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Item 9 of the provisional agenda

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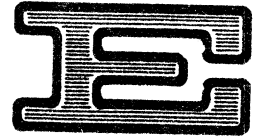
DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIAL WELFARE ISSUES

(b) UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF DISABLED PERSONS

Note by the Executive Secretary



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Corrigendum

Page 2, fifth paragraph, line 5,

Replace Kuwait with Syria.

(b) UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF DISABLED PERSONS

The United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992) grew out of the 1981 International Year of Disabled Persons, when it became evident that programmes developed for the Year required much more time to implement. The proclamation of the Decade by the General Assembly in its resolution 37/53 entitled "Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons", adopted on 3 December 1982, provided a time frame for the realization of the programmes, for implementing the goals and objectives of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and for review and appraisal of progress made.

The World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons was elaborated during 1981 and 1982 and adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 37/52 entitled "World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons" of 3 December 1982. The Programme is both a declaration of opportunities and a set of guidelines for policies. It is based on the International Year's theme of "full participation and equality" with an added dimension of "prevention of disability."

Activities at the international level

Annual inter-agency meetings have taken place since the beginning of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons in 1983. The fifth inter-agency meeting was scheduled to be held in Vienna from 18 to 20 February 1987.

At the fourth inter-agency meeting (1986), serious concern was expressed about the lack of awareness concerning the Decade and it was agreed that, without urgent and more effective dissemination of information to increase awareness, the goals and objectives of the Decade and of the World Programme of Action would be defeated. In response, the meeting requested Disabled Peoples' International and the Council of World Organizations Interested in the Handicapped to launch a public information programme in support of the General Assembly objectives concerning disabled persons.

There will be a Global Meeting of Experts to evaluate the progress achieved in implementing the World Programme of Action at the mid-point of the Decade, as requested by the General Assembly in its above-mentioned resolution 37/53 and in its resolution 40/31 entitled "Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons" of 29 November 1985. The Meeting is scheduled to be held in Stockholm from 17 to 23 August 1987. The fourth inter-agency meeting made useful suggestions for regional inputs into the Global Meeting.

The fourth inter-agency meeting considered the establishment of a centralized information network on disability within the United Nations system. It was agreed that such a network within the United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs (CSDHA) would be a useful focal point for locating and retrieving information available within the United Nations system, through the co-ordination of existing information networks of agencies and organizations.

The fourth inter-agency meeting took note of the need to review and to improve the co-ordination of technical co-operation in the field of disability within the United Nations system and requested the representative of the World Health Organization to prepare a draft report on the subject for the next inter-agency meeting.

What is expected of the regional commissions

The establishment of inter-organizational task forces at regional levels to deal with the development of regional activities including human resources and training activities was recommended at the third (1985) and fourth (1986) inter-agency meetings; progress reports thereon were to be submitted to the fifth inter-agency meeting.

Input to the Global Meeting of Experts in 1987

The fourth inter-agency meeting recommended that the regional commissions provide inputs into the 1987 Global Meeting of Experts "in order to reflect the realities at the grass-roots level." The meeting further recommended that "regional consultations should be held by the regional commissions in collaboration with the Centre, in conjunction with regular regional meetings organized at the headquarters of the regional commissions ... the agenda of the Global Meeting should contain the issue of integrating problems of disabled persons in overall development strategies." ^{1/}

Regional commissions should communicate information on disability to the centralized information network within CSDHA.

Activities at the regional level in ESCWA

In order to establish a regional task force on human resources development, in October 1985 the ESCWA secretariat, through the Resident Representatives of the United Nations Development Programme, requested from ESCWA members a list of candidates, i.e., experts on disability. Only Bahrain, Jordan and Kuwait responded. In February 1987, the ESCWA secretariat sent a follow-up letter requesting the same information.

ESCWA is currently the only regional commission that has not yet set up a regional task force. One of the most important emerging social issues in the ESCWA region is assistance to and rehabilitation and integration of the disabled; it is therefore urgent that the regional task force be established and enter into operation so that the ESCWA region can more effectively and actively monitor and participate in the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. A progress report will be submitted to the Global Meeting of Experts.

^{1/} "Report of the fourth inter-agency meeting on the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons" (ACC/1986/PG/6) of 19 June 1986, paragraph 23.

The ESCWA secretariat has continued to support and follow up the activities of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons with particular attention to the Arab Declaration and Plan of Action concerning the Disabled, which was adopted at the Arab Regional Conference held from 1 to 5 April 1981 in Kuwait. In February 1987, the ESCWA secretariat requested the Arab countries to send progress reports on activities related to disability issues, taking into consideration the suggestions made at the fourth inter-agency meeting on regional inputs into the Global Meeting of Experts.

The ESCWA secretariat is co-ordinating and co-operating with the International Labour Organisation, the executing agency, in a project being undertaken with a view to strengthening and expanding vocational rehabilitation services for disabled persons in the ESCWA region. The project began in January 1987. The project document will essentially be an update of the information contained in an earlier ESCWA report entitled "Assessment of the situation and needs of disabled in the region of Western Asia," which was submitted to the Kuwait Regional Conference for the Disabled in April 1981. The project document will also contain recommendations on what can be done for disabled persons at the regional level. The document could serve as an input into the Global Meeting of Experts.

The issue of disability is becoming more significant in the ESCWA region, which has witnessed a large increase in the number of disabled persons, due in no small measure to various wars and armed conflicts in the region. The ESCWA secretariat has therefore incorporated in its draft medium term plan (1990-1995), a study including information on trends in this field and levels of the handicapped, their characteristics, methods of rehabilitation, reintegration and placement and the training and other needs of relevant service institutions. Initial preparations for the study are being made. There will also be an assessment of the progress made and obstacles encountered in the ESCWA region in the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons.