

الأمم المتحدة
اللجنة الاقتصادية والاجتماعية لغربي آسيا

UNITED NATIONS
Economic and Social Commission
for Western Asia



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Press release

ESCWA to Hold a Consultative Meeting in Preparation for the Arab-International Forum on Palestine Rehabilitation

Beirut, 22 July 2003 (United Nations Information **Service**)--In the run-up to the Arab-International Forum on "Palestine Rehabilitation and Development", the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) is holding a consultative meeting, cosponsored by the League of Arab States (LAS) and the Palestinian Authority, on 29-30 July 2003 at the United Nations House, Riad Solh Square, Beirut.

Organized in cooperation with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Meeting, which will open at 10:00 am on Tuesday 29 July, aims at keeping the social and economic issues and needs in the occupied Palestinian territories on the agenda of the international community, in spite of the lack of stability the region. Its main task is to define the objectives of the Forum; to identify its specific themes for deliberations; and to widen the preparatory process as much as possible.

The main issues to be deliberated during the Meeting are the specific themes to be covered by the Forum and the desired outcomes; the agenda and the format of the Forum; the date of the Forum, its funding as well as the list of partners, participants and experts.

Participants in the Meeting will be provided with a report on the ESCWA assessment mission to the occupied Palestinian territories; an inventory assessment by UNCTAD of various projects, **studies**, programs published or undertaken and ongoing (2000-2003) on Palestinian rehabilitation and development; a summary assessment by UNDP of relevant comparative experiences of post-conflict rehabilitation and development; a report by the Office of the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) on relevant socio-economic developments and key indicators and issues; a paper by the Palestinian Authority on Palestinian emergency and development plans and on expectations of the Forum; a paper by Palestinian civil society institutions assessing the role of civil society in the process of Palestinian social and economic development; and a summary by the LAS of Arab contributions and participation in the Palestinian rehabilitation and development process.

On 11 May 2001, ESCWA Member States adopted a resolution calling for the "Rehabilitation of the Economic Sectors in Palestine". Since then, the situation has worsened with the systematic Israeli destruction of Palestinian institutions, infrastructure and homes reaching unprecedented proportions. The economy has been shattered while the humanitarian plight of the Palestinian people has deepened, necessitating urgent action to address issues of rehabilitation of social and economic institutions in the occupied Palestinian territory.

It should be noted that ESCWA is the only United Nations institution where Palestine enjoys full membership. Therefore, the envisaged 2004 Arab-International Forum on Palestine Rehabilitation and Development would provide a necessary step towards the establishment of an independent Palestinian State.

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