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**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION
FOR WESTERN ASIA**

**REPORT ON THE FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION
OF THE COMMISSION
11 March 2002**

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OFFICIAL RECORDS**

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NOTE

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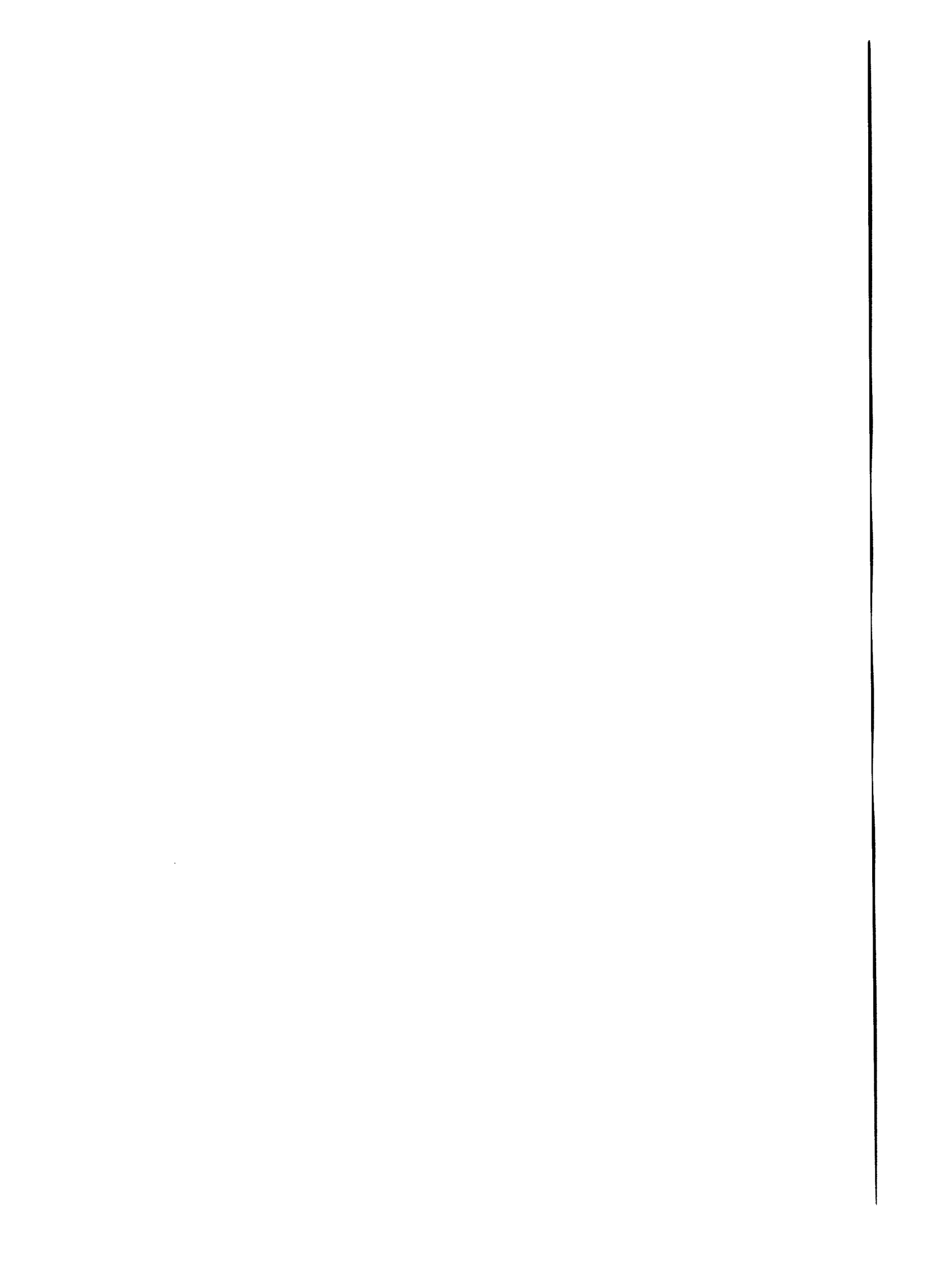
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INTRODUCTION

1. The fourth special session of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) was held at United Nations House in Beirut on 11 March 2002 in accordance with rule 1(d) of the Commission's rules of procedure.
2. This report deals with the most important aspects of the work of the session.

I. FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

3. The fourth special session of the Commission was held in Beirut on 11 March 2002. The Commission held one meeting during which it discussed the items on the agenda contained in paragraph 7, below.

4. The session was attended by representatives of the following members of the Commission: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. The representative of Palestine was not able to attend.

1. *Election of officers*

5. The Commission adopted the practice followed in the case of a special session. Accordingly, His Excellency Mr. Basil Fulayhan, Minister of Economy and Trade and head of the delegation of Lebanon, as Chairman of the twenty-first session, acted as Chairman of the fourth special session. In view of the absence of the representative of Palestine, who was one of the two deputy Chairmen of the twenty-first session, the Chairman proposed that either one deputy should be sufficient, or that another deputy should be elected instead of the Palestinian representative. The Commission agreed that one deputy was sufficient. His Excellency Ali Soulieman Al-Said, Ambassador of Kuwait in Lebanon, assumed the role of Deputy Chairman. His Excellency Mr. Waheed Sayyar, Ambassador of Bahrain, acted as Rapporteur.

2. *Credentials*

6. In accordance with rule 11 of the rules of procedure of the Commission, the credentials of the representatives submitted to the Executive Secretary were examined by the officers and found to be in order.

3. *Agenda and organization of work*

7. The Commission adopted the agenda and organization of work of the session as amended. The amended agenda is as follows:

- “1. Opening of the fourth special session.
- “2. Adoption of the agenda.
- “3. Proposed organization of work.
- “4. Adoption of the revised medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005.
- “5. Adoption of the revised programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2002-2003.
- “6. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its fourth special session”.

B. OPENING OF THE SESSION

8. The Commission met in a fourth special session at the invitation of the ESCWA secretariat after consultation with the Chairman of the twenty-first session, in order to consider the revised medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 and the revised programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2002-2003.

9. The meeting began with a welcoming statement by the Chairman of the session and head of the delegation of Lebanon, His Excellency Mr. Basil Fulayhan.

10. The Executive Secretary of ESCWA, Ms. Mervat Tallawy, welcomed the delegations of the member countries and stated the purpose of the special session. She gave a presentation in which she highlighted the main amendments made to the medium-term plan and the programme of work and priorities.

11. In her presentation she mentioned that the purpose of the amendments was to focus the programme on a smaller number of priorities and emphasize issues of regional integration, approaches to developments in the international and regional arenas, keeping abreast with developments in the sphere of information technology and in line with the principles expressed in the "United Nations Millennium Declaration", in order to respond to the needs of the region, concentrating on quality, rather than quantity.

12. As a result of the revisions to the programme of work and priorities, the management of water, energy and environment subprogramme had been merged with the sectoral policies subprogramme to form a unified subprogramme, namely, integrated policies for the management of regional resources for sustainable development. Three new subprogrammes had been introduced, namely, regional integration and responding to globalization, information and communication technology for regional integration, and economic analysis and forecasting for regional development. The revisions had also led to strengthening of the statistics programme for the production of comparable statistics for improved planning and decision-making.

13. She summarized future orientations in the following points:

(a) Establishing a regional think-tank in order to assist in orienting the future activities and programmes of ESCWA, to better respond to the needs of the region;

(b) Working to keep the activities of ESCWA abreast with regional and global developments;

(c) Giving attention to public relations and recognition for the work of ESCWA;

(d) Increasing interaction with regional and international institutions within the region and outside it;

(e) Achieving the aims of the United Nations contained in the Millennium Declaration;

(f) Mobilizing additional resources, including assistance and grants, in order to deal with new and unanticipated activities in response to the needs of member States.

C. MAIN TOPICS OF DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

1. *Adoption of the revised medium-term plan for 2002-2005* (Agenda item 4)

14. The ESCWA secretariat gave a brief presentation of the document relevant to the item (E/ESCWA/S-4/L.3/Rev.1). The overall orientation of Programme 18 of the United Nations medium-term plan was to assist member countries in creating a suitable environment that could stimulate steady regional development with its three interdependent and mutually reinforcing dimensions: economic, social and environmental. The plan sets out the objectives of each subprogramme, as follows:

(a) Achievement of a positive impact on regional integration through sustainable management of water and energy and the production sectors;

(b) Strengthening of regional cooperation through advocacy and promotion of integrated, applicable social policies sensitive to the cultural specificity of the Arab region;

(c) Assisting member States in the coordination of their economic policies and achieving development through providing quantitative assessment of economic and financial data and trends;

(d) Facilitating transboundary flows of goods, services, persons and capital in order to meet the challenges posed by globalization;

(e) Assisting countries in the utilization of information and communications technologies in order to achieve development;

(f) Improving the statistical capabilities of countries in the region, which will make available the required data and improve the decision-making process.

2. Adoption of the revised programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2002-2003
(Agenda item 5)

15. The ESCWA secretariat gave a brief presentation on the document relevant to the item (E/ESCWA/S-4/L.4/Rev.1). The internal structure of the programme of work was organized in the same way as the medium-term plan, by subprogramme. Within each subprogramme, the orientation of the subprogramme for the biennium, expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement were defined. These accomplishments and their indicators differed from those in the medium-term plan as they were better defined with regard to the first biennium of the plan. Acting on the recommendation of the Commission that the work of the ESCWA secretariat should focus on a limited number of priorities and reduce its outputs accordingly, ESCWA had reduced the total number of programme outputs by approximately 20 per cent while revising the programme of work and priorities. The reduction had covered mainly recurrent publications and reports, which constituted the main part of the Commission's outputs. That was in accordance with the overall orientations of the United Nations, which advocated the rationalization of the number of publications, with the aim of focusing on quality, not quantity. The ESCWA secretariat had sought to limit the number of its outputs in order to achieve balance between research activities and fieldwork.

3. General discussion

16. Members of delegations discussed the medium-term plan and programme of work and priorities and thanked the ESCWA secretariat for the efforts exerted in order to develop the plan and programme. They highlighted the importance of implementing the proposed amendments in order to remain in line with international and regional changes. A number of country representatives raised a number of points, including the following: the introduction of amendments to the form and content of the text, such as the replacement of the phrase "provision of advice" with the phrase "provision of technical assistance"; merging some of the paragraphs contained in the medium-term plan, such as the merging of human settlements activities with those of the Social Development Division; the necessity of coordination with member States with regard to revision of the plan and programme; and the extent to which the elements contained in the plan and the programme of work could be implemented.

17. One delegation proposed that programmes and projects should be established with defined budgets for presentation to member countries and donors offering funding from extrabudgetary resources.

18. The ESCWA secretariat responded to the interventions from member countries, pointing out that the medium-term plan was general and that the details were contained in the programme of work and priorities. Some developments had imposed changes on the plan and programme of work. One such development was the Millennium Declaration, which was considered a binding guiding document and, also, a recommendation for the twenty-first session of ESCWA to reduce the number of its outputs and enhance the focus of its subprogrammes.

19. In response to the proposal to merge paragraphs 10, 11 and 12 of the medium-term plan as regards the management of water and energy resources and protection of the environment, the ESCWA secretariat indicated that water and energy were matters of particular regional relevance and, therefore, ESCWA was

focusing on these two subjects and according them special importance. In view of the differences between the three paragraphs, the secretariat considered that it would be better not to merge them.

20. As regards human settlements, the ESCWA secretariat indicated that a section concerned with this subject existed within the social development division. Interrelatedness was a fundamental matter that had received attention during preparation of the plan and programme. The main aim of the Commission was to achieve regional integration through interrelated subsidiary objectives, and the accomplishment of those would be measured according to specific criteria.

21. With regard to coordination, the ESCWA secretariat clarified that the meetings of the Advisory Committee composed of Ambassadors of member States in the host country and focal points, whether foreign ministries or ministries of planning in member States, served as a means of coordination between ESCWA and member States. Within ESCWA, there were also six intergovernmental committees representing the Governments of member countries, which also contributed to the coordination. In addition, the ESCWA secretariat was in dialogue with countries in order to take their views into consideration. The medium-term plan had been adopted in 1999 and the programme of work and priorities in 2000. The Commission was now in the process of revising them, based on the request of the previous regular session.

22. Members of delegations, including those who had made observations, expressed their agreement on the necessity of revising the medium-term plan and the programme of work and priorities, as contained in the two documents indicated above. The representative of Kuwait and the representative of Lebanon presented the draft resolution contained in document E/ESCWA/RES/L.238 on the adoption of revised medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 and the revised programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2002-2003.

23. The Commission unanimously adopted the draft resolution as resolution E/ESCWA/S-4/RES/L.238.

4. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its fourth special session
(Agenda item 6)

24. The Commission adopted the draft report on its fourth special session.

25. In closing the meeting, H.E. Mr. Basil Fulayhan, speaking in his capacity as Chairman of the fourth special session and head of the delegation of Lebanon, thanked the heads and members of delegations for their attendance and cooperation. He emphasized the commitment of Lebanon to continuing to provide any assistance that would facilitate the Commission to undertake the tasks entrusted to it.

II. RESOLUTION ADOPTED AT THE FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION

26. The Commission, at the close of its fourth special session, adopted the following resolution by consensus:

Resolution 238 (S-IV)
Revised medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 and
revised programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2002-2003

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Guided by General Assembly resolution 55/2 of 8 September 2000, entitled "United Nations Millennium Declaration", as the main document identifying the purposes and principles which the Organization is endeavouring to uphold at the dawn of the third millennium,

Also guided by the report of the Secretary-General to the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly (A/56/326), entitled "Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration",

Referring to the potential strategies contained in "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform" (A/51/950), which calls for United Nations activities to be rationalized and made more effective,

Pursuant to the recommendation endorsed by the Commission at its twenty-first session, held on 10 and 11 May 2001, to the effect that ESCWA secretariat activities should focus on a limited number of priorities, in order to best serve regional integration,

Convinced of the need to revise the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005, adopted in 1999, in keeping with this recommendation and the purposes and principles of the United Nations Millennium Declaration,

1. *Adopts* the revised medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 contained in E/ESCWA/S-4/L.3/Rev.1;
2. *Adopts* the revised programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2002-2003 contained in E/ESCWA/S-4/L.4/Rev.1;
3. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to continue endeavours to increase the effectiveness of the activities undertaken by the ESCWA secretariat by taking all the programme, administrative and organizational measures necessary to that end.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

ESCWA MEMBERS

Bahrain

H.E. Mr. Waheed Sayyar
Ambassador of Bahrain in the Syrian Arab
Republic

H.E. Mr. Antoine Chedid
Ambassador
Director of the International Organizations
Ministry of Foreign and Emigrants Affairs
Deputy Head of the Lebanese Delegation

Egypt

H.E. Mr. Hatem Saif Al-Nasser
Ambassador of Egypt in Lebanon

Ms. Zouha Sakr
Minister's Office
Ministry of Economy and Trade

Mr. Alaa Youssef
Second Secretary
Embassy of Egypt in Lebanon

Ms. Souhair Nadda
Minister's Office
Ministry of Economy and Trade

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H.E. Mr. Nabil Abdullah Al-Janabi
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Embassy of Iraq in Lebanon

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Mr. Ahmed Saleh Al-Mouhnadi
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Mr. Sami Abdulaziz Ahmed Al-Hamad
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Embassy of Kuwait in Lebanon

Saudi Arabia

H.E. Mr. Fouad Sadek Moufti
Ambassador of Saudi Arabia in Lebanon

Lebanon

H.E. Mr. Basil Fulayhan
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Mr Fahad Mohammad Sabbagh
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Syrian Arab Republic

Mr. Ibrahim Ali
Director, Central Bureau of Statistics

United Arab Emirates

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Ambassador of Yemen in Lebanon

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Embassy of Yemen in Lebanon

Annex II

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Symbol	Title
E/ESCWA/S-4/1/L.1	Provisional agenda
E/ESCWA/S-4/2/L.2	Proposed organization of work
E/ESCWA/S-4/3/L.3/Rev.1	Revised medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 Programme 18: Economic and social development in Western Asia
E/ESCWA/S-4/4/L.4/Rev.1	Revised programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2002-2003
E/ESCWA/S-4/5/L.5	Draft report of the Commission on its fourth special session
E/ESCWA/S-4/RES/L.238	Draft resolution

