



American Model United Nations
**Economic and Social Commission for Western
Asia**

Report to the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on Economic governance: market competition challenges in the Arab Region

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1 Executive Summary

2 The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) considered pathways towards
3 addressing market competition challenges through economic governance in the Arab Region from 23
4 November 2025 to 25 November 2025. The following report contains sub-topics such as legislative
5 recommendations for effective economic governance, free trade and e-commerce discussions, con-
6 flicting viewpoints within the region, the effectiveness of energy resource usage, tourism initiatives, and
7 necessary changes within education and the workforce.

8 The first chapter of the report features two draft resolutions which ESCWA is submitting and rec-
9 ommending for consideration to the United Nations. The first draft resolution recognizes current United
10 Nations groups and regional bodies that can be further exercised to aid market competition chal-
11 lenges in the region, as well as the necessity for new legislation to address anti-competitive behavior
12 and economic diversification.

13 The second resolution recognizes the role that the insufficient social infrastructure in education,
14 media and the workforce play in further exacerbating the consequences of economic issues and gaps
15 in legislation. The resolution outlines recommendations for expansion in these sectors as effective ways
16 to improve social infrastructure and consequently stimulate economic growth.

17 The second chapter of the report features the deliberations of ESCWA on the aforementioned
18 topics and subtopics. In the first section of these deliberations, the delegations of Oman, Morocco,
19 Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia discussed how legislation can address competition challenges, in-
20 cluding legislation towards specifically the dominance of state owned enterprises (SOEs), clarifying
21 economic crimes as a means to more effectively address existing issues, and the need for amend-
22 ments to reform the failures of current market cooperation programs in place.

23 In various discussions, delegations noted how e-commerce could further facilitate trade, the
24 significance of climate change reform in the region considering the reliance on oil in the Arab region.
25 and methods for tourism to increase economic diversification.

26 **2 Matters calling for action**

27 **2.1 ESCWA II/1**

28 *Further requests* that the RTCs assist in several key areas for economic development, diversifi-
29 cation and sustainability,

30 *Recognizing* the establishment of the Arab Legislation Portal and other regional initiatives that
31 aim to promote market competition,

32 *Affirming* the varying economic needs of the ECSWA Member States and that implementation
33 of recommendations will differ according to these needs,

34 *Endorsing* the efforts of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) as a means to promote free
35 trade amongst the Arab nations,

36 *Understanding* the need for legislation that prevents anti-competitive behavior,

37 *Recognizing* the need for economic diversification in the Arab region,

38 1. *Requests* the establishment of voluntary Regional Technical Committees (RTCs) by the United
39 Nations Economic and Social Council to disseminate specialized knowledge in collaboration with the
40 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and ESCWA:

41 (a) *Recommends* the RTCs to coordinate with regional organizations and initiatives such
42 as the League of Arab States and the Arab Legislation Portal;

43 2. *Further requests* that the RTCs assist in several key areas for economic development, diver-
44 sification and sustainability:

45 (a) *Proposes* the RTCs assist with trade facilitation, customs modernization, reducing
46 bureaucratic hurdles and the expedition of sanctions relief;

47 (b) *Proposes* that the RTCs assist digital diagnostics and governance, especially regard-
48 ing artificial intelligence (AI) and e-commerce;

49 (c) *Proposes* that the RTCs assist technical and vocational training;

50 3. *Encourages* the use of e-commerce as a path for economic growth and diversification:

51 (a) *Recommends* e-commerce as a method to prevent unregulated and unofficial trans-
52 actions;

53 (b) *Approves* a transition to e-commerce as it provides digital receipts of transactions
54 between parties;

55 4. *Recommends* Member States engage neutrally with state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and
56 small and medium-sized enterprises regarding government contracts;

57 5. *Encourages* the establishment of stronger procurement laws;

58 6. *Endorses* the involvement of the general population in participation of trade;

59 7. *Encourages* ESCWA Member States to implement regulatory policies towards SOEs to deter
60 anti-competitive behavior further;

61 8. *Recommends* that ESCWA Member States shift from oil dependency towards sustainable
62 energy development, increased tourism and technology industries:

63 (a) *Suggests* the use of renewable energy to reduce carbon emissions within the Arab
64 region;

65 (b) *Strongly affirms* that tourism is a viable industry to promote economic growth and
66 diversification.

67 **2.2 ESCWA II/2**

- 68 *Deeply disturbed* by the rising unemployment rate in the Arab Region,
69 *Confident* that developing higher education will aid the development of employment and mar-
70 ket competition,
71 *Recognizing* the opportunity for education and employment as human rights,
72 *Acknowledging* the importance of digital literacy, and the rapid growth of artificial intelligence
73 (AI),
74 *Fully believing* the ability of Member States respecting and enforcing gender equality will en-
75 courage market competition to expand to more citizens,
76 *Desiring* initiatives to include understanding and procedures to protect minority and cultural
77 rights within education and employment,
78 *Expecting* that more citizen participation in education will lead to more participation in the mar-
79 ket,
80 *Acknowledging* the disparity between rates of school attendance in girls and boys,
81 *Recognizing* the impact of school meal programs on school attendance,
82 *Affirming* programs aimed to support young adults and the employment process,
83 1. *Encourages* all Member States to support gender equality within education and the workforce;
84 2. *Recommends* the implementation of free and accessible public education for pre-primary,
85 primary and secondary education;
86 3. *Calls for* equal access to affordable technical, vocational and tertiary education, including
87 university;
88 4. *Strongly urges* Member States to support efforts that promote the elimination of discrimina-
89 tion within education of the following categories:
90 (a) Gender;
91 (b) Disability;
92 (c) Indigenous disparities;
93 5. *Urges* Member States to take the initiative in planning for this digital transformation;
94 6. *Reaffirms* minorities to include women, people with disabilities, people of color and indige-
95 nous people;
96 7. *Suggests* the adoption of a comprehensive school meal program throughout both primary
97 and secondary schools by Member States;
98 8. *Supports* organizations working to implement school meal programs in K-12 education:
99 (a) *Recognizes* the efforts of the School Meals Coalition (SMC);
100 9. *Urges* utilization of the SMC in an effort to increase rates of attendance:
101 (a) *Recommends* additional funding for the SMC for implementation of school meal pro-
102 grams;
103 10. *Calls for* improvements of employment opportunities and higher education resources;
104 11. *Reiterates* the discussion of the Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and
105 Degrees in Higher Education in Arab States:
106 (a) *Demands* transparent and fair recognition of higher education;
107 (b) *Encourages* the concession of qualifications to allow students to pursue further stud-
108 ies and facilitate professional exchanges;

109 12. *Recommends* programs that work to promote skills, trainings and connections in the youth
110 employment process:

111 (a) *Endorses* the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in partnership with the World
112 Bank and the non-profit organization Forward MENA, developed the Youth Employment in the Digital
113 Economy project;

114 (b) *Supporting* initiatives to improve labor market data, employment intermediation
115 services, skills training, job matching, and private sector capacity building in the digital economy;

116 13. *Suggesting* programs that combat the rising youth unemployment rate in the Arab region:

117 (a) *Draws attention* to the Education for Employment, which creates pathways for ca-
118 reer development, through job placement, entrepreneurship, mentorship, systems change and alumni
119 support.

3 Consideration of the status

Strong legislation is a major way many countries can work towards economic prosperity and combat competition challenges. The delegations of Oman, Morocco, Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia proposed using legislative tools such as the Arab Legislation Portal to analyze how Member States can better improve their economic legislation. The establishment of a secondary regulatory framework could also improve legislative outcomes. Additionally, states agreed upon the precedent that Member States should be neutral when engaging small-medium sized enterprises (SMEs) vs state-owned enterprises (SOEs).

Efforts should be made to design SOE frameworks with this precedent in mind. However, there is no one size fits all solution. Each country experiences varying gaps in economic legislative policy that may facilitate similar solutions with differing applications. Primarily, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) agreed that these gaps should be amended to balance economic strains in the region overall. Ultimately, these recommendations could be implemented according to the willingness of independent Member States' governing bodies.

The delegation of Morocco suggested that it is necessary that the delegations emphasize that recommendations are discussed with respect to core tenets of Sharia law to ensure regional applicability of legislative recommendations. This is in consideration to all ESCWA Member States practicing the tenets of Sharia law to differing degrees, with several Member States using Sharia law to inform economic legislation particularly.

While most states agreed upon these tenets, some states disagreed on the enforcement of these frameworks. Oman believes participation in this framework program should be voluntary in order to enforce state sovereignty. These voluntary programs will strengthen Arab cooperation in the region and be customized to each country's needs.

Many countries during the Arab Business Legislative Frameworks were identified for lacking comprehensive terms for monopolization, dominance, abuse of dominance, and other such terms. Without clear definitions of these ideas, the Arab region's anticompetitive bodies cannot tackle these issues. The matter was brought up, including the development of a memorandum of understanding with other competition authorities, both regional and international.

Additionally, the body discussed establishing Regional Technical Committees (RTCs) that would spread specialized knowledge in order to further expand market opportunities, eliminate bureaucratic hurdles, and help with governance challenges. These ideally would cover a wide breadth of issues and expertise necessary for the modernization of the Arab region. Oman specifically believes that these committees should be established in cooperation with the League of Arab States and utilizing the Arab Legislative Portal in order to strengthen regional unity. Further, we discussed how the RTCs could assist with Member State compliance with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to education and vocational training, in addition to helping with governance challenges. The Syrian Arab Republic expressed a desire for the RTCs to assist with bureaucratic hurdles regarding the lifting of sanctions to encourage investment. The ESCWA members discussed the possibility of these committees to assist in market cooperation in the region as a whole.

On the other hand, the delegates from Morocco and Kuwait advocated for stronger enforcement of market legislation in order to boost the overall Arab economy. Loopholes in competition laws weaken the enforcement of those laws, as well as trade agreements in the Arab region. Weak enforcement also allows the informal economy to rise, which can cause abuse of dominance and mergers which inhibit competition. The delegation of Morocco recognized that the dominance of SOEs particularly impedes international market cooperation in the state. Considering prior successful implementation and positive outcomes of SOE regulating policies, Morocco is receptive to further changes, and advocates for the expansion of these policies regionally to address regional market competition challenges. In Kuwait, competition law regulates large mergers as well as the prohibition of anti-competitive practices, which increases market competition in Kuwait. Implementation of this legislation has been proven to be effective in countries such as Kuwait and Morocco, which is why they advocated for it strongly.

Additionally, Qatar strongly advocated for pro-competition and thorough anti-corruption

legislation to stimulate economic growth in Arab states with less comprehensive legislation, where less defined legislation exists. Qatar has implemented laws with wide-sweeping definitions of corruption and the bodies responsible for combatting corruption within the Qatari economy and also incorporated the United Nations Convention against Corruption into Qatari law to follow international standards for competitive markets. This strong, precise legal framework has ensured economic diversity and decreased corruption in the economy greatly in Qatar, and thus they strongly advocate for similarly thorough anti-corruption legislation that follows suit with other strong global economies.

While ESCWA members agree many Member States have implemented policies that have improved regional market cooperation, there remain several failures within the Greater Arab Free Trade Agreement (GAFTA) that should be amended. The delegation of Oman suggested that the World Trade Organization's recommendations for Trade Facilitation Agreements is a helpful alternative instead of pursuing free trade. These agreements help in reducing bureaucratic means and automating processes, as well as making sure that goods are traded more easily.

3.1 Free trade and commerce/e-commerce

E-commerce was discussed as a viable path for economic growth and diversification in the Arab region, with multiple delegates, including Algeria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Qatar present at the Economic and Social Commission on Western Asia (ESCWA) discussing the topic. The delegations noted that power is concentrated in large enterprises and monopolies, and that addressing these institutions is crucial when examining the issue of diversification. The delegates also drew attention to the need for free trade amongst the Arab Member States, as it has been found to lead to more entrepreneurship in the region. Additionally, the delegations discussed the importance of procurement laws as a way to combat corruption within the market. Saudi Arabia suggested that such laws are necessary to prevent governments from acquiring 100% of the shares of a public company. Saudi Arabia (amongst other countries present in the discussion) noted that commerce doesn't simply encompass brick-and-mortar shops, but e-commerce as well. E-commerce would enable every citizen to be involved in trade, and at the same time, it creates a digital record of the interactions, which Egypt noted could assist with unregulated, unofficial transactions.

3.2 Conflicting viewpoints on State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs)

The delegates are generally in agreement that it is necessary to limit state monopolies as they stifle economic growth, competition and innovation. However, there have been conflicting viewpoints related to the eradication and use of SOEs. The United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Sudan and Qatar are generally pro-SOE. In discussions, they have expressed willingness to work towards a consensus. The delegations have also acknowledged that certain Member States are facing economic difficulties that have led to the reliance on SOEs, such as governmental corruption. The delegations noted that it is crucial to address the weak consumer bases in these struggling Member States, especially as it relates to SOEs.

3.3 Climate change as a challenge

The delegations discussed the importance of incorporating climate change into the conversation, especially when realizing that most economies in the Arab region are dependent on oil. The United Arab Emirates has made efforts to reduce its reliance on the oil industry, as it understands that oil is a finite resource. Additionally, Saudi Arabia discussed its Vision 2030 plan to transition to 50% renewable energy, as 50% of its GDP is made up of oil exports. Kuwait and Jordan expressed similar sentiments, as they aim to diversify their economies. Along with this, the delegations discussed the history of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions production. They noted that the Member States in the Arab region only recently began significantly contributing to CO₂ emissions, and that other countries, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, have made a larger impact in comparison. The delegations also discussed the possibility of increased leniency towards oil-reliant Arab Member States, due to their history of colonial subjugation and resource exploitation. Additionally, they discussed other possible energy sources, such as solar power. Jordan can be looked at as a model for transitioning towards renewable energy initiatives. Through the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Law, Jor-

dan has pushed to cut energy costs, reduce dependence on imported fuel and open the energy sector towards private investment.

3.4 Tourism

It is also important to recognize the efforts of the Arab region to increase tourism as a means of diversification of their economies. There are examples of attempts to grow tourism in the area, exemplified by Egypt's historical pyramids and the new Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM), Saudi Arabia's religious tourism and public entertainment events, and Jordan's cultural and wellness tourism.

Egypt stated that increased tourism represents a great opportunity for economies to begin their transitions towards service based economies. Tourism has become a vital industry and has contributed a significant share to overall GDP. Tourism has actively diversified the economy by creating new jobs and supporting local communities. The delegations have explored a vision plan to ensure tourism experiences sustainable growth, specifically through the adoption of vision plans.

Egypt has a long history of tourism and is currently in the process of completing a long term vision. This process is leading to an increase in tourism by emphasizing the non-ancient history related tourist attractions the country has to offer. Egypt believes that by diversifying into these types of tourism and emphasizing things like Egypt's beaches and modern cities in coordination with the broader promotion of different cultural festivals the tourism sector of the Egyptian economy can continue to flourish.

Saudi Arabia highlighted its continued investment into public infrastructure and attraction events to bolster international interest through ambitious projects spanning sports stadiums (FIFA World Cup 2034), concert venues (reopened in 2017), and Saudi Seasons. Saudi Arabia also noted tourism generated by the fifth pillar of Islam, Hajj. During these pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina, millions of Muslims travel to Saudi Arabia each year. Saudi Arabia has sponsored and welcomed organizations like WWE, Riyadh Comedy Festival, AMC, Formula 1, and Mr. Beast Inc. Jordan noted a long-term vision to increase cultural, medical, spiritual, and film-production tourism. Jordan discussed increasing tourism throughout the broader Middle-East to increase overall income and circulation of wealth. Qatraneh Castle was added to a local tourism route, and school trips were launched to the historic city of Petra, in addition to joint campaigns for cleaning and raising awareness about tourist sites. Jordan also discussed the international recognition of Azraq North by UN Tourism as one of the world's best tourist villages for 2025. Jordan has discussed assisting with implementing their tourism model with other Middle Eastern countries.

3.5 Gender Equality and Cultural Diversity

This body discussed the importance of uplifting gender equality within education and the workforce. The Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) (2030) targets universal access to quality education. Within SDG4, there is a major focus on free pre-primary, primary and secondary education. Further, SDG4 calls for equal access to affordable technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university. The body believes that this process will increase the number of people with relevant skills for financial success, leading to a prosperous, competitive market. SDG4 also aims to eliminate all discrimination within education, specifically gender, disability and indigenous disparities. This body further discussed the need to promote a culture of peace and non-violence with an appreciation of cultural diversity.

3.6 Issues in Attendance (K-12)

The body discussed attendance in primary and secondary schools, with a focus on the disparity between the attendance of boys and girls, and methods to promote a higher rate of attendance. The World Food Programme (WFP) notes that rations given to students at school in Syria in 2024 prompted an 88% increase in school attendance rates. With this in mind, the body discussed comprehensive school meal programs designed to keep students in school, in both primary and secondary schools under the School Meals Coalition (SMC). The body also discussed the economic benefits of school meal programs, as they promote new job opportunities and utilize local food sources.

3.7 Digital Transformation and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

This body discussed Saudi Arabia's Saudi Vision 2030 plan with digital transformation and Artificial Intelligence (AI). This plan has allowed over 1 million Saudi Arabian citizens to be trained in AI, with 52% being women. Saudi Arabia is the first country in the world to actively and deliberately empower women within a digital transformation. A part of Saudi Arabia's 2030 plan is for women's education, which includes training opportunities in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). When Saudi Vision 2030 launched in 2015, women's enrollment in TVET was among the lowest globally. The body believes that this will enable more women to move into emerging sectors. Female enrollments in TVET institutions increased from 17,959 women in 2019 to 27,304 in 2021. Further, this body discussed Djibouti's Vision 2035, which brought many training initiatives for women to have equal access to education with digital literacy and AI. This body discussed the future of the digital and AI world, the importance of bringing plans, such as Saudi Vision 2030, and Djibouti Vision 2035, into other nations while still respecting state sovereignty, cultural relativism and recognizing governance challenges.

3.8 Higher Education and Employment

The body discussed the relationship between employment and higher education in the Arab region. This discussion addressed the Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Arab States revised and adopted on 2 February 2022. The regional agreement under the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) promotes academic mobility and cooperation by initiating a transparent and fair recognition of higher education in the Arab regions. This agreement encourages the concession of qualifications to allow students to pursue further studies and facilitate professional exchanges. Additionally, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in partnership with the World Bank and the non-profit organization Forward MENA, developed the Youth Employment in the Digital Economy project aimed to support young adults through the employment process by promoting skills, trainings and connections to improve their earnings. This project will support initiatives to improve labor market data, employment intermediation services, skills training, job matching and private sector capacity building in the digital economy. Furthermore, the body discussed the Education for Employment (EFE) program aimed at combating the rising unemployment rate in the Arab region. The EFE works to create pathways for career development, through job placement, entrepreneurship, mentorship, systems change and alumni support. The program has connected 213,915 aspiring youths to the workforce; 57% of the graduates have been women and 73% of job-track graduates have been placed in careers. The body continued to analyze higher education employment drawbacks and developments through government and nonprofit programs to address this relationship.

Passed by consensus, with 0 abstention