Report to the The Economic and Social Council on Population and Social Development
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At its 48th session, held on 20 November to 23 November, 2010, the Economic and Social Commission of Western Asia (ESCWA), mandated “Social and Population Development” as a priority theme for the 2010-2011 review cycle by considering relevant United Nations plans and programs of action pertaining to the situation of Western Asia and advise future actions to be taken in this topic area.

On the theme this body held collaborative sessions elaborating on four key social and population development issues and passed one resolution. The four priority areas addressed was unemployment, Iraq and its social development, Immigration and population mobility, and the advancement of women in the region. The Commission adopted resolution one, and decided to recommend it to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Due to high population growth within the Western Asia region, unemployment is on the rise. With more women and youth joining the workforce, job scarcity within the region is a reality. More and more jobs require skilled labor and techniques and ESCWA feels that women, men, and youth could benefit from new and improved techniques in their education to be qualified for the jobs in the region.

Iraq after many years of turmoil is starting to rebuild. EWSCA feels that social development within Iraq needs more consideration and assistance. There are three areas of social development that need more work: Education, Public Health, Political and Social Empowerment. Education could improve by having more monetary investment and also incentives for families to send their children to school. Public Health could improve dramatically by having more access to medicine, vitamins, and counseling for those people who need these things. By giving more power to local governments, Political and Social Empowerment could feasibly stabilize the state.

Immigration and population mobility is a giant hurdle that the Western Asia region has to overcome. Palestinian refugees were one of the issues that was discussed within the committee. The body discussed the possibility of creating a free movement region in which citizens from ESCWA states would not require visas to enter into the member states. However, the issue of reducing trade barriers and of allowing free movement of capital within the region was considered as a positive suggestion. This would bring countries in the region together and create job opportunities in Arab countries that usually export immigrants to the Gulf countries.

The final topic discussed at the committee was the advancement of women within the region. ESCWA felt that while it was pertinent to Social Development, it would be a viable option to talk as a main topic at one of the next Committee meetings.
SUBJECT OF RESOLUTION: Social Development: Population and Social Development

SUBMITTED TO: The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

SPONSORS: Kuwait, Bahrain, Syrian Arab Republic, Jordan

The Economic and Social Council

Deeply concerned with the dire conditions faced by Palestinian refugees residing within the Western Asia region,

Recalling the previous recommendations put forth regarding Palestine in S.RES.242,

Reaffirming that little has been done so far to address said conditions in their current situation,

Bearing in mind the skilled Palestinian workers whose potential contributions to the region are being underutilized,

Recognizing the efforts of certain Economic and Social Council of Western Asia (ESCWA), member states to promote the improvement of status of Palestinians within their borders,

1. Urges member states of the ESCWA region to act collectively to improve the temporary conditions of Palestinian refugees by granting restricted residency status for those refugees who have been living within the host countries for a specific period of time in order to attempt to provide opportunities for them to work in the formal economy;

2. Suggests that the aforementioned residency does not include:
   (a) The right to vote;
   (b) The right to hold public office;
   (c) The access to public social service;
   (d) The possibility of public employment;

3. Emphasizes that this recommendation is not aimed at Palestinians currently living in the West Bank, Gaza and Golan Heights;

4. Reminds all states that the above suggestions are temporary in nature.

Passed, Yes: 6 / No: 0 / Abstain: 3

Chapter II
A. Reducing Unemployment

Throughout the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) population growth rates over the past decade have exceeded world averages. As Member States populations continue to grow youth ages 15-24 expand to create a larger percentage of the population. ESCWA Member States will refer to this phenomenon throughout the report as the youth bulge. This phenomenon has led to an increase in unemployment for people between the ages of 15 and 24.

As a result of the youth bulge Member States face a variety of economic and political challenges. Economic development and job creation has failed to keep pace with population growth, resulting in the unemployment of large portions of the population between the ages of 15 and 24.

The effects of the youth bulge on unemployment in Member States is compounded by the relatively new trend of women entering the workforce. ESCWA Member States promote the introduction of women into the workforce and see this as a positive and encouraging sign of progress in our societies. However, it is important to note this phenomenon exacerbates the unemployment of people aged 15-24 in the region.

Considering these general factors two questions must be posed:

a) What actions may governments and international organizations take to ameliorate unemployment crisis in ESCWA Member States?

b) How can Member States and international organizations reconcile the conflicting goals of empowering women to enter the workforce, while concurrently reducing employment challenges created by the youth bulge?

The ESCWA recommends member states view the youth bulge as a potential asset rather than a barrier to development. Many countries have used the youth bulge to capitalize on high population growth rates, utilizing large workforces has proven to be a robust driver of economic growth. This development strategy advocates inexpensive and abundant large scale labor, and is applicable in Member States. To ensure the viability of this strategy Member States must take a variety of measures, including but not limited to:

1. Structural reforms in the education structures of states to create an educated class of skilled workers capable of maintaining competitiveness in a globalized world economy.

   a. Member States are recommended to incorporate modern technology into their educational curriculum. This will ensure the continued competitiveness of Member States education systems in a globalized economy. The private sector demands a competent workforce, and the education systems of Member States must adapt to supply this need.

   b. The construction of incentive schemes to ensure high rates of school attendance. It is of the utmost importance that heads of families understand the importance of sending their children to school. The values of parents concerning education plays a large role when determining whether or not a child is successful in school. The ESCWA would recommend states move
to design systems of incentives, noting the successes of the
*Opportunidades* program employed in Mexico and the Child-Feeding
plans implemented in Sub-Saharan Africa. These Child-Feeding plans
promote school attendance by providing a food ration to all female
students attending classes regularly. They also promote the education of
women, while helping feed impoverished rural families. ESCWA is not
recommending that these plans be copied directly, but instead use these
programs as models of what is possible in designing incentive schemes to
ensure higher rates of school attendance.

2. A comprehensive reassessment of specific governmental regulations on the
ability of corporations and other private enterprises to operate freely within
Member States at the national and regional level. Member States within the
ESCWA benefit from having large amounts of inexpensive labor, it is necessary to
ease the act of doing business in the ESCWA region, in order to improve and
increase the potential for employing all of these individuals. The ESCWA
recommends all Member States take action to implement measures including but
not limited to:

a. The establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZ), designed to lure
private investment from regional big heads into Middle Eastern nations.
These zones would provide favorable tax rates and other incentives to
encourage private investment in geographically strategic areas, such as port
cities and other urban areas near trade routes. The ESCWA would
recommend giving preference to labor intensive industries, in order to best
combat unemployment.

b. The ESCWA recommends reforming of legal codes that constrict the
ability of private enterprises to operate and invest in the region. The
ESCWA recommends Member States conduct a thorough review of legal
codes and bureaucratic procedures with the goal of removing obstacles to
business. By removing potential hindrances to business operations, the
ESCWA anticipates that private sector investment will increase, therefore
working to ameliorate the problem of unemployment.

This commission urges ESCWA Member States to exercise considerable
discretion when employing recommendations stated in this report. The ESCWA
understands that the developing world historically has had imperfect results from
allowing private enterprises free reign within it. This body does not condone policies that
in a manner would set back the human development of Member States, pollute the
environment of the region, or cultivate political instability amongst governments.
Ultimately, the ESCWA views the role of private enterprises as beneficial, but it is
nonetheless necessary to remain cautious because of the potential for harm when certain
sectors are left unregulated.

B. Social Development in Iraq

Over the past three decades Iraq has been plagued with instability, and its war torn
history has made it a unique state in the region. These circumstances call for ESCWA
Member States to discuss further the implementation of social development programs to successfully address ongoing population challenges in the context of this topic area. The ESCWA recommends and stresses the necessity of expanding education, public health, and political and social empowerment to meet these growing challenges. To reform and develop the education system in Iraq the ESCWA recommends adopting the following actions:

1. The ESCWA will begin with large scale investment in the educational infrastructure of the country especially primary education facilities. Iraq's recent history has been plagued by conflict such as the Iran Iraq war during the 1980's, the Persian Gulf war in 1991, and the United States of America invasion of Iraq in 2003, which has resulted in vast destruction and degradation of the educational capacity of the nation. Increasing this capacity would encompass a two tiered program involving:
   a. The promotion of facility construction programs to ensure every community can fulfill the demand for primary education. Investment should be allocated to supply the physical aspects of education such as; building schools, supplying textbooks, and teaching materials. Expanding this infrastructure will help alleviate the problem of unemployment in Iraq by providing jobs in both the education and industrial sector.
   b. Teacher training programs from neighboring states in which potential teachers from Iraq could receive the necessary training from instruction facilities in states with well developed education programs.
2. Advocates and encourages the implementation of widespread school feeding programs in the Iraqi countryside. Government investment and aid should be allocated to this program in order to ensure children from impoverished families are encouraged to enroll and attend school. These school feeding programs would target female students in an attempt to ensure that education is accessible to both genders. If capacity exists the ESCWA recommends student be given a monthly food ration for their family as an incentive to attend school. This would serve two functions it would alleviate food insecurity in rural areas and alleviate the economic burden of supplying food to families while simultaneously ensuring families have incentives to send their children to school.

Physical and psychological health concerns must be addressed to mitigate the long term affects of Iraq's war torn history. Specific steps to be taken include:

1. The ESCWA promotes the improved access to micro-nutrient supplements. Large portions of the Iraqi population particularly youth do not receive adequate levels of vitamins and minerals. Introducing micro-nutrient supplements is an inexpensive and easy way to meet the basic health needs of Iraqis.
2. Improving drug supply from outside nations for general lifesaving medications for diseases prevalent in conflict zones. The ESCWA encourages all states to assist in providing these essential medications at free or prorated levels.
3. Recommends the Establishment of community counseling groups to help address the problem of psychological stress and trauma resulting from the various conflicts in Iraq. This program will mitigate the psychological impact decades of
In addressing this problem, the ESCWA encourages the implementation of the following steps:

1. Encourages the delegating of more power to local government officials while simultaneously ensuring fair elections. The majority of decisions in Iraq today are made at the national level neglecting the perspective of local citizens. This has led many citizens to not trust their local officials to do what is in their best interest. With increased importance played on the fair election and appointment of these officials, the state could entrust further power at the local level, reestablishing trust between government and its citizenship.

2. Urges the facilitation of cultural practices in order to maintain the identity of refugees. Supporting traditional cultural practices of all forms as well as ensuring religious freedom of expression in its entirety.

Additionally, great steps need to be taken to address the social development of Iraqi refugee populations in neighboring states. Drawing from the developments recommended above, the ESCWA would encourage the following initiatives towards refugee populations from Iraq:

1. Ensure refugees receive basic living necessities, specifically clean water, safe living areas, adequate food, education, and work opportunities.
2. Urges the facilitation of cultural practices in order to maintain the identity of refugees. Supporting traditional cultural practices of all forms as well as ensuring religious freedom of expression in its entirety.

C. IMMIGRATION AND POPULATION MOBILITY

The commission has combined the following positions on immigrant status for Member States. Oman highlighted that immigration is not a pressing issue in their country due to the fact they have a very small flow of immigration coming into and/or leaving their country. The flow of immigration they do experience coming into their country is mainly from Southeast Asia, and is a result of their proximity to India. The delegation of the United Arab Emirates has stated they are currently working with refugees and asylum seekers mostly originating from Iraq. They pointed out these immigrants are skilled and are legally allowed to seek employment. Bahrain stressed their dependence on immigration, currently 44% of their labor force is made up of migrant workers.

The body discussed the possibility of creating a free movement region in which citizens from ESCWA Member States would not be required to have visas to enter into or leave Member States. The members looked into the European Union as a model to be implemented in the ECSWA region. This suggestion was rejected by Kuwait and other Gulf countries that recognized the risk they were running from having their countries receive a huge inflow of immigrants that would put the oil industry at risk. However, the issue of reducing trade barriers and of allowing free movement of capital within the region was considered as a positive suggestion. This would bring countries in the region
together and create job opportunities in Arab countries that export immigrants to Gulf Coast States.

The representative from Palestine highlighted that none of the Member States in the ESCWA legally grant citizenship to Palestinian refugees. The honorable representative stressed that 75% of Palestinians would like to eventually go back to Palestine but that realistically they understand this is unlikely to happen in the short term due to current circumstances. The representative stated that currently 40% of Palestinians are unemployed skilled laborers. The honorable representative also encouraged states to continue to implement programs similar to those in Jordan, where Palestinians are being introduced into society and integrated into the economy where possible. The honorable representative also encourages states to look at accepting policies similar to Lebanon, where the government has granted citizenship to many Palestinian refugees on the basis of religion.

Palestine proposed a few recommendations in dealing with Palestinians for the ESCWA member countries to consider. The improvement of living condition at refugee camps and continued and expanded help from state governments where needed. The honorable representative seeks to protect the cultural practices and identity of Palestinians in hopes to maintain the shared history and cultural practices of Palestinians.

Following the remarks made by the representative of Palestine, the members raised several questions on whether the countries would have the capability to absorb Palestinians, especially considering their extremely high rate of population growth.

Lebanon believes they have done enough to help Palestinian refugees and would be strained in meeting further populations. Kuwait suggested the creation of an integrated body that would deal with the issue in the region. The UAE raised the problem of getting Palestinians out of Gaza in order to help them. The Syrian Arab Republic thought it was important for countries to increase the documentation of Palestinians within the region so then a more comprehensive approach can be carried out.

Immigration is a huge issue for Kuwait. The country heavily depends on foreign workforce mainly in the private sector. More than 50% of the people currently in Kuwait are not Kuwaiti nationals. The percentage is even higher considering non-nationals in the workforce. As well as many other countries in the region, Kuwait is also facing the youth bulge. An immediate solution for a country in which so many citizens are about to enter the labor force is the implementation of policies that restrict immigration. Kuwait is working to increase the cost of issuing visas, increasing the cost of sponsoring foreign workers, and is establishing a quota system for employers to hire Kuwaiti nationals.

Kuwait recognizes that these moves will have and effect in developing countries in the ESCWA region since a lot of those countries depend on remittances from immigrants in Gulf countries.

One problem Kuwait recognizes within its boundaries is the abuse foreign workers may be subjected to, mainly those who work as domestic workers in Kuwaiti homes. ESCWA Member States understand the numerous problems that are related to human trafficking to Gulf countries. The withholding of passports restrict peoples freedom of movement. Consequently, employees are left in a very vulnerable situation, being subjected to such abuses, where it is nearly impossible to change employers.

Chapter III.
ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

On 23 November, 2010 the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia passed the report on Population and Social Development by consensus.