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AMENDMENT OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

Note by the Executive Secretary

1. In accordance with section I, rule 1, of its provisional rules of procedure, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) holds its sessions on an annual basis. The secretariat considers that it would be both more economical and more practical if, instead, the Commission were to hold one session every two years. Given the fact that the extrabudgetary resources available to the Commission have diminished, and in the light of the zero-growth policy currently applied in the United Nations system, every consideration must be given to instituting the greatest possible economies in those of the Commission's resources utilized for the organization of its annual session (including general services and other meetings, about 50 per cent of the overall budget) and to their reallocation in order to increase the financial resources earmarked for the implementation of the Commission's programmes, where growth is likely to be halted in the light of the present financial situation. A biennial arrangement would also allow the Commission more time to prepare its work programmes and to implement those adopted in a more satisfactory manner. It would also give members of delegations ample time to familiarize themselves with documentation and to prepare themselves in good time to attend the session and might, moreover, provide ministers with greater opportunities to contribute to the work of the session. It should be pointed out that the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has already adopted such a system and holds its session at the ministerial level on a biennial basis. If ESCWA were to adopt the same procedure, it would have effect as of 1989, since the Commission is required to meet in 1987.

to consider the programme of work and priorities and the budget for the biennium 1988-1989 and since the fifteenth session must be held in 1988 in order to prepare the medium-term plan for the five-year period 1990-1994 so that it can receive the necessary approval and be ready for dissemination in 1989.

2. Section I, rule 1, of the provisional rules of procedure also stipulates that sessions of the Commission should begin on the third Saturday of April. Some delegations have expressed the wish that they should not be bound, in advance, to a particular day for the beginning of the work of the session and that members should reach agreement on the matter by way of an exchange of letters. Accordingly, the secretariat proposes two possible modes of action: either that the Commission should, at each session, proceed to set a date for the commencement of its subsequent session (the procedure adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP); or that agreement should be reached on the date of the session through exchanges of letters a sufficient amount of time in advance of its being convened.

3. The proposals set forth in the present note do not, of course, apply to meetings of the Commission's Technical Committee.

4. Since the Commission was first established by Economic and Social Council resolution 1818(LV), its rules of procedure have been of a provisional nature. Now, with the Commission completing its thirteenth year, they have taken on such definite shape and assumed such a definitive form as to warrant discontinuation of their characterization as provisional so that they can be designated as simply "the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia".