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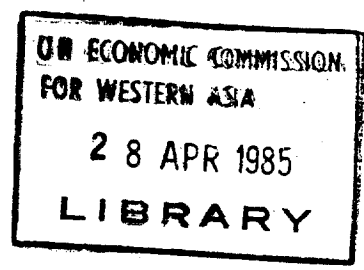
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UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

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Item 6(b) of the Agenda



Follow-up to resolution 95(VIII) Note by the Secretary-General

- 1. Pursuant to operative paragraph (a) the ECWA Liaison Office in Baghdad was strengthened and continued to work closely with the Government of Iraq in solving outstanding issues. After the temporary office premises were officially handed over to the United Nations late 1981, the liaison office was further enlarged to include mainly staff members from supporting services. Since that date, the liaison office was actively involved in assisting the secretariat in its gradual relocation from Beirut to Baghdad.
2. Pursuant to operative paragraph (b) the Secretary-General decided to establish a secretariat working group composed of representatives of Departments of UN Headquarters, the ECWA secretariat and the ECWA Staff Council. The working group was mandated to find solutions to outstanding issues relating to the move of the ECWA secretariat from Beirut to Baghdad affecting the standard of efficiency and performance of the secretariat staff. The working group met from 7-14 July 1981 and reached inter alia agreement on:
a) an increase of the non-resident allowance (NRA) for internationally recruited general service staff to ID 1200.

b) the establishment of an ad hoc rental subsidy for staff members in the general service category to encourage such staff members to relocate with ECWA to Baghdad. Under the arrangement, the rent payable by staff members will be limited to a maximum of 20 per cent of their net base salary plus NRA.

c) the option of assignment allowance for all international staff transferring to Baghdad in lieu of removal of household effects.

d) delegation of authority to the Executive Secretary to extend installation grants under the provisions of the staff rules.

e) arrangements for undertaking a new in-depth local salary survey in Baghdad.

f) the establishment of a special rental subsidy arrangement for staff members in the professional and higher categories who must leave their families in Beirut, as an interim measure, for educational purposes. Staff members in the general service category will be considered under this arrangement on a case-by-case basis.

g) to recommend to the ICSC, the waiving of the ceiling applicable to the rental subsidy scheme of international staff whenever needed.

h) provision by the secretariat of certain basic installations in the apartments for the general service staff.

3. The Secretary-General is of the view that the above described arrangements will considerably facilitate the functioning of the commission in its new headquarters in Baghdad. These arrangements will be kept under continuous review so as to make adjustments when required.

4. The working group further reviewed the vacancy situation in the ECWA secretariat and recommended special measures to fill vacancies on a long and short-term basis. Special efforts have been exerted by the ECWA secretariat and the Office of Personnel

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Services to improve the vacancy situation.

5. The working group also reviewed the question of the desirability of international educational facilities in Baghdad and considered various possible arrangements, taking into account the school facilities which already existed in Baghdad. It was recognized by the working group that the availability of suitable educational facilities was a matter of high priority for the establishment of good working conditions and for the effective functioning of the commission at Baghdad in order by ensuring a broad geographic representation of staff at the duty station.

6. In this connexion, the Secretary-General would emphasize the great importance he attaches to the establishment of an international educational institution for the children of staff members at ECWA. The importance of having access to an international curriculum as a vital service to the Secretariat in its recruitment of highly qualified staff throughout the United Nations system has been recognized by the Secretary-General and the General Assembly. For example, in connexion with the United Nations International School in New York, the General Assembly, in its resolution 1102(XI) of 27 February 1957, gave recognition to the continued functioning of that School as one of the important non-financial factors contributing to the recruitment and retention of international staff. In a report to the 29th session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General noted that the welfare of their children, particularly as regards education, had been a deciding factor in attracting many highly qualified candidates to the international civil service, that satisfaction with available educational facilities, and the ability to afford the costs of such tuition were an important factor in the retention of qualified staff. The Secretary-General would like to draw the attention of the Member States of the Economic Commission for Western Asia to the above statements, in order to highlight the

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importance of this particular schooling issue. The existence of major international schools in New York, Geneva, and more recently Vienna proved to have contributed significantly to the welfare of staff members and members of the delegations at those locations. Besides the educationally integrated and well prepared curriculum, the schools provide the children with diversified educational opportunities which facilitate their reintegration into their many national educational systems or into other educational systems. More importantly, however, they provide the children with different cultural experiences in learning not only about the nationalities and lives of their colleagues, but also they offer them rich opportunities in understanding the culture of the country in which they live, and in appreciating and respecting its traditions and history.

7. The Secretary-General anticipates the need for the establishment of a suitable framework within which the school would be set up, including agreements between the United Nations and the proposed institution identifying the modalities for the relationship between ECWA and the school. In addition, other arrangements of a juridical nature are to be foreseen by which the uniquely international nature of the school would be recognized, both by the Organization and the host country.

8. The Secretary-General would like to express his gratitude to the Government of Iraq for the effort and concern which it has manifested in providing for a major educational facility by its generous contribution of a modern school-building complex. Through its foresight and vision, the host country has made available physical facilities capable of accommodating the full range of grades and programmes, particularly enabling the teaching of the working languages of the Commission, at a site adjacent to the permanent headquarters of the Commission. In this regard the Secretary-General notes that a consultant from the International School, Geneva, has recently completed a preliminary study and plan of operation for

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setting up a full-scale international school at Baghdad. In the light of these developments, the Secretary-General looks forward to the goodwill and constructive support of all concerned in order to establish this valuable educational facility in the near future.

9. In order that an international school of the kind referred to may be established, it would be necessary to ensure that its financial base be secure. It is clear that a major undertaking of this sort, which is capable of providing lasting benefits through the years to come, cannot be launched without incurring initial expense, even though operational expenses, once established, would be met substantially from tuition income. On this matter, the Secretary-General would seek the guidance and advice of Member States regarding the modalities by which the necessary capital base from which such an important institution could be established. In this connexion, the Secretary-General considers that the setting up of a Trust Fund for this purpose would constitute a significant advance toward the realization of this goal.