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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

**ESCWA POLICY ON GENDER EQUALITY
AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN
(2019-2023)**

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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce the updated Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2019-2023) for the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). The policy document will frame our efforts to promote gender equality within the organization and in its outputs. It will guide the implementation of our internal processes and our work with member States, mainly through our publications, projects and technical cooperation programmes.

The current policy document builds on ESCWA's first five-year Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, which was developed and endorsed in 2014. The policy was recently revised through an internal participatory process which highlighted ESCWA successes and areas that required further attention. The present document is also anchored in United Nations principles on gender equality.

ESCWA's progress towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women has expanded over the years to deliver highly efficient and gender-responsive interventions at regional and national levels. ESCWA's effort in this area intensified following the launch of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) in 2012. Our commitment has been demonstrated by the active engagement with which we have sought ways to improve our work and apply lessons learned and reiterated in consecutive annual reports on the process. ESCWA's efforts have been recognized by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN Women) and evaluated as "exceeding requirements" according to the United Nations Evaluation Group criteria.

The policy document highlights some of the key areas that we need to continue working on over the coming five years. It translates our commitment to uphold principles of equality and non-discrimination in our internal processes and in our work in the region to ensure that economic and social development in member States addresses gender concerns and "leaves no one behind".



Rola Dashti

Under-Secretary-General
Executive Secretary of ESCWA

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Acronyms and abbreviations

CEB	Chief Executives Board for Coordination
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
ECW	ESCWA Centre for Women
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
NWM	National Women's Machineries
UN-SWAP	United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Introduction

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) focused its commitment to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women into the early engagement in the implementation of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. Designed to put the United Nations Chief Executive Board for Coordination (CEB) policy on gender equality into effect,¹ ESCWA has been actively implementing the UN-SWAP since 2012. This accountability framework aims “to enhance the UN system’s ability to hold itself accountable in a systematic, coordinated and harmonized manner for its work on gender equality and the empowerment of women”.²

ESCWA’s performance in implementing the UN-SWAP has been steadily improving since 2012. Currently, ESCWA outperforms the overall Secretariat³ and other agencies within the UN System at large in its rating of “exceeding” or “meeting” requirements against the 15 gender equity performance indicators.⁴ ESCWA’s solid performance is based on several achievements:

- Developing and implementing a five-year policy (2014-2018) on gender equality and the empowerment of women to guide the organization’s work;
- Developing and implementing a human resource plan to enhance women’s presence in the organization;
- Conducting the first organization-wide participatory gender audit, and mainstreaming gender equality, to a various degree, into the work of substantive divisions focusing on natural resources, technology and development, development in crisis contexts and economic development;
- Developing and organizing annual capacity development training for the gender focal points;
- Developing an online tracking system to monitor flexible working arrangement;
- Developing a gender marker using Umoja.

The ESCWA Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2014-2018) was developed and endorsed by the Executive Secretary in 2014. The document was based on an examination and assessment of the situation in ESCWA. The policy document is anchored in United Nations principles and aims to enhance ESCWA’s efforts in ensuring an organizational structure and culture that are in line with international commitments and requirements as identified in the UN-SWAP. It provides the necessary framework for ESCWA to enhance its internal gender mainstreaming functions at all levels through a roadmap that guides implementation.

To take stock of progress made and consolidate ESCWA’s efforts in addressing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, ESCWA recently completed a participatory assessment of progress made in implementing its policy and updated the document to incorporate lessons learned. The present policy

¹ https://www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/gm/UN_system_wide_P_S_CEB_Statement_2006.pdf.

² <http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/how%20we%20work/unsystemcoordination/un-swap/un-swap-brochure-en.pdf?la=en&vs=846>.

³ A letter and the related annexes from the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women to the Executive Secretary of ESCWA dated 15 August 2017 stated: “Commendably, ESCWA is outperforming the overall Secretariat, the UN System as a whole, and the overall Regional Commissions in ‘exceeds’ and ‘meets’ ratings, registering a combined total of 93 per cent compared to the Secretariat’s combined total of ‘meets’ and ‘exceeds’ ratings of 66 per cent, the UN System’s 64 per cent, and the Regional Commission’s 84 per cent”.

⁴ The UN-SWAP previously identified 15 indicators built around the six elements identified in the CEB policy. Each performance indicator was measured against a sliding scale of standards consisting of the following five ratings: missing, approaches requirements, meets requirements, exceeds requirements and not applicable. Recently, they were expanded to 17 indicators. More information on UN-SWAP can be found at <https://www.unescwa.org/about-escwa/programme-management/un-system-wide-action-plan-gender-equality-and-empowerment-women-un>.

document is the outcome of this process. The ESCWA Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2019-2023) aims to:

- Maintain and strengthen an inclusive and enabling environment to reach gender parity⁵ and support female staff members' ability to fulfil their potential within the organization;
- Ensure that ESCWA's activities promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

I. MANDATES

The United Nations has established several international frameworks to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women including, but not limited to, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Millennium Declaration and, most recently, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

CEDAW, a core international human rights instrument, was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979 and came into force in 1981. It lays the foundation for gender equality through a comprehensive framework that defines the various elements that constitute discrimination against women. It sets out an agenda for action that advocates and protects women's civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and legal status.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995,⁶ reaffirmed that women's rights are human rights. The Platform for Action established a detailed framework for the United Nations, Governments and non-governmental organizations to take action in 12 areas of concern which are prerequisites for equality, development and peace. Importantly, the Platform identified gender mainstreaming as a global strategy for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women.

At its 1997 substantive session the United Nations Economic and Social Council and all United Nations agencies adopted Agreed Conclusions 1997/2, which defined gender mainstreaming as "the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality".⁷

The Economic and Social Council further emphasized that gender neutrality should not be assumed and that accountability for outcomes should be ensured. The key gender mainstreaming principles adopted by the Economic and Social Council include broadening women's participation at all levels; designing both women and gender-specific policies and programmes; and ensuring political will to allocate human and financial resources for gender mainstreaming.

The Millennium Declaration,⁸ adopted in 2000, championed equal rights and opportunities for both men and women and considered equality as one of its fundamental values. The Millennium Development Goals clearly stated that gender equality is both a goal in itself and a condition for the achievement of other goals.⁹

⁵ For the purpose of this policy, in accordance with the United Nations' definition and without compromising merit-based recruitment and retention of staff, gender parity is understood to be achieved when 50 per cent of posts are held by women.

⁶ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/>.

⁷ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/ECOSOCAC1997.2.PDF>.

⁸ www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm.

⁹ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2010/1/making-the-mdgs-work-better-for-women>.

Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on Women, Peace and Security and ensuing resolutions acknowledged the disproportionate and unique impact of conflict on women. The Women, Peace and Security agenda reaffirms the vital role of women in peacebuilding, including contributions women make to prevention, protection, peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction. A key principle of the agenda is that gender equality is a prerequisite for peace and development.

The 2005 World Summit, which was a follow up to the Millennium Summit, called upon the Secretary-General to take additional steps towards mainstreaming gender in all areas of United Nations work. In response, in 2006 the CEB issued a system-wide policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women. Members of the CEB committed themselves to achieving gender equality at all levels within the United Nations system and to providing sound leadership in that regard. The CEB policy included a clear strategy comprising the following six elements: accountability; results-based management for gender equality; oversight through monitoring, evaluation, auditing and reporting; human and financial resources; capacity development; and coherence, coordination, knowledge and information management.

Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) constitute the most recent international commitment towards ensuring gender equality and women’s empowerment. The commitment to the principle of “leaving no one behind” ensures that gender has been mainstreamed throughout the goals, with a focus on gender inequalities at the level of targets and indicators. Commitment to gender equality is further reflected in SDG 5, which specifically aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

At the United Nations institutional level, the UN-SWAP was designed in 2012 to operationalize the CEB policy. The UN-SWAP is an accountability framework that aims to create a common understanding of gender equality and enhance coherence within the United Nations systems measured against the 15 indicators which, in turn, are built around the six elements identified in the CEB policy. In resolution [2014/2](#), the Economic and Social Council welcomed the UN-SWAP and requested its full implementation and reaffirmed the need to enhance gender mainstreaming by fully implementing the UN-SWAP and ensuring 100 per cent reporting compliance by all entities to meet its performance indicators by 2017. The evaluation of the institution according to the set indicators allows for an assessment of the overall performance of the entity. In January 2018, UN-SWAP 2.0 was released with revised performance results for United Nations entities. Each performance indicator is now measured against a sliding scale of standards consisting of the following four ratings: misses, approaches, meets, and exceeds requirements.

Reiterating the United Nations’ commitment towards addressing its internal challenges, in October 2017, the System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity was published to translate the Secretary-General’s vision “to reach parity at the senior leadership level, including USGs, ASGs, SRSGs and Special Envoys, by 2021, and parity across the entire UN System well before 2030”.¹⁰ The strategy aims to change the institutional environment and culture and emphasises the importance of leadership and accountability to achieve its targets; it also provides a framework for the introduction of special measures and their consistent application throughout the UN system.

The global as well as internal institutional mandates cited above are the basis for the ESCWA Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. They provide the necessary framework to shape the organization’s gender mainstreaming strategy and to underscore its internal gender mainstreaming functions.

II. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The policy presented here is guided by principles enshrined in the United Nations mandates, declarations and decisions. These include:

- Equality and non-discrimination;
- Participation, empowerment and inclusion;
- Ownership and sustainability;
- Transparency and accountability.

¹⁰ https://www.un.org/gender/sites/www.un.org/gender/files/gender_parity_strategy_october_2017.pdf.

III. POLICY STATEMENT

Gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is a key priority for ESCWA. It is at the heart of ESCWA's daily work and serves as a driving force towards positive and transformative change. The principles of gender equality and non-discrimination are central to the full realization of inclusive sustainable development and the realization of the principle of "leaving no one behind", which is central to major international frameworks, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Equality between men and women is a fundamental right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent treaties and United Nations mandates. ESCWA will take measures to ensure that women and men benefit equally from its policies and outputs. ESCWA will strive to achieve gender equality in all aspects of its work, including its normative work, extrabudgetary activities and technical cooperation provided to member States. ESCWA is therefore committed to mainstreaming gender in its various outputs and activities. Gender budgeting and financing for gender equality is also crucial to ESCWA in order to help measure the impact of its work on men and women and addressing inequalities.

ESCWA is committed to gender equality principles internally and aspires to achieve equal representation of women and men, especially at senior levels. ESCWA will ensure that at the internal organizational level, gender parity is sought and encouraged, and the organization's core values of integrity, professionalism and diversity upheld. This will include the full implementation and monitoring of the ESCWA human resources action plan (2019-2023), provided as annex I.

IV. POLICY DIRECTIVES AND IMPLEMENTATION

ESCWA will address gender equality in three areas:

- ESCWA will ensure that gender equality is respected at the **organizational level**. ESCWA will continue to review its internal policies to ensure their responsiveness to principles of equality and non-discrimination and enable the implementation of its human resources plan to balance women's representation, especially at the senior level;
- ESCWA will continue to ensure that gender is mainstreamed throughout its various **publications and projects** by incorporating gender-sensitive tools and methodologies in its publication strategy and in its project design. This will include, for example, interdivisional work and the involvement of assigned gender focal points in their respective divisions. In addition, the involvement of the ESCWA Centre for Women (ECW) in joint task forces established at the organizational level to examine key regional issues will enable a consistent consideration of gender concerns and the identification of policies to address inequalities between men and women;
- ESCWA will uphold its commitments towards **advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in member States** by promoting gender-sensitive policies that enable policymakers to address existing inequalities. ESCWA is committed to engaging with national women's machineries and supporting their role at the national level. Furthermore, ESCWA will ensure that the adapted UN-SWAP tool for the Arab region continues to be rolled out to national women's machineries, wherever possible.

In order to address the above three policy goals, ESCWA commits to implement its Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls for the period 2019-2023. The implementation and targeted interventions fall under five main headings: accountability; gender parity and organizational culture; resources and capacity; coherence and information management; and monitoring and evaluation.

A. ACCOUNTABILITY

ESCWA is committed to addressing gender concerns both internally, in its substantive and operational divisions, and externally, in the research it produces and publishes and within the projects it designs and implements.

The accountability cycle will begin at the level of the senior management, which will continue to provide leadership support to policies empowering women in order to meet the gender parity targets within organizational entities. ESCWA will continue to administer its biennial internal gender award to acknowledge outstanding work on gender equality with the aim of ensuring the replication of good practices. ECW will manage the process of introducing mechanisms to implement the present policy and monitor implementation. ECW will work closely with other divisions as well as the Human Resources Management Section to support the implementation of the policy. ECW will develop materials to inform staff on gender equality issues within the commission and in member States. Members of the gender focal points network will support and follow up with their divisions to promote and advance gender mainstreaming. All staff will be responsible for adhering to the guiding principles outlined in relevant mandates, the present policy and other documents, for participating in the implementation of the present policy and for providing feedback as deemed necessary.

B. GENDER PARITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

ESCWA aims to achieve equal representation of men and women at all levels. Drawing upon its commitment to recruiting staff based on merit, ESCWA will build on existing gains in gender parity and implement the targets set out in its Human Resources Action Plan towards Gender Parity (2019-2023),¹¹ particularly at senior levels. In addition to encouraging internal staff development, ESCWA will adopt a proactive approach to outreach and recruitment to attract and retain qualified female staff. Hiring managers will be requested to provide a written justification when job openings fail to yield a minimum of 20 per cent of female applications. ESCWA will adopt the principle of gender parity in interview panels and encourage gender focal points in each division to participate in the panels according whenever possible and consistent with United Nations rules and regulations. ESCWA will also strive to ensure parity in all its internal committees. ESCWA will promote the amendment of the Staff Council's election procedure to ensure that 50 per cent of those elected to the Council are women.

ESCWA will work with staff to address stereotypes and discriminatory practices. It will capitalize on existing mechanisms, including developing secure mechanisms for receiving complaints on instances of gender-based discrimination and harassment. ESCWA will continue to implement flexible working arrangements. ESCWA will also promote opportunities to build the capacities and enhance the knowledge of all staff members, men on women, on gender sensitive approaches towards socioeconomic development.

C. RESOURCES AND CAPACITY

ESCWA will strive to allocate and make available adequate human and financial resources to support the implementation of the present policy and the UN-SWAP 2.0. It will renew its commitment to support gender mainstreaming efforts in the organisation, including capacity-building activities that target different divisions within the organisation.

ESCWA will maintain and enhance its role as a hub for knowledge, data, quality analysis and expertise on trend and issues related to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the region. ESCWA will make full use of internal and external expertise to bring a gender-sensitive perspective to its different areas of work. ESCWA will seek to increase demand for activities, including technical advisory services, to advance gender equality by promoting and raising the awareness of such activities, encouraging member States to nominate women participants in ESCWA events and meetings and supporting national women's machineries in their work toward women's advancement in their respective States.

ESCWA will continue to support its internal gender focal points network. It will strengthen the role of the network at the institutional level and within all divisions and address internal resistance to gender mainstreaming. ESCWA will strengthen the capacity of members of the gender focal points network to address gender-related issues in all aspects of the work of their respective divisions. ESCWA will give a greater role to alternate focal points of the network to support this objective.

¹¹ See ESCWA Human Resources Action Plan: Towards Gender Parity (2019-2023), provided in annex I.

ESCWA will build the substantive knowledge and skills of staff on gender-related issues. It will design tailor-made training programmes to substantive divisions on how to integrate a gender perspective in their areas of work. ESCWA will also capitalize on its relationship with other United Nations entities to exchange expertise, experiences and good practices in gender mainstreaming.

D. COHERENCE AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

ESCWA will seek to mainstream gender in projects undertaken to support member States, as well as to expand its engagement with projects related directly to the advancement of gender equality. It will endeavour to institutionalize equal representation in panels, conferences and delegations and among speakers in the events it organizes, based on the recognition of their added value for ESCWA's work and the need for women's greater representation in the region.

ESCWA will build on its existing structures to ensure that gender concerns are addressed in all aspects of work. ECW will continue to be responsible for raising awareness and ensuring the internal flow of information concerning gender mainstreaming. In addition, ECW will work with the Human Resources Management Section to provide a simple and attractive introductory package on gender mainstreaming to all newcomers within the organization. ESCWA will organize cross-divisional meetings to ensure that all staff can participate in learning forums on gender equality and women's rights. Successful experiences for mainstreaming gender in publications will be shared across divisions and highlighted during the regular meetings of the ESCWA Publications Committee.

ECW will maintain a regular flow of information on the situation of women in the region and share knowledge on gender-related issues within different social and economic fields with all staff. The opportunity to use interdivisional meetings, "insight series", brown bag meetings and town hall meetings will be harnessed in this regard. The Staff Council will also be actively engaged in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

At the external level, ESCWA will maintain its annual participation and active engagement in relevant bodies, meetings and networks, including the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the UN Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE), as mandated by the UN-SWAP.

E. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

ESCWA will use an annual plan enabling the tracking of the adherence of ESCWA publications to the gender marker. An annual ratio for different ratings of the gender marker will be set for ESCWA publications to limit the "gender-blind" publications to a low percentage of ESCWA's total output, and continue to increase the number of publications with a "significant" status. ECW will cooperate with the Strategy, Evaluation and Partnership Section to develop and implement an evaluation template to monitor progress at the level of divisions, with the support of the members of the gender focal points network.

ESCWA will hold a semi-annual meeting between members of the gender focal points network and the Executive Secretary, the Deputy Executive Secretary for Programme and the Deputy Executive Secretary for Programme Support to discuss the status of gender mainstreaming within ESCWA, provide senior management with concrete feedback on progress and challenges in implementing the present policy and offer recommendations to improve the mainstreaming of gender-related issues in the work of the organization. Members and alternates of the gender focal points network will also be encouraged to propose policies related to gender equality to ESCWA senior management.

ESCWA will continue to monitor, on yearly basis, progress towards the Human Resources Action Plan. ESCWA will also monitor the status of implementation of flexible working arrangements through an internal online tracking system that provides sex and grade disaggregated data.

ESCWA will continue to report on the implementation of the UN-SWAP on an annual basis. ESCWA is committed to revising its Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women every five years to ensure that it is up-to-date, responsive to emerging trends and developments and aligned with new United Nations mandates.

Annex

ESCWA HUMAN RESOURCES ACTION PLAN: TOWARDS GENDER PARITY (2019-2023)

I. BACKGROUND

In September 2017, the United Nations adopted a System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity, which consists of a roadmap to reach parity at the organization's senior levels of leadership by 2021 and across the board by 2028. The adoption of this strategy reaffirms the increasing necessity of gender parity for the UN's efficiency, impact and credibility. It acknowledges the main factors that have hampered the achievement of gender parity within the organization despite the plethora of policies, reports and recommendations provided throughout the past four decades.¹²

The United Nations first called for gender parity in 1970, when the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the employment of women at senior and professional levels. It also requested all United Nations bodies to take measures to ensure equal employment opportunities for qualified women at senior and professional levels.¹³ This was followed by the adoption of a series of resolutions aimed at achieving gender parity. In 1986, the General Assembly reaffirmed the need to increase the overall participation of women in the United Nations system. It set the target at 30 per cent of all posts held by women, subject to geographical distribution, to be reached by 1990.¹⁴ In 1990, this target was increased to 35 per cent of posts, subject to geographical distribution, particularly in senior policy-level and decision-making posts, to be reached by 1995. Moreover, a goal of 25 per cent for D1 levels and above was also set for the year 1995.¹⁵

In 1995, the General Assembly called on the Secretary-General to ensure that women held 50 per cent of managerial and decision-making positions by 2000.¹⁶ This goal was reaffirmed¹⁷ and redefined¹⁸ to include 50/50 gender distribution by 2000 in all categories of posts, especially at the D1 level and above, with full respect for the principle of equitable geographical distribution, and also taking into account the under-representation of women from certain countries, in particular from developing countries and countries with economies in transition. The General Assembly has also stressed the need to respond to the lack of women's representation by developing innovative recruitment strategies to identify and attract suitably qualified women candidates.¹⁹

In 1999, the Under-Secretary-General for Management issued a series of measures on recruitment, promotion and placement, with a view to achieving gender parity at all levels and developing an implementation and monitoring mechanism.²⁰ This was followed by a Gender Balance Strategy for the United Nations Secretariat²¹ that set out a framework for achieving the above-mentioned mandate of the Secretary-

¹² System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity, available at https://www.un.org/gender/sites/www.un.org.gender/files/gender_parity_strategy_october_2017.pdf.

¹³ [A/RES/25/2715 \(XXV\)](#).

¹⁴ [A/RES/41/206](#).

¹⁵ [A/RES/45/239](#).

¹⁶ [A/RES/50/164](#).

¹⁷ [A/RES/51/67](#).

¹⁸ [A/RES/52/96](#).

¹⁹ [A/RES/59/164](#).

²⁰ [ST/AI/1999/9](#).

²¹ www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/ianwge/NEW%20Gender%20Balance%20Strategy_march%202010_Anex%206.pdf.

General on gender parity. It proposed reforms at various levels to increase awareness among staff; improve recruitment and selection processes; provide increased opportunities for career development; facilitate spousal employment; increase flexible working arrangements; and provide day-care facilities.

In 2006, the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) issued a United Nations system-wide policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women,²² in which members of CEB committed themselves to advancing gender equality within the United Nations system at all levels. In 2012, the United Nations System-wide Action Plan for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) was designed as a tool to implement the CEB policy. The UN-SWAP consists of a series of performance indicators to guide the internal work of the United Nations entities and to ensure accountability to promote gender equality. The Economic and Social Council welcomed its development and called on the United Nations system to actively engage in its roll-out.²³

The first UN-SWAP framework, rolled out in 2012, included one performance indicator, out of a total of 15, on “gender architecture” that covered gender parity along with establishing a gender focal points network within the organization and securing needed resources for the entity’s gender department.

The newly developed and rolled-out UN-SWAP 2.0 framework includes a distinct performance indicator, out of a total of 17, on “equal representation of women”. This new indicator reflects the importance the United Nations system has accorded to the realization of gender parity. It covers general services and professional staff categories at all levels.

Further to its commitment to implement the UN-SWAP 1.0, ESCWA endorsed its first Human Resources Plan towards gender parity (2014-2018) in 2014. The plan revolved around four axes, namely outreach/recruitment; selection process; staff retention; and staff development. The plan aimed to establish practices to increase women’s representation at all levels while ensuring that relevant rules are followed.

As the first plan came to a close, ESCWA capitalized on the experience and lessons learned throughout its implementation (2014-2018) and developed this second Human Resources Action Plan that translates the organization’s commitment to continue to uphold the substantial results achieved in the implementation of UN-SWAP 1.0. This second plan is designed to frame ESCWA’s efforts to achieve gender parity among all its staff members at all levels based on the requirements of the System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity and the UN-SWAP 2.0 framework.

This plan establishes the targets to be achieved over the coming years to reach gender parity in ESCWA across the board by 2028 as recommended by the System-wide Gender Parity Strategy. It details the distinct actions required to reach the set targets as well as the responsible division for each action.

II. REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AMONG ESCWA STAFF MEMBERS

The overall situation of women’s representation among ESCWA staff members is relatively static. In addition to the organization’s context including the specificities of the region it serves, the situation is influenced by staff members’ limited mobility particularly at senior levels. The limited mobility is generally explained by the UN Secretariat difference in contractual conditions compared to other UN Programmes and Funds. This difference plays a role given that it could also discourage senior male staff to move to other positions in other UN entities to maintain favourable contractual arrangements within the secretariat.

The breakdown of figures on the various categories and levels of staff demonstrates some trends that are worth capitalizing on and further promoting.

²² www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/gm/UN_system_wide_P_S_CEB_Statement_2006.pdf.

²³ E/RES/2012/24.

A. REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AT THE SENIOR LEVELS AT ESCWA

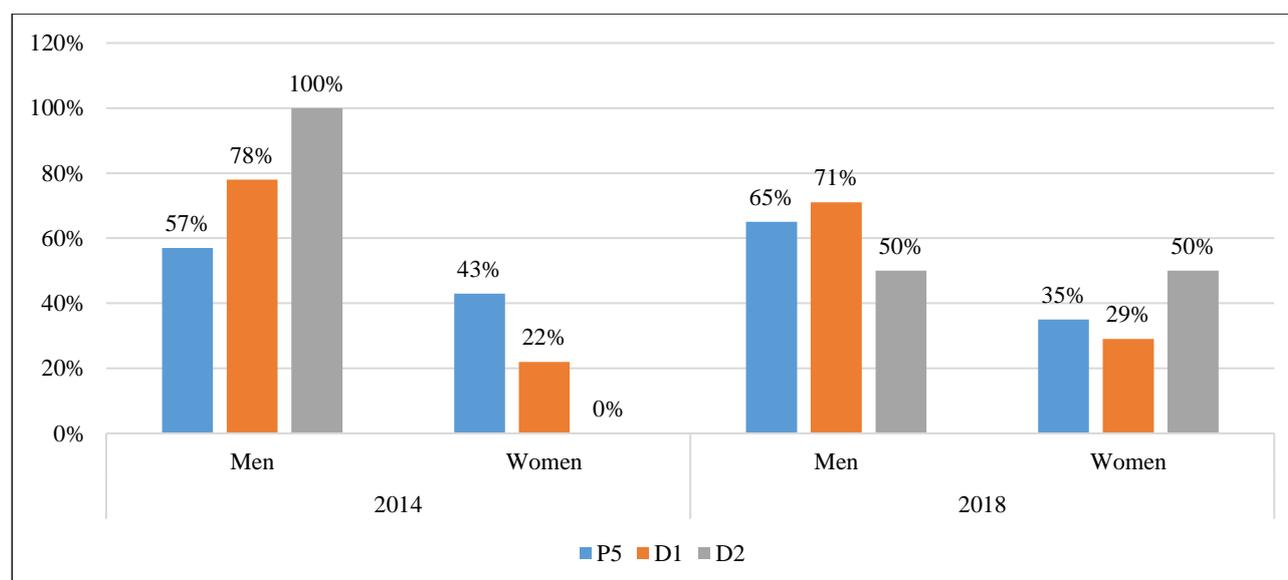
The number of women in leadership positions (P5 and above) in ESCWA is relatively low. This underrepresentation of women among senior leaders is a challenge faced by agencies throughout the United Nations system, where, with very few exceptions, most agencies fall short of achieving gender parity in this category.

TABLE 1. REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AT THE SENIOR LEVELS

Grade			Men				Women			
	2014	2018	2014		2018		2014		2018	
	Total	Total	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
P5	28	26	16	57	17	65	12	43	9	35
D1	9	7	7	78	5	71	2	22	2	29
D2	1	2	1	100	1	50	0	0	1	50
Total	38	35	24	63	23	66	14	37	12	34

Table 1 shows that ESCWA has currently 35 occupied posts at the senior levels. Of these 35 occupied posts, 12 are held by women (34 per cent) and 23 are held by men (66 per cent). Compared to the situation in 2014, the representation of women at the senior levels slightly decreased in 2018. However, it is important to note that, while the percentage of women occupying posts at the P5 level reduced, their representation at the D2 and D1 level has improved.²⁴

Figure 1. Representation of women at the senior levels in 2014 and 2018



²⁴ The number of women at the D1 level has, in fact, remained static while the overall number of D1 positions filled has decreased, showing an increased percentage in women's representation.

B. REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AT THE JUNIOR AND MID-LEVELS

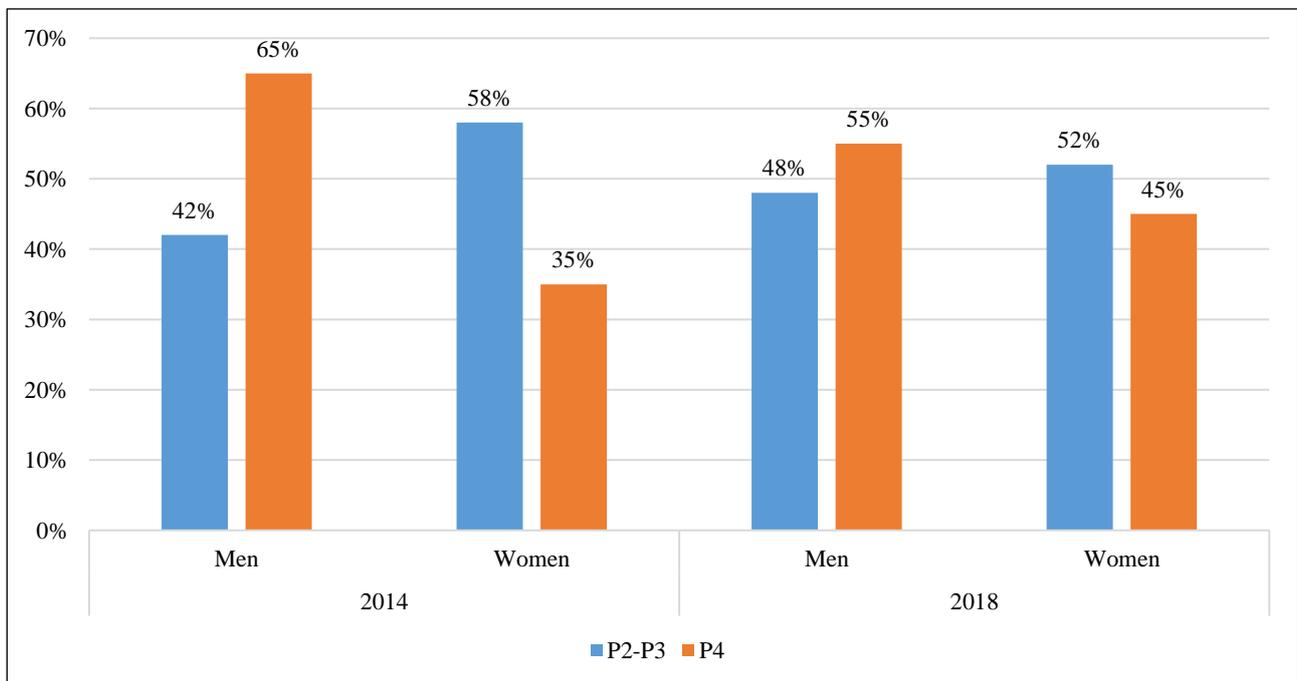
At the junior and mid-levels (P2-P4) the representation of women is stable, close to parity as shown in table 2 below. This trend is the result of a decrease in the representation of women at P2 and P3 levels coupled with an increase at the P4 levels.

TABLE 2. REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AT THE JUNIOR AND MID-LEVELS

Grade			Men				Women			
	2014	2018	2014		2018		2014		2018	
	Total	Total	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
P2-P3	45	44	19	42	21	48	26	58	23	52
P4	34	33	22	65	18	55	12	35	15	45
Total	79	77	41	52	39	51	38	48	38	49

In the United Nations, women are generally equally represented, or even overrepresented, at the P1 to P2 levels. However, women's representation generally begins to decrease at the P3 and P4 levels. Although this pattern is also observed at ESCWA, the commission is coming closer to approaching gender parity at the P2-P4 levels.

Figure 2. Representation of women at the junior and mid-levels in 2014 and 2018



C. WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION AT THE GENERAL SERVICE CATEGORY

Women's representation in the general service category is usually significantly higher than that of men throughout the United Nations system.²⁵ The objective in this plan is therefore to increase the representation of men in this category.

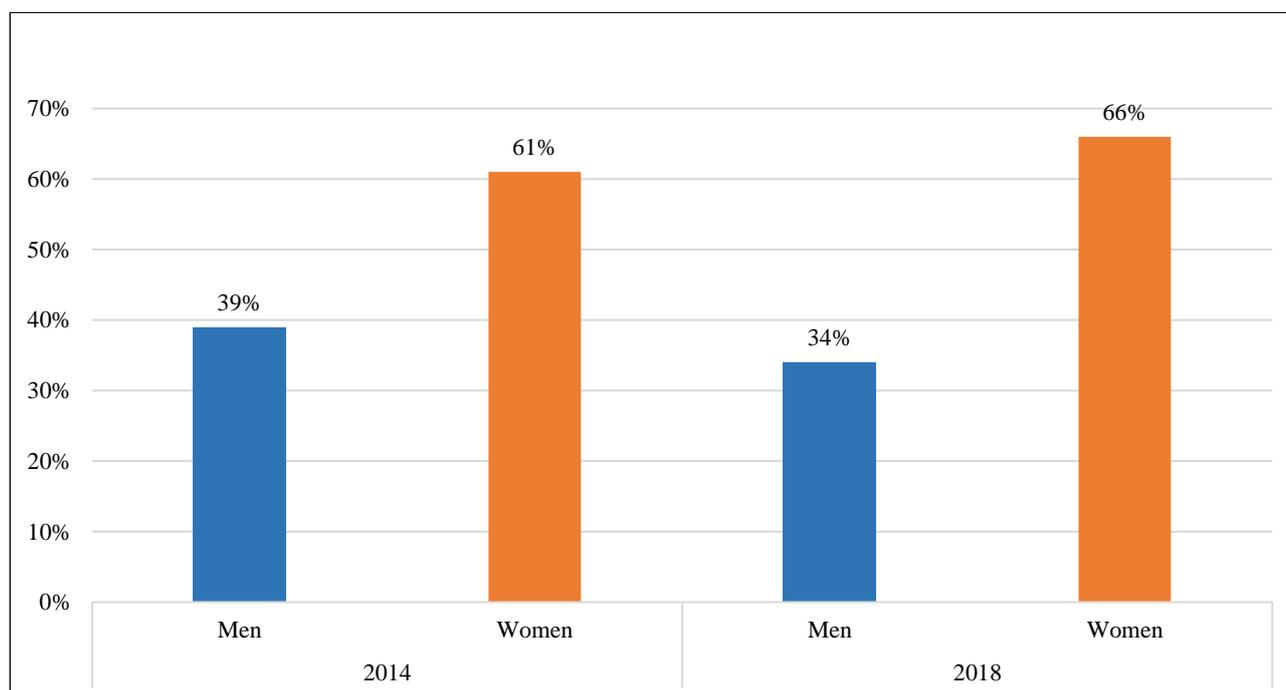
TABLE 3. REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AT THE GENERAL SERVICES CATEGORY

		Men				Women			
2014	2018	2014		2018		2014		2018	
Total	Total	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
158	145	61	39	49	34	97	61	96	66

The percentage of women working in the general services category, all levels included, increased in 2018 compared to 2014 as shown in table 3 above.

It is noteworthy that there is a significant concentration of men in the levels G6 and G7 compared to the lower levels of the general service. Forty-two per cent of the posts occupied by men are in the general services category level 6, equivalent to 15 per cent of all the general services category posts at ESCWA.

Figure 3. Representation of women at the general services category in 2014 and 2018



²⁵ This Action Plan does not cover staff members of the Security and Safety Section, which is part of the Department of Safety and Security (DSS).

III. PROPOSED ACTIONS TO PROMOTE GENDER PARITY AT ESCWA

The above analysis shows that ESCWA's efforts to promote gender parity in all staff categories at all levels have been partially successful. There is gender parity at the D2 level and the percentage of women at the D1 level has increased, in part due to the fewer number D1 posts filled. Parity has been or nearly been reached at the P2-P3 levels and the significant decrease in the number of women observed in the past between the P2-P3 to the P4 levels is diminishing. However, the analysis also demonstrates the need to sustain the endeavours to reach gender parity by the set deadlines for the entire organization including at the P5 level and for the general services category at all levels.

The actions proposed in this action plan are divided into six categories namely:

- Leadership and accountability;
- Recognition and reward of achievement of gender parity targets;
- Recruitment, retention, progression and talent management;
- Strengthening merit-based selection process and remove potential bias;
- Addressing unconscious bias in recruitment;
- Flexible work arrangements.

The actions are detailed in table 4 below along with the responsible divisions at ESCWA.

A. TARGETS SET

(a) Professional category: targets set and status May 2019²⁶

May 2019														
Level	Women	Men	Total Staff	% Women	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
D-2	0	1	2	0	0	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
D-1	2	6	8	25	25	38	38	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
P-5	11	17	28	39	39	43	43	46	46	50	50	50	50	50
P-4	17	20	37	46	46	48	48	51	51	51	51	51	51	51
P-3	13	15	28	46	46	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
P-2	8	8	16	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
FS-5	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

(b) General services category: targets set

Status quo				Annual Targets: % Male staff as at 31 December 2018										
Women	Men	Total Staff	% Men	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
97	49	146	34%	34%	34%	38%	45%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%

²⁶ As the USG is an SG-level appointment, it has not been included in this chart.

B. PROPOSED ACTIONS

	Recommendation in Secretary-General's Report	Comment	Action	Responsible in ESCWA
Leadership and accountability	Head of Department responsible to Head of Entity to reach the calculated time-bound, entity- and level-specific targets within their departments/offices/missions.		ES to use Cabinet meetings and individual meetings to continuously remind Division Directors of their targets.	Executive Secretary
	First reporting in June 2018 will confirm if the entity is on track to meet the gender parity target for 2018. Targeted support offered to those not on track. As of December 2018, if the entity has not met its gender parity targets for 2018 Monitoring plan, Heads of departments/offices/missions will receive a warning from their Head of Entity and will receive support, if needed, from the central HR office in their entity.		HRMS will provide monthly reports on progress to the ES, as well as the bi-annual reports to be submitted to OHRM.	HRMS
	Provide the most up-to-date information on gender balance for the relevant level to a hiring manager prior to recruitment, sex-disaggregated information at each stage of recruitment, and ensure that hiring managers are aware and personally sign off on the implications of their hiring decision for overall parity goals.		HRMS to provide the required information for each recruitment.	HRMS
	Monitor progress against annual targets at all levels.		HRMS to generate monthly report.	HRMS
	Monitor that special measures are applied consistently.			HRMS, Executive Secretary
	Hiring managers to personally acknowledge and sign off on the departmental statistical status on gender parity and the implications of their selection prior to final decision of a candidate.		ES to sign off on ESCWA statistics. HRMS to prepare a memo to be signed by Hiring Managers as part of the recruitment process.	HRMS, Hiring managers

	Recommendation in Secretary-General's Report	Comment	Action	Responsible in ESCWA
	Workplans to include a SMART goal related to contributing to gender equality and parity and performance appraisal to include an assessment of staff member's performance in this area, including the consistent application of special measures and the creation of an enabling work environment. UNOG has begun implementation of this from April 2017.	HRMS needs to provide guidance at the beginning of the next performance cycle to include these goals in the ePAS of hiring managers.	HRMS to prepare instructions for work planning phase of e-PAS to be issued in February/March 2018.	HRMS, Hiring managers
Recognize and reward achievement of gender parity targets	Managers at all levels who meet their targets and/or demonstrate good practice in support of gender equality and parity should be profiled on entity intranets, gender-related websites, at town hall meetings and through an annual Secretary-General Gender Award as well as any other available means.		ES to raise issue at cabinet level, raise awareness and stress importance of good practice to Division Directors.	OES
	As called for in an earlier Executive Committee decision, all senior managers are encouraged to follow the Secretary-General's example and join the International Gender Champions, and make specific, concrete and ambitious commitments to enhance gender equality and parity within their organizations.		ES to raise issue at cabinet level, raise awareness and stress importance of good practice to Division Directors.	Senior Management, ES, DESs
Recruitment, Retention, Progression and Talent Management	Hiring Managers to be required to recommend 50% women and 50% male candidates for selection for all types of Job Openings at all levels, including senior appointments. Where this is not possible owing to job family or objective obstacles, written justification should be submitted.		HRMS to inform all hiring managers during the recruitment process.	Applicable for all hiring managers to abide by ES to enforce
	To increase the pool of applicants – a including the number of women to select from – temporarily suspend restrictive requirements from the job description for all applicants. These will be different by entity but would include for example removing “requirements for time in post or those related to the number of lateral moves to be eligible for applications to a higher level”.	This may require a policy change from OHRM.	No action	HRMS to enquire at ORHM

	Recommendation in Secretary-General's Report	Comment	Action	Responsible in ESCWA
	Job openings that fail to yield a minimum 20% female applications will require written justification from the hiring manager on the positive outreach measures taken to attract women applicants. In the absence of a strong justification, job openings to be extended/reopened.	ESCWA hiring managers need to be educated to conduct outreach as current outreach is poor. To be raised in the Cabinet.	Ask hiring managers to use their networks to attract more female candidates.	Hiring managers. Director ASD to raise issue in the Cabinet
	Each entity's implementation strategy should detail the use of special measures along three tiers – Level 1 to be implemented at all times (including the minimum measures detailed above); Level 2 when entities are not on track to their targets; Level 3 when the targets have not been met for one year. Level 3 would include the mandatory selection of women on the recommended or short list or some variant of this policy.		HRMS to seek guidance from OHRM.	HRMS
Address unconscious bias in recruitment	All entities to require hiring managers to be trained on eliminating unconscious bias in the workplace in general, and in job design, job descriptions and vacancy announcements in particular, to increase awareness and standardize practice across the system. This should be implemented at the D1 level and up initially, with across the system application after three years.		HRMS has added a short module on gender bias in selection to the CBI training. HRMS to liaise with OHRM to obtain further guidance.	HRMS, ES
	Each entity to consider developing ways of masking personal information, including marital status and number of children, from hiring managers during recruitment.	This may require a policy change from OHRM.	HRMS to liaise with OHRM to obtain guidance.	HRMS, ES
	Central HR of each entity to establish standards for each set of TORs to ensure that they are written with only the essential qualifications of the job, rather than non-essential criteria.	This may require a policy change from OHRM.	HRMS to liaise with OHRM to obtain guidance.	HRMS, ES

	Recommendation in Secretary-General's Report	Comment	Action	Responsible in ESCWA
Strengthen merit-based selection process and remove potential bias	Extend the requirement for both women and men to be represented at all stages of the assessment and interview processes for senior appointment selections to ensure 50/50 representation of women and men at all stages of the selection process and on interview panels and consider including externals on senior level appointment panels.		This could be done locally. Currently ESCWA panels have three members. ES to modify panel composition requirements to allow 50/50 representation. Encourage managers to include GFPN members in the panels.	D/ASD, ES
Flexible work arrangements	Periodic staff meetings by units are scheduled during common working hours and on working days of staff working part-time, with teleconference or other virtual means of collaboration actively promoted.		HRMS to draft a broadcast recommending such practice.	HRMS
	Consult with staff concerned before making assumptions regarding their preference for work-life balance. More deliberately consider female staff members for official travel, stretch assignments or hardship locations.		HRMS to draft a broadcast recommending such practice.	HRMS
	Institutionalize equal representation in panels, conferences and delegations and among speakers, and provide networking opportunities during working hours.		HRMS to draft a broadcast recommending such practice.	HRMS or ECW

	Recommendation in Secretary-General's Report	Comment	Action	Responsible in ESCWA
Additional recommendations	ESCWA HR action plan of 2014 for gender parity is outdated and needs analysis and update.		HRMS to provide recent analysis on the staffing status and ensure consistent follow up on agreed measures to enhance women representation.	HRMS, SWAP focal point
	ESCWA gender equality plan requires review and update. Needs to be informed by the HR action plan and include other substantive discussion on the overall gender dynamics within ESCWA.		SWAP focal point to review and update gender equality plan.	SWAP focal point, ECW, HRMS
	Decommissioning of Lotus Notes will require finding a replacement solution to record, track and monitor flexible work arrangements.		Include the FWA online reporting system in the ESCWA portal.	ICTS, HRMS
	Create a gender-neutral work environment where men and women can work productively and safely.		Undertake an organizational culture survey in 2018 to learn about issues related to sexual harassment, abuse of authority within the organization.	SWAP focal point, ECW
	Take measures to create an enabling environment where internal female junior staff can progress to the P4 level and beyond.	In ESCWA, like in many UN entities, female representation is good up to the P3 level. Beginning at P4, female staff becomes more underrepresented.	Create focus group with P2/3 female staff to discuss issues that prevent them from reaching P4 level. Create mentoring programme for junior staff.	HRMS