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**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION****FOLLOW-UP ACTION AT REGIONAL LEVEL TO  
UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES****Introduction**

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) plays an effective part at regional level in activities in follow-up to or preparation for United Nations international conferences. A large part of the work of the Commission in this field is the production and distribution of briefing notes that introduce the most important issues discussed at such conferences, with a view to increasing awareness thereof; developing common concepts and understandings of those issues; harmonizing the positions thereon of all the Arab countries; promoting the adoption by those countries of programmes of work or declarations of principles for submission to United Nations international conferences; building the capacity of countries to negotiate on the issues under consideration at those conferences; reviewing and evaluating the regional position on those issues; and submitting specific, practical proposals with respect to the role of ESCWA member and all Arab countries in regard to the same issues. The Commission aims to associate the major effective actors, including the organizations of civil society, with the follow-up activities. It has been involved at regional level in follow-up activities to 10 United Nations international conferences on various issues including, *inter alia*, all aspects of social development, funding for development, sustainable development and information technology.

**A. THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE WORLD YOUTH FORUM OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (DAKAR, AUGUST 2001)**

2. In order to promote endeavours to include youth and increase their involvement in the development process, ESCWA, in cooperation with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, held the Arab Youth Forum of the United Nations System in Beirut on 26 and 27 June 2001. The aim of the Forum was to prepare Arab non-governmental youth organizations and groups to take part in the World Youth Forum, by reviewing and discussing the following basic issues: (a) the priority areas of and progress made in implementing the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond and the Braga Youth Action Plan; (b) the situation of youth in the ESCWA region from the perspective of human resources development; and (c) the formulation of the Declaration of the Arab Youth Forum of the United Nations System and its presentation to the World Youth Forum in Dakar. In addition to the Declaration, the Forum adopted the idea of a project to produce a handbook on the network of youth non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Western Asia region. The Commission has assumed responsibility for preparing this document in its final form, with a view to providing whatever is necessary to support its activities and coordinating requirements for implementation. It should be noted that the ESCWA Trust Fund and the United Nations Youth Fund provided the necessary funding for that purpose. Part of the project involves

establishing an Internet site that contains a database on Arab youth NGOs and their activities and on policies, projects and studies relating to youth that are being implemented by specialized United Nations agencies or Arab Governments. In the same context, and in coordination with the Arab Labour Organization, ESCWA is coordinating regional activities in implementation of the draft technical programme for Arab youth employment. The Commission prepared the final project document for the approval of the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs and subsequent dispatch to certain relevant funding bodies, with a view to securing the requisite funding.

#### B. THE WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND RELATED INTOLERANCE

3. This Conference was held in Durban from 31 August to 7 September 2001 and was attended by representatives of ESCWA as part of its support for international endeavours to oppose racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The ESCWA contribution focused on the role that the Commission plays, through its various programmes and activities, in the fight against a variety of forms of discrimination, including those against the ageing, women and disabled persons, and in respect of gender issues, racial and religious discrimination and other forms of discrimination. Another focus of the contribution was the endeavours exerted by ESCWA in support of the peace process in the region and the effort to find a just solution to the Palestinian question and establish an independent Palestinian state.

#### C. REVIEW OF THE TENTH ANNUAL COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE FAMILY (1994)

4. In preparation for the review of the tenth annual commemoration of the International Year of the Family (1994), and pursuant to the outcome of the discussions on that matter at the ESCWA twenty-first session, which was held in Beirut from 8 to 11 May 2001, ESCWA prepared a document on the project for the empowerment of the Arab family and enhancement of its role in development and social cohesion. It also held, in Beirut on 5 and 6 November 2001, the Regional Expert Group Meeting on Empowerment of the Arab Family to Enhance its Role in Development and Social Cohesion. Attending that Meeting were representatives of the Arab Family Organization, family-related committees in Arab countries and governmental and non-governmental regional organizations. The aim was to discuss the project document and formulate a programme of work to include specific activities for implementation in Arab countries in years to come. Also considered were a number of research papers that constituted the basic scientific background for discussion of the bases and components of the project document.

5. Currently, funding for the project is still being sought in order that work may begin on implementation: a number of ESCWA member countries have been approached. The Commission will urge Arab Governments, the private sector, regional and international organizations, Arab funds and other donors to announce contributions to this project at a special meeting to be held for the purpose.

6. As part of the adopted programme of work for the biennium 2002-2003, in the third quarter of 2003 ESCWA, in cooperation with the League of Arab States and the Arab Family Organization, will organize an expert group meeting in order to review the status of the Arab family. The Commission has prepared a field study on the participation of the Arab family in three selected countries, namely, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen. Iraq was selected because it is a country that has for many years been suffering from sanctions, disputes and wars, and pursuant to one of the recommendations of the Social Development Commission concerning study of the impact of the embargo imposed on Iraq and its effects on the Iraqi people. The three field studies were based on a questionnaire about a number of variables, and showed that participation within the Arab family has increased in urban nuclear families, young families with a high level of education and income and families where the wife does not work outside the home but shares decision-making with her husband.

D. THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT  
(MONTERREY, MEXICO, MARCH 2002)

7. In preparation for the International Conference on Financing for Development and pursuant to the request of the United Nations General Assembly and its resolution 55/245 of 21 March 2001 concerning preparations for the substantive preparatory process and the International Conference on Financing for Development, ESCWA undertook to implement complementary activities during the 2001-2002 biennium, of which the aim was to identify the challenges being faced by the ESCWA region with respect to financing for development and propose appropriate solutions thereto.

8. Against this background, ESCWA held two preparatory meetings, on 4 June and 6 July 2001, with the aim of reviewing and discussing the basic issues raised in the briefing note that was prepared by the heads of the preparatory committee for the International Conference on Financing for Development at the conclusion of the first part of the third session, that was held in New York from 2 to 8 May 2001. Those issues included follow-up of financial resources, foreign direct investment (FDI), foreign trade, international financial cooperation and indebtedness. The purpose was to link those issues to the financing for development-related realities and demands in the countries of the ESCWA region, and to elicit proposals for the improvement of the situation befitting the needs of the countries of the region. At the second meeting, an agenda was set for ESCWA with respect to the likely preparations, in which five focuses for research were identified as part of the concept of follow-up of financial resources, namely, the Arab financial system; foreign trade; FDI; microcredit systems; and indebtedness.

9. From 11 to 13 September 2001, ESCWA held a regional workshop on financing for development in United Nations House, Beirut, during which studies on the five aforementioned areas were considered. The workshop was attended by notable experts and specialists, including representatives of Government and financial institutions, NGOs, regional organizations, academic institutes and chambers of commerce and industry. A number of recommendations were made in the course of the workshop, of which the most important may be summarized as a call to promote the involvement of banking institutions at local and regional level in order to create competitive institutions; develop financial markets by modernizing financial establishments and mechanisms and technical cadres; completely review the role of the insurance sector; develop and link Arab financial markets in order to facilitate the transfer between them of Arab capital; promote a financing mechanism for and develop the financial and human resource capacities of small projects as an effective strategy for eliminating poverty; elicit FDI flows; open up to each other the markets of the region, with a view to creating one wider market that could help to attract investment; build a reliable database on investments; develop a dependable indicator to measure foreign investment flows; liberalize trade, including making the necessary changes in the legal and administrative atmosphere and adopting effective policies on exchange rates; and develop electronic commerce.

10. Further to the discussions that took place and the proposals that were made during that regional workshop, it was decided to prepare five studies putting forward the views of ESCWA on financing for development, for submission to the International Conference on Financing for Development, which was held in Mexico from 18 to 22 March 2002. The studies were the following:

- (a) *External Debts and Financial Flows of ESCWA Countries;*
- (b) *The Financial Sector in the ESCWA Region: The Current Status and the Prerequisites for Strengthening and Development;*
- (c) *Microfinance in the ESCWA Region and Proposed Development Strategy;*
- (d) *Foreign Direct Investment Flows in the ESCWA Region;*
- (e) *Trade Issues of the ESCWA Region.*

11. The Commission prepared a summary of those studies entitled *The ESCWA View on Financing for Development: A Regional Study on Financing for Development in the ESCWA Region*. That study included a set of recommendations that focused on the outcomes of ESCWA studies and meeting discussions, and provided a clear picture of the current situation in the region with regard to financing for development. It also identified the means that are conducive to the improved use of available resources and the expansion of small and medium enterprises and, in particular, women-related projects.

12. The ESCWA delegation that took part in the work of the Conference included the Executive Secretary, the Chief of the Economic Development Issues and Policies Division and an adviser on financial and economic affairs. It was clear from the discussions that the studies presented by ESCWA had been widely circulated and had given a clear impression of the status of financing for development in the region. In the course of the Conference, it was decided to undertake the following actions at national, regional and international level:

(a) To continue to improve coordination between domestic policies through the ongoing work of central banks and the ministries concerned, including ministries of development, finance and foreign trade;

(b) To provide support for regional commissions and regional development banks;

(c) To keep financing for development on the agendas of intergovernmental institutions, including all funds, programmes and agencies of the United Nations and, in particular, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

13. At the conclusion of its proceedings, the Conference called for an international follow-up conference to be held no later than in 2005, of which the aim would be to review implementation of the Monterrey consensus.

#### E. THE SECOND WORLD ASSEMBLY ON AGEING (MADRID, APRIL 2002)

14. In preparation for the Second World Assembly on Ageing, ESCWA organized the Arab Preparatory Meeting for the Second World Assembly on Ageing, which was held in Beirut from 5 to 8 February 2002. The Meeting was held at expert and minister level and focused on four main issues, namely, the demographic status of older persons; social policies relating to older persons; the role of the family and of women in caring for older persons; and the role of NGOs in caring for older persons. At the conclusion of that Meeting, the Arab Plan of Action of Ageing to the Year 2012 (the Arab Plan) was adopted for distribution and presentation to the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid and for inclusion in the international document issued by the Madrid Conference, thereby ensuring that the regional dimension was represented in that document. The Commission took pains to coordinate the Arab positions, with a view to taking a united stand on ageing-related issues. The Arab Plan was based on the responses to the questionnaires circulated to Governments by ESCWA regarding the implementation status of the 1982 Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing and the 1993 Cairo Regional Plan on Ageing.

15. The Commission participated at the Second World Assembly on Ageing, which was held in Madrid from 8 to 12 April 2002, in its capacity as the regional coordination centre for Arab countries and in cooperation with the League of Arab States. It organized the preparatory meeting in Madrid for the Arab group participating in the World Assembly, of which the aim was to hold consultations on the contentious issues in the International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002. It also held a series of daily coordination meetings in order to study the International Plan and integrate Arab positions on its more controversial points. The Commission further organized a round-table discussion on the Arab Plan to which it invited prominent persons and specialists from all over the world. That preparatory coordination activity undertaken by ESCWA, by harmonizing Arab positions, helped Arab delegations to contribute effectively to the World Assembly.

F. THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
ON CHILDREN (NEW YORK, MAY 2002)

16. From 24 to 27 April 2001, in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the League of Arab States, Government institutions and civil society organizations from Arab countries, ESCWA held in Beirut the Regional Seminar on Children, at which a number of documents, studies and reports were considered. As a result of the contribution of ESCWA to that Seminar, cooperative links in matters relating to children were established for the first time between UNICEF and the League of Arab States. In particular, ESCWA established the regional dimension with respect to children and confirmed its position as a regional commission and focal point on the issue. That action was taken in preparation for the High Level Arab Conference on Child Rights that was jointly organized by UNICEF, the League of Arab States, ESCWA and the Government of Egypt and held in Cairo from 2 to 4 July 2001. During that Conference, the Arab framework for child rights was adopted and was considered as the Arab vision and contribution to the Special Session that was held in New York from 8 to 10 May 2002.

G. THE WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
(JOHANNESBURG, AUGUST – SEPTEMBER 2002)

17. In preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which was held in Johannesburg from 26 August to 4 September 2002, the United Nations General Assembly assigned responsibility to ESCWA, as a United Nations regional commission, for coordinating regional preparations for the Summit in cooperation with the regional offices of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Eighteen months before the convening of the Johannesburg Summit, a joint secretariat was established by ESCWA, the Technical Secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) in the League of Arab States and the UNEP Regional Office for West Asia (ROWA), with a view to coordinating endeavours and supporting the Arab position in the Group of 77 and China. To that end, the following meetings were held:

- (a) A round table on sustainable development issues;
- (b) The regional forum for NGOs;
- (c) The regional industry forum;
- (d) The regional stakeholders round table;
- (e) The meeting of the preparatory committee for Western Asia and the Arab region;
- (f) The joint forum of Arab parliamentarians and civil society on sustainable development and good governance;
- (g) A joint meeting of the councils of Arab and African ministers responsible for the environment.

18. On the basis of those meetings, a report was prepared on the progress made in the Arab region in the past 10 years, from which was derived both the Arab Declaration to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which was issued by the Arab Ministers Responsible for Development, Planning and Environment at their meeting on 24 October 2001 and adopted at the Beirut Arab Summit that was held in March 2002, and the joint African Ministerial Council for the Environment/CAMRE Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Development.

19. In response to a call by Mr. Amre Moussa, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, ESCWA, in its capacity as a member of the joint secretariat, participated in the preparations for the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region, which aims to meet the challenges faced by Arab countries and achieve sustainable development in the region. The Commission was also involved in the announcement of

the Arab Initiative Declaration at a press conference held in Johannesburg, at which ESCWA undertook to contribute to the implementation of the programme and activities of the Initiative, by assisting the parties concerned at national and regional level and by building partnerships with other regions and international organizations and institutions, as part of the global endeavour to achieve sustainable development.

20. Further to its earlier endeavours with respect to regional preparations for international conferences, and in view of the scarcity of data in the Arabic language on strategies and policies and the measures that must be taken in order to achieve sustainable development in the countries of the region, ESCWA issued 18 briefing notes dealing with a number of the fields covered in Agenda 21, which may be divided into three main subject areas. The first such area is covered by 10 briefing notes on the energy and related systems employed in the various economic sectors. Four briefing notes on water represent the second area. They deal with the most important measures linked to the sustainability and management of the water sector and to ensuring a supply of water for all economic and social development requirements. A further four notes cover the third subject area, namely, sustainable development in the economic and social fields. The official delegations and representatives of civil society of member countries commended those briefing notes, which acquainted them with the issues discussed during the proceedings of the World Summit, and acknowledged their faithful portrayal of the needs and positions of ESCWA member countries. The notes also provided a regional platform for the establishment of positions on the issues of which the Summit was seized and for evaluating the feasibility of implementing its recommendations and programmes.

21. In view of the need to follow up implementation of those undertakings, which will constitute measures of success or failure, ESCWA determined to give equal importance in its work to the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development, in order, in particular, to facilitate the exchange of expertise, best practices, case studies and the experiences of relevant stakeholders in implementing Agenda 21. In this context, ESCWA responded to the resolutions adopted by CAMRE at their fourteenth session, which was held in Sharm al-Sheikh, Egypt, on 23 and 24 October 2002, in which they called for the establishment of a joint bureau comprising ESCWA, the technical secretariat of the relevant council of ministers and UNEP/ROWA, in order to follow up implementation at regional level of the Johannesburg Summit resolutions.

22. Within this joint secretariat, ESCWA has created a regional mechanism for achieving sustainable development beginning at national level. Its bases are being extrapolated from a study on perceptions of the mechanism that is currently being carried out by ESCWA with funding from CAMRE. The study will be presented for comment to a group of Arab experts at a meeting on trade and the environment that is scheduled for May 2003, before it is submitted to the executive office of CAMRE. The joint secretariat has also approved the establishment of a mechanism for follow-up of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region, in the light of the conclusions of the ESCWA study.

23. The Commission agreed to hold regional meetings in follow up to the implementation of Johannesburg Summit resolutions and the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region, to be jointly organized by the aforementioned three parties and other relevant bodies, and to attempt, as far as was possible with the resources available to it, to secure the financing necessary to implement the regionally agreed sustainable development projects and programmes. As the first activity in its programme of work to follow up implementation of the outcomes of the Johannesburg Summit, ESCWA cooperated with the members of the joint secretariat and the Arab Media Forum for Environment and Development in organizing a workshop on strengthening the role of the Arab media in order to achieve sustainable development, which was held in Beirut from 25 to 27 February 2003. The aim of the workshop was to adopt a strategy and action plan for the Arab media in achieving sustainable development and with a view to employing the media as a partner in respect of environmental issues, rather than as a mere channel for information.

24. Against that background, ESCWA urged member countries to honour their undertakings to implement the Sustainable Development Initiative in the Arab Region and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, by adopting and supporting modern and thoroughly researched mechanisms to ensure complementarity between the three pillars of sustainable development, namely, economic

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development, social development and environmental protection, at local, national and regional levels. The Commission also urged member countries to establish and activate the appropriate mechanisms for promoting strengthened cooperation between member countries in the field of sustainable development. Similarly, it requested participants at the twenty-second ESCWA session to alert the appropriate authorities in their countries to the possibility of making use of the services provided by the ESCWA Sustainable Development and Productivity Division with a view to strengthening regional cooperation and the interchange of expertise and knowledge.

#### H. WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY (GENEVA, DECEMBER 2003)

25. On 21 December 2001, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 56/183 concerning the World Summit on the Information Society, convinced of the need to develop a common vision and understanding of the information society and the adoption of a declaration and plan of action for implementation by Governments, international institutions and all sectors of civil society. The Summit will be held in two phases, the first in Geneva from 10 to 12 December 2003 and the second in Tunis from 16 to 18 November 2005.

26. With a view to preparing for that Summit at regional level, ESCWA organized the Western Asia Preparatory Conference for the World Summit on the Information Society, which was held in Beirut from 4 to 6 February 2003 under the aegis of the Government of Lebanon, represented by the Ministry of Communications, and with the cooperation of the Regional Office in Cairo of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and with the support of the World Bank and the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Task Force.

27. The Conference considered the basic requirements for the establishment of the information society in the region, of which the most important are ICT applications for economic and social development; the development of Arabic digital content; the expansion of infrastructure and building of capacities; the establishment of an ICT sector; the putting in place of strategies, policies and organizational frameworks for an information society; the identification of the roles of Governments, the private sector and civil society institutions; and the furtherance of regional cooperation.

28. For the Conference, ESCWA prepared one main paper on the information society in Western Asia, which summarized the regional situation and identified the major issues that hinder the building of an information society in the region. Seven national papers on the information society in seven member countries were presented in the course of the Conference, while a further eight papers focused on the following specific issues:

- (a) The ICT infrastructure in the ESCWA region;
- (b) Arab Internet content: the current situation and proposals for its development;
- (c) Building ICT capacities in ESCWA member countries;
- (d) ICT applications in education, health care, Government and trade;
- (e) Financing and investment in ICT in the Middle East.

29. The outcome of the Conference was the Beirut Declaration: Towards an Information Society in Western Asia, in the formulation of which ESCWA played a prominent part by identifying a regional vision, objectives and principles, and by putting forward recommendations for the building of an information society, taking into consideration the particularities of the region and the abilities of member countries. The Commission submitted to the Conference a preliminary formula for a regional initiative that might form the nucleus of a regional plan of action for strengthening capacities and moving towards an information society. A report on the Conference was prepared that contained a summary of the most important interventions and discussions and the recommendations that were made, mostly to the Governments of member countries.

30. Follow-up activities at that level included the following:

(a) The Commission hosted the fourth meeting of the Arab Preparatory Working Group for the World Summit on the Information Society, which was held on 7 and 8 February 2003, immediately after the Preparatory Conference, and organized by the League of Arab States. It was agreed to support the Beirut Declaration at international meetings in preparation for the World Summit;

(b) The Commission participated in the second meeting of the Preparatory Committee of the World Summit on the Information Society, which was held in Geneva from 17 to 28 February 2003, presenting the outcomes of the Western Asia Preparatory Conference and attempting, in cooperation with member countries, to affirm the importance of the contents of the possible draft declaration of the World Summit, the regional vision of an information society and the Beirut Declaration. In fact, many of the objectives and principles and much of the vision set forth in the Beirut Declaration were adopted in the draft declaration of principles and action plan that was prepared during the meeting;

(c) The Commission also participated in a meeting of the United Nations regional commissions that was held on 24 February 2003, concurrently with the second meeting of the Preparatory Committee, at which was discussed coordination between the five commissions with a view to ensuring the success of the Summit by bringing attention to the essential issues relating to an information society in developing countries; planning subsidiary activities in which certain heads of State could participate; and focusing on the formulation of national strategies to narrow the digital divide and finance projects of a developmental nature.

31. Furthermore, ESCWA is prosecuting its endeavours to harmonize the Arab position, by cooperating with the League of Arab States and participating in the arrangements for the Arab Preparatory Conference for the World Summit on the Information Society, which is to be held in Cairo in June 2003 with a view to adopting a common vision, principles and action plan at Arab level. The Commission will support the outcomes of that Arab Preparatory Conference at the third and final meeting of the Preparatory Committee of the World Summit on the Information Society, which is to be held in Geneva in September 2003. At that meeting, before the first stage of the Summit begins, the final touches will be put to the declaration of principles and action plan.

#### I. FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN (BEIJING 1995)

32. As part of the follow-up to implementation of the recommendations of the Beijing Conference, ESCWA is making preparations to hold the First Arab Preparatory Meeting for Beijing +10, in order to review implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action and the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women. The Commission is organizing the Meeting in cooperation with the League of Arab States, the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Hariri Foundation, Lebanon. It will be held in 2003 at United Nations House in Beirut, the headquarters of ESCWA. It was originally intended that Meeting proceedings should be inaugurated on International Women's Day, namely, 8 March. However, in view of the circumstances in the region, it has been postponed. The objective of the Meeting is to consider the decisive steps that must be taken to mark the 10 years that have passed since the Fourth World Conference was held in Beijing in 1995. That will include assessing the progress made in implementing the Beijing Platform of Action and the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women, by reviewing, studying and evaluating achievements, identifying obstacles, and formulating future measures and initiatives for achieving the desired objective of advancing Arab women.

33. In order to mark the tenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference, ESCWA is preparing to publish, at the end of 2003, the first comprehensive regional report on the status of Arab women. It will present a preliminary study that surveys the women's movement in the Arab world and assesses the progress made in implementing the Beijing Platform of Action and the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women by consulting the most significant indicators and gender-disaggregated data.



J. THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION  
AND DEVELOPMENT (1994)

34. Pursuant to the resolutions adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development, that was held in Cairo in 1994, ESCWA, in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), is taking action to follow up implementation of population policies in their comprehensive development sense, as embodied in the Programme of Work of the International Conference on Population and Development and its follow-up document and the United Nations Millennium Declaration. As part of its programme of cooperation with UNFPA in preparing for the regional conference that will be held in order to mark the 10 years that have passed since the International Conference was held, ESCWA is working on two tracks:

(a) It is preparing preliminary research papers with the aim of analysing trends and the policies adopted by Arab countries in the following fields:

- (i) Population and water resources in Arab countries;
- (ii) Population growth and the eradication of poverty;
- (iii) Ageing persons in Arab countries;
- (iv) Globalization and the challenges it poses to the relationship between population and development;

(b) In cooperation with UNFPA and the League of Arab States, ESCWA is organizing a regional preparatory conference, to be held at the end of 2003, of which the objective is to evaluate and review the achievements that have been realized in the first 10 years subsequent to the International Conference; identify the challenges to implementation; ensure commitment to the principles of the Cairo Conference; underline the importance of the international community's honouring of its funding commitments; and support the call made by NGOs for Arab Governments to confront the voices that conflict with the Programme of Work of the International Conference. A technical committee has been established in order to identify the issues and, in particular, those relating to the status of the relationship between population and development in the Arab region and included in the priorities concerning the problems that faced those countries in their attempts to improve that relationship in the first decade. The following slogan may be adopted for the preparatory conference: "Population, poverty and youth in Arab countries", because it encapsulates the relevant issues, namely, population; poverty; the role of reproductive health; Arab youth and the challenges it faces and the opportunities that are open to it; and demographic changes and the problems they pose to health and social services. The conference will also analyse current issues and ideological conflicts with respect to the relationship between population and development and mechanisms for dealing with such.

35. In addition to the part it plays in preparing studies and identifying researchers, ESCWA has a role in mobilization and awareness-raising and in disseminating information that highlights the importance of commitment to human rights principles, the empowerment of women and awareness of the importance of investment in human resources, as embodied in the Programme of Work of the International Conference on Population and Development.

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