in the areas of food and energy security and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals;

6. *Welcomes* the establishment of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Humanitarian Task Force for the Victims of Cyclone Nargis, and acknowledges the progress achieved in assisting the post-Nargis relief work by the Tripartite Core Group comprising the Government of Myanmar, the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and the assistance provided by the international community to those in need;

7. *Encourages* effective cooperation between member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the appropriate United Nations organizations in the delivery of operational activities in the area of development at the country level;

8. *Takes note* of the efforts of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to hold meetings with other regional organizations at the fringes of the sessions of the General Assembly to promote cooperation in support of multilateralism;

9. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution;

10. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its sixty-fifth session the sub-item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations".

On 15 December [meeting 69], the General Assembly adopted **resolution 63/144** [draft: A/63/L.39/Rev.1 & Add.1] without vote [agenda item 114 (i)].

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 48/2 of 13 October 1993, by which it granted observer status to the Economic Cooperation Organization,

Recalling also its previous resolutions on cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization, in which it invited various specialized agencies as well as other organizations and programmes of the United Nations system and relevant international financial institutions to join in the efforts towards realizing the goals and objectives of the Economic Cooperation Organization,

Recalling further the Articles of the Charter of the United Nations that encourage activities through regional coopera-

tion for the promotion of the purposes and principles of the United Nations,

Expressing its support for the plans and programmes of the Economic Cooperation Organization aimed at achieving internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration,

Welcoming the efforts of the Economic Cooperation Organization to consolidate ties with the United Nations system and relevant international and regional organizations,

1. *Takes note with appreciation* of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 61/12 of 13 November 2006, and expresses satisfaction at the enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization;

2. *Takes note* of the Herat Declaration, adopted at the seventeenth meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organization, held in Herat, Afghanistan, on 20 October 2007, in which the Council reaffirmed its commitment to establish a free-trade area in the Economic Cooperation Organization region by 2015 as a priority task, extended the Programme of Action for the Economic Cooperation Organization Decade of Transport and Communications, and called for joint action for human resources development, poverty alleviation and disaster mitigation and management;

3. *Stresses* the importance of the continuation and expansion of areas of cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization, including the provision of financial and technical assistance for pre-feasibility and feasibility studies of projects, consultancy services, workshops and training courses and project management services by specialized agencies of the United Nations, in the ongoing as well as future activities of the Economic Cooperation Organization;

4. *Appreciates* the technical and financial assistance extended by the United Nations and its specialized agencies, as well as other international and regional organizations, to the Economic Cooperation Organization for its economic development programmes and projects, and encourages them to continue to support its activities;

5. *Calls for* a further increase in the technical assistance of the World Trade Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO to the States members of the Economic Cooperation Organization, which are at various levels of development and some of which are in the process of acceding to the World Trade Organization, with a view to expanding their intra- and interregional trade, which may promote their sustainable economic development goals, including trade liberalization, leading to regional and global integration;

6. *Welcomes* the enhancement of cooperation between the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the Economic Cooperation Organization, and recommends continuation of their joint programmes to strengthen the institutional infrastructure to overcome the technical barriers to trade and promote sanitary and phytosanitary measures to be taken by the States members of the Economic Cooperation Organization;

7. *Also welcomes* the initiative to sign a trilateral agreement between the Economic Cooperation Organization, the Islamic Development Bank and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific for joint projects under the Asian Highway Network and Trans-Asian Railway Network initiatives of the Commission, as well as the implementation of the Economic Cooperation Organization Transit Transport Framework Agreement and the Programme of Action for the Economic Cooperation Organization Decade of Transport and Communications, and invites the donor institutions and countries to support the projects;

8. *Takes note* of progress on the Istanbul-Almaty container and passenger train project of the Economic Cooperation Organization, and calls upon the relevant United Nations agencies to join the Organization's efforts to revitalize the China-Middle East-Europe railway corridor, providing an uninterrupted railway connection between China and Europe through the Economic Cooperation Organization region;

9. *Also takes note* of the Tashkent Declaration on the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia, and welcomes coordination between the Economic Cooperation Organization and the Special Programme;

10. *Takes note with appreciation* of the initiative of the Economic Cooperation Organization to launch a demonstration train on the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul route as well as on the route through Afghanistan, and calls upon the relevant regional and international institutions to assist the Organization in operationalizing the routes by making up the missing links;

11. *Appreciates* the efforts of the Economic Cooperation Organization to develop energy trade in the region in cooperation with international organizations, especially the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank, and requests their continued support for the preparation and efficient implementation of regional programmes on energy efficiency and conservation;

12. *Also appreciates* the holding of the donor conference in Turkey on 8 May 2008 in support of the regional programme of the Economic Cooperation Organization for food security, invites the relevant United Nations bodies, international organizations and donor agencies to assist in the efficient implementation of the programme, and calls for their support for the technical cooperation programme for strengthening seed supply in the region;

13. *Welcomes* the establishment of the Economic Cooperation Organization Regional Centre for Risk Management of Natural Disasters, and invites United Nations institutions and international donors and financial institutions to extend their support for the further development of the Centre and to assist member States in developing their early warning systems and their capacity for timely response and rehabilitation, with a view to reducing human casualties and the socio-economic impact of natural disasters;

14. *Notes with satisfaction* the priority given by the Economic Cooperation Organization to Millennium Development Goals related to child mortality, maternal health and combating HIV/AIDS, and recommends that United Nations

agencies, especially the United Nations Development Programme, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Children's Fund, assist the Economic Cooperation Organization in preparing an analytical regional report on the health-related Millennium Development Goals;

15. *Calls for* the strengthening of the technical assistance provided by the relevant United Nations bodies, in particular the United Nations Environment Programme, to the Economic Cooperation Organization plan of action for cooperation on the environment, especially in such priority areas as the transfer of technology and the implementation of strategic plans and projects;

16. *Notes with satisfaction* the adoption of the work plan on biodiversity in the Economic Cooperation Organization region aimed at achieving, with the assistance of the relevant United Nations bodies, the common objectives of the global 2010 biodiversity target and ensuring the sustainable use of biological and genetic resources as well as equitable sharing of the resulting benefits;

17. *Appreciates* the efforts of the Economic Cooperation Organization and its member States in combating the production of and trafficking in narcotic drugs and calls for increased cooperation between the Organization and relevant United Nations bodies, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, as well as the European Commission and the international community, and also calls for further exploration of the capacity of the Economic Cooperation Organization to effectively combat the production of and trafficking in narcotic and psychotropic drugs;

18. *Also appreciates* the initiatives of the Economic Cooperation Organization to combat transnational crime, and encourages closer collaboration between the Economic Cooperation Organization and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for the prevention of corruption and money laundering;

19. *Welcomes* the memorandums of understanding between the Economic Cooperation Organization and the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the International Road Transport Union as well as the exchange of notes verbales between the Organization and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, and calls for the effective implementation of those agreements;

20. *Takes note with appreciation* of the progress made by the Economic Cooperation Organization in expanding external relations, especially strengthening relations with regional peers and other international organizations;

21. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution;

22. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its sixty-fifth session the sub-item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization".

On 19 December [meeting 72], the General Assembly adopted **resolution 63/200** [draft: A/63/L.56 & Add.1] without vote [agenda item 114 (s)].

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 49/1 of 17 October 1994, 59/20 of 8 November 2004 and 61/48 of 4 December 2006,

Welcoming the ongoing efforts towards closer cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum and its associated institutions,

Bearing in mind that the Pacific Islands Forum was established in 1971 and that leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum endorsed in 2005 the Pacific Plan, which has the goal of enhancing and stimulating economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security for Pacific countries through regionalism,

Affirming the need to strengthen the cooperation that already exists between entities of the United Nations system and the Pacific Islands Forum in the areas of sustainable development, environmental protection, good governance and peace and security,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General, in particular paragraphs 90 to 97 on cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum, and encourages further such cooperation;

2. *Invites* the Secretary-General of the United Nations to take the necessary measures, in consultation with the Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum, to promote and expand cooperation and coordination between the two secretariats in order to increase the capacity of the organizations to attain their common objectives;

3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution;

4. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its sixty-fifth session the sub-item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum".

Europe

The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) did not meet in 2008. Its sixty-third session was to be held in 2009. The state of the European region and the activities of ECE's subsidiary bodies during 2008 are discussed below.

Economic trends

A report on the economic situation in the ECE region: Europe, North America and the Commonwealth of Independent States [E/2009/16] stated that, in 2008, the region entered into what was forecast to be the worst economic downturn since the Second World War. The decline was accompanied by rising

unemployment and by especially large declines in international trade and capital flows, while Government fiscal positions had deteriorated significantly. The global slowdown, the result of a financial crisis that began in the United States, was noteworthy not only because of its severity, but also because of its global synchronization.

Activities in 2008

Trade

The Committee on Trade did not meet in 2008. At its second session in 2007 [YUN 2007, p. 1023], it had considered a number of reports and taken various actions dealing with trade. Although its third session was to have been held from 13 to 17 October, it was postponed to 25–26 February 2009.

Timber

The Timber Committee, at its sixty-sixth session (Rome, 21–24 October) [ECE/TIM/2008/9], held jointly with the thirty-fourth session of the European Forestry Commission of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), addressed a range of issues, including forests and climate change, forests and energy, and forests and water. On climate change, it considered how climate change mitigation and adaptation measures could be integrated into forest sector policies, how forest management strategies could contribute to reducing forests' vulnerabilities to climate change, and how coordination and communication between climate change negotiations and forest sector policies could be improved. With respect to energy, the Committee discussed the growing need for renewable energy, notably from wood, and the consequences for forest policy. It considered the role of wood energy in climate change mitigation and the implications for forest-based industries in Europe, and stressed the importance of sustainable forest management in supplying wood and safeguarding biodiversity. As to the linkages between the forest and water sectors, it presented international legal and policy frameworks and discussed areas for interaction between the forest and water sectors, and strategies which linked forest management and water risk management to deal with floods, droughts, soil erosion and landslides in the context of climate change. The Committee also discussed market developments in 2008 and the prospects for 2009. In addition, it welcomed the Strategic Review and Planning process which took place in 2007–2008, and adopted the Strategic Plan 2008–2013 [ECE/TIM/2008/7 & Add.1] of the ECE/FAO integrated programme of work on timber and forestry, agreed during the Timber Committee's Special Session on the strategic review and plan of the ECE/FAO

integrated programme of work on timber and forestry (Geneva, 28–30 April) [ECE/TIM/S/2008/6].

The Joint FAO/ECE Working Party on Forest Economics and Statistics, at its thirtieth session (Geneva, 2–3 April) [ECE/TIM/EFC/WP.2/2008/11], reviewed a range of issues, including potential wood supply, markets and statistics, forest resource assessment, and forest sector outlook studies. It also reviewed its methods of work, and adopted the conclusions and recommendations of a workshop on national wood resource balances (31 March–1 April).

Transport

The seventieth session of the Inland Transport Committee (Geneva, 19–21 February) [ECE/TRANS/200] reviewed, among other topics: Euro-Asian transport links; transport and security; assistance to countries with economies in transition; transport trends and economics; road transport; road traffic safety; harmonization of vehicle regulations; rail transport infrastructure; inland water transport; intermodal transport and logistics; border crossing facilitation; transport of dangerous goods and of perishable foodstuffs; transport statistics; the status of accession to international ECE transport agreements and conventions; the transport situation in ECE member countries and emerging development trends; transport of people with reduced mobility; and the draft programme of work of the Committee 2008–2012. It also considered action taken by its Working Parties on: the Transport of Dangerous Goods; Road Transport; Transport Trends and Economics; Road Traffic Safety; Rail Transport; Inland Water Transport; the Standardization of Technical Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation; the Transport of Perishable Foodstuffs; and Transport Statistics.

On 20 February, the Inland Transport Committee adopted an Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road Concerning the Electronic Consignment Note.

Energy

The Committee on Sustainable Energy, at its seventeenth session (Geneva, 19–21 November) [ECE/ENERGY/78], focused its energy security dialogue on “Strategic Alliances for Energy Security”, with particular attention to the cooperation and relationship between international and national oil companies on energy security strategies. It also reviewed cooperation and coordination with other bodies, including the Commission’s other sectoral committees; the regional advisory services programme in the field of energy; the Committee’s work programme for 2009–2010; and the performance of the sustainable energy sub-programme.

The Committee endorsed the requests for two-year mandate renewals by its Ad Hoc Groups of Experts on: Financing Energy Efficiency Investments for Climate Change Mitigation; Cleaner Electricity Production from Coal and Other Fossil Fuels; and Coal Mine Methane. It also endorsed the request to renew its Ad Hoc Group of Experts on the Supply and Use of Gas for one year, and endorsed the work programme of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Harmonization of Fossil Energy and Mineral Resources Terminology for 2008–2009.

The Committee reviewed and adopted its programme of work for 2009–2010, and approved its provisional calendar of meetings for 2009.

Environment

The Committee on Environmental Policy, at its fifteenth session (Geneva, 21–23 April) [ECE/CEP/148], reviewed the environmental performance reviews of Kazakhstan and adopted related recommendations. It also reviewed its work programme, which included: environmental monitoring; building capacity and partnerships through multilateral environment agreements; ECE’s environment and security initiative, and partnerships with the private sector; and such cross-sectoral initiatives as the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme, education for sustainable development, and environment and health.

The Committee took note of the outcome of the third regional implementation meeting on sustainable development (Geneva, 28–29 January), addressing agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa [ECE/AC.25/2008/2]. It also considered the outcome of the Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (EFe) Conference [YUN 2007, p. 1025] and discussed modalities for the reform of the EFe process, as decided by the ministers at the Conference. Ahead of the Committee’s session, the ECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development held its third meeting (Geneva, 31 March–1 April) [ECE/CEP/AC.13/2008/2], at which it reviewed progress by ECE members in implementing the ECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development and related issues.

Housing and land management

The Committee on Housing and Land Management, at its sixty-ninth session (Geneva, 22–23 September) [ECE/HBP/149], decided that two workshops would be held in 2009, in Bulgaria and Austria, on energy efficiency in housing. It considered the relationship between housing and regional demographic changes, and reviewed a draft study on informal set-

lements. It welcomed the adoption of a new logo for its housing and land management activities; endorsed the new newsletter, *Vital Spaces*, recommending that it be published at least quarterly; and supported a thesis award for graduate students working on housing- and land management-related issues.

The Committee reviewed its 2008–2009 work programme [ECE/HBP/2008/1], with its focus on country profiles; improving urban environmental performance; land registration and markets; and housing modernization and management. It was informed of progress achieved in developing the country profiles of Belarus and Kyrgyzstan, and of the publication, in May, of *Spatial Planning—Key Instruments for Development and Effective Governance, with Special Reference to Countries in Transition*. The Working Party on Land Administration announced that its Real Estate Market Advisory Group planned to host, in Rome, a workshop on “Real estate market: risks and benefits” in March 2009. Preparations were also under way for a project on the multi-family housing sector [ECE/HBP/2008/5], and for a workshop on homelessness in May 2009.

Statistics

The Conference of European Statisticians, at its fifty-sixth session (Paris, 10–12 June) [ECE/CES/74], considered the implications of the meetings of one of its parent bodies—the February session of the UN Statistical Commission (see p. 1379). It also considered the coordination of international statistical work in the ECE region, particularly with respect to business statistics; statistics on income, living conditions and poverty; and statistics on gender, culture and the environment. The Conference congratulated the Joint ECE/Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)/Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat) Working Group on Statistics for Sustainable Development for its *Report on Statistics for Sustainable Development* [ECE/CES/2008/29 & Add.1,2], which provided an overview of different approaches on measurement of sustainable development with a particular focus on the capital approach.

The Conference reviewed the work of the ECE Statistical Division in 2007 and its plans for 2008 [ECE/CES/2008/31], and considered progress made by the Joint ECE/OECD/Eurostat Working Group on the Impact of Globalisation on National Accounts [ECE/CES/2008/32]. It also reported on two seminars held during the Conference session: a Seminar on Strategic Issues Linked to the Measurement of International Transactions, organized by the International Monetary Fund and the United States Bureau of Economic Analysis, and a Seminar on Measuring Population Movement and Integration in a Globalized World, organized by Germany and Eurostat.

Economic cooperation and integration

The Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration (CECI), at its third session (Geneva, 3–5 December) [ECE/CECI/2008/2], discussed the impact of the economic and financial crisis on issues related to its work, and reviewed the implementation of its 2006–2008 work programme, concluding that its main objectives and outputs had been achieved. The Committee organized policy segment panels on “Cooperative solutions to global challenges: eco-innovation and clean energy for higher competitiveness” and “Wider economic integration through innovative development of efficient and safe transport and trade links.”

The Committee noted the establishment of an active constituency of CECI stakeholders, including business community and expert networks in ECE member States, that contributed to successful programme implementation while benefiting from CECI results and outputs. It emphasized the role of the CECI Teams of Specialists as important pillars of its activities, and encouraged use of its Information Exchange Platform as an instrument of knowledge-sharing by its Teams of Specialists and expert networks.

The Committee adopted its work programme for 2009–2010, taking account of its deliberations on that item [ECE/CECI/2008/6]. Noting that the demand for CECI capacity-building activities and other technical cooperation services from countries with economies in transition had increased considerably in 2008, it agreed on the need to match that demand with an adequate level of regular budget and extrabudgetary resources. It also recommended that the mandates of the Teams of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies, on Intellectual Property, and on Public-Private Partnerships be renewed for the period 2009–2010.

The Committee also supported proposals to organize joint events in 2009, including: with the Economic Research Institute of the Ministry of Economy and Budget Planning (Kazakhstan), an international event on “Public-Private Partnerships Facing Global Challenges” to be held in March within the framework of the II Astana Economic Forum; with the Russian Private Equity and Venture Capital Association, an international conference on “Practical Aspects of Public-Private Partnerships in Innovation”, to be held in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, in October within the framework of the Tenth Venture Capital Fair; and with the Market Research Foundation (Russian Federation), an international conference on “World Economic Crisis: New Opportunities for Public-Private Partnerships” to be held in Kalinin-grad, Russian Federation, in April.

Cooperation with regional bodies

The Secretary-General, in his August consolidated report [A/63/228-S/2008/531 & Corr.1] on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations, outlined UN relations with the Eurasian Economic Community and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION

On 3 November [meeting 37], the General Assembly adopted **resolution 63/15** [draft: A/63/L.13 & Add.1] without vote [agenda item 114 (j)].

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Eurasian Economic Community

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 58/84 of 9 December 2003, in which it granted the Eurasian Economic Community observer status in the General Assembly, and 62/79 of 6 December 2007 on cooperation between the United Nations and the Eurasian Economic Community,

Recalling also that one of the purposes of the United Nations is to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural and humanitarian nature,

Recalling further the Articles of the Charter of the United Nations that encourage activities through regional cooperation for the promotion of the purposes and principles of the United Nations,

Taking note of the fact that the membership of the Eurasian Economic Community includes countries with economies in transition, and recalling in this regard its resolution 61/210 of 20 December 2006, in which it invited the United Nations system to enhance dialogue with and increase support to the regional and subregional cooperation organizations whose membership includes countries with economies in transition and whose efforts include assisting their members to fully integrate into the world economy,

Noting that the Treaty on the Establishment of the Eurasian Economic Community reaffirms the commitment of the States members of the Community to the principles of the Charter and also to the generally accepted principles and norms of international law,

Convinced that the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and other organizations of the United Nations system and the Eurasian Economic Community contributes to the promotion of the purposes and principles of the United Nations,

Expressing concern over the persistent natural disasters in countries of the region,

Recognizing that the issues of water and energy resources management, as well as the development, dissemination and transfer of technologies, have particular importance for the sustainable development of the countries members of the Eurasian Economic Community,

Recognizing also that the Eurasian Economic Community includes some landlocked countries, and in this regard underlining the key role of regional integration in-

stitutions such as the Eurasian Economic Community in the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/79, and expresses satisfaction with regard to the mutually beneficial interaction between the United Nations and the Eurasian Economic Community;

2. *Also takes note* of the activities of the Eurasian Economic Community in support of United Nations goals through the strengthening of regional cooperation in such areas as trade and economic development, the establishment of a customs union, energy, transport, agriculture and agro-industry, the regulation of migration, banking and finance, communications, education, health care and pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, environmental protection and natural disaster risk reduction;

3. *Commends* the commitment of the States members of the Eurasian Economic Community to scaling up regional economic integration by establishing a customs union and free trade zone, consistent with the multilateral trading system, as well as the formation of a common energy market;

4. *Notes with appreciation* the progress achieved in cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Community and the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the United Nations Development Programme, including in the fields of water and energy resources management, the development, dissemination and transfer of technologies, trade facilitation, transport and capacity-building, promoting effective interaction within the framework of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia;

5. *Underlines* the importance of further strengthening dialogue, cooperation and coordination between the United Nations system and the Eurasian Economic Community, and invites the Secretary-General of the United Nations to continue conducting, to this end, regular consultations with the Secretary-General of the Eurasian Economic Community, within existing resources, using for this purpose the relevant inter-institutional forums and formats, including the annual consultations between the Secretary-General of the United Nations and heads of regional organizations;

6. *Invites* the specialized agencies and other organizations, programmes and funds of the United Nations system, as well as international financial institutions, to enhance cooperation and direct contacts with the Eurasian Economic Community for the purpose of undertaking joint implementation of programmes to achieve their goals;

7. *Invites in particular* the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and other related organizations of the United Nations system to further contribute to the development by the Eurasian Economic Community of a concept for the effective use of water and energy resources in States members of the Community as well as to the resolution of water-related disaster risk reduction issues in the region;

8. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution;

9. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its sixty-fifth session the sub-item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Eurasian Economic Community".

Also on 3 November [meeting 37], the Assembly adopted **resolution 63/11** [draft: A/63/L.9 & Add.1] without vote [agenda item 114 (d)].

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 54/15 of 8 October 1999, by which it granted observer status to the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, as well as its resolutions 55/211 of 20 December 2000, 57/34 of 21 November 2002, 59/259 of 23 December 2004 and 61/4 of 20 October 2006 on cooperation between the United Nations and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization,

Recalling also that one of the purposes of the United Nations is to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social or humanitarian nature,

Recalling further the Articles of the Charter of the United Nations that encourage activities through regional cooperation for the promotion of the purposes and principles of the United Nations,

Recalling its Declaration on the Enhancement of Cooperation between the United Nations and Regional Arrangements or Agencies in the Maintenance of International Peace and Security of 9 December 1994,

Recognizing that any dispute or conflict in the region impedes cooperation, and stressing the need to solve such a dispute or conflict on the basis of the norms and principles of international law,

Convinced that the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and other organizations contributes to the promotion of the purposes and principles of the United Nations,

Recalling the report of the Secretary-General submitted pursuant to resolution 61/4,

1. *Takes note* of the Declaration adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the States members of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization on the occasion of the Fifteenth Anniversary Summit of the Organization, held in Istanbul, Turkey, on 25 June 2007;

2. *Reiterates* the conviction that multilateral economic cooperation contributes to enhancing peace, stability and security to the benefit of the Black Sea region;

3. *Welcomes* the efforts towards the completion of the process of reforms in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization envisaged in the Bucharest statement of 26 April 2006, issued by the Council of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States members of the Organization, thus contributing to the enhancement of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization, as well as its role in the economic and social development of its member States;

4. *Takes note* of the resolve of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization to foster a pragmatic and project- and results-oriented approach in the spheres of common interest for its member States, where improved regional cooperation could create synergies and increase the efficiency of resources used;

5. *Welcomes* the activities of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization aimed at strengthening regional cooperation in fields such as energy, transport, institutional reform and good governance, trade and economic development, banking and finance, communications, agriculture and agroindustry, health care and pharmaceuticals, environmental protection, tourism, science and technology, exchange of statistical data and economic information, collaboration among Customs services, and combating organized crime and illicit trafficking in drugs, weapons and radioactive material, acts of terrorism and illegal migration, and in other related areas;

6. *Also welcomes* the efforts of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization to elaborate and realize concrete joint regional projects, particularly in the fields of energy and transport, which will contribute to the development of the Euro-Asian transport links;

7. *Takes note*, within this framework, of the signing in Belgrade on 19 April 2007 of the memorandum of understanding for the coordinated development of the Black Sea Ring Highway and the memorandum of understanding on the development of the Motorways of the Sea at the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization region;

8. *Welcomes* the financing of projects by the Project Development Fund of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization to the benefit of the sustainable development of the Black Sea region;

9. *Appeals* for greater cooperation between the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and international financial institutions in co-financing feasibility and prefeasibility studies of the projects in the wider Black Sea area;

10. *Takes note* of the positive contributions of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, the Business Council, the Black Sea Trade and Development Bank and the International Centre for Black Sea Studies to the strengthening of multifaceted regional cooperation in the wider Black Sea area;

11. *Also takes note* of the enhanced cooperation between the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and the Economic Commission for Europe, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the working contacts of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization with the World Bank, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization, aimed at promoting the sustainable development of the region of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization;

12. *Welcomes* the multifaceted and fruitful cooperation between the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and the Economic Commission for Europe, especially in the area of transport, within the framework of the Cooperation Agreement signed between the two organizations on 2 July 2001;

13. *Also welcomes* the launching of the Black Sea Trade and Investment Promotion Programme, the first partnership project between the Black Sea Economic Cooperation

Organization and the United Nations Development Programme, on 1 December 2006, and the signing of the cooperation agreement between the two organizations in Istanbul on 28 June 2007;

14. *Takes note* of the establishment of cooperation between the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and the International Centre for Hydrogen Energy Technologies of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, with emphasis placed on energy and environment;

15. *Also takes note* of the increased cooperation between the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and, within this framework, welcomes the launching on 1 September 2007 of the joint Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization-United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime project on strengthening the criminal justice response to trafficking in persons in the Black Sea region;

16. *Acknowledges* the commitment of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization to contributing to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals at national, regional and global levels;

17. *Takes note* of the intensified cooperation between the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and the European Union, and supports the efforts of the Organization to take concrete steps to advance this cooperation in line with the provisions of the Declaration of 14 February 2008 on a Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization-European Union Enhanced Relationship, issued by the Council of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the States members of the Organization;

18. *Also takes note* of the cooperation established between the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and other regional organizations and initiatives;

19. *Invites* the Secretary-General to strengthen dialogue with the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization with a view to promoting cooperation and coordination between the two secretariats;

20. *Invites* the specialized agencies and other organizations and programmes of the United Nations system to cooperate with the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization in order to continue programmes with the Organization and its associated institutions for the achievement of their objectives;

21. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution;

22. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its sixty-fifth session the sub-item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization".

Latin America and the Caribbean

During its thirty-second session, (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 9–13 June) [E/2008/40], the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) considered the report *Structural Change and Productivity Growth—20 Years Later. Old problems, new opportunities* [LC/G.2368(SES.32/4)],

which examined the region's performance in the world economy, along with its opportunities and challenges in the new global economic environment; reviewed the region's economic and export performance in the past quarter century; and looked at the emerging opportunities associated with the new techno-economic paradigms. The Commission held a high-level seminar on that subject, which included panel discussions on Latin America and the Caribbean and structural changes in the world economy; competitiveness and learning in the natural-resources sector and in the manufacturing and services sectors; and public-private alliances for innovation and restructuring of production.

ECLAC also discussed the draft work programme of the ECLAC system for 2010–2011, and held a Regional Consultation Preparatory to the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus [YUN 2002, p. 953], to be held in Doha, Qatar, on 29 November–2 December, where it considered the report *Trends and challenges in international cooperation and the mobilization of resources for development in Latin America and the Caribbean* [LC/G.2380(SES.32/15)]. It held panel discussions on financing and cooperation; mobilization of domestic resources; systemic issues; and financing for development: gender policies. The Commission also had before it reports of the ECLAC sessional Ad Hoc Committee on Population and Development and the Committee on South-South Cooperation, which were annexed to its report.

ECLAC adopted 13 resolutions on various regional issues, including: the Santo Domingo resolution [res. 633(XXXII)], which addressed the issues raised in the report on structural change and productivity growth; ECLAC calendar of conferences for 2008–2010 [res. 634(XXXII)]; ECLAC priorities and programme of work for the 2010–2011 biennium [res. 635(XXXII)]; support for the work of the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning [res. 636(XXXII)]; follow-up to the Plan of Action for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean [res. 637(XXXII)]; ECLAC Statistical Conference of the Americas [res. 638(XXXII)]; ECLAC activities in relation to follow-up to the MDGs and implementation of the outcomes of the major UN conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields [res. 639(XXXII)]; admission of the Cayman Islands as an associate member of ECLAC [res. 640(XXXII)]; Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee [res. 641(XXXII)]; South-South Cooperation [res. 642(XXXII)]; location of the Commission's next session [res. 643(XXXII)]; population and development: priority activities for the period 2008–2010 [res. 644(XXXII)]; and Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean [res. 645(XXXII)].

Economic trends

A report on the economic situation in and outlook for Latin America and Caribbean, 2008–2009 [E/2009/19] said that the growth of GDP in the region stood at 4.2 per cent in 2008, its sixth consecutive year of expansion. However, the mid-2007 subprime mortgage market problem in the United States had become, just over a year later, a systemic crisis that crippled the credit markets of the developed countries, with worldwide effects. In the ECLAC region, a fall in economic activity to -0.3 per cent was expected in 2009, and regional unemployment was expected to rise from 7.5 per cent in 2008 to 8.6 per cent. Trends in the world prices of foodstuffs and fuels were likely to bring about a marked fall in inflation, from 8.3 per cent in 2008 to 5.5 to 6 per cent.

Activities in 2008

An ECLAC report on the Commission's work in 2008 and 2009 [LC/G.2436(SES.33/7)] 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 strengthened the Commission's role as a forum for policy discussion, the exchange of experiences, and as a catalyst for consensus-building. The Division played a pioneering role in helping several countries organize public-sector institutional processes, strategic national visions, and public-private partnerships. It also addressed opportunities for interregional trade and investment, publishing: *Opportunities for Trade and Investment between Latin America and the Asia-Pacific region: the link with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)*, *Economic and Trade Relations between Latin America and Asia-Pacific: the link with China*, and *The Latin American Pacific Basin Initiative and the Asia-Pacific region*, which it presented at regional and interregional meetings. It also participated in the 2008 China International Auto Parts Expo at Beijing in November.

Significant changes were introduced to the Division's website, resulting in easier access and optimized use of search engines on trade and regional integration. The flagship publication *Latin America and the*

Caribbean in the World Economy 2007: Trends 2008 was launched in Mexico City and received wide media coverage. A document on the international crisis and the opportunities for regional cooperation was prepared for the Summit of Latin America and the Caribbean on Integration and Development, which met at Costa do Sauípe, Brazil, in December.

The Division's technical cooperation activities focused mainly on public-private partnerships; the relationship between trade and development, with special emphasis on social issues and sustainability; negotiation and administration of trade agreements; innovation and competitiveness; and trade development. Its 74 technical cooperation missions addressed competitiveness and export promotion (47 per cent); trade agreements (23 per cent); integration (16 per cent); and relations between Asia and Latin America (14 per cent). In November, a forum was held in Mexico City on attracting FDI, export promotion and export development in the framework of public-private partnerships. It was organized with the support of the Ibero-American Secretariat, ProMéxico, the Mexican Importers and Exporters Association, and the Mexican Business Council for Trade, Investment and Technology.

Production and innovation

The ECLAC Production, Productivity and Management Division devoted considerable effort to strengthening the capacity of Governments to formulate and implement policies and strategies to enhance the productivity and competitiveness of their countries' production structures. In the face of the economic crisis, its flagship publication, *Foreign Direct Investment in Latin America*, included a special section on the impacts of the crisis on capital flows to the region, as well as an analysis of investment in large coastal hotel and real estate complexes in tropical countries, which were hit hard by the crisis. The Division's research on the determinants of productivity growth in developing countries remained an important reference for policymakers and research institutions.

The Commission's post-graduate summer school hosted 50 young researchers interested in studying and analysing the Latin American and Caribbean economies. The Division continued to maintain the Observatory for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean, which aimed to centralize and harmonize data monitoring the information society in the region. Technical cooperation and support for policymaking included 207 missions, addressing information and communication technologies (ICTs) and innovation (47 per cent); industrial development and small and medium-sized enterprises (35 per cent); agricultural and rural development (13 per cent); and investment and corporate strategy (5 per cent).

Macroeconomic policies and growth

In the context of the financial and economic crisis, the ECLAC Economic Development Division placed emphasis 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 remained a leading contributor to the dissemination of up-to-date information on current macroeconomic policy topics and to the promotion of information-sharing. Its 172 technical cooperation missions focused on financial crisis management (53 per cent); economic growth (15 per cent); employment (13 per cent); development financing (10 per cent); fiscal policy (6 per cent); and monetary and exchange-rate policy (3 per cent).

The Division enhanced the awareness of policymakers in the region about key issues relating to short-term macroeconomic policies within a long-term growth framework by undertaking a systematic assessment of the application of economic policies and reforms and of their impact on the economies of the region, and disseminated its main analyses and findings through its publications. The Division's leading publications—*Preliminary Overview of the Economies of Latin America and the Caribbean* and *Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean*—were widely read, and readers' surveys, including feedback from policymakers, academics, the press, non-governmental organizations representatives and economists from the private sector, showed a 94.5 per cent satisfaction rate. The Division also continued to disseminate economic analyses on fiscal policy and labour markets, including a variety of specialized, in-depth macroeconomic analyses, through its working paper series "Macroeconomía del desarrollo". Through such publications as "Regulation, Worker Protection and Active Labour-Market Policies in Latin America", it continued to contribute to the policy debate regarding labour market institutions in the region, and to inform decision-makers and technical personnel of policy options with respect to regulation and protection.

Equity and social cohesion

The global financial crisis, which also affected the social situation, brought an end to six years of successes in reducing poverty, expanding employment, extending social protection coverage and improving income distribution in the region. During the period under review, the ECLAC Social Development Division strengthened its assessment and monitoring of social protection systems and poverty reduction policies, and of the links between families and social protection policies. Its 145 technical cooperation missions

focused on social protection (26 per cent); social cohesion and vulnerable groups (25 per cent); education, health and nutrition (25 per cent); poverty eradication (15 per cent); and social indicators (9 per cent).

The 2008 edition of the flagship publication *Social Panorama of Latin America* provided up-to-date poverty figures from 18 countries, thus contributing to policy discussions regarding the new employment-related targets incorporated into MDGs, the demographic dividend as an opportunity for expanding secondary education coverage, and the issue of youth and family violence from a perspective of social inclusion. The steady increase in downloads of that edition was indicative of the demand for crucial information for assessing social conditions, advances in poverty reduction, migration and health issues, and public social expenditure, as well as of the role of ECLAC in furthering the regional social development agenda.

The Division continued to provide technical cooperation to Governments to develop methodologies for measuring social expenditure. It also devoted much of its work to social protection and conditional cash transfer programmes, as fundamental tools for achieving greater equality and reducing poverty in the region. The Division also disseminated information through the website of the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Social Institutions. Its publication, *Youth and Social Cohesion in Ibero-America: A model in the making*, which provided a comprehensive, up-to-date picture of the situation of youth in Ibero-America, was presented in October to Heads of State and Government at the eighteenth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government in El Salvador.

Mainstreaming the gender perspective

The ECLAC Division for Gender Affairs, in its transition from the Women and Development Unit [YUN 2007, p. 1030], was significantly upgraded and strengthened, enabling ECLAC to demonstrate its role in generating knowledge and enhancing capacity for gender equality and the empowerment of women and in contributing to gender mainstreaming in the region. The launching of the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean; the implementation of the Quito Consensus [ibid., p. 1031]; and the integration of a gender perspective into the main institutional documents and work priorities of ECLAC were the Division's most important achievements during the period under review.

The Division also carried out preparatory work aimed at fostering collaboration between users and producers of statistical information at the country level through the organization of two technical meetings—Aguascalientes, Mexico, October, and Port-of-

Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, December—with participation by representatives of national machineries for the advancement of women/gender affairs and national statistical offices from the region in defining the basic set of indicators necessary for the functioning of the Gender Equality Observatory. The Division's 37 technical cooperation missions focused on women's rights (49 per cent); gender statistics (38 per cent); institutions and representation of women (8 per cent); and gender and the environment (5 per cent).

ECLAC participated in consolidating efforts to support the UN Secretary-General's Campaign "UNite to End Violence against Women", launched in February, through collaborative response, participatory action and sharing of best practices. The Division contributed to work on the issue of gender-based violence through various means, including the creation of an inter-institutional regional working group to define a regional strategy. It also prepared a series of seven video clips on violence against women, which were widely distributed by the five regional commissions and the regional working group on the occasion of the 2008 International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

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]. It presented a background document on the socio-economic impact of demographic changes at the 2008 ECLAC sessional Ad Hoc Committee on Population and Development, and prepared a chapter for the 2008 edition of the ECLAC publication *Social Panorama of Latin America*, on the opportunity to improve secondary education brought about by the demographic dividend.

During 2008, a survey on the activities of national statistical offices in relation to the forthcoming 2010 round of censuses identified thematic areas in which countries of the region needed technical cooperation and support. As a result, the Division organized four workshops on such emerging issues as measurement of racial and ethnic identity; measurement of migration and other forms of mobility; the use of cartography; and the inclusion of health-related questions in censuses.

The Division's 177 technical cooperation missions focused on population censuses and statistics (24 per cent); ageing (19 per cent); indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants (19 per cent); migration (17 per

cent); population growth and public policy (11 per cent); fertility and reproductive health (7 per cent); and a rights-based approach in social policy (3 per cent).

Public administration

The Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) underscored the need for the countries of the region to strike the necessary balance between private initiative and public action and to consolidate a fiscal and social covenant, defined as the institutional arrangements that ensured effective governance. It sought to foster a healthy, 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 worked in specialized areas, offering short courses which featured a combination of theory and practice, and systematized the experiences of the countries of the region, assisting government officials in the design and implementation of their development programmes and policies. ILPES was the leading voice within 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 catalyzed the collective discussion on those issues, contributing to efforts to improve the quality of public policies and strengthen institutional capacities.

The Division's 393 technical cooperation missions focused on local and regional development (58 per cent); results-based management (21 per cent); planning and budget (11 per cent); and socio-economic project evaluation (10 per cent).

Sustainable development and human settlements

The ECLAC Sustainable Development and Human Settlements Division continued to work on the inter-relationships between economic growth, environmental protection, urban development and social equity. Its technical cooperation and studies strengthened the capacity of the countries of the region to assess their progress towards sustainable development, by generating empirical information and constructing sustainability indicators to measure the magnitude of the economic, social and environmental costs associated with their development strategies at national and subnational levels. Eight studies on climate change mitigation, including evaluation of carbon markets and economic adaptation in the region, were undertaken jointly with national Government institutions

of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.

The Division worked on the integration of public policies and the follow-up of international and regional agreements on sustainable development, including their links with environmental goods and services markets. It coordinated a multi-agency report on regional progress under MDG 7 (ensuring environmental sustainability), which included information on carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP and deforestation, and the potential impacts of climate change on the achievement of other MDGs, and elaborated on additional difficulties for addressing climate change. The report showed important advances in aspects of environmental sustainability, such as increased number of protected areas, reduced consumption of products that damaged the ozone layer, and increased water and sanitation services in the region.

ECLAC also raised awareness and disseminated its analyses and policy recommendations on the issue of climate change to regional policymakers at major meetings. The Division published four methodological guides aimed at facilitating decision-making in the construction of composite indices of sustainable development, economic analysis of environmental externalities and strategic environmental assessment. In addition, urban infrastructure sustainability analyses were presented at expert group meetings.

The Division's 154 technical cooperation missions focused on natural disasters (38 per cent); climate change (29 per cent); the environment (19 per cent); and development and urban planning (14 per cent). Support was provided to countries and local authorities to enable them to cope with the estimated increase of 40 million inhabitants in urban populations over the following five years, and with the repercussions that the increase would have on demand for housing and public services and in terms of the exacerbation of environmental pollution and soil degradation.

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. It focused on strengthening the institutional capacity of countries in the region to formulate and implement public policies and regulatory frameworks, in order to increase efficiency in the sustainable management of natural resources and the provision of public utilities and infrastructure services, and in coordinating and sharing best practices.

In the area of infrastructure, the Division provided support and cooperation to enable countries to address three kinds of challenges threatening future social and economic development: the infrastructure gap resulting from delays in investment coupled with explosive growth in demand for transportation; the lack of sustainable criteria in planning infrastructure services; and problems in the operation of transport and logistics chains that increased costs and affected the competitiveness and productivity of national economies, among other negative externalities.

In the energy sector, the Division supported the region's Governments in the promotion of an integral and sustainable energy policy, with emphasis on renewable energies, energy efficiency and biofuels. With respect to mining, the countries that were most active in that sector—including Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Peru and others—received technical cooperation services on environmental management of the mining industry, including aspects of management such as mining liabilities, mine closures and social responsibility.

The Division organized eight seminars and expert meetings, including a regional conference on policies for economically efficient, environmentally sustainable and socially equitable water supply and sewerage services (Santiago, Chile, September). It provided the Latin American and Caribbean energy ministers meeting at the third Regional Energy Integration Forum (Buenos Aires, Argentina, November) with an assessment of the local and regional energy situation and an evaluation of policy proposals on regional integration from the perspective of regional energy markets. The Division's 160 technical cooperation missions focused on energy (42 per cent); maritime transport and ports (19 per cent); land transport and road safety (14 per cent); water (14 per cent); and mining (11 per cent).

Statistics and economic projections

The ECLAC Statistics and Economic Projections Division continued its work in the area of systematization and dissemination of statistics. It supported at least 15 countries of the region in strengthening their national statistical systems and capacities in the areas of national accounts, development of suitable indicators for measuring progress towards the MDGs, household surveys and the production of environmental statistics. In July, together with the Central Bank of Chile, ECLAC hosted a workshop on the application of statistical methods to national accounts; in October, a regional seminar on national accounts was held in Santiago.

Technical cooperation provided by the Division facilitated the estimation of national account data in 17 countries, and five countries implemented the

1993 System of National Accounts recommendations. A set of indicators for measuring social cohesion in the region was also identified, including qualitative indicators on public perceptions on different issues. The Division also provided support to countries to improve the quality and availability of household surveys. Another effort involved improving the accessibility of data collected by ECLAC as a whole, by enabling access to all ECLAC databases through CEPALSTAT, a new statistical information portal on the Commission's website.

The Division's annual flagship publication, *Statistical Yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean*, was a leading source of statistical information, providing social, economic and environmental data from the countries of the region. Despite improvements in the quality and completeness of the region's statistical output on economic, environmental, demographic and social matters, more was needed to cope with future challenges. With the support of the United Nations Environment Programme and the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development, environmental indicators were developed and adapted to take account of the region's statistical development. A similar process of harmonization was carried out for regional manufacturing business trend surveys.

The Division's 176 technical cooperation missions focused on economic statistics (40 per cent); social statistics (37 per cent); institution-building (17 per cent); and environmental statistics (17 per cent). The main direct beneficiaries were senior technical staff from national statistics offices in ECLAC member States. Their responsibilities included the collection, processing and analysis of economic statistics and data on such social indicators as employment and poverty. Other beneficiaries included central bank officials working on national accounts.

Subregional activities

Caribbean

The ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, strengthened 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 the escalation in world food and oil prices and the resulting impact on Caribbean economies. Work on analysing the economics of climate change in the Caribbean began in late 2008, focusing initially on determining the situation in terms of available data and policies, and with respect to other instruments relating to climate change impacts.

The subregional headquarters assisted government officials and public and private institutions from 24 Caribbean countries on sustainable development and integration. Efforts were made to increase access for policymakers in the subregion to the work of the subregional office, and to provide them with an opportunity to increase their knowledge on global matters relating to sustainable development and integration in the Caribbean. Expert meetings were convened in the areas of youth issues, crime and violence, gender and sustainable development, including climate change and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States [YUN 2005, p. 946].

In addition, the subregional headquarters continued to highlight developments in the world economy with respect to international trade, tourism, remittance flows, FDI and external financing—all of which strongly influenced the small open economies of the subregion—and to advocate prudent fiscal and policy responses. The annual *Economic Survey of the Caribbean* [LC/CAR/L.216], which included an economic overview of the subregion in 2008 and the outlook for 2009, provided policymakers with an in-depth discussion of the subregion's economic performance, and put forward recommendations for policy and fiscal change.

The subregional headquarters' 138 technical cooperation missions focused on climate change and the environment (25 per cent); natural disasters (21 per cent); censuses and statistics (21 per cent); gender (10 per cent); economic development (10 per cent); social development (8 per cent); and energy (5 per cent). The headquarters also contributed to economic policymaking in the subregion through studies conducted on public-private partnerships and the subprime mortgage crisis in the United States.

Mexico and Central America

The economies of the northern region of Central America and the Caribbean suffered soaring commodities prices and a devastating hurricane season in 2008, followed by the worldwide economic and financial crisis which erupted at year's end. In response, the ECLAC subregional headquarters in Mexico redirected its activities within its programme of work. Its document "Confronting the crisis. The Central American Isthmus and the Dominican Republic: economic evolution in 2008 and prospects for 2009" [LC/MEX/L.904] examined the causes of the crisis, the channels through which it was transmitted and its economic and social effects, and provided a set of policy recommendations.

In 2008, the subregional headquarters evaluated the impact of international food and oil price hikes

on inflation and poverty in Central America. Twice during the year it published a detailed analysis of the economic evolution and outlook for each of the sub-region's 10 countries. It also implemented a successful strategy for electronic distribution of information and publications via its website. In addition, ECLAC and Cuba agreed on a methodology for estimating the Cuban GDP.

In the energy field, it produced studies on the externalities and costs of electricity-generating plants using fossil fuels and of refinery complexes in Mexico—providing the technical basis for the establishment of the national standard for reducing carbon dioxide emissions. Its studies on bioethanol provided the technical basis for a Costa Rican project on introducing bio-fuels into the country's gasoline supply, for which a pilot stage was carried out in 2008.

The subregional headquarters conducted a feasibility study on the economics of climate change in Central America and prepared a project proposal for a comprehensive study on the subject, which was approved by the ministries of environment of the countries of the Central American Isthmus. The Presidents of the subregion, at their Summit on Climate Change and Environment (San Pedro Sula, Honduras, 23–27 May) gave their ministries of environment and finance a mandate to support the study.

The 228 technical cooperation missions of the subregional headquarters focused on economic development (21 per cent); integration and international trade (19 per cent); natural disasters (16 per cent); climate change and the environment (14 per cent); social development (11 per cent); energy and natural resources (10 per cent); and productive development (9 per cent).

Programme and organizational questions

During its thirty-second session (Santo Domingo, 9–13 June) [E/2008/40], the Commission adopted a number of resolutions on programme and organizational matters.

ECLAC calendar of conferences

By its resolution on the ECLAC calendar of conferences for the period 2008–2010 [res. 634(XXXII)], the Commission reaffirmed the decision to maintain the current intergovernmental structure and existing pattern of meetings and approved the calendar of conferences of the Commission as it appeared in the annex to that resolution. It also reaffirmed that the Commission's conference servicing system had been found to be efficient and cost-effective, and recommended that its tasks continue to be the responsibility of the Executive Secretary. It further reaffirmed the

importance of continuing to entrust the Commission with the task of organizing and holding regional and subregional meetings to prepare for and follow up on world conferences of the United Nations in the economic and social fields.

ECLAC priorities and programme of work for 2010–2011

In June [res. 635(XXXII)], the Commission endorsed the proposed priorities for the work of the Commission for the 2010–2011 biennium as set forth by the Executive Secretary, which encompassed the consolidation of the advances achieved in the following areas: macroeconomic stability and the promotion of policies to reduce vulnerability; an increase in the region's production potential and a reduction in productivity gaps; an improvement in the region's position in the international economy and the promotion of long-term production development strategies involving appropriate forms of public- and private-sector cooperation and participation; the promotion of a broad social agreement to strengthen social cohesion, to reduce social risks and to strengthen gender mainstreaming in public policies; the refinement of sustainable development policies and an examination of the socio-economic implications of climate change; the strengthening of public management; and the improvement and consolidation of institutions relating to the management of global issues at the regional level.

The Commission urged the Executive Secretary to examine the challenges faced by the region in connection with the global energy and food crisis, and approved the programme of work for the system of the Commission for 2010–2011, which included the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning, and which, with the guidance provided by the resolutions adopted at the Commission's thirty-second session, would become the legislative mandate for the execution of programmes, projects and technical cooperation activities and for the production of recurrent publications identified therein.

Admission of the Cayman Islands to ECLAC membership

At its thirty-second session in June [res. 640(XXXII)], the Commission decided to admit the Cayman Islands as an associate member of ECLAC.

Venue of ECLAC thirty-third session

At its thirty-second session in June [res. 643(XXXII)], the Commission recommended that the Economic and Social Council approve the decision to hold the thirty-third session of ECLAC in Brazil in 2010.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL ACTION

On 22 July [meeting 38], the Economic and Social Council, on the recommendation of ECLAC [E/2008/15/Add.2], adopted **resolution 2008/9** without vote [agenda item 10].

Venue of the thirty-third session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

The Economic and Social Council,

Bearing in mind paragraph 15 of the terms of reference of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and rules 1 and 2 of the rules of procedure of the Commission,

Considering the invitation of the Government of Brazil to host the thirty-third session of the Commission,

1. *Expresses its gratitude* to the Government of Brazil for its generous invitation;
2. *Notes* the acceptance by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean of this invitation with pleasure;
3. *Endorses* the decision of the Commission to hold its thirty-third session in Brazil in 2010.

Cooperation with regional bodies

The Secretary-General, in his August consolidated report [A/63/228-S/2008/531 & Corr.1] on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations, outlined UN relations with the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION

On 3 November [meeting 37], the General Assembly adopted **resolution 63/12** [draft: A/63/L.10 & Add.1] without vote [agenda item 114 (*m*)].

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 59/258 of 23 December 2004 on cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations,

Bearing in mind the Agreement between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System, in which the parties agree to strengthen and expand their cooperation in matters that are of common concern in the fields of their respective competence pursuant to their constitutional instruments,

Noting that cooperation between the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System and the United Nations has been evolving over the last few years and diversifying with regard to areas of cooperation,

Welcoming the evolution in the treatment of topics relating to the United Nations system, in close contact with the delegations of the Member States participating in such deliberations,

1. *Takes note* of the holding of the thirty-third regular meeting of the Latin American Council of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System from 26 to 28 November 2007;

2. *Urges* the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to continue deepening its coordination and mutual support activities with the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System;

3. *Urges* the specialized agencies and other organizations, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, in particular, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Organization for Migration, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund, to continue and intensify their support for and to strengthen their cooperation with activities of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System and to contribute to joint actions to achieve the internationally agreed development objectives, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, in Latin America and the Caribbean;

4. *Requests* the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Permanent Secretary of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System to assess, at the appropriate time, the implementation of the Agreement between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session;

5. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution.

The Assembly, by **resolution 63/34** of 26 November (see p. 350), invited the Secretary-General to continue to promote and expand cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community in order to increase the capacity of the two organizations. It also urged the specialized agencies and other UN system organizations and programmes to step up their cooperation with the UN Secretary-General and the Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community with a view to intensifying their consultations and programmes of cooperation with the Caribbean Community and its associated institutions.

Western Asia

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) held its twenty-fifth session in Sana'a, Yemen, from 26 to 29 May [E/2008/41]. Session meetings were held in two segments, one for senior officials and the other for ministers. The senior officials segment considered: a report of the Executive Secre-

tary on the Commission's activities [E/ESCWA/25/5]; management issues; the draft convention on international multimodal transport of goods in the Arab Mashreq; and the request for membership in the Commission by the Sudan. The ministerial segment held two round tables: the first on financing for development in the ESCWA region, in preparation for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus [YUN 2002, p. 953], to be held in Doha, Qatar, from 29 November to 2 December; the second on strengthening regional cooperation for achieving the MDGs.

With regard to financing for development, delegates reviewed the progress made by countries of the region in implementing the Monterrey Consensus, and took into account the outcome of the regional preparatory meeting on the subject (Doha, 29–30 April). On the achievement of the MDGs, the situation was assessed as at 2007, which marked the mid-point towards their attainment. ESCWA encouraged the strengthening of regional cooperation to counter the main obstacles facing certain Arab countries and subregions, in particular the least developed and conflict-affected countries.

During the session, ESCWA launched the Information Society Portal for the ESCWA Region—a bilingual (English and Arabic), database-driven and open-source Web application dedicated to building an online network for partnerships on information and communication technology (ICT) initiatives. It also issued a report on the MDGs in the Arab region in 2007.

The Commission adopted 12 resolutions, including a resolution concerning the Sudan's request to become a member of ESCWA, which required action by the Economic and Social Council (see p. 1135).

Economic trends

According to the summary of the survey of economic and social developments in the ESCWA region, 2008–2009 [E/2009/20], until the last quarter of 2008, ESCWA member countries exhibited steady economic expansion, boosted by higher-than-usual oil prices, except in conflict-affected areas. However, with the onset of the global financial crisis and the steep drop in oil prices, growth prospects became increasingly uncertain. At the economic level, the impact of the crisis had a fourfold effect in 2008: a plunge in financial and real estate asset prices; a collapse in commodity prices, including energy, metal and food—although food prices remained relatively high; shortages of monetary liquidity, particularly of the United States dollar, in local and international money markets; and a rapid decline in export earnings. Against that global backdrop, ESCWA countries showed resilience in terms of economic expansion until the end of 2008. The

increasing economic and social uncertainty further undermined the already precarious sense of security shared by the ESCWA population.

Activities in 2008

In 2008, ESCWA continued to strengthen the complementarity between its normative and analytical work and its technical assistance activities, and to strengthen strategic partnerships with regional and national players, in particular with UN agencies and the League of Arab States and its subsidiary bodies. ESCWA activities under its 2008–2009 work programme [E/ESCWA/26/5(Part I)] focused on seven subprogrammes: integrated management of natural resources; integrated social policies; economic development and integration; ICT for regional integration; statistics for evidence-based policymaking; advancement of women; and conflict mitigation and development.

Climate change and sustainable development

By its resolution on climate change issues in the Arab region [res. 281(XXV)], the Commission asked the secretariat to assess the economic and social vulnerability of the region to climate change, with emphasis on freshwater resources, to increase awareness of climate change and to develop an Arab framework action plan on climate change in partnership with the League of Arab States, the Regional Office for West Asia of the United Nations Environment Programme, and other regional organizations.

In response, ESCWA would continue its efforts to build member countries' capacity to address climate change and foster a deeper understanding of measures to mitigate it. It would address such issues as the vulnerability of the water sector to climate change; large-scale renewable energy applications; reducing transport emissions; and enhancing energy efficiency, while continuing to offer technical assistance. ESCWA expanded its communication and networking efforts through the Arab Integrated Water Resources Management Network. In 2008, training activities were conducted on climate change, economic and financial instruments for integrated water resource management, and gender and water.

During the year, a study and field surveys were prepared for the Qatar General Electricity and Water Corporation, in order to evaluate the situation in Qatar and identify areas for improvement. In Yemen, as part of efforts to support the Ministry of Electricity and Energy, ESCWA held a January workshop on energy efficiency and conservation that focused on integrated energy resource planning, demand-side management and energy audits. It also held an October seminar on national cleaner-fuels strategies that provided an opportunity for collecting data and information.

Social policy

The ESCWA Social Development Division focused on strengthening the capacity of member countries to formulate and promote region-specific, integrated social development policies, with a view to achieving social equity, poverty reduction and sustainable development. It also strove to increase their capacity to develop and implement intersectoral social development plans, programmes and projects focusing on youth, migrant workers, persons with disabilities, and the rural and urban poor. During the year, it produced the *Integrated Social Policy Report II: From Concept to Practice* [E/ESCWA/SDD/2008/3], and launched technical assistance projects on integrated social policy in Egypt and Palestine. It also published a report, *The Status and Prospects of the Arab City I: Urbanization and the Challenge of Urban Slums*, focusing on good urban governance, social inclusion and security of tenure, presenting a framework for the dimensions of urbanization and slum areas and examining means to improve life in urban slums and prevent the emergence of new slum areas, while highlighting principles and good practices at the regional and international level.

At its May session [res. 285(XXV)], the Commission encouraged member countries to initiate consultative dialogue aimed at adopting an integrated social policy approach; encourage partnership between Government institutions, the private sector and civil society organizations in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of social policies; adopt and institutionalize integrated social policy and seek a balance between economic priorities and social outcomes; and formulate national youth policies as part of that policy and of national development plans and programmes. ESCWA also requested the secretariat to advocate and enhance the capacity of countries to formulate and adopt an integrated social policy approach.

Economic development

During 2008, the ESCWA Economic Development and Globalization Division (EDGD) enhanced the capacity of member countries to design and implement sound economic policies and strategies for sustainable economic growth, employment creation and poverty alleviation. It organized a wide range of activities on key priority issues of economic importance to the region, in order to increase its capacity to promote foreign direct investment (FDI), formulate and implement adequate trade policies and economic policies for accelerating progress towards achieving the MDGs, and strengthen the processes by which they implemented programmes for improving transport infrastructure and logistics within the

framework of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq. In line with the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development, EDGD continued to support countries in promoting finance for development, and organized a consultative preparatory meeting (Doha, Qatar, 29–30 April) for the Follow-up International Conference.

The division also prepared its *Annual Review of Developments in Globalization and Regional Integration in the Arab World, 2008* [Sales No. E.09.II.L.1], which focused on FDI and regional integration, highlighting labour movement in the region. As part of the Review's follow-up activities, an expert group meeting was organized (Beirut, Lebanon, 20 November). Throughout the year, EDGD continued to provide training services for member countries on financing for development, double taxation, FDI statistics and bilateral investment agreements and their economic implications. As to trade promotion activities, it conducted the Third Forum on Arab Business Community and World Trade Organization Agreements (Beirut, July) to enhance the capacity of countries to negotiate and implement subregional, regional and multilateral trade agreements, and to increase awareness in the Arab business community of developments in WTO negotiations and their implications for businesses in the region. It also assessed trade policy trends, trade facilitation, service liberalization measures and the WTO accession process; and provided related policy advocacy and advice through an expert group meeting on the assessment of trends in the region and their implications for trade and economic performance (Beirut, 17–18 December).

By a resolution on regional action to accelerate implementation of the Monterrey Consensus in Western Asia [res. 290(XXV)], the Commission adopted the draft final communiqué issued by the consultative preparatory meeting and affirmed the need for developing countries, including ESCWA member countries, to be more involved in the management of the global financial, monetary and trade system. It urged countries to support regional integration and small and medium-sized enterprises, and make available the financial resources to create new youth employment opportunities. It also called on countries to continue efforts to eradicate financial and administrative corruption and increase their FDI share, and to stress the importance of education and its central role in eradicating poverty and achieving wider socio-economic development goals. The Commission requested the developed donor countries to increase their ODA in order to assist in achieving the MDGs and affirmed the need for member countries to make a contribution at the highest possible level to the Follow-up International Conference. The secretariat was urged to strengthen cooperation with relevant regional and

international organizations and other UN regional commissions on Monterrey Consensus-related issues; to follow up the outcome of the Conference; and to support country efforts.

Yemen

On 29 May [res. 289(XXV)], the Commission commended the comprehensive development efforts undertaken by Yemen, which were aimed at eradicating poverty and meeting economic and social needs with the involvement of civil society and the professional, academic and political social sectors. It recommended that ESCWA provide more support to Yemen with a view to achieving the activities undertaken as a part of the comprehensive development and national efforts to realize the MDGs.

ICT and related development issues

During the year, the ESCWA region experienced a widening digital divide and faced major challenges in building the information society. It needed evidence-based policymaking that relied on basic indicators to produce strategies that optimized development. Broadband represented a challenge to developing the region's ICT infrastructure, since most online applications required the transfer and display of significant amounts of data. The financing of ICT projects was another major obstacle. Digital Arabic Content (DAC) was still very limited compared with Internet content in other languages, and increased efforts were needed to promote the DAC industry in the region in order to preserve Arabic language and culture in a digital world.

At its April meeting in Bahrain, the ESCWA Consultative Committee on Scientific and Technological Development and Technological Innovation, through its Information and Communications Technology Division, reviewed progress made towards the establishment of the ESCWA technology centre, including a detailed assessment of regional needs and priorities, and proposed implementation mechanisms for the centre.

At its May session [res. 284(XXV)], the Commission requested the secretariat to set up within ESCWA a multidisciplinary team to support and monitor progress in the operationalization of the ESCWA regional technology centre, to be funded by extrabudgetary resources.

Statistics

The ESCWA Statistics Division aimed at strengthening the capacity of national institutional frameworks for official statistics in member countries, while strengthening their capacity to participate in the 2010

round of population censuses and implement household and other surveys, in order to provide evidence-based data for attainment of the MDGs by 2015.

ESCWA member countries faced major challenges in producing and disseminating reliable and up-to-date data. Their national statistics offices faced significant obstacles in incorporating appropriate data collection plans into statistical strategies; improving methodologies for basic data and metadata collection; raising the accuracy of estimates to bring them into line with international standards; and strengthening reporting mechanisms at the national and international levels.

On 29 May [res. 283(XXV)], the Commission adopted a resolution on ESCWA member country compliance with international standards for enhancing national statistical systems. It requested countries to take measures to produce high-quality official statistics that could be used in international comparisons; adopt the 1994 Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics of the UN Statistical Commission and take action to apply them; complete the implementation of national strategies for statistical development; and enhance the position of the national statistical machinery within the institutional structure. The Commission requested the secretariat to hold training workshops on international concepts, classifications and standards, and to support countries in adopting and undertaking to apply the Fundamental Principles and in designing and implementing national strategies for statistical development.

On the same date [res. 287(XXV)], the Commission adopted a resolution on strengthening statistical capacities for evidence-based policymaking, and encouraged countries to produce MDG indicators and, in particular, indicators related to poverty, education and health, using surveys and other relevant sources; exchange information for best practice in the development of statistical activities; and adopt the Common Set of Core ICT Indicators issued by the Global Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development. The Commission stressed the need to strengthen the impartiality of national statistical offices in order to produce objective data and improve coordination mechanisms within the statistical system.

Gender equality

Despite positive developments in advancing gender equality in ESCWA member countries in recent years, the region still lagged behind on a number of key indicators. With ESCWA assistance, countries addressed three main challenges: promoting and integrating gender in policies, programmes and projects; mitigating the effects of regional instability and conflict; and continuing to implement the 1995 Beijing Dec-

laration and Platform for Action [YUN 1995, p. 1170] and the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) [YUN 1979, p. 895].

Through its Centre for Women, the Commission provided policymakers with recommendations on advancing the rights of women in the region; engaging in capacity-building activities on women's rights and the need to adhere to international instruments; engaging in activities aimed at enhancing the capacity of Government institutions in such gender issues as national machineries for women; and raising awareness on gender issues. The full implementation of CEDAW and its optional protocol in the region remained a priority for ESCWA, which organized several capacity-building workshops and advisory missions to raise awareness of its importance and the need for countries to withdraw their reservations.

On 29 May, by a resolution on gender statistics for equality and empowerment of women [res. 286(XXV)], the Commission encouraged member countries to adopt the set of indicators in the Arab Gender Issues and Indicators Framework as a common set of indicators; develop a mechanism for the collection, dissemination and analysis of gender-sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data by rural, urban and age information for the formulation of gender-related and gender-sensitive policies and programmes; and implement training programmes to mainstream gender issues and statistics into their statistical systems, with a view to sensitizing data producers and users to the issue of gender quality and women's empowerment.

Conflict mitigation and development

During 2007 and 2008, the ESCWA Emerging and Conflict-related Issues (ECRI) section conducted numerous capacity-building modules for over 4,500 participants from Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and Yemen, geared towards enhancing the ability of the public sector to take the lead in attainment of development objectives, including the MDGs. Through such training, ESCWA worked to strengthen good governance practice in conflict-affected countries. As part of its technical cooperation activities, ECRI organized two training of trainers workshops on strategic planning for Palestinian and Yemeni public sector managers, in Beirut, Lebanon, and Sana'a, Yemen, respectively.

On 29 May [res. 282(XXV)], the Commission adopted a resolution on mitigating the impact on development of conflict, occupation and instability in ESCWA member countries, and called on them to enhance institutional capacities to respond to the challenges associated with conflict and occupation and to

support conflict- or occupation-afflicted countries in overcoming socio-economic and political challenges. It urged the secretariat to raise awareness of the potential impact of conflict and instability on development; build on successful ESCWA interventions in conflict- or occupation-afflicted countries through the development and interchange of best practice and adaptation for use by other countries; contribute to the capacity-building of Government officials; mobilize extrabudgetary resources to finance the implementation of capacity-building and other activities; and enhance partnerships with relevant local, regional and international organizations. It also invited member countries and donors to support ESCWA.

Programme and organizational questions

Establishment of UN Arabic language centre

Pursuant to its resolution 239(XXII) [YUN 2003, p. 1028], the Executive Secretary submitted to ESCWA at its twenty-fifth session an April report on the follow-up to the establishment of a UN Arabic language centre at ESCWA [E/ESCWA/25/5(Part III)]. The report considered ESCWA activities, including carrying out consultations with relevant UN departments, academic institutions and member country experts; preparing technical studies and discussing them at an expert group meeting; and preparing a project document in accordance with the meeting's recommendations.

On 29 May [res. 288(XXV)], the Commission, cognizant of the project document presented to the senior officials segment of its session concerning the establishment of an Arabic language centre at ESCWA—to be involved in the coordination of Arabic terminology, organization of training sessions and building of cooperative relationships with translation institutes and universities, in coordination with the UN Department of General Assembly and Conference Services—encouraged continued cooperation with ESCWA by the focal points designated by member countries for the project. It also requested the Executive Secretary to fund the project from extrabudgetary resources.

Admission of the Sudan to ESCWA membership

On 29 May [res. 280(XXV)], the Commission requested the secretariat to submit to the Economic and Social Council for action the recommendation that the request for membership by the Sudan should be approved.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL ACTION

On 22 July [meeting 38], the Economic and Social Council adopted **resolution 2008/8** [draft: E/2008/15/Add.1] without vote [agenda item 10].

Admission of the Sudan as a member of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

The Economic and Social Council,

Taking into consideration paragraph 2 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1818(LV) of 9 August 1973 concerning the terms of reference of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, which provided that members of the Commission should consist of the States Members of the United Nations situated in Western Asia that called on the services of the then United Nations Economic and Social Office in Beirut, and that future applications for membership by Member States should be decided on by the Council upon the recommendation of the Commission,

Recalling that the terms of reference and rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia do not cover the geographical location of countries that may become members thereof nor proscribe a member of one regional commission from being at the same time a member of another regional commission,

Recalling also that most of the other regional commissions have as members countries that are not located in the region that they serve,

1. *Welcomes with satisfaction* the request by the Government of the Sudan that it be admitted to membership in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia;

2. *Approves* the admission of the Sudan as a member of the Commission.

Cooperation with LAS

The General Assembly, by **resolution 63/17** of 10 November (see p. 1531), commended the continued efforts of the League of Arab States (LAS) to promote multilateral cooperation among Arab States, and requested the UN system to continue to lend its support. It requested the UN Secretariat and the LAS General Secretariat, within their respective fields of competence, to intensify their cooperation, and called on the Secretary-General to strengthen cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and other UN system organizations and agencies and LAS and its specialized organizations, in order to enhance their capacity to serve the mutual interests and objectives of the two organizations in the political,

economic, social, humanitarian, cultural and administrative fields.

Venue and dates of ESCWA twenty-fifth session

On 29 April [meeting 6], the Economic and Social Council adopted **resolution 2008/1** [draft: E/2008/L.3 & E/2008/SR.6] without vote [agenda item 2].

Venue and dates of the twenty-fifth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

The Economic and Social Council,

Having considered the letter dated 27 February 2008 from the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia informing the Council of the offer of the Government of Yemen to host the twenty-fifth session of the Commission,

1. *Expresses its gratitude* to the Government of Yemen for its generous offer;

2. *Approves* the holding of the twenty-fifth session of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia in Sana'a from 26 to 29 May 2008.

Frequency of sessions of ESCWA and its subsidiary bodies

In March [E/ESCWA/25/6(Part I)/Add.1], the secretariat provided the background to its evaluation efforts on the conduct of sessions of ESCWA and its subsidiary bodies. It assessed the quality of the services provided to countries in facilitating their consultations and reported on the lessons learned from 18 sessions from 2004 to 2007. In April [E/ESCWA/25/6(Part I)/Add.2], the secretariat reported on the frequency of the sessions and considered the challenges for ESCWA in responding to the emerging needs in light of the ongoing UN reform in the field of development, and the latest intergovernmental machineries of other regional commissions and the frequency of their sessions.

On 29 May [res. 291(XXV)], the Commission called on the secretariat to carry out an in-depth evaluation of the ESCWA intergovernmental structure in light of both programme priority, as identified by countries, and UN reforms. The Commission expressed appreciation for the lessons learned from the evaluation of the intergovernmental sessions during 2004–2007.