

UN, ATO representatives discuss disaster reduction measures

Minister Safar hails the role of ATO in developing the Arab towns

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KUWAIT: Representatives of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) held a press conference Monday morning at the Regency Hotel to announce the launch of the Disaster Reduction campaign in the Arab region titled "Making Cities Resilient". The press conference was held as part of 15th Conference of the Arab Towns Organization (ATO).

The event was attended by UN Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction Margareta Wahlstrom, Head of United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-HABITAT) office in Kuwait Talal El-Sheikh and ATO representatives from Syria, Lebanon and Jordan.

The speakers touched mainly on natural disasters that have occurred in their countries such as earthquakes, droughts and floods. They discussed pro-active measures reduce or detect these disasters.

Wahlstrom told Al Watan Daily that cities in the Arab region are at great risk of earthquakes due to fault lines across West Asia and in the Mediterranean Sea. She went on to say, "Earthquakes in the region could trigger tsunamis in the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean and volcanic eruption on the Arab Peninsula. Climate change increases the frequency and intensity of floods, storms, and droughts. Arab cities are already experiencing altered conditions due to climate change, causing loss of lives and livelihoods in addition to huge damage to buildings and infrastructure."

She further pointed out that many Gulf countries including Kuwait face a shortage of water for drinking and industrial purposes.

She stressed, "It has been predicted that climate change will create further water shortages. Scarcity of water resources is the main challenge for the whole world and finding water for urban consumption and agriculture is a major challenge worldwide that."

She warned that, in the case of Kuwait, the

most serious looming disaster is water scarcity leading to drought.

She advised, "Kuwait needs to work on its infrastructure and develop it. Also the urban infrastructure such as the water drainage also needs to be developed because when there is heavy rain, the country is nearly flooded."

She asserted that many parts of the Arab world have experienced strong earthquakes, like the one in Iran in 2003. She stressed that rich and poor Arab countries must work together to manage disasters.

Commenting on the UNISDR global campaign, Wahlstrom said, "The campaign aims to raise awareness by working with city administration and local governments because they are the ones who work directly with the local population impacted by disasters."

It also helps manage their risks, develop solutions, and create partnerships that will lead to resilient and safer cities."

She mentioned several recommendations to make cities resilient.

These include establishing an organization to understand and reduce disaster risk; assigning a budget for disaster risk reduction; maintaining an up-to-date database on vulnerabilities; preparing risk assessments as the basis for urban development plans and decisions; investments within infrastructure; assessing the safety of all schools and health facilities and upgrading these as necessary; applying and enforcing realistic risk-compliant building regulations and land use planning principles; ensuring education programs and training on disaster risk reduction in schools and local communities; and installing an early warning systems.

In related news, ATO representatives agreed during the conference's closing session to elect the ATO Secretary General Abdulaziz Al-Adani for another three-year term.

The conference's closing session said that it discussed the proposals referred to it from the ATO permanent office and approved them and contained of recommendations, including the holding of its 16th session in the Syrian city of Aleppo in 2012.

The statement also expressed appreciation for the State of Kuwait represented by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the government and people for hosting the conference as well as the ATO headquarters

and for the unlimited support lent to the ATO in what further increased the successes achieved by the organization at the Arab, regional and world levels for the benefit of its member states.

It also noted that the State of Kuwait took the lead in donating funds for establishing a new ATO headquarters in Kuwait and pointed out that Arab towns that recently joined the ATO have raised the number of members to 455.

The ATO conference had earlier elected Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Dr. Fadhil Safar as its chairperson, while the mayor of Rabat Fatallah Oualalou and the head of Beirut municipality Bilal Hamad as deputies of the president.

The statement drew attention that following the ATO general conference four agreements were signed between the ATO Secretary General and each of the European Investment Bank, the UNISDR, China-Arab Friendship Society and the World Heritage Organization.

Meanwhile, Minister Safar hailed the role of ATO in developing the Arab towns through offering services, expertise and consultations to them.

He asserted in a statement following his inauguration of the fair held on the sidelines of the ATO conference, held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir, that ATO is an independent body and not a subsidiary of any country, but it represents all those in charge of the Arab towns.

He also said that ATO has a wide experience in offering distinctive services for the inhabitants of the Arab towns, noting that Arab towns developed in the recent years thanks to the support of the Arab governments and that these towns possess now all utilities including entertainment, education and infrastructure.

Minister Safar expressed his admiration for the fair's contents that reflect the activities going on in Kuwait with the aim of serving the society, noting that all bodies works toward achieving the desire of His Highness the Amir on turning Kuwait into a financial and commercial hub.

On his part, head of the Kuwait municipality Ahmad Al-Subaih said that the Municipality supports the ATO in its activities, noting that it effectively participates in managing all of the organization's departments as well as supervising a number of vital projects in the development plan for the well-being of Kuwait.

School hour extensions start today

Compiled by Al Watan Daily

KUWAIT: Minister of Education and the Minister of Higher Education Dr. Moudi Al-Homoud announced that the ministry will extend every Tuesday school day by 25 minutes starting today.

She said that the ministry is serious in maintaining the extension and has already issued instructions to all relevant departments.

Meanwhile, Assistant Undersecretary for Students' Activities at the Ministry of Education Deij Al-Deij has said that the Undersecretaries Council discussed a proposal to postpone the decision for extending school days every Tuesday. He added that the council rejected the proposal to postpone since there are "no valid reasons". He noted that the council decided to approve the extension of school days starting Sunday.

Meanwhile, Deputy Assistant Undersecretary at the Ministry of Education Mariam Al-Weteed announced that the ministry will form a committee to study

the issue of extending the school day every Tuesday. The committee will take into consideration the recommendations made by experts in the educational field, in addition to the recommendations of Assistant Undersecretaries who studied the issue earlier.

She asserted that the council has no objections regarding the extension of the school day every Tuesday, but the final decision will be in the hands of the Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Moudi Al-Homoud.

This was mentioned during a special meeting that was headed by Al-Weteed to listen to the opinions, remarks, and explanations of the Assistant Undersecretaries, who agreed to extend the school day every Tuesday. However, some undersecretaries requested that the issue be studied extensively and called for field surveys for teachers in various educational stages. They also asked for the formation of a committee to study the obstacles facing the implementation of the extension.

KFAED extends KD 15 million in loan to Bahrain

MANAMA: Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) signed an agreement with Bahrain, offering it a loan of 15 million Kuwaiti dinars (51 million US dollars), together with a guarantee agreement.

Bahraini Minister of Finance Sheikh Mohammed Bin Ahmad Al-Khalifa and Minister of Public Works Fahmi Al-Jawdar signed the loan deal for the Bahraini side, while KFAED's Director General Abdulwahab Ahmad Al-Bader represented the Fund in the signing.

The loan will fund developing and raising the efficiency of a 220-KV voltage electricity network, besides transferring electricity from Al-Door power

plant to main load centers in the country.

The loan will fund the design, manufacture, supply and installation of equipment and works needed for the implementation of 10 power plants, besides the rehabilitation of seven stations, and installing 515-kilometer land cables, as well as advisory services and institutional support.

It is the 16th loan to be offered by KFAED to Bahrain, as it had extended 15 funds to the Gulf country at a total of KD 131 million (\$445 million), meant to finance various projects, besides 12 grants and technical assistance valued at KD 32.1 million (\$109 million). -KUNA



Jabriya residents discontented with ongoing construction

KUWAIT: Residents of Blocks 3 and 5 in Jabriya have declared their impatience regarding the never ending construction in the area. Mud and sewage water have spilled on to the road with continuous with no end in sight. Municipal construction began last April, however, after five long months residents have complained that the work progress is hardly noticeable, and have pointed out that the numerous diggings lack any protec-

tion or warning signs.

Residents have also complained that the "drilling is awfully planned with poor equipments and unprofessional labor" and many have perceived the construction will not finish prior to the onset of winter and the expected heavy rain falls. Seen here are a number of photos taken of the continual chaotic construction work within the Jabriya area on Monday, Oct. 4, 2010. (Al Watan)

Human Rights society urges free education for Bedoun children

Staff Writer

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Society for Human Rights has stressed that education, healthcare and satisfactory work conditions are necessary for a decent life. It asked the government to retract all security conditions that deprive Bedoun (Stateless Arabs) children from receiving free educa-

tion, in order to protect Kuwaiti society from illiteracy.

The society highlighted the importance of free education at the primary level for Bedoun children. It also added that charitable societies and government must contribute to the fund that provides education to the growing number of Bedoun children.



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