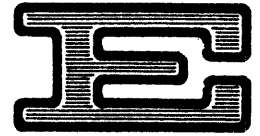




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**INTERREGIONAL CONSULTATION ON DEVELOPMENT
SOCIAL WELFARE POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES**

Note by the Executive Secretary

A. Background

1. The 1968 International Conference of Ministers Responsible for Social Welfare made a comprehensive review of the social aspects of development and their implications for national policies and programmes and enunciated a dynamic concept of developmental social welfare. The Declaration on Social Progress and Development in 1969 was another attempt to formulate specific principles and objectives concerning social progress and the social imperatives of development. Despite the earlier intentions of convening global consultations on social welfare at regular intervals, there has been no follow-up until now to the 1968 Conference to review national and regional developments and to consider them on an interregional basis.

2. In its recent session the Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 1985/26 of 29 May 1985, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General "to proceed with the organization of the interregional consultation on developmental social welfare policies and programmes to be held... at an appropriate policy-making level, in the autumn of 1987 when regional preparations will be completed, and to which all States would be invited, with the objective of appraising present policies and programmes and developing themes and setting goals in the social field for the year 2000".

3. The convening of an interregional consultation was therefore seen as necessary for considering social welfare policies, particularly in the light of the serious consequences of the world-wide economic recession, for the welfare of people and for the funding and delivery of social services which are even more essential now than during the periods of economic growth. Another factor, in the intervening years, has been the emergence and subsequent domination on the international scene of issues concerning women and specific groups such as children, disabled persons, the aging and youth and specifically the implications of delivering, expanding and co-ordinating the social welfare and social development programmes for these populations.

4. A number of regional ministerial conferences have been held periodically over the years in Africa, the Arab States and Asia and the Pacific, as well as one in Europe. The issues they have considered cover a broad spectrum of social development issues, including the practical questions of the administration and delivery of social welfare services. In view of these developments in the areas of social development and social welfare, in particular developments concerning women and specific population groups, it is opportune to make a comprehensive review of progress achieved, experience gained and strategies for the future in the field of social welfare policies, in order to create better congruence between regional and global issues.

B. Interregional consultation: earlier legislative mandates

5. The decision to convene an interregional consultation to examine social welfare policies and provisions in relation to present problems and concerns of Governments and against the background experience gained since the 1968

International Conference of Ministers Responsible for Social Affairs was taken at the 14th plenary meeting of the Economic and Social Council on 26 May 1983 (resolution 1983/22).

6. Resolution 1979/18 of 9 May 1979 of the Economic and Social Council which requested the Secretary-General "to examine and analyse developmental activities with social welfare content and objectives, including those undertaken by international and regional centres", and resolution 1981/20 of 6 May 1981 re-emphasized the theme and objectives of the earlier resolution and requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission for Social Development at its biennial sessions "comparative interregional analyses of the deliberations and recommendations of regional conferences on social welfare and related areas". It also urged the Secretary-General "to reinforce Secretariat research and operational activities related to developmental social welfare policies and programmes within existing resources".

C. Interregional consultation: implications for the International Development Strategy and recent activities concerning women and specific population groups

7. The forthcoming Interregional Consultation on Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes will provide opportunities for a review of social welfare policies and programmes within the context of the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade (General Assembly resolution 35/56 of 5 December 1980). While the International Development Strategy deals with a much wider spectrum of social issues, it does provide a relevant framework for a review of social welfare policies and programmes. The Strategy has set forth a number of social goals and objectives. These include the reduction and elimination of poverty and fair distribution of the benefits of development, the eradication of hunger and malnutrition, full and productive employment, longer life expectancy, and health, education, literacy and shelter for all. The Strategy also calls for the full and effective participation by the entire population in development, including equal status for women and the integration into society of vulnerable population groups, especially children, youth and disabled persons.

8. The achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985) were appraised by a World Conference in July 1985. Equality, Development and Peace were the three global themes of the Decade. Emphasis was put on employment, health and education as key components of strategies for full and equal participation of women in development. Those objectives were endorsed in the International Development Strategy.

9. The International Development Strategy refers to the objectives highlighted during the International Year of the Child in 1979 which called for a fostering of the welfare of children and stressed the essential role of the family in the balanced development of the child. Further, the International Development Strategy recommends that all countries should give high priority to the mobilization and integration of youth in development. The General Assembly, in resolution 38/22 of 22 November 1983, designated 1985

as International Youth Year. Together with the welfare of children, the promotion of youth constitutes a basic factor in national development and the process of socialization of young people underlines the need to establish appropriate linkages between child-oriented and youth-oriented policies and programmes.

10. It is indicated in the International Development Strategy that particular efforts should be made to integrate the disabled in the development process. The International Year of Disabled Persons, proclaimed by the General Assembly in resolution 31/123 of 16 December 1976, aimed at promoting this objective. As a result of the International Year of Disabled Persons, the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons was adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 37/52 of 3 December 1982 and in resolution 37/53 of the same date, the Assembly proclaimed the period from 1983 to 1992 the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons.

11. Governments have shown interest in the socio-economic issues that are or might be associated with the aging of the population. The World Assembly on Aging was convened in 1982 at Vienna and adopted the Vienna International Plan of Action on Aging. One of the recommendations of the Plan is that Governments should adopt an age-family integrated approach to planning and development which would recognize the special needs and characteristics of older persons.

12. The need for development to proceed in an atmosphere free of disruption, violence and crime is generally admitted, yet crime prevention is rarely an integral part of development strategies. This issue was debated by the Seventh United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders, held in Milan in August 1985.

13. The global awareness concerning the situation of women, children, disabled persons, the aging and the youth reflected in various international, regional and national events clearly has reached a stage of designing and implementing appropriate and effective policies and programmes. It is in this context and specifically as they relate to social welfare and social development that interregional consultation assumes considerable significance. It would provide an opportunity for policy-makers to examine priority issues of social welfare in the context of development and current economic conditions, and to set specific goals for the year 2000 and beyond.

D. Implications for the ESCWA region

14. In line with the objectives of the Third United Nations Development Decade which focus on man as the means as well as the end of all development, social welfare policies and programmes, especially in the developing world, are being increasingly regarded as key instruments in influencing the direction and quality of social progress. This is clearly reflected in the deliberations of several Arab ministerial conferences on social welfare held since 1968. These meetings have given serious consideration to social welfare as a strategy for development and to the importance of social welfare and social development in bringing marginal population groups into the mainstream of development, with specific focus on pragmatic and essential considerations of planning,

designing, administering, evaluating and improving the effectiveness and relevance of social welfare programmes for urban as well as rural populations. The recent United Nations/League of Arab States Sectoral Meeting on Social Development held in Amman from 15 to 21 August 1985 took a positive position regarding interregional consultation.

15. Given the leading role taken by several Arab countries in evolving and promoting the concept and implementation of developmental social welfare, it is expected that the ESCWA region's contribution to the proposed interregional consultation would be a significant one. It would be an occasion to make a regional review and assessment of the social welfare situation, as an important element of the interregional consultation planned for 1987.

16. Among the issues which might be considered in the regional review are:

(a) The extent to which welfare has been successfully oriented towards development: achievements and obstacles;

(b) The interrelationship between social welfare objectives and other sets of objectives in national development planning;

(c) The effectiveness of welfare policies as instruments for the integration of less-advantaged groups into the mainstream of national life and developmental efforts, and in broadening and intensifying popular participation;

(d) A world plan of action for developmental social welfare policies and programmes for the year 2000.