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**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION****PROGRESS MADE DURING 2002 IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2002-2003***Regular programme activities***Introduction**

1. The present report reviews the activities undertaken by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in 2002 and early 2003 within the framework of the programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003. The activities include expert group meetings, seminars and workshops, studies, reports, projects and technical cooperation activities. The report includes an annex that contains a table on departures from programmed activities in 2002 and up to February 2003.

2. ESCWA achievements in 2002 must be viewed within the context of the major restructuring process that was undertaken by the secretariat in the same year. This is reviewed under agenda item 6 (f) (E/ESCWA/22/4(Part VI)). The restructuring of ESCWA incorporated the following objectives:

(a) Formulation of a new vision for ESCWA, with an emphasis on the promotion of Arab regional integration;

(b) Restructuring of the entire programme of work, with a focus on a limited number of priorities related to regional integration. These priorities are as follows:

- (i) Management of water and energy;
- (ii) Management of social policy;
- (iii) Management of globalization;
- (iv) Management of technology;

(c) Transformation of methods of work and shifting from a sectoral approach, based on rigid sectors of work, to a flexible approach based on thematic brackets that incorporate the entire programme of work;

(d) Rationalization of the outputs of ESCWA, to be achieved by reducing outputs by some 17 per cent in the biennium 2002-2003 and by approximately 16 per cent in the biennium 2004-2005.

3. ESCWA achievements during 2002 and early 2003 can be illustrated within the context of: (a) preparing the region for effective participation in United Nations international conferences (see agenda item 6 (d) (E/ESCWA/22/4(Part IV))); (b) producing pilot publications; (c) concluding agreements to promote regional integration; (d) holding meetings for various stakeholders on socio-economic issues pertaining to ESCWA, thereby acting as a forum for the exchange of expertise; and (e) implementing field projects.

4. ESCWA played a leading role with regard to regional preparations for United Nations international conferences, particularly in relation to three international conferences, namely, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) (Johannesburg, August – September 2002), the International Conference on Financing for Development (Monterrey, Mexico, March 2002) and the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) (Geneva, December 2003). These are detailed below. In addition, ESCWA was actively engaged in raising the awareness of stakeholders with regard to the main issues raised in such conferences, namely, capacity-building, forging partnerships with various stakeholders and the development of common positions to present at international forums.

5. With regard to publications, ESCWA is attempting to move from quantity to quality of work, and to incorporate related issues under one thematic bracket. The ESCWA series of publications on integrated social policies in the ESCWA countries is one component of this endeavour. These publications address the problem of fragmented social programmes and policies in the Arab countries and attempt to move towards an integrated social vision. In addition, they include a survey of successful experiences in non-Arab countries; a review of social policies in the Arab countries, including a conceptual framework; and relevant country profiles.

6. Another component of the endeavour to produce quality work is the publication entitled *Annual Review on Globalization and Regional Integration in the Countries of the ESCWA Region*, launched in February 2003. This publication links the issues of globalization, an issue of concern for ESCWA, and regional integration. The publication emphasizes the links between Arab regional integration and globalization, provides a forum for constant monitoring and evaluation of existing cooperative arrangements for regional integration and proposes new mechanisms to promote regional cooperation and integration.

7. The introduction of a road, railway and maritime Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM) highlights ESCWA achievements with regard to ensuring the realization of regional integration. The ratification of the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq, the second facet of ITSAM, is scheduled to take place during the twenty-second session of the Commission.

8. ESCWA exerted efforts with regard to convening conferences and expert group meetings. Particular reference is made here to meetings in the area of technology, an issue of concern for ESCWA. Such meetings included the first meeting of the ESCWA Consultative Committee on Scientific and Technological Development and Technological Innovation (Beirut, 16-18 July 2002). The membership of the Committee derives from leading science and technology (S&T) institutes, including civil society institutions. The aim of this is to ensure the involvement of civil society institutions in advancing S&T. The Committee is mandated to play an important role with regard to implementing future policies and strategic programmes to harness selected new technologies for sustainable development.

9. ESCWA and the International Labour Organization (ILO) collaborated in the organization of the Forum on Technology, Employment and Poverty Alleviation in the Arab Countries (Beirut, 16-18 July 2002). The Forum identified new policy directions and endeavoured to promote regional approaches with regard to building national capacity in the area of science, technology and innovation (STI). Participants included the 1998 Nobel Laureate for Chemistry, Ahmed Zewail.

10. Furthermore, ESCWA has been involved in implementing operational activities, namely, pilot field projects. For example ESCWA, in cooperation with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, has been involved in activities related to post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation. This has included implementation of a multidisciplinary project in the liberated areas of South Lebanon. The project responds to a community-based initiative related to the socio-economic development of South Lebanon. It is tailored

to the specific needs of the region and utilizes local resources. Vocational and small business training, in addition to instruction in the areas of information technology and microcredit schemes are provided under the umbrella of this project.

11. An example of ESCWA efforts in the area of operational activities is related to building capacity in utilizing internationally recognized statistical standards, namely, the International Comparison Programme (ICP). ESCWA is involved in implementing the regional component of this project.

12. Below is a detailed account of the activities undertaken by ESCWA in 2002 and early 2003, grouped according to thematic subprogramme. The six subprogrammes are implemented by respective substantive divisions.

Subprogramme 1. Integrated policies for the management of regional resources for sustainable development

13. This subprogramme is implemented by the Sustainable Development and Productivity Division (SDPD). The objective of the subprogramme is to make a positive impact on regional integration and cooperation. This is based on a combined approach with regard to the integrated and sustainable management of water and energy and production sectors.

14. Considerable efforts were exerted with regard to preparations for WSSD (Johannesburg, 26 August – 4 September 2002). In this regard, 18 briefing papers were issued to participants from the region. The papers addressed key issues with regard to achieving sustainable development. A number of booklets and a poster were also issued. These were related to sustainable development and presented a summary of the Arab Declaration to WSSD and of relevant ESCWA studies. Furthermore, the *WSSD Assessment Report for the ESCWA Region* was issued. It was based on the outcomes of the regional preparatory process for WSSD. The report comprises five chapters on social and economic trends, achievements and challenges; major factors influencing sustainability; environmental trends, achievements and challenges; international and regional conventions and agreements supporting sustainable development; and challenges facing sustainable development.

15. In addition, ESCWA organized intergovernmental, subregional and regional Preparatory Committees (PrepComs) during late 2001. At the regional Arab level, ESCWA collaborated with the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) and the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for West Asia (UNEP/ROWA) in preparing the *WSSD Assessment Report for the ESCWA Region*, the Arab Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Development, the joint African Ministerial Council for the Environment/CAMRE Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region.

16. In addition, a post-WSSD Workshop for Strengthening the Role of Arab Media in Achieving Sustainable Development was organized in cooperation with UNEP/ROWA, the League of Arab States and the Arab Media Forum for Environment and Development (Beirut, 25-27 February 2003).

17. ESCWA undertook a number of technical assistance activities related to sustainable development, including the Workshop on Trade and Environment and International Competitiveness (Beirut, 23-25 October 2002). This involved a subregional workshop on trade and environment for the Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

18. The fifth session of the ESCWA Committee on Water Resources (Beirut, 30 October – 1 November 2002) reviewed the work carried out by SDPD during the period since its last session. Furthermore, it discussed priority areas related to the integrated management of water resources in the region and the role of working groups. The Committee provided an opportunity for general discussion among member countries. It also enabled a number of officials to outline respective national activities and plans with regard to the development and management of water resources.

19. A meeting was held regarding Inter-State Cooperation on the Basalt Aquifer between Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic (Beirut, 13-14 February 2002). This was a joint activity under the umbrella of the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources of Germany (BGR) project. It provided an opportunity for the representatives of Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic to increase cooperation in this area.
 20. The Regional Training Workshop on the Application of Groundwater Rehabilitation: Techniques to Different Hydrogeological Environments in the ESCWA Region (Beirut, 18-22 March 2002) highlighted the issues of pollution, monitoring, protection and rehabilitation of groundwater. It also introduced recent advancements in specialized techniques. In addition, the Workshop on Harmonization of Diverging Interests in the Use of Shared Water Resources was held (Beirut, 17-19 December 2002). These workshops were undertaken within the framework of a project that was financed by BGR, to assist member countries in the management of water resources. Moreover, this project involves the provision of advisory services on water issues to member countries and regional organizations.
 21. Within the framework of assistance activities for South Lebanon, ESCWA and the United Nations Development Programme co-organized the Workshop on Water Tariffication and Groundwater Legislation in Lebanon (Beirut, 17 January 2003).
 22. ESCWA provided advisory services to the Syrian Arab Republic with regard to the establishment of a national strategy for water desalination and water treatment. In addition, it provided such services to Kuwait with regard to investigating the impact of changes in river water inflow in relation to the salinity of Gulf water.
 23. The fourth session of the ESCWA Committee on Energy (Beirut, 17-18 October 2002) reviewed activities implemented in the field of energy since its third session. Moreover, it provided an opportunity for member countries to present respective national plans/policies and to discuss developments in this field.
 24. Two expert group meetings were held on energy. The first of these was the Expert Group Meeting on Capacity-building and Regional Integration for Developing a Sustainable Energy Sector (Beirut, 15-17 October). The second was the Expert Group Meeting on Promoting Awareness and Participation in Developing Sustainable Energy Policies and Systems (Abu Dhabi, 2-5 February 2003).
 25. SDPD organized a training workshop on the building of national capacities in the field of wind energy (Cairo, 29 June – 4 July 2002). It covered the assessment of wind energy resources, capacity and site selection and the design and specifications of wind energy projects. This was the second workshop in this area. The first took place in September 2001.
 26. With regard to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the Expert Group Meeting on Enhancing Competitiveness through the Promotion of Innovative Approaches in SMEs was organized (Manama, 10-12 June 2002). The meeting comprised five sessions. These covered the issues of innovation: a conceptual framework; innovative management approaches; best practices in innovation; women entrepreneurs and innovation; and an innovation-friendly environment.
 27. A directory of support services for small and medium enterprises in Jordan is being prepared. This follows the publication of the *Directory of Support Services for Small and Medium Enterprises in Lebanon* (E/ESCWA/ID/2001/6). The Jordan directory aims to facilitate access to sources of information related to establishments and programmes that provide entrepreneurial support services to SMEs. In addition, it highlights the availability of assistance and counselling services in Jordan and includes information on organizations, ministries and programmes that provide direct or indirect support to SMEs. It does not, however, include information on private profit-seeking organizations or private consultancy firms.
 28. Workshops were conducted to provide training with regard to developing entrepreneurship activities. These included the Workshop on Start Your Small Business (Doha, 11-15 May 2001), which was organized at the request of the Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting and the Workshop on How to Start a
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Successful Business Enterprise, which was organized in collaboration with the Umm Al Moumineen Women Association (Ajman, United Arab Emirates, 1-13 June 2002). It incorporated a gender perspective into the training package. In addition, two other training courses were organized in Lebanon in 2002. Furthermore, ESCWA is implementing a project on Trade and Environment Capacity-Building for SMEs, the aim of which is to increase awareness of trade and environment challenges affecting SMEs in North Africa. Under the umbrella of this project a training Workshop and Technical Planning Exercise on the Links Between Commerce and the Environment in the SME Sector was held (Rabat, 11-14 November 2002).

29. The Capacity-building Workshop on Rural Development: Policies, Strategies and Institutional Reform (Beirut, 3-6 June 2002) aimed to promote knowledge with regard to environmentally, socially and economically sustainable rural development. The programme targeted mid-to-high level policy makers and civil servants in addition to private sector and civil society personnel and trainers.

Subprogramme 2. Integrated social policies

30. The subprogramme is implemented by the Social Development Division (SDD). The objective of this subprogramme is to achieve regional cooperation with regard to the advocacy and promotion of comprehensive and integrated social policies that are region-specific, culturally sensitive and have a practical bias.

31. The situation of the ageing in the region was examined and analysed for the first time at an expert group meeting on the ageing population in the Arab region. This culminated in the Arab Preparatory Meeting for the Second World Assembly on Ageing (Beirut, 5-8 February 2002). The meeting adopted the Arab Plan of Action on Ageing to the year 2012 (the Arab Plan). In addition, national reports and background studies related to the demographic development of the ageing were presented and special programmes and related policies, social services and the role of the family with regard to providing care and assistance to the ageing, were discussed. An information kit comprising brochures, pamphlets and flyers was prepared. Furthermore, ESCWA actively participated in the Second World Assembly on Ageing (Madrid, 8-12 April 2002).

32. The fourth session of the ESCWA Committee on Social Development (Beirut, 3-5 July 2002) reviewed the follow-up activities related to the implementation of recommendations of its third session and examined the activities of SDD with regard to: integrated social policies; population policies; social integration; empowerment of women and incorporation of gender issues in policies, programmes and activities; urban development and housing policies; and provision of statistical data and social indicators.

33. Poverty issues have been a major concern during the past two biennia. During the period under review and as a follow-up to previous activities, the Expert Group Meeting on Poverty Statistics was organized (Beirut, 10-12 September 2002). The objective of the meeting was to share national experiences related to the measurement of poverty; the use of statistics with regard to formulating policies to reduce poverty; and the suggestion of indicators to assist in the follow-up of implementation of poverty reduction activities, which are included as an objective in the Millennium Development Goals.

34. One of the main causes of poverty is unemployment. In this regard, a study entitled *Responding to Globalization: Skill-formation Linked to Unemployment Reduction Policies* was carried out. The study highlights the fact that insufficient attention has been afforded to quality of education in the region and makes the point that efforts must be made to alleviate this situation, with the aim of reducing poverty and unemployment. In addition, the study reveals that the sharp increase in the number of graduates in the countries of the region is largely the result of the poor quality of education. The study concludes that an assessment of education needs must be conducted to enable graduates to meet the requirements of the labour market and to reduce unemployment and underemployment. A case study of the United Arab Emirates is scheduled to be published as an annex to this publication. Furthermore, the *Proceedings of the Expert Group Meeting on Governance, Socio-economic Development and Poverty Alleviation* (Cairo, 11-13 November 2001), were published as part of the *Eradicating Poverty Studies Series*.

35. There has been a particular emphasis on integrated social policies in the biennium 2002-2003. Activities implemented within the framework of this subject include the convening of the Policy Makers Meeting on Social Policies in the ESCWA Region (Cairo, 10-12 December 2002) and the launching of the *Social Policies Series*, which includes case studies of developed countries, namely, Canada and Norway, and of developing countries, namely, Malaysia, Republic of Korea and Tunisia.

36. SDD has continued to focus on gender issues within the framework of the work programme. In this regard, the Expert Group Meeting on Participation and Access of Women to the Media and its Impact on and Use as an Instrument for the Advancement and Empowerment of Women (Beirut, 12-15 November 2002) was organized in cooperation with the United Nations Division of Advancement of Women. Furthermore, a Workshop to Discuss Recommendations of "Gender, Agriculture and Agro-Processing in Lebanon" was organized (Beirut, 19 September 2002). In addition, statistical pamphlets concerning women and men in two areas, namely, employment and education, were issued.

37. Furthermore, SDD organized the second Workshop for Users and Producers of Gender Statistics (Doha, 13-14 January 2003) under the framework of the Project on the Development of National Gender Statistics Programmes in the Arab Countries. In this regard, two publications were issued, entitled *Women and Men in Lebanon: A Statistical Portrait* (E/ESCWA/STAT/2002/1) and *Women and Men in Yemen: A Statistical Portrait* (E/ESCWA/STAT/2002/2).

38. With regard to population, an information kit on population policies in the Arab countries was published. This provides comparative data on seven indicators and highlights the change in population indicators between 1985 and 2000. In addition, a brochure on Population Policies Information System (PPIS) in the Arab countries was published. Furthermore, the development and maintenance of PPIS has continued and a report was issued in Arabic on *PPIS-Monitoring: Goals and Objectives of the Early Decades of the Millennium*.

39. Within the context of promoting sustainable human development, efforts continued to be exerted in relation to the implementation of a local community development project that had been initiated in Egypt and the Syrian Arab Republic during the biennium 1996-1997 and in Lebanon in 2000. The Programme for Training of Trainers in Local Community Development was initiated. In this regard, two training workshops were conducted in Tripoli, Lebanon in August and September 2002.

40. Within the framework of a strategy for sustainable human development in the region and the inclusion of the disabled therein, ESCWA contributed to the Second Conference on Disability Conditions in the Arab World: Towards an Arab Decade on Disability (Beirut, 2-5 October 2002). In addition, ESCWA organized the Workshop on Self-Employment for Disabled Persons (Beirut, 19 June 2002) under the umbrella of a project on community development for the social integration of the disabled.

41. The annual report on the "Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan" was submitted to the Economic and Social Council in 2002.

42. Country profiles related to urban development and housing policies were prepared for Lebanon and Kuwait and a publication was issued entitled *Success Story in the Global Urban Observatory Program: Lebanon Country Experience 1999-2001*.

43. The *Bulletin on Vital Statistics in the ESCWA Region* was produced as part of the work programme for the biennium 2002-2003 (see paragraph 70 below).

Subprogramme 3. Economic analysis and forecasting for regional development

44. The main objective of this subprogramme, which is implemented by the Economic Analysis Division (EAD), is to increase the capacity of member countries with regard to coordinating respective economic

policies. The aim of this is to achieve economic development by providing a quantitative assessment of economic and financial data and trends.

45. The *Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region 2001-2002* focuses on general economic conditions during the reported period and covers aggregate economic performance, monetary and fiscal developments, trade and foreign direct investment (FDI) and social developments in the region. A summary of the *Survey* has also been completed.

46. A related study entitled, "Reform of economic institutions in ESCWA member countries, with Egypt and the Syrian Arab Republic as case studies" was prepared as part two of the *Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region 2001-2002*. Furthermore, the work of this subprogramme includes the publication of national accounts and ICP studies (see paragraph 70 below).

47. ESCWA is implementing the regional component of a project on ICP, related to a new round of ICP activities to be conducted between 2003 and 2005. This is within the framework of an initiative launched by the World Bank in cooperation with the United Nations Statistical Commission. Purchasing power parity data, the main output for the ICP, provides means for the following: comparing economic values among countries that present differences in purchasing power not reflected in market exchange rates; monitoring and comparing poverty levels; and assessing the real progress being made by countries towards achieving the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals on poverty reduction.

Subprogramme 4. Regional integration and responding to globalization

48. This subprogramme is implemented by the Globalization and Regional Integration Division (GRID). The main objective of this subprogramme is to facilitate transboundary flows of goods, information, services, persons and capital in order to meet the challenges of globalization.

49. The third session of the ESCWA Committee on Transport was convened (Beirut, 5-7 March 2002). This Committee, which was established in May 1997, serves as a forum for the discussion and adoption of transport policies in the region and for coordination among ESCWA member countries. This session focused on the Draft Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq; the proposal to establish national committees related to the facilitation of trade and transport; the design of a regional transport information system; and the design of road signs for international roads in the region. The Committee adopted the agreement and reviewed the follow-up to the implementation of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq.

50. The fourth session of the ESCWA Committee on Transport (Beirut, 14-16 January 2003) reviewed the progress made in implementing its third session resolutions, the steps undertaken for establishing national committees for trade facilitation, and the Draft Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Cooperation in the Field of Maritime Transport in the Arab Mashreq. In addition it followed up on the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq and the compilation of data on international roads in the Arab Mashreq.

51. The Expert Group Meeting on Transport and Trade Facilitation for Regional Integration (Cairo, 24-26 September 2002) complemented ESCWA efforts to develop ITSAM in the biennium 2002-2003. The development of ITSAM, which was approved by the Commission in its twenty-first session, necessitates sustainable and concerted efforts with regard to its implementation and success.

52. The Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq was amended according to the requests of member countries and a revised version was issued. In addition, the Draft Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Cooperation in the Field of Maritime Transport in the Arab Mashreq was prepared and published. Furthermore, a manual for the establishment of national transport and trade facilitation committees in countries of the ESCWA region was completed.

53. Within the framework of this subprogramme, technical assistance was provided to Ain Sukhna Port, Egypt. Efforts focused on a review of the procedures of the port and the recommendation related to facilitation measures.

54. With regard to international trade issues and the World Trade Organization (WTO), the third session of the Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade and Economic Globalization in the Countries of the ESCWA Region was held (Muscat, 24-25 February 2003). The Committee discussed the status of negotiations related to the Doha Agenda for Development and the preparations for the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference scheduled to be held in Mexico in September 2003.

55. The Expert Group Meeting on the Results of the WTO Fourth Ministerial Conference and the Preparations for Future Negotiations (Beirut, 5-6 June 2002) discussed various issues including the Doha Agenda for Development, related technical assistance provided by ESCWA to its member countries and preparations for future WTO negotiations.

56. The Forum on Arab Business Community and WTO Agreements was held (Beirut, 3-4 June 2002). It addressed the concerns of the Arab business community with regard to agricultural issues, intellectual property rights (IPRs) and issues of Arab economic integration in the context of WTO Agreements and the Post-Doha Agenda for Development.

57. ESCWA and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) organized the Joint ESCWA/WIPO Training Seminar on Intellectual Property Rights (Beirut, 31 July – 2 August 2002). The objective of the meeting was to raise awareness among the Lebanese judiciary concerning WTO agreements and their legal framework, in particular with regard to IPRs.

58. The Trade in Services Training Workshop was organized in cooperation with the WTO and the World Bank (Beirut, 17-19 December 2002). The goals of the workshop were to assist the Arab countries in (a) reviewing the major provisions under the General Agreement on Trade in Services; and (b) participating in negotiations on trade in services prior to the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference scheduled to be held in September 2003.

59. In the area of globalization and regional integration, the Expert Group Meeting on Competition Laws and Policies: Identification of Common Ground in ESCWA Member Countries (Abu Dhabi, 28-30 January 2002) was organized in collaboration with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the World Bank Group, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry and local institutes in the United Arab Emirates. The meeting included discussions on a number of topics including the interrelationship between competition, trade, development and FDI policies; sharing information on competition policies and laws in the Arab countries; promoting a dialogue between the private and public sectors concerning national competition policy; and the formulation of guidelines for developing good practices in competition laws and policies in member countries. A substantive report on the meeting was issued. This activity, which was originally scheduled for September 2001, was postponed as a result of the 11 September attacks on the United States of America.

60. The first issue of the recurrent publication entitled *Annual Review of Developments in Globalization and Regional Integration in the Countries of the ESCWA Region*, was released. It provides an assessment of globalization in the region by means of four indicators: trade, FDI, communications and tourism. In addition, it reviews WTO membership status of ESCWA member countries and partnership agreements in the Arab countries. It also provides a brief review of attempts at regional integration and highlights the impact of developments in various sectors, namely, transport, energy, industry, water and the environment, on advancing regional integration.

61. The *External Trade Bulletin of the ESCWA Region* was issued as a result of efforts for the biennium 2002-2003 (see paragraph 70 below).

62. The publication entitled *Perspective from ESCWA on Financing for Development* was issued. It comprises six reports on the region and covers trade issues, FDI flows, external debt and financial flows, the financial sector, microfinance and a proposed development strategy. It also includes a regional study on financing for development. Efforts were exerted in this regard in preparation for the International Conference on Financing for Development (Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002).

63. ESCWA and UNCTAD jointly organized the Regional Workshop on International Methodological Standards for Data Compilation on Foreign Investment (Beirut, 28 October – 1 November 2002). This activity falls within the framework of a project that ESCWA is implementing on networking of expertise on FDI in its member countries.

Subprogramme 5. Information and communication technology for regional integration

64. This subprogramme is implemented by the Information and Communication Technology Division. Its objective is to increase the capabilities of member countries with regard to harnessing information and communication technologies for development.

65. ESCWA and ILO co-organized the Forum on Technology, Employment and Poverty Alleviation in the Arab Countries (Beirut, 16-18 July 2002). The objectives of the Forum were to address the implications of recent developments in the field of new technology, discuss policy responses and consider strategic initiatives aimed at harnessing selected new technologies with the goal of creating employment and alleviating poverty. It identified new policy directions and sought to promote original approaches with regard to building national capacities in STI. In addition, it placed emphasis on selected new technologies capable of generating improved employment and economic opportunities. The Forum produced concrete proposals related to capacity-building of national STI. The regional Agenda for Action on Technology, Employment and Poverty Alleviation in the Arab Countries was introduced as a framework for future endeavours, the objective of which would be to harness selected new technologies.

66. A special session of the Forum was devoted to the first meeting of the ESCWA Consultative Committee on Scientific and Technological Development (Beirut, 18 July 2002). The Committee is mandated to play an important role in implementing future policies and strategic programmes to harness selected new technologies for sustainable development.

67. In the context of preparations for WSIS, ESCWA co-organized the Western Asia Preparatory Conference for WSIS (Beirut, 4-6 February 2003) in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the International Telecommunication Union, the World Bank and national institutes. The Conference addressed central issues raised by the information society with regard to the formulation of policy, socio-economic development and cultural, ethical and technological concerns. The Conference adopted *Towards an Information Society in Western Asia: Declaration of Principles* and considered a draft endeavour entitled *Towards an Information Society in Western Asia: Beirut Initiative*. This included elements of a regional action plan concerning the transition to an information society at both the national and regional levels.

Subprogramme 6. Comparable statistics for improved planning and decision-making

68. This subprogramme is implemented by the Statistics Coordination Unit. The objectives of the subprogramme are to improve the statistical capabilities of countries in the region, with the aims of promoting informed decision-making and improving the availability and timeliness of comparable statistical information.

69. The fifth session of the ESCWA Statistical Committee (Beirut, 1-3 October 2002) reviewed the implementation of activities in the area of statistics since its last meeting. Furthermore, it discussed the proposed programme of work for the biennium 2004-2005 and the decentralization of statistical responsibilities and assignments in ESCWA.

70. A number of recurrent statistical publications were prepared. These include the following:

(a) *Statistical Abstract of the ESCWA Region, No. 22*. This classifies data by topic rather than by country to facilitate comparability between the countries of the region;

(b) *National Accounts Studies of the ESCWA Region, No. 22* (EAD). This comprises selected economic indicators and reviews aggregates of national accounts and relative distribution, namely, gross domestic product (GDP) at current and constant prices, per capita GDP, private and Government final consumption, gross fixed capital formation and relevant data for each country of the region; consolidated accounts; and ESCWA estimates of GDP, by expenditure and economic activity at 1995 prices in national currencies for the period 1992-2001;

(c) *Bulletin on Vital Statistics in the ESCWA Region, Fifth issue* (SDD) is available on CD-ROM. However, hard copies of the *Bulletin* will be made available to ESCWA member countries and persons who have difficulty assessing the electronic format. The *Bulletin* includes statistics of registered births, deaths, marriages and divorces in addition to main indicators for each of these areas compared with estimates prepared by the United Nations Population Division;

(d) *External Trade Bulletin of the ESCWA Region, No. 11* (GRID) includes tables on overall trade, trends and share of the region with regard to total trade, imports and exports distribution, intraregional trade and the geographic distribution of trade with regard to individual member countries.

71. The regional component of an ICP world-wide project is being implemented within the framework of subprogramme 3 (see paragraph 46).

72. A project on Strengthening Statistical Capacity in the ESCWA Region is being implemented as part of efforts related to the work programme of the biennium 2002-2003. This included the organization of the Seminar on Management and Organization of Statistical Systems (Muscat, 7-9 April 2002); Workshop on Census Data Processing (Amman, 18-22 May 2002); Meeting on Disability Measurement for ESCWA Countries (Cairo, 1-5 June 2002); and Meeting on a Core Set of Census Topics (Cairo, 8-12 June 2002).

Annex

**DEPARTURES FROM PROGRAMMED ACTIVITIES IN 2002
 AND UP TO FEBRUARY 2003**

Activity	Status				Justification
	Terminated	Added	Reformulated	Postponed	
Subprogramme 1.					
Integrated policies for the management of regional resources for sustainable development					
<i>Other substantive activities</i>					
<i>Mandated non-recurrent publications</i>					
Promotion of public awareness and participation in environmental decision-making in the ESCWA region			X		Reformulated at the initiative of the secretariat pursuant to recommendations of WSSD. The title has been changed to Post-WSSD Workshop for Strengthening the Role of Arab Media in Achieving Sustainable Development.
<i>Other substantive activities</i>					
<i>Booklets, pamphlets, fact sheets, wall charts and information kits</i>					
Preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)		X			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic reasons to assist member countries in preparing for WSSD
<i>Technical cooperation</i>					
<i>Group training</i>					
Workshop on solar electricity systems and capacity-building	X				Terminated at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic reasons owing to shortage of staff resources
<i>Technical cooperation</i>					
<i>Field projects</i>					
Technical Cooperation Project: Advisory Services to ESCWA Member States in the Field of Water Resources		X			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic reasons and owing to the availability of extrabudgetary funds. This activity is undertaken in cooperation with the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources of Germany; the German Agency for Technical Cooperation; the United Nations Development Programme, within the national policy framework in Lebanon; and the United Nations Environment Programme/ Regional Office for West Asia within the Framework of the Global International Water Assessment Project in Subregion 51 (Jordan Valley).

Activity	Status				Justification
	Terminated	Added	Reformulated	Postponed	
Technical cooperation					
<i>Field projects</i>					
AWARENET – Arab Integrated Water Resources Management Network		X			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic reasons. It is being undertaken in cooperation with the International Institute for Infrastructural, Hydraulic and Environmental Engineering.
Technical cooperation					
<i>Field projects</i>					
MedPolicies initiative of the Mediterranean environmental technical assistance programme		X			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic reasons and owing to the availability of extrabudgetary funds. It is funded by the World Bank under the auspices of the Mediterranean Environmental Technical Assistance Programme and the ESCWA Trust Fund.
Technical cooperation					
<i>Field projects</i>					
ESCWA Regional Initiative on the Use of New Technology to Alleviate Poverty		X			Added at the initiative of the secretariat owing to the availability of extrabudgetary funds. This activity is undertaken in cooperation with the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development.
Subprogramme 2.					
Integrated social policies					
Servicing of intergovernmental and expert bodies					
<i>Ad hoc expert group meetings</i>					
Expert Group Meeting on Participation and Access of Women to the Media and its Impact on and Use as an Instrument for the Advancement and Empowerment of Women		X			Added by legislation and implemented in coordination with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs as a follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and within the framework of women's issues
Technical cooperation					
<i>Field projects</i>					
Statistical Plan for Establishing Databases on the Palestinian refugees during 1998/2000 in Syria and Lebanon		X			Added by legislation pursuant to ESCWA resolution 237 (XXI) of 11 May 2001 on the rehabilitation of economic sectors in Palestine and resolution 184 (XVI) of 2 September 1992 on economic and social conditions of the Palestinian Arab people in the occupied Palestinian territory. Extrabudgetary funds have been secured.

Activity	Status				Justification
	Terminated	Added	Reformulated	Postponed	
Subprogramme 3.					
Economic analysis and forecasting for regional development					
<i>Other substantive activities</i>					
<i>Recurrent publications</i>					
Quarterly Indices of Production, Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4			X		Reformulated at the initiative of the secretariat owing to the unavailability of data. These will be published as Comparative Study on the Quantity Production Indices in Some ESCWA Member States.
<i>Other substantive activities</i>					
<i>Recurrent publications</i>					
Quarterly Indices of Production, Nos. 5, 6, 7 and 8			X		Reformulated at the initiative of the secretariat owing to the unavailability of data. It will be replaced by the Annual Report on International Comparison Programme (ICP) in the Western Asia Region, No. 1.
<i>Other substantive activities</i>					
<i>Ad hoc expert group meetings</i>					
Expert group meeting on index numbers of economic activities and gross domestic product deflators			X		Reformulated at the initiative of the secretariat owing to ESCWA partnership with ICP, which compiles purchasing power parity (PPP) indices. The title of the meeting has been changed to Expert Group Meeting on Calculating PPPs in Western Asia.
Subprogramme 4.					
Regional integration and responding to globalization					
<i>Servicing of intergovernmental and expert bodies</i>					
<i>Ad hoc expert group meetings</i>					
Expert Group Meeting on the Results of the WTO Fourth Ministerial Conference and the Preparations for Future Negotiations		X			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic reasons as a follow-up to the WTO Fourth Ministerial Meeting and with regard to preparations for the WTO Fifth Ministerial Meeting
<i>Other substantive activities</i>					
<i>Recurrent publications</i>					
Review and Appraisal of Progress Made by Yemen in the Implementation of the New Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries in the Decade 2001-2010		X			Added by legislation pursuant to General Assembly resolution 56/227 of 24 December 2001 on the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

Activity	Status				Justification
	Terminated	Added	Reformulated	Postponed	
Other substantive activities					
<i>Non-recurrent publications</i>					
Perspective from ESCWA on Financing for Development		X			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic reasons in response to the Monterrey Consensus, adopted at the International Conference on Financing for Development
Technical cooperation					
<i>Group training</i>					
Forum on Arab Business Community and WTO Agreements		X			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic reasons to highlight the importance of WTO agreements
Technical cooperation					
<i>Group training</i>					
Specialized Symposium on Intellectual Property Rights		X			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic reasons and within the context of propagating knowledge on intellectual property rights agreements
Technical cooperation					
<i>Group training</i>					
Trade in Services Training Workshop		X			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic reasons as a follow-up to the Doha Agenda for Development
Technical cooperation					
<i>Group training</i>					
Seminar on Capacity-building in Transport		X			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic reasons as a follow-up to the signing of the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq at the fourth session of the ESCWA Committee on Transport
Technical cooperation					
<i>Group training</i>					
Preparation for WTO Fifth Ministerial Conference in Mexico		X			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic reasons as a follow-up to the WTO Fourth Ministerial Conference
Technical cooperation					
<i>Field projects</i>					
Networking of Expertise on Foreign Direct Investment in ESCWA Member States		X			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic reasons and owing to the availability of extrabudgetary funds. It is funded by the Development Account.

Activity	Status				Justification
	Terminated	Added	Reformulated	Postponed	
Subprogramme 5.					
Information and communication technology for regional integration					
<i>Servicing of intergovernmental and expert bodies</i>					
<i>Ad hoc expert group meetings</i>					
Expert group meeting on legal framework for information and communication technology (ICT) policies			X		Reformulated at the initiative of the secretariat and amalgamated with the expert group meeting on the Western Asian Preparatory Conference for the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS)
<i>Servicing of intergovernmental and expert bodies</i>					
<i>Ad hoc expert group meetings</i>					
Expert group meeting on new technology strategies and capacity-building with emphasis on ICTs			X		Reformulated at the initiative of the secretariat to streamline the work programme according to the outcomes of the PrepCom 2 and the Western Asia Preparatory Conference for WSIS. The title has been changed to Expert Group Meeting on Promotion of Digital Arabic Content.
<i>Other substantive activities</i>					
<i>Non-recurrent publications</i>					
The infrastructure of electronic commerce			X		Reformulated at the initiative of the secretariat owing to regular budget vacancies. It will be amalgamated with another activity entitled Capacity-building in Selected ICT Applications in ESCWA Member Countries.
<i>Other substantive activities</i>					
<i>Non-recurrent publications</i>					
Promotion of best practices in governance in selected ESCWA member countries, with an emphasis on ICT tools and techniques			X		Reformulated at the initiative of the secretariat to streamline the work programme according to the outcomes of the PrepCom 2 and the Western Asia Preparatory Conference for WSIS. The title has been changed to Regional Profile and Indicators for the Information Society.
<i>Other substantive activities</i>					
<i>Non-recurrent publications</i>					
Report on regional initiatives to enhance the benefit of member countries from the World Bank and the G8 programme of technical assistance in ICT			X		Reformulated at the initiative of the secretariat to streamline the work programme according to the outcomes of the PrepCom 2 and the Western Asia Preparatory Conference for WSIS. The title has been changed to Tentative Regional Action Plan for Building the Information Society.

Activity	Status				Justification
	Terminated	Added	Reformulated	Postponed	
Technical cooperation					
<i>Field projects</i>					
Capacity-building in Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business in the Mediterranean		X			Added at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic reasons and owing to the availability of extrabudgetary funds. It is funded by the Development Account.
Technical cooperation					
<i>Field projects</i>					
ICTs for Employment Creation and Poverty Reduction		X			Added at the initiative of the secretariat owing to the availability of extrabudgetary funds from the International Labour Organization
Technical cooperation					
<i>Field projects</i>					
Modern ICT-Based Educational Systems		X			Added at the initiative of the secretariat owing to the availability of extrabudgetary funds from UNESCO/Lebanon
Subprogramme 6.					
Comparable statistics for improved planning and decision-making					
Other substantive activities					
<i>Technical material for outside users</i>					
Overall development, maintenance and coordination of ESIS database modules			X		Reformulated at the initiative of the secretariat for programmatic reasons on the basis that the Statistics Coordination Unit will administer and coordinate the ESCWA Statistical Information System (ESIS) database and updating and maintenance will be carried out at the level of the relevant Division. The title has been changed to overall administration and coordination of ESIS database.

Implemented

In progress

Not initiated
