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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

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Item 9 of the provisional agenda

**RELOCATION OF ESCWA
TO ITS PERMANENT HEADQUARTERS
IN BEIRUT, LEBANON**Note by the Executive Secretary**A. Background**

1. At its seventeenth session, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia adopted resolution 197 (XVII) of 31 May 1994, in which it decided to recommend to the Economic and Social Council that the permanent headquarters of the Commission should be relocated to Beirut.
2. On 29 July 1994, the Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 1994/43 on the permanent headquarters of ESCWA in which the Secretary-General was requested, *inter alia*, to approach the Government of Lebanon in order to arrive at a common understanding on all issues and commitments relating to the relocation of the permanent headquarters of the Commission to Beirut and to ensure that the transfer would be financed within existing resources and primarily from extrabudgetary contributions and without prejudice to planned cost savings.
3. At its eighteenth session, the Commission adopted resolution 207 (XVIII) of 25 May 1995, in which it called on the member States to take measures to support the Secretary-General in his efforts to secure the necessary resources for the implementation of resolution 197 (XVII).
4. At its nineteenth session, the Commission adopted resolution 215 (XIX) of 7 May 1997 on the progress made in facilitating the relocation of the Commission to its permanent headquarters in Beirut in which *inter alia*, it requested the authorities concerned within the United Nations Secretariat to examine the possibility of utilizing the skills of ESCWA local staff in Amman in other areas within the United Nations or of finding ways to compensate them.
5. On the basis of the above, the ESCWA secretariat drew up an integrated plan to move to its permanent headquarters to Beirut, taking into account the legal, programme-related, administrative, financial and logistical aspects of the move. Although these different aspects were all interrelated, a strategy was adopted to approach them simultaneously on the assumption that all contingencies in each area would be resolved positively, allowing the plan to move forward.

6. In an endeavour to carry out the tasks entrusted to the Commission and to minimize any disruptions resulting from the move, ESCWA rescheduled the activities of its programme of work for the biennium 1996-1997 so as to complete most of the activities before the beginning of the transfer in September 1997. Numerous steps were taken, including rescheduling the missions of experts and professionals to the member States. Simultaneously, administrative activities were also rescheduled corresponding to the need to gradually phase out activities in Amman and subsequently resume them in Beirut.

B. Implementation of the moving plan

7. The transfer required that the responsibilities of both the United Nations and the Government of Lebanon should be determined with regard to the timely completion of the headquarters building. It also involved the negotiation and conclusion of an agreement determining the privileges, immunities and exemptions which the United Nations, the representatives of its member States and its officials should enjoy in the territories of Lebanon for the independent exercise of their functions. To this effect, the Agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Lebanon concerning the Headquarters of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the Supplementary Agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Lebanon, relating to the Occupancy and Use of United Nations Premises in Beirut, Lebanon were signed on 27 August 1997 and 9 October 1997 respectively.

8. While the headquarters agreement was being concluded, practical steps to implement the move were being taken. An ESCWA liaison office was opened at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Beirut on 20 August 1997. This office was responsible for laying the groundwork for the move, helping to organize the arrivals, ensuring the gradual completion of the premises and setting up furniture and office equipment, communications and transport.

9. Before moving into the premises, the secretariat ensured the security and safety of the staff and undertook an initial inspection of systems, furniture and fittings in place. In addition to the regular security staff, who were recruited and trained by the Commission, a reputable private security company was contracted to support them. The staff started moving into the premises as of 20 October 1997.

10. ESCWA staff were moved gradually from Amman to Beirut as per the moving plan, taking into consideration work requirements and the school schedule at the new duty station. The physical move was initiated on 1 September 1997 and was completed on 31 December 1997.

C. Handover of premises

11. The premises granted to the United Nations to host the permanent headquarters of the Commission were handed over officially by the Government of Lebanon on 10 November 1997. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed to this effect in which it was stated that the premises were acceptable to the United Nations with the proviso that final acceptance should take place after inspection, as stipulated in the Supplementary Agreement.

12. During the first six months of occupancy of the new headquarters, construction work on the site was finalized by the construction company. In the meantime, ESCWA management entered into consultations with the officials at United Nations Headquarters regarding the operation and maintenance modalities of the new premises.

13. A comprehensive visual inspection of the premises, including the electromechanical systems, furniture, fittings, and civil and architectural works, was undertaken by a team of specialists and consultants. The findings were documented and reported to the Government of Lebanon and to the Lebanese Company for the Development and Reconstruction of Beirut Central District (SOLIDERE).

D. Inauguration of ESCWA headquarters

14. The offices of the permanent headquarters of ESCWA at United Nations House in Beirut were inaugurated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 20 March 1998. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lebanon, representatives of the ESCWA member States and other officials were present at the ceremony. In the building, six office floors are occupied by ESCWA and two floors are assigned to United Nations agencies and other international organizations institutionally linked to the United Nations. The ground floor, two basement floors and the mezzanine floor are assigned to common services, conference facilities, the central stores, the cafeteria and the printing shop. Four other basement floors are for parking.

E. Move of other United Nations agencies and offices to United Nations House

15. Pursuant to the General Assembly resolutions requesting all organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to make the necessary arrangements, in cooperation with host Governments, to establish common premises at the country level in order to increase efficiency by consolidating administrative infrastructure, and in accordance with the Supplementary Agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Lebanon, the Tripartite Memoranda of Understanding were signed between the United Nations, the Government of Lebanon and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). At the same time, a Memorandum of Understanding concerning Occupancy and Use of Common Premises by the United Nations Agencies, Programmes, Funds and Offices was signed by ESCWA and the above United Nations offices and agencies on 24 November 1998. Internal mechanisms for sharing common services and related costs have been devised.

F. Financing the move

16. In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1994/43 of 29 July 1994, the move of ESCWA from Amman to Beirut was financed primarily from extrabudgetary resources. Out of the total moving expenses, which amounted to \$14,911,810 United States dollars, contributions from extrabudgetary resources amounted to US\$ 12,064,121 and, from the regular budget, to US\$ 2,847,689. A detailed financial statement pertaining to the move of ESCWA from Amman to Beirut is given in the annex to this document.

G. Closing down operations in Amman

17. While packing and shipping its property out of Jordan, ESCWA began the process of vacating and handing over its temporary premises in Amman, where operations were closed down by 31 December 1997. With regard to its locally recruited staff, the secretariat took a series of initiatives, including a comprehensive training programme offering courses to upgrade electronic data processing skills, explore job market approaches, improve office administration skills and enhance business and entrepreneurial awareness. The courses not only assisted staff in these areas, but also provided them, at the individual level, with the means to adjust to the expected period of transition. Consequently, some forty per cent of the local staff were placed in other United Nations agencies, embassies and private agencies in Amman, as well as in overseas peacekeeping missions. In addition, in accordance with resolution 215 (XIX) by the Commission regarding ways to compensate the local staff, the secretariat obtained, on an exceptional basis, approval from United Nations Headquarters to pay special ad hoc compensation for the local General Service staff who would be separated as a result of the move.

Annex**FINANCIAL STATEMENT PERTAINING TO THE MOVE
OF ESCWA FROM AMMAN TO BEIRUT DUTY STATION***Contributions:*

1.	Cash contributions:	
	Lebanese Government	1 000 000
	Kuwaiti Government	<u>500 000</u>
	Subtotal:	\$1 500 000
2.	In-kind contributions:	
	Lebanese Government contribution:	
	Furniture, equipment and supplies	10 282 121
	Maintenance of the building (one year) by the Government of Lebanon	<u>282 000</u>
	Subtotal:	\$10 564 121
	Total contribution:	\$12 064 121

Expenses:

General temporary assistance	264,477
Consultants' fees and travel	104,257
Termination indemnity for general services staff	649,613
Travel of staff from Amman to Beirut	2,669,686
Travel on official business	214,307
General operating expenses	117,526
Maintenance of the building from Lebanese Government	282,000
Removal of office furniture and equipment	191,060
Office supplies	13,874
Office equipment	10,301,143
Programme support cost	<u>103,867</u>
Total:	\$14,911,810

Funding sources:

The funding sources of the above-mentioned expenditures are as follows:

1.	Lebanese and Kuwaiti Governments, cash contributions	1,500,000
2.	Lebanese Government contribution in kind	10,564,121
3.	Regular budget contributions (United Nations)	<u>2,847,689</u>
	Total:	\$14,911,810
