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**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION****RESTRUCTURING OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA****Summary**

1. On the basis of a recommendation made by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) at its twenty-first session to the effect that ESCWA secretariat activities should focus on a limited number of priorities of concern to member countries, with a view to strengthening the integration of the countries of the region, the secretariat accordingly restructured its programme and administrative organization. Four priorities were identified, on the basis of which the programme of work was reviewed and radically amended. The secretariat also revised its administrative organization in order to bring it into line with programme reforms. Those reforms were approved by member countries and the legislative bodies in the secretariat and at United Nations headquarters in New York. The annex to this document sets forth the progress that has been achieved in this process.

A. THE LEGISLATIVE STEPS INVOLVED IN THE RESTRUCTURING OF ESCWA

2. At its twenty-first session, which was held in Beirut from 8 to 11 May 2001, ESCWA adopted a recommendation to the effect that ESCWA secretariat activities should focus on a limited number of priorities and be correspondingly restricted, and that attention should be focused on Arab regional integration and the study of mechanisms that would activate such integration.

3. Accordingly, the secretariat devoted itself to reviewing its programme of work and administrative organization. Radical amendments in line with the new orientation were made to the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 and the programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2002-2003.

4. At its fourth special session, which was held in Beirut on 11 March 2002, ESCWA adopted resolution 238 (S-IV) concerning the revised medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 and revised programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2002-2003. The revised medium-term plan was submitted to and approved by the Committee for Programme and Coordination in New York in June 2002.

**B. THE PROGRAMME CONSIDERATIONS THAT DETERMINED THE RESTRUCTURING
OF THE ESCWA PROGRAMME**

5. The restructuring of the ESCWA programme was carried out on the basis of the following considerations:

(a) The vision and mandate of ESCWA were redefined as the following: to facilitate regional cooperation and integration and enable member countries to manage globalization and implement regional integration, taking into consideration the Millennium Development Goals, regional particularities and global changes in the fields of technology and trade;

(b) Against that general background, ESCWA determined its priorities. Those priorities were in perfect harmony with the orientations set forth in the report of the Secretary-General entitled *Strengthening of the United Nations: An Agenda for Further Change (A/57/387)*.

1. *Priorities*

6. Priorities come under four headings. They were identified after lengthy consultations within the secretariat carried out by a task force that was formed especially for the purpose of the restructuring exercise and with high-level figures from various disciplines. Further consultations were conducted with a team that came from the Headquarters of the United Nations in New York in specific regard to the restructuring of ESCWA. Those priorities are as follow:

- (a) Management of water and energy resources;
- (b) Management of technology;
- (c) Management of globalization;
- (d) Management of social policies.

7. All ESCWA activities have been linked to those four priorities, and in the formulation and implementation of activities, attention has been paid to the multidisciplinary approach.

2. *Activities*

8. Activities that did not fit into the framework of the aforementioned priorities were identified, and the secretariat accordingly dropped or included certain activities and expanded others. That led to the following:

(a) Renewed focus was placed on the part of the mandate related to social issues, with a view to strengthening integrated social policies that take into account social aspects as a whole rather than particular aspects, as is currently the case most usually;

(b) Activities relating to industry and agriculture were incorporated with those relating to water, energy and the environment, because the industrial and agricultural sectors are the major consumers of energy and water respectively, quite apart from the environmental aspects of those two sectors that impact on economic development;

(c) A new subprogramme was instituted concerning information and communication technology (ICT) for regional integration, with a view to bridging the gap between the economies of ESCWA member countries and those of developed States by building the relevant capacities. The aim of the new subprogramme is to make available new methods of achieving social and economic development and to use ICT in order to improve quality of life without the need for large investment or environmental degradation;

(d) Renewed attention was given to economic activities, with the aim of improving the capacity of member countries to coordinate their economic policies; achieving economic development by giving quantitative estimates of economic and financial orientations; assisting the region to respond to the impact of globalization and the liberalization of trade that is being conducted under the aegis of the World Trade Organization; and assisting the region to exploit globalization in supporting the regional integration process and promoting development at all levels;

(e) Support was given to the subprogramme concerning comparable statistics for improved planning and decision-making by focusing on the analytical functions of statistics rather than the pure collection of statistical data. The objective functions performed by the various ESCWA technical programmes were incorporated with statistical functions;

(f) Commission programmes of work include activities concerned with post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation. Such activities are of especial importance in a region that continues to suffer from the scourges of war and conflict.

9. The secretariat also determined to reduce the number of its publications and the various issuances incorporated in its programme of work. Consequently, in the current biennium the number of issuances has fallen by 13.4 per cent, while there has been a fall of 15.5 per cent in the number of issuances pertaining to the proposed programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2004-2005.

10. The programme of work includes a number of pioneering activities that cover several similar subjects, in an attempt to create a set of interlinked activities that can be incorporated with the main issuances.

C. THE MAIN STEPS INVOLVED IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING OF ESCWA

11. Subsequent to the reform of the programme, administrative reforms were introduced, the most significant of which include the following:

(a) Human resource skills were assessed and posts were redistributed to subprogrammes;

(b) A number of posts were redeployed from administrative and support divisions to substantive divisions;

(c) Human resources were retrained in order to enable them to assume their new responsibilities, and vacant positions were advertised on Galaxy, the new electronic staff selection system used by the United Nations;

(d) The organizational structure based on sections within substantive divisions was replaced by flexible working groups, each of which deals with a particular subject, that may be altered as programmes or requirements change. Each group comprises individuals from other groups within the same or other divisions.

12. The Secretary-General's bulletin concerning the organization of the secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ST/SGB/2002/16) was issued on 27 December 2002.

13. As a result of the adoption by the United Nations legislative authorities of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005; the restructuring of the programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2002-2003; the formulation of the proposed programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2004-2005 on the basis of the revised medium-term plan; and the publication of the Secretary-General's bulletin concerning the organization of the secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the restructuring of the secretariat has been completed from the points of view of both programming and organization.

14. During the forthcoming period, the secretariat intends to attempt to achieve further progress in ensuring that its programme of work serves the priorities that it identified and in creating measures to improve the quality of the studies and reports issued by ESCWA. It also intends to employ information technology in order to establish databases and tables that can contribute to optimizing the work of the Commission and assist in achieving the desired progress in the implementation of the programme of work and in serving the member countries in the best possible manner.

Annex

PROGRESS MADE IN THE PROCESS OF RESTRUCTURING ESCWA SECRETARIAT


