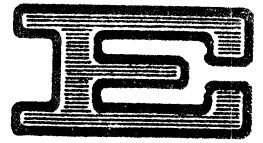




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REPORT OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON
THE WORK OF ITS SEVENTH SESSION

NOTE

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Technical Committee held its seventh session during the period from 30 August to 2 September 1992 in Amman, Jordan. Its work covered four meetings.
2. In accordance with the organization of work adopted by the Commission at its present ministerial-level session, the sixteenth session, the Technical Committee was assigned the task of considering a number of main and sub-items of the agenda [sub-items 5(a), 5(b)(viii) and 5(b)(ix) and items 6 and 7] and submitting a report thereon to the sixteenth ministerial-level session.
3. Mr. Kassem Mukdad of the Syrian Arab Republic, one of the two Vice-Chairmen of the present ministerial-level session, was elected by acclamation as Chairman of the Technical Committee at its seventh session. Mr. Mahmoud Ahmed Othman of Iraq was also elected by acclamation as Rapporteur of the Technical Committee at its seventh session.

I. ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDINGS

A. Progress made in the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 1990-1991 (agenda item 5(a)) (E/ESCWA/16/3(Part I)/Add.1-9 and E/ESCWA/16/3(Part II))

4. The Committee started its deliberations with a discussion of sub-item 5(a). The Chief of the Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Division of the Commission reviewed this sub-item, referring to the set of documents presented under it. He stated that programme implementation did not exceed 44 per cent on account of the circumstances which the Commission had undergone and the repatriation of staff. He said this percentage corresponded to the months of work available for that period, which also amounted to 44 per cent of the scheduled months.

5. The Chairman of the Technical Committee requested the members to discuss each document separately. A representative of a State suggested that an official from the Commission give a brief outline of each document and a technical member of each delegation comment on it and submit proposals. Another delegate seconded this suggestion. A delegate from another State suggested tackling each addendum separately, but the Chairman thought this was unnecessary as the main document presented a brief account of each activity. The Chairman was of the view that the draft medium-term plan was the more important document and that it should be focused on as it concerned a future stage of the Commission's work. A delegate suggested that the topics which State representatives were to focus on should be identified in respect of each paper, as this would help in directing interventions.

6. After an exchange of views on a method of considering documents, the Chairman said there were several important matters that should be concentrated on during the discussions, including: (a) receipt by staff of salaries during their repatriation period without work; (b) the Commission's failure to carry out part of its work during this period, noting that all of the Commission's facilities were in Baghdad and there was nothing to prevent their shipment abroad; (c) the Commission's actual output did not exceed 26 per cent of the expected total, contrary to the 44 per cent figure mentioned in the report on the Commission's activities, where outputs that had been completed but not printed were counted as actually implemented; (d) cancellation of certain subprogramme elements of the medium-term plan despite their importance, and whether the Commission had the authority for such cancellation; and (e) failure to give due attention to very important topics such as: trade flow; integration of women in the development process; population; environment and industrial pollution; coordination of development plans, programmes and policies; informatics, etc. A representative of a State enquired about the justifications for considering certain outputs that had not been printed as accomplished work although they had not yet reached users. He said that actual benefit was the important thing.

7. In reply to some of the queries raised above, the representative of the secretariat explained that national plans of member States did not necessarily conform with ESCWA's medium-term plan since the latter involved activities of a regional nature. He said that ESCWA kept itself constantly informed about the contents of these national plans and endeavoured as much as possible, within its terms of reference, to take these plans into account in formulating work programmes and medium-term plans, and that the purpose of these ministerial-level meetings held by the Commission was to exchange views and to reflect the common needs and concerns of the countries of the region.

8. With regard to the programme of work and priorities, the secretariat's representative said that the United Nations continued to pay salaries to personnel during the period of their repatriation. Some staff members continued to carry out their duties during their repatriation; others were in Amman to provide technical and administrative services; still others were at the United Nations Headquarters in New York to handle the secretariat's administrative work. What these staff members did was not necessarily related to the scheduled outputs for two reasons: firstly, the performance of outputs such as seminars and meetings required a reunion of the ESCWA family; and secondly, certain outputs were cancelled because they involved travel of staff members to all countries of the region, and this was impossible on account of the Gulf crisis. Moreover, it was not possible to carry out certain outputs that had been planned for implementation in collaboration with, or to be funded by, certain organs in ESCWA countries directly involved in the Gulf crisis. However, ESCWA carried out 15 additional outputs, including 7 papers concerning the Gulf crisis, which were not taken into account in working out the output implementation percentage. Amendments had to be introduced to certain outputs to respond to rapid developments in the region. He pointed out that the amendment of outputs did not necessarily mean reducing programmes but sometimes involved expanding their scope. The proportion of reformulated outputs for the period 1990-1991 exceeded that of previous periods, in view of the exceptional circumstances faced by the region.

9. In regard to transferring the print-shop from Baghdad, the secretariat's representative said that the transfer was effected after ESCWA's regrouping in Amman, as it involved lengthy administrative formalities. He said he agreed that ESCWA's publications would be useless if they did not reach users, but the circumstances which the ESCWA region had undergone were not normal by any standard. He said that the detailed observations made by certain delegates in respect of ESCWA programmes would be taken into consideration in the preparation of the programme of work and priorities for 1994-1995 in the course of this year.

10. Discussions then shifted to the nine papers presented to the Commission under this item. One of the delegates referred to document E/ESCWA/16/3(Part I) and proposed the establishment of a centre for developing the capabilities of less fortunate groups. He was seconded by another delegate.

11. With regard to training in agricultural planning and project analysis (E/ESCWA/16/3(Part I)/Add.1), one delegate referred to the proposal to promote regional networking among training institutions in agricultural planning and suggested that the network be "a regional network linking institutions involved in agricultural planning and policies in the countries of the region"

and that training be one of its basic tasks. Another delegate stressed the statement in the medium-term plan about the necessity of providing incentives to farmers and raising their productivity by improving their income and living standards, with the object of establishing them in the countryside in agricultural work. He also stressed the need to prepare technical training programmes for farmers to raise their productive efficiency.

12. In reply to points raised by certain delegates on the subprogramme on food and agriculture, the representative of the secretariat said that the proposal presented by one of the delegates for the establishment of a regional network of institutions for agricultural planning and policies was a constructive one and that the secretariat would take it into consideration in preparing the proposed regional network project. On the question of technical training of farmers as an element for establishing farmers in agricultural work, he said that this matter was dealt with within the framework of support for agricultural services and institutions undertaken by the Commission.

13. The Technical Committee then went on to discuss the paper on environmental perspective to the year 2000 and beyond in the ESCWA region (E/ESCWA/16/3(Part I)/Add.2). A delegate referred to the considerable attention given by her country to environment and to the appreciable amount of legislation in this respect which it intended to promote. She said she particularly supported that part of the document relating to the impact of wars and regional conflicts on environment. She requested the Commission to carry out studies on the environmental impact of the economic blockade imposed on Iraq. Another delegate said that the policies of developed countries in the field of environment were not clear, and consequently there should be a recommendation that these countries commit themselves to monitoring the projects that they transferred to developing countries. A delegate indicated that it was necessary to lay down legislative principles in the area of environmental protection. He also pointed out the multiplicity of environmental institutions and called for their unification. He advocated an Arab strategy for a better environment. He also indicated that it was necessary to distinguish between regional conflicts and the Arab-Israeli conflict as to the impact on the environment; this was in view of the nature of the Israeli occupation and its serious effects on environment in Palestine and the region, and in view of its difference in quality and quantity from disputes that might take place between countries of the region. He called for inclusion of an activity on this topic in the Commission's work programme. Another delegate called also for the implementation of projects in the area of desertification, hydroponics and environmental awareness, in addition to following up the results of the Earth Summit and Agenda 21 for the benefit of the ESCWA countries.

14. In this connection a delegate raised the question of housing, saying that liberalizing, renting and leasing policies had their advantages and disadvantages. However, he said, States should sponsor housing projects for low-income individuals. He presented a proposal inviting the States of the region to show flexibility in policies for pricing housing units while continuing to make more efforts to provide housing for low-income individuals.

15. In reply to this, the secretariat's representative pointed out that the case of housing had been covered in proportion with the region's requirements. He referred to two activities within the framework of the programme of work for 1992-1993, viz.:

(a) Symposium on Low-Cost Housing in the Arab Region, which will be held in Sana'a from 24 to 28 October 1992. He indicated that this Symposium would be held in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning in Yemen and with regional and international organizations. Over 35 agencies would be participating in the Symposium, in which 30 working papers that were being processed at ESCWA would be presented;

(b) Preparation of a guide for the implementation of integrated housing and community-development schemes with special emphasis on self-reliance, to cover the southern part of the Arabian peninsula in particular.

16. Subsequently, the Chairman of the Committee requested consideration of the report of the Executive Secretary on the Expert Group Meeting on the Absorption of Returnees in the ESCWA Region with Special Emphasis on Opportunities in the Industrial Sector (E/ESCWA/16/3(Part I)/Add.3). A representative of a State said that this expert group only met at the end of 1991 after the problem had emerged fully and had been remedied. He supported the proposal to establish a dialogue between the labour-sending and labour-receiving countries. Another delegate pointed out the importance of: implementing the recommendations addressed to international and regional organizations concerned with this issue; setting up a committee to follow up these recommendations; and creating an effective international mechanism to promote regional cooperation, develop practicable methods to compensate the countries affected by the Gulf War and set up a regional centre for Arab expertise. He called for the formation of a group that would pay visits to countries for the purpose of drawing up small low-cost, labour-intensive projects and programmes and coordinating cooperation among the concerned countries. A delegate pointed out the necessity of providing support to returning labour and drawing up activities for the training and rehabilitation of returnees in order to integrate them into their communities in a natural way.

17. Referring to the recommendations regarding the occupied Palestinian territories embodied in chapter IV of the document, Palestine's delegate proposed adding a recommendation appealing to the United Nations to work to lift Israeli occupation restrictions on Palestinian economic activities under occupation.

18. In reply to a question asked by a delegate about the reasons for calling a certain subprogramme "International trade and development finance" without embodying in the programme any activities concerned with development finance, the secretariat's representative explained that development finance here did not refer to mobilization of resources but reflected the relationship between external trade and development finance in general.

19. The Committee then considered the Executive Secretary's report on the implementation of projects formulated in the course of the biennium 1988-1989 on renewable sources of energy (E/ESCWA/16/3(Part I)Add.4). A delegate pointed out the necessity of supporting renewable energy projects in view of the role they were going to play in the coming years in power generation and

preservation of the environment. Discussions then shifted to the question of setting up a centre for space science and technology education in the region of Western Asia (E/ESCWA/16/3(Part I)/Add.5 and Suppl.1). The Jordanian delegate said that his country would welcome hosting such a centre and suggested that Governments participating in this project be obliged to provide continued financial support to the centre and also that the executing agency ensure a portion of the necessary funds. He stressed the necessity of using Arabic as a basic language besides English and French. Oman's representative also welcomed his country's hosting of the centre. This proposal was supported by other delegates.

20. In reply to this, the secretariat's representative said that ESCWA laid emphasis in this respect on the preparation of the regional project document, preparation of questionnaires on what a State wishing to host the project could provide, and formation of a regional committee to make field visits to appraise what each country would offer and how serious its proposals were. He said that ESCWA could give preliminary answers to the proposals of various countries but final answers depended on the responses of the rest of the ESCWA member States and the United Nations Outer Space Affairs Division in New York. After consultations, appraisal field visits and assurance of serious facilities, detailed negotiations could be entered into with regard to hosting the centre. On the use of the Arabic language in the centre's activities, he said that the States making this proposal should bear translation expenses. As for obligating States to provide assistance to the centre, he said that the United Nations was trying to persuade certain countries to do so. He said that including the host Government on the governing board of the centre would depend on the position of the host country.

21. One delegate underlined the necessity that ESCWA's projects in the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 include a project for setting up a regional centre for science and technology. She called upon ESCWA to make endeavours in this respect. She also called for providing the science and technology programme with its requirements of financial and human resources within the context of restructuring ESCWA, in view of the importance of this programme.

22. The Committee then considered support to technical assistance projects for the development of women (E/ESCWA/16/3(Part I)/Add.6). A delegate said that his delegation had studied all the documents on this issue and indicated that women's role in development in the Arab countries was receding. He called for greater involvement of women in development.

23. Some delegates inquired about the reasons for failure to allocate adequate financial resources to fund activities of the Transport and Communications Decade in Western Asia, and urged follow-up of this issue. In reply, the secretariat's representative said that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Governing Council was the authority in charge of allocating funds in implementation of General Assembly resolutions. The secretariat had kept in contact with all the appropriate agencies in the United Nations and elsewhere to secure the necessary funding as explained in detail in document E/ESCWA/16/3(Part I)/Add.8. He added that the matter was contingent on support for the Commission's request by the States of the region who were members of the UNDP Governing Council. These would need to urge the Council to agree to allocate the necessary funds for the Decade's activities.

24. The Committee then considered strengthening the functioning of industrial training institutions in the ESCWA region (E/ESCWA/16/3(Part I)/Add.9). A representative of a country indicated that information in the field of industrial training was meagre in his country and that the report in question ignored industrial extension. A delegate of another country said that the report omitted mention of vocational training centres and specialized schools in his country.

25. The secretariat's representative said in reply that the above-mentioned document was only a brief outline of an extensive study in this respect and therefore did not include all the industrial training institutions. He stated that the question of agro-industries was not neglected but the emphasis at this stage was on engineering and chemical industries. Another delegate commented on this by stressing the importance of attention to local industries, particularly food industries, as raw materials were available and this was a comparative advantage which should be utilized. ESCWA's delegate underscored the role ESCWA was playing in setting up industrial projects to achieve complementarity. One delegate said that there should be "educating" training in a person's area of specialization or interest rather than imposed training. The Chairman indicated that educational policies should be formulated to serve development and promote qualitative training aimed at increasing production; these, consequently, should focus on technical and vocational education, particularly after secondary school.

26. Another delegate said it was necessary to develop appraisal methods and raise the standard of data on income and expenditure, as analytical tools. He also stressed standardization of survey-form patterns with special emphasis on household surveys. He underscored the importance of specifications in the area of industrial development, to ensure competitiveness in the market. He warned that concern with Eastern Europe should not be at the expense of social development in the ESCWA region.

27. One delegate proposed that projects implemented in countries of the region should have similar specifications to the greatest extent possible, the aim being to standardize the statistical concepts used and the mechanisms and software pertaining to the inputs and outputs of results. This, he said, would save time in analysis and in obtaining comparative results among various countries.

28. The Committee then proceeded to technical cooperation activities (E/ESCWA/16/3(Part II)). One delegate indicated that regional advisory services were regarded to be among the essential activities undertaken by ESCWA and that tables should be prepared showing the number of services provided and the number of countries that benefited from them. He said that the benefits derived should also be shown. He suggested that distinction be made among advisory services, meetings and training programmes so that they might be easily monitored. One delegate, seconded by another, called for setting up a regional economic and social information centre serving ESCWA member States that should maintain contact and coordinate with the national information centres of member countries.

29. Replying to an inquiry about lack of accuracy in income and expenditure data on household surveys, the ESCWA representative said this would be for two reasons, viz. that these were visible errors resulting from sampling, which could be minimized, and invisible errors, which could only be partially controlled because they depended on the individual and his response. He said this matter had been discussed in the periodic meetings of the heads of statistical offices in the ESCWA countries; statistical awareness had been discussed, which was a large project whose implementation required the concerted efforts of various organs including the Statistics Division. With regard to standardization of statistical forms, he said this was envisaged in a broader framework of standardization of criteria, concepts and classification. This topic, he added, had been included in the medium-term plan for statistics for the period 1992-1997 and, in this context, ESCWA was cooperating with the United Nations Statistical Office in New York and Arab organizations concerned with developing the United Nations national accounts system. The revised system in its final form would be considered at an international meeting to be held in Mexico in October 1992. He also indicated that ESCWA, in collaboration with the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics in Baghdad, had prepared a standard sample form for household surveys.

B. Follow-up action on the resolutions of the Commission at its fifteenth session (agenda item 5(b))

1. Resolution 173(XV) on the draft medium-term plan of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia for the period 1992-1997 (agenda item 5(b)(viii)) (E/ESCWA/16/4/Add.8)

30. The ESCWA Chief of the Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Office reviewed sub-item 5(b)(viii) on the draft medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, referring to documents relating thereto. He said that the draft medium-term plan, which had been revised to include some new topics, had been sent to the United Nations Headquarters in New York to meet the deadline set by the General Assembly for including the Commission's plan in the medium-term plan of the United Nations system as a whole. In this context, he referred to the intergovernmental meeting to review the 1992-1997 medium-term plan, held at Cairo on 8 and 9 February 1992, which contributed to the preparation of the final version of the plan.

31. The Chairman opened discussion of the draft medium-term plan. A delegate asked whether the General Assembly's adoption of the draft medium-term plan was final or whether it was possible to make amendments thereto. The Chief of the Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Office said in this respect that the plan consisted basically of general orientations that were discussed and approved by appropriate United Nations committees. It was customary to submit the draft plan to member States for approval prior to submission to these committees. However, as it was not possible to hold the sixteenth ministerial-level session of the Commission in April 1991, ESCWA was obliged to submit the plan to the appropriate United Nations organs before submission to member States. However, ESCWA had become acquainted with the views of those States in this respect during the intergovernmental meeting held at Cairo in February 1992 to review the plan. As for the present

proposals regarding the plan, they would be taken into account at the time scheduled to make the second revision of the plan. Another delegate suggested that the overall orientations of the medium-term plan be reformulated so as to include the status quo, overall goals and specific goals. The delegates supported this idea, provided it was adopted by ESCWA at a later stage.

32. One delegate expressed the opinion that priority be given to studies of an analytical nature that would be of direct advantage to the countries of the region. He said that what was required was not new structures but a strengthening of the existing ones. He underscored the necessity of identifying the criteria on the basis of which priorities were determined. Another delegate suggested that criteria for determining priorities include economic and social dimensions and that mechanisms be set up for implementing the recommendations of the Commission. He emphasized the necessity of a mechanism for the appraisal of working methods and for an independent appraisal unit. He also said there should be coordination between the plans of the United Nations organizations and those of ESCWA when these dealt with the same topics, to avoid duplication. He also noted that the plan identified priorities, whereas the final goal was implementation of all the programmes included in it. He stressed the importance of concentrating on the methodology of cooperation, particularly with international organizations, and on keeping ESCWA informed of the conclusions and studies prepared by other organizations. He said expanding ESCWA's role was necessary but that depended on availability of financial resources. More than one delegate referred to discrepancies in priorities from one country to another and noted that this would raise complications.

33. The secretariat's representative explained, in respect of appraisal methodology, that the Programme Evaluation Unit at ESCWA was part of the Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Office and that some of the main tasks of this Unit were: organizing self-evaluation within the framework of the United Nations; coordination of in-depth evaluation carried out by the United Nations for certain aspects of programmes; and appraisal of approved outputs of ESCWA programmes.

34. With regard to a methodology of cooperation between ESCWA and international organizations, he said there were several cooperation and coordination mechanisms within the United Nations system undertaking coordination of certain topics, such as committees concerned with consideration of certain economic and social issues. As examples, he mentioned the committee on women and the committee on drugs.

35. On the question of the criteria governing the determination of priorities of the plan, he said the fact that certain programmes were regarded as high priority did not mean that others would not secure financial or human resources. ESCWA, he added, was obliged to implement activities pertaining to all the 16 programmes and no specific programme would be implemented at the expense of another, but it was natural and logical that the Commission set priorities for its work.

36. One delegate referred to the document on follow-up action on resolution 173(XV) on the draft medium-term plan and the proposal contained therein on the role of the Commission in managing the process of privatization. He suggested cancelling this proposal. He also suggested that texts referring to ESCWA's giving priority to Lebanon and the occupied Palestinian territories be modified by adding "and Golan" in references to territories occupied by Israel.

37. On the subject of building indigenous capabilities, a delegate of a country said it was necessary to prepare statistical data on Arab experts to refer to them when necessary and added that employment of foreign experts should be linked with the training of indigenous counterparts whenever possible. Another delegate suggested seeking expertise from member States of the Commission in project implementation and consultancy tasks in order to strengthen technical cooperation among these countries.

38. A delegate referred to the necessity of giving more attention to the involvement of the banking sector in development. The secretariat's representative said that this issue was dealt with in the public administration and finance subprogramme. Several years ago, he said, the study "Arab banks' current situation and future prospects, 1987" was conducted. He said that there was an annual survey of developments in the monetary and banking sector. It would be possible, he added, to include in the programme of work and priorities for the period 1994-1995 a study on the impact of the European Common Market on the banking sector in the region, as such studies could not be carried out every year.

39. In the area of industry, a delegate suggested that ESCWA assume a larger role in promoting integration among the countries of the region and setting up joint industrial enterprises to be financed by the countries of the region among which the products of the projects would be distributed. Another delegate touched on a number of topics, calling for greater focus on them. These included the allocating of a programme on combating desertification within the programme on environment, studying the conditions of returnees (their rehabilitation and employment), and matters relating to water and natural resources. He also noted that women's participation in development should be increased in the productive sectors.

40. Another delegate suggested that the Technical Committee recommend introducing a special programme on economic and social development in the occupied Palestinian territories into its medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, provided that this programme be subsequently implemented jointly between ESCWA and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). He pointed out that coordination between ESCWA and the appropriate organs of the PLO needed strengthening with regard to the adoption of activities related to the Palestinian Arab people within ESCWA programmes. He also pointed out the necessity of replacing the term "rights of the Palestinian man" by "rights of the Palestinian people". He also suggested omitting the words in paragraph 34.12 of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 from "A peace agreement..." to the end of the paragraph. Other delegates supported this suggestion.

41. In this connection, a representative of the secretariat explained that the allocation of a separate programme for the Palestinian people was not possible, because ESCWA's programmes were of a regional nature. Any matter pertaining to the Palestinian people, he said, could be included within the subprogrammes set for the Commission. Another representative of the secretariat indicated that the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) had a special unit on Palestine and said that ESCWA's capabilities would not permit it to concentrate on a specific country; he also said that ESCWA was not the natural place for a unit concerned with the economic and social affairs of the Palestinian Arab people. He said that there was a working group at ESCWA following up the implementation of activities concerning the Palestinian Arab people.

42. The Chairman of the Technical Committee requested those present to submit specific proposals showing the main aspects which they wished to include within ESCWA's programme of work.

2. Resolution 174(XV) on the draft programme of work and priorities for the biennium 1990-1991
(agenda item 5(b)(ix)) (E/ESCWA/16/4/Add.9)

43. The secretariat's representative said that this resolution requested the Executive Secretary to submit a report to the Technical Committee at its seventh session on any modifications to the programme of work and priorities for the biennium 1990-1991. However, owing to the postponement of the Technical Committee session and the ministerial-level session, ESCWA had failed to submit this report prior to the lapse of the two years in question. Therefore, he went on, ESCWA had introduced the modifications it saw fit to its programme of work. The details of these modifications, he added, appeared under item 5(a), entitled "Progress made in the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 1990-1991" (document E/ESCWA/16/3(Part I)). This document, he said, contained a detailed explanation of the modifications introduced in each output.

C. Financial status of the Commission's programmes
(agenda item 6) (E/ESCWA/16/7)

44. A number of delegates made remarks about the method of presenting the information contained in the documents submitted under this item and called for their simplification and confinement to the period under review. The representative of the secretariat appealed to member States to support the Trust Fund for ESCWA Regional Activities to enable it to participate in the implementation of specific projects, particularly country projects.

D. Draft programme of work and priorities for the biennium 1992-1993
(agenda item 7) (E/ESCWA/16/8, and Suppl.1 and Suppl.2)

45. In a comment on the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993, one delegate raised several points largely related to the method of presenting the documents under this item. In this context, he thought that the programme budget document should contain the justifications for the cancellation of certain activities and the inclusion of new ones. He also believed that the

activities listed under the subprogrammes lacked consistency, as some of these subprogrammes comprised only two activities while others comprised a considerable number of activities. He said that certain activities in all the subprogrammes should come under a section on coordination and harmonization. He then turned to the subprogramme on "transnational corporations", noting that the methodology followed in the part of the programme budget related to this subprogramme was not consistent with that in other subprogrammes, because this part of the programme budget followed the general budget of the United Nations programmes as a whole. He suggested that the specificities of the transnational corporations subprogramme of ESCWA be identified within this comprehensive budget. On the whole he was of the opinion that the programme budget of ESCWA should embody a full picture of the distribution of human resources.

46. With regard to the content of the programme of work and priorities, one delegate stressed the necessity of continuing to provide consultancy services to Iraq apart from the political considerations that called for imposing a blockade on it. He added that this blockade was economic and not cultural. One delegate said that presenting the programme budget to the appropriate United Nations organs for approval before submitting it to ESCWA's legislative body (i.e., the ministerial-level session) was a precedent it was hoped would not be repeated. The secretariat's representative explained in this regard that that was an exceptional measure resorted to as a result of the postponement of the sixteenth session of the Commission because of the Gulf War. In this context one delegate said it was necessary to submit the draft programme of work and priorities for the next biennium 1994-1995 to member States for perusal before approval.

47. One delegate raised the question of introducing activities covering democracy and human rights in the Commission's programme of work. There was agreement on the importance of this issue, but views diverged on the way to handle it. The secretariat's representative said that this issue did not fall within the terms of reference of the Commission, but rather within those of other specialized agencies within the United Nations system.

48. Commenting on the number of prescribed outputs, one delegate suggested reducing them in order to focus attention on quality instead of quantity. He also touched on priorities governing subprogrammes and corresponding financial allocations in the programme budget, saying that relatively few resources were allocated for high-priority subprogrammes. He also suggested that the programme budget, which covered one third of the period of the medium-term plan 1992-1997, contain an explanation of the subprogrammes within the scope of priorities identified by the medium-term plan.

49. One delegate made observations on the medium-term plan with regard to five subprogrammes. With regard to food and agriculture, he suggested circulating the results of studies related thereto to all member States. With regard to environment, he expressed the opinion that the countries of the ESCWA region should jointly formulate or harmonize environmental legislation as these countries were close to one another and had common concerns. He suggested that ESCWA take part in the formulation of a common approach to be adopted by all member countries. He referred to the link between the

industrial sector and international trade, as marketing is an indivisible part of industrialization. He called for giving attention to this aspect. With regard to population, he noted that the Commission's programme of work for the period 1992-1993 focused on integrating returning labour into their original communities. He suggested that ESCWA focus on remedying the broad issue of unemployment, through training and rehabilitating labour, instead of focusing on the narrow issue of integrating returnees into the labour market, as it would be too late to treat this issue by 1993. A number of delegates supported this suggestion. Referring to public administration and finance, the delegate stressed the importance of studying the question of tax reform and the money market.

50. The secretariat's representative replied to queries raised by certain delegates concerning ESCWA's undertaking studies about the prospects of peace in the region, within the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 and the programme of work and priorities for the biennium 1992-1993; he said that the main justification for reviewing the medium-term plan was revising it in the light of the most prominent regional and international changes. The intergovernmental meeting to review the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 held at Cairo in February 1992, identified the main factors which ESCWA should take into consideration when reviewing the plan. Among these was a study to be undertaken by ESCWA on the economic and social implications of the peace process for the region. He referred to a paragraph in the report of the meeting calling upon ESCWA to play a technical role in this respect. The secretariat's representative explained that ESCWA intended to discuss three scenarios in its study on the implications for the region of a peaceful settlement at the meeting which it intended to hold for this purpose early in 1993 under the title "The implications for the region of a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine". He added that these scenarios would comprise three possibilities: comprehensive settlement, partial settlement, and no settlement. He said that ESCWA would address all these possibilities so as to help member States crystallize a future vision in this respect.

51. A number of delegates commented on this topic, some of whom expressed reservations as to ESCWA's understanding of the recommendations made in this respect at the Cairo meeting. Others said that the general trend was negative rather than positive. A delegate said that the discussion only focused on enabling the Palestinian people to disengage from Israel. In this connection, some delegates asked whether an intergovernmental meeting, rather than a ministerial-level session of the Commission, could provide ESCWA with the legislative cover to undertake a certain activity. One delegate said that the Cairo meeting was of a consultative nature and its decisions were not obligatory. The secretariat's representative said that the Cairo meeting, together with its proposals, was approved by the United Nations General Assembly and the legislative authority was therefore in existence. He explained that the idea was not to avoid seeking the opinion of member States, but rather that postponement of the sixteenth session of the Commission prevented submission of the report of the meeting to member States on time.

II. MAIN THEMES OF THE DISCUSSIONS AND THEIR CONCLUSIONS

A. Progress made in the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 1990-1991^{1/}

1. On agriculture

(a) Setting up a regional network of training institutions in the area of agricultural planning;

(b) Providing incentives to farmers.

2. In the area of environment

Giving attention to the impact of wars in the region on environment; inclusion of this topic in the Commission's programmes; endeavouring to formulate common or harmonized environmental legislation; and dissemination of environmental awareness.

3. On industry

(a) Introducing industrial extension within industrial training in the same way as agricultural extension;

(b) Focusing on technical and vocational training;

(c) Focusing on food industries, as this has comparative advantage on account of the availability of raw materials.

4. On human settlements

Focusing on low-cost housing.

5. On science and technology

"Endogenizing" technology and endeavouring to set up a regional centre for space science and technology education.

6. On women and development

Addressing the receding role of Arab women in development.

^{1/} When the Technical Committee reviewed the programmes and activities contained in the programme of work for the biennium 1990-1991, the proposals put forward under this item centred on what the Committee thought fit to introduce into its programme of work in the future. ESCWA therefore may adopt these observations in the context of its current work and future programmes.

7. On statistics

Attempting to raise the standard of accuracy of income data, and standardization of household survey forms, concepts and the statistical mechanisms used.

8. On transport and communications

Continuing efforts to provide the necessary resources to undertake the activities of the Transport and Communications Decade in Western Asia.

9. On identifying various priority areas

Giving due attention to the desertification problem, water, and science and technology.

10. On activities relating to the Palestinian people

Strengthening coordination between ESCWA and the appropriate organs of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

11. In the area of technical cooperation

(a) Seeking the help of experts from ESCWA member States in the implementation of advisory tasks and projects;

(b) Endeavouring to build indigenous capabilities by linking the employment of foreign experts with the training of local counterparts wherever possible;

(c) Preparing a list classified according to nature of activity, showing the advisory services undertaken by ESCWA.

12. On labour

Calling for concentration on unemployment in general, and on rehabilitation and training in dealing with surplus labour, instead of on absorbing returnees into the labour market.

B. The Commission's medium-term plan

1. On the methodology of the plan

(a) Identifying the overall orientation of the plan according to the present situation and the general and specific objectives;

(b) Seeking guidance from the national plans of the countries of the region in preparing the plan and attempting to reflect common concerns of the region in it;

(c) Identifying criteria for selecting priorities in the plan, and giving priority to activities of an analytical nature;

(d) Creating a mechanism for implementing the Commission's recommendations, with focus on independent evaluation;

(e) Obtaining access to plans of other United Nations organizations whose disciplines overlap ESCWA's to avoid duplication, at the preparation stage;

(f) Cooperation between ESCWA and other international organizations;

(g) Giving reasons for cancelling certain activities or introducing new ones.

2. On the content of the plan

(a) Giving attention to the role of the banking sector in development;

(b) Strengthening ESCWA's role in industrial integration and joint industrial projects in the region;

(c) Drawing up programmes within the medium-term plan for the occupied Arab territories;

(d) Cancelling activities relating to possible repercussions of the peace process on the region.

C. Financial status of the Commission

Simplifying the information in documents about the financial status of the Commission's programmes and confining them to the biennium under review.

D. Programme of work and priorities
for the biennium 1992-1993

(a) Simplifying document presentation and directing the attention of the States' delegates to the fundamental points in the presented documents in order to control discussion;

(b) Reducing the number of activities, with emphasis on quality rather than quantity;

(c) Allocating resources for high-priority programmes;

(d) Circulating the programme of work and priorities for the biennium 1994-1995 (which falls within the period of the plan) to the appropriate quarters in member States for perusal before approval by the concerned United Nations organs.

Annex

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
AT ITS SEVENTH SESSION

- A. The Technical Committee approved the following draft resolutions and recommended that they be adopted by the sixteenth session

Draft resolution 1

Work of the secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission
for Western Asia for the biennium 1990-1991

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Noting that the secretariat made every effort to continue its work during the Gulf crisis, in spite of the effects of the crisis on the normal progress of work,

Noting also the outputs and activities completed by the Commission during that period over and above the scheduled outputs, particularly the studies dealing with the social and economic implications of the Gulf crisis in a number of the countries in the region,

1. Commends the efforts made by the secretariat of the Commission to continue its work in these difficult circumstances;
2. Stresses the need for member States to support the Commission's efforts, which aim at advancing the process of economic and social development in the ESCWA region.

4th meeting
2 September 1992

Draft resolution 2

Medium-term plan of the Economic and Social Commission
for Western Asia for the period 1992-1997^{1/}

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 45/253 of 21 December 1990 on programme planning, which adopts the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997,

Recalling also its resolution 157(XIV) of 5 April 1987 on the medium-term plan of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia for the period 1990-1995 and resolution 173(XV) of 18 May 1989 on the draft medium-term plan of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia for the period 1992-1997,

Taking note of the conclusions of the Intergovernmental Meeting [convened by the Commission in Cairo on 8 and 9 February 1992] to Review the 1992-1997 Medium-Term Plan in the light of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade and of recent events in the region,

1. Takes note of the first revision of the medium-term plan of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia for the period 1992-1997;^{1/}
2. Approves the amendments to the medium-term plan which the Technical Committee recommended at its seventh session;
3. Requests the Executive Secretary to inform the Technical Committee at its eighth session of developments with regard to the revision of the plan.

4th meeting
2 September 1992

^{1/} E/ESCWA/16/4/Add.8 and Suppl.1.

Draft resolution 3

Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993^{1/}

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 45/253 of 21 December 1990 on programme planning, which adopts the United Nations medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 as the principal policy directive governing programme aspects of the work of the United Nations in the economic and social fields,

Recalling further its resolution 173(XV) of 18 May 1989 on the draft medium-term plan of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia for the period 1992-1997,

Taking into consideration the recommendations and conclusions of the Intergovernmental Meeting to Review the 1992-1997 Medium-Term Plan held in Cairo on 8 and 9 February 1992,

Taking note of the modifications proposed by the secretariat to the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993,^{1/}

1. Approves the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 as amended in the light of observations made thereon by the Technical Committee at its seventh session;^{2/}

2. Requests the Executive Secretary to bring to the attention of the Technical Committee at its eighth session any proposed modification of the programme budget.

4th meeting
2 September 1992

^{1/} Also referred to in other documents as "Programme of work and priorities for the biennium 1992-1993".

^{2/} E/ESCWA/16/8, E/ESCWA/16/8/Suppl.1 and 2, and E/ESCWA/16/8/Suppl.1/Add.1.

