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## **Focus on women and youth crucial for development in Arab region – Migiro**



Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro

11 November 2010 – Ensuring jobs for young people and empowering women are vital to advance development in the Arab region, Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro said today, calling on countries to tap the potential of these two important segments of society.

“The Arab States have much to gain from harnessing the power of the youth demographic,” she said in [remarks](#) to the Regional Coordination Mechanism meeting for Western Asia, held in Beirut.

“Given the high percentage of youth among Arab populations, and their intense yearning for jobs, opportunities and freedom, the risks of neglecting youth are simply too high to afford,” she added.

The meeting, convened by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General, seeks to ensure that various UN departments, agencies and other components work more effectively together in the region.

Ms. Migiro noted that, despite progress over the past decade towards the global anti-poverty targets with a 2015 deadline, known as the Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)), much remains to be done.

“We need to remain focused on what we can do now to accelerate progress in the run-up to 2015,” she stated, adding that ensuring jobs for young people is a priority given that too many young people remain jobless or under-employed.

In the Middle East and North Africa, youth unemployment rates are expected to continue on an upward path in 2011. At the same time, the proportion of youth in the general population is projected to increase by 30 per cent over the next 25 years.

“We must work for a job-intensive recovery that promotes social inclusion and integration. Otherwise, we risk marginalizing a generation,” Ms. Migiro warned.

She also stressed the need to empower women, calling them “critical agents of development.” While the region has reduced gender disparities in both primary and secondary education, more efforts are needed in the economic and political spheres, she said.

In a related development, ESCWA today launched a new report on combating poverty and inequality, produced by the UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD).

Speaking at the launch in Beirut, Tarek Alami, Acting Director of ESCWA’s Economic Development and Globalization Division, highlighted unemployment as a major development challenge in most Arab countries.

He noted that unemployment rates during the past decade are only marginally lower than in the 1990s, adding that the least developed countries (LDCs) in the region have witnessed a dramatic increase in unemployment rates, from around 14 per cent to around 19 per cent.

Among the short-term macroeconomic policies that can help reduce poverty, he cited a pro-poor fiscal policy and an improved tax system.

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