



E/A

UN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION
FOR WESTERN ASIA

- 4 MAY 1994

LIBRARY + DOCUMENT SECTION



UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Distr.
GENERAL
E/ESCWA/17/7
11 April 1994
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION
FOR WESTERN ASIA**

Seventeenth session
29-31 May 1994
Amman

Item 6(d) of the provisional agenda

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION**

**COOPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND
REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

Introduction

1. The main purpose of the cooperation among developing countries and regional organizations is the promotion of collective self-reliance and interdependence among the countries in the region. Technical and economic cooperation among developing countries (TCDC/ECDC) provides modalities for such cooperation.

2. The responsibility for intensifying and strengthening the level of cooperation and collective self-reliance rests primarily with the developing countries themselves. However, the United Nations development system is expected to play an important catalytic and supportive role in enhancing such cooperation.

3. During the period under review, the programme of work and priorities of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) involved numerous activities to strengthen collective efforts for regional and interregional cooperation. A summary of these activities is presented below.

A. ESCWA regional TCDC/ECDC activities

4. ESCWA has continued its efforts aimed at widening the scope of the Regional Information Network on New and Renewable Sources of Energy (NRSE) in terms of activities as well as membership. To this end, several ESCWA member countries have been approached to join the Network, which currently consists of three member States: Egypt, Iraq and Jordan. Authorities concerned in the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen have expressed interest in becoming members of the Network.

5. Follow-up cooperation between ESCWA and the authorities concerned in China and India has continued on the diffusion of biogas technologies in the Chinese and Indian models of biogas plants and on training in the design and construction of more appropriate models of biogas units.

6. ESCWA has also been involved in the preparations of "Global Energy Efficiency 21" and has taken part in the identification of energy efficiency demonstration projects that can be implemented in the ESCWA region and in developing countries of other regions.

7. In accordance with the Commission's mandate, ESCWA continued its role in promoting regional cooperation in the field of water resources development and management among its member States as well as other countries. To achieve regional economic integration, ESCWA has been engaged in a number of activities, including the establishment of a regional water resources database; the surveying of potential areas for regional cooperation; and efforts to set up institutions for regional cooperation, including a regional water training network. These activities were supplemented by additional meetings and studies.

8. Within the context of promoting regional and international cooperation in the water sector, ESCWA organized the Regional Symposium on Water Use and Conservation, held at Amman from 18 to 21 October 1993. The Symposium was attended by representatives of ESCWA member countries, participants from other

countries, namely Cyprus, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Morocco, Pakistan, the Sudan and Tunisia, and experts from Arab and United Nations organizations active in the water sector. The Symposium was primarily aimed at examining ways of meeting the growing demand for water resulting from rapid socio-economic developments, as well as problems aggravated by the limited water resources in the region. The Symposium provided a forum for government officials, experts and decision makers to formulate plans and policies for development, conservation, management and utilization of water resources, and to exchange views on appropriate mechanisms for promotion of regional cooperation in the water sector.

9. Following the Regional Symposium on Water Use and Conservation, ESCWA took the initiative of establishing a regional training network in the water sector. A task force of experts from Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the League of Arab States and ESCWA representatives was established to assess the performance of national institutions concerned, formulate training programmes and convene intergovernmental meetings.

10. An agreement was signed in August 1993 between ESCWA and the Government of Germany. In accordance with this agreement, ESCWA and BGR (German Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources), in cooperation with the concerned ESCWA member countries, will undertake joint projects in the field of water resources assessment, exploration and development at regional and subregional levels. Emphasis will be placed on the major shared water resources. Involvement of United Nations and Arab organizations in implementing such joint activities is envisaged.

11. Pursuant to the recommendations contained in Agenda 21, adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 3 to 14 June 1992,^{1/} and those agreed upon by the International Conference on Water and the Environment, held at Dublin in January 1990, ESCWA took part in the First Meeting of the Inter-agency Task Force on Land and Water Resources, organized by the World Health Organization (WHO) in Egypt in February 1993 with the objective of discussing the modalities of cooperation and coordination among the United Nations organizations and the Arab regional agencies.

12. A meeting was held in 1993 with ESCWA and the Arab Organization for Agriculture Development (AOAD) to discuss the means of cooperation for supporting the agricultural sector in the occupied Palestinian territories.

13. An agreement between the FAO Regional Office for the Near East (RNEA), the ESCWA Agriculture Division and the Near East North Africa Regional Agricultural Credit Association (NENARACA) was signed concerning the preparation and publication of a textbook on agricultural credit which could be used in Arab universities.

14. A memorandum of understanding for collaboration and coordination between ESCWA and the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) was signed in 1993.

^{1/} See Earth Summit, Agenda 21, The United Nations Programme of Action from Rio (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.11), chap. 18.

15. A memorandum of understanding was signed between ESCWA and the Regional Bureau of the Middle East Committee for the Affairs of the Blind in order to facilitate the undertaking by ESCWA of specific activities determined in consultation with the Bureau and aimed at the promotion of the welfare of blind persons, particularly computer training for blind girls and women in the ESCWA region.
16. A memorandum of understanding was also signed between ESCWA and the Arab Security Studies and Training Centre in Saudi Arabia in order to facilitate the undertaking by ESCWA of specific activities determined in consultation with the Centre and aimed at promoting social security in member States.
17. The ESCWA/UNCTAD/TRAINMAR Workshop on Multimodal Transport for Senior Officials was held at Amman from 25 to 27 January 1993.
18. ESCWA is following up the implementation in the region of the second phase (1992-1996) of the Transport and Communications Decade in Western Asia.
19. ESCWA is participating in the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) World Telecommunication Forum Organizing Committee.
20. The Regional Seminar on Motivation, Orientation and Training Techniques for Enhancing Industrial Entrepreneurship in the ESCWA Region was held at Amman in April 1992. The Seminar was undertaken in cooperation with the Jordan Institute of Management and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It brought together 25 senior officials from small industry development institutions and government institutions.
21. The Expert Group Meeting on Creation of Indigenous Entrepreneurship and Opportunities for Small- and Medium-Scale Industrial Investment was held at Damascus in April 1993. It was organized in cooperation with the Scientific Studies and Research Centre in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Germany and the International Development Research Centre.
22. A "Start Your Own Business" Regional Workshop for Training of Trainers was held at Cairo in October-November 1993. The Workshop was conducted in cooperation with UNDP and the Arab Contractors Training Institute (Egypt).
23. Joint activities with regional organizations included the Seminar on Pricing Policies of Ports Services and Facilities in the ESCWA Region, held at Alexandria, Egypt, in November 1992 and organized by ESCWA and the Arab Maritime Academy.
24. The High-level Workshop on the Implications of New and Advanced Materials Technologies for the Economies of ESCWA Countries was held at Damascus in September 1992 and a study was issued, The Implementations of New and Advanced Materials Technologies for the Development of the ESCWA Countries (E/ESCWA/ID/1992/16).
25. The issue of environmentally sound technologies was the focus of attention at the Expert Group Meeting on Prospects for the Substitution of Ozone-Depleting Substances in the ESCWA Region, held at Amman in December 1993.

26. ESCWA activities on regional cooperation efforts in the field of statistics were centred around the standardization and dissemination of reliable statistical data, mainly through recurrent regional publications covering various areas, through development of statistical databases, household surveys, and through the Fourth Meeting of Heads of Central Statistical Organizations in the ESCWA Region, held at Amman in October 1993. Cooperation with the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND) was enhanced.

27. ESCWA organized the West Asia Workshop on Strategies for Accelerating the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems, held at Damascus in June 1993. A seminar on household surveys was organized for senior statisticians and held at Cairo in December 1992.

28. ESCWA continued to monitor social developments and trends in the region through the analysis of social statistics, with special emphasis on social integration and vulnerable groups. With the aim of promoting regional cooperation ESCWA undertook several studies including Return Migration: Profiles, Impact and Absorption in Home Countries (E/ESCWA/SD/1993/12) and Population: Spatial Distribution (E/ESCWA/POP/1993/4).

29. The issue of employment was addressed at the Meeting of Experts on Unemployment in ESCWA Countries, organized in cooperation with the International Labour Office and held at Amman in July 1993.

30. Under the theme of "Affordable Housing" two publications were issued: Proceedings of the Symposium on Low-cost Housing in the Arab Region (1993) and Housing Finance in the ESCWA Region: Institutions and Procedures (1992).

31. The Regional and National Conference on Arab Women and Sustainable Development was held at Amman in April 1993, and was organized by ESCWA in cooperation with the National Federation of Business and Professional Women in Jordan and the International Federation of Business and Professional Women. Two regional meetings will be held in preparation for the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women: the Expert Group Meeting on the Regional Plan of Action for Arab Women in Western Asia in September 1994 and the Intergovernmental Regional Preparatory Meeting in November 1994.

B. Cooperation between ESCWA and the Organization of the Islamic Conference

1. Islamic Foundation for Science, Technology and Development

32. The Second Arab Conference on Perspectives of Modern Biotechnology, held at Amman in April 1993, was co-sponsored with the following organizations:

Islamic Foundation for Science, Technology and Development (IFSTAD)
UNESCO Regional Office for Education in the Arab Region
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
United Nations Industrial Organization (UNIDO)
Federation of Arab Scientific Research Councils
Arab Union of Manufacturers of Pharmaceutical and Medical Appliances.

33. A training course on "Tissue culture techniques and applications" was held at Cairo from 9 to 21 October 1993 and was co-sponsored by the following national and regional organizations:

IFSTAD

Islamic Development Bank (IDB)

Federation of Arab Scientific Research Councils

The Academy for Scientific Research and Technology in Egypt.

34. IFSTAD participated with ESCWA in organizing the Workshop on Integration of Science and Technology in the Development Planning and Management Process, held at Amman in September 1993. It also sponsored a case-study in Egypt for the Workshop.

2. Islamic Development Bank

35. In addition to participating in the above activities, ESCWA signed an agreement with IDB and UNEP to co-finance a project on the assessment of water resources using remote sensing techniques in the ESCWA region.

36. IDB cooperated with ESCWA in investigating the possibilities of supporting the implementation of the project on "Biomass--environmentally sound energy source for sustainable rural development in selected ESCWA countries".

37. IDB also participated in the implementation of the Interregional Symposium on Gas Development and Market Prospects by the Year 2000 and Beyond, held at Damascus in June 1992.

38. IDB was one of the main co-sponsors of the above-mentioned joint ESCWA/UNIDO Workshop on Implications of New and Advanced Materials Technologies for the Economies of ESCWA Countries.

3. Inter-Islamic Network on Water Resources Development and Management

39. Initial steps were undertaken by ESCWA to cooperate and coordinate its water-related activities with the Inter-Islamic Network on Water Resources Development and Management (INWRDM) so as to serve the member States of both bodies. INWRDM member States are Bangladesh, Egypt, Jordan, Mali, Niger, Pakistan, Tunisia and Turkey.

C. Areas of cooperation with the League of Arab States

40. Contacts have been made with the secretariat of the League of Arab States to promote close cooperation for the establishment of a regional water resources council and a regional water training network, and to explore the possibility of convening within a regional perspective a conference on water resources in the occupied Arab territories.

41. ESCWA participated, as an observer, in the meeting of the League of Arab States Committee on Coordination of Trade Information.

42. ESCWA participated and presented a paper on trade relations between the ESCWA region and African countries at the First Arab-African Trade Fair, held at Tunis in October 1993 and jointly organized by the League of Arab States and the Organization of African Unity.

43. ESCWA cooperated with the League of Arab States in organizing the Arab Population Conference, held at Amman in April 1993, which resulted in the adoption of the Second Amman Declaration on Population and Development. The Declaration, which reflected the position of all the Arab countries, will be submitted to the International Conference on Population and Development in September 1994.

44. ESCWA in coordination with the League of Arab States, organized the Expert Group Meeting on Human Development, held at Cairo in November 1993.

45. Consultations were held at Amman in March 1994 with the technical secretariat of the Arab Council of Ministers of Housing and Construction, League of Arab States. An agreement was reached to cooperate in the preparations for the 1996 United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II).

46. Efforts of the regional organizations are focused on preparations for the World Social Summit. The regional organizations involved include the League of Arab States, AGFUND (Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations), the Arab Labour Organization and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development. These organizations are preparing an Arab position paper on the main themes of poverty, productive employment, social integration and the cultural dimension of social development in the Arab region.

47. ESCWA also worked with the secretariat of the League of Arab States in a land transport committee, developing a plan to improve transport corridors in the Arab region.

1. Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region

48. In the context of its resolution 180 (XVI), which called for the establishment of an Arab and international inter-agency coordinating committee on environment and development in the Arab region for the purpose of promoting environmentally sound and sustainable development, ESCWA, in cooperation with the League of Arab States and FAO, established the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR).

49. JCEDAR aims at enhancing cooperation and achieving the highest levels of coordination between the League of Arab State, and its specialized organizations, and the United Nations and its specialized organizations as well as their respective committees and other Arab and international organizations.

2. Arab Centre for the Study of Arid Zones and Dry Lands

50. An agreement between ESCWA and ACSAD was signed in 1993 for the preparation of project documents for combating desertification in some countries of the region, and the holding of an expert group meeting on management of dry lands in the Arab world.

51. A Steering Committee has been set up with ACSAD and UNESCO/ROSTAS (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization/Regional Office for Science and Technology for the Arab States) to coordinate various water activities such as remote sensing projects, sea water intrusion, a water atlas for the Arab world and other relevant projects.