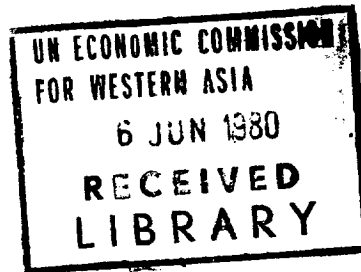




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Item 10 of the Provisional Agenda

DECENTRALIZATION OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES
TO, AND STRENGTHENING OF, REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMISSIONS

Note of the Executive Secretary

80-3105

1. The Commission at its Sixth Session adopted resolution 69(VI) entitled "Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 32/197 on the restructuring of the Economic and Social Sectors of the United Nations System" which calls upon the Secretary-General of the United Nations to expedite the implementation of resolution 32/197 and upon the Executive Secretary to:

- (a) Identify the tasks which could be assumed by the Commissions as a result of the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system and to indicate the financial and manpower implications of those tasks;
- (b) Intensify his efforts, in consultation with Arab and International Organizations, Regional bodies and member States, for the preparation of a detailed study on the modalities and possibilities for the establishment of subsidiary bodies of the Commission, as called for in Commission resolution 63(V);
- (c) Continue his efforts to obtain the required resources for the secretariat and to make the necessary arrangements to strengthen its capacity to meet the new challenges posed by the implementation of General Assembly resolution 32/197;
- (d) Streamline the existing administrative structure of the secretariat so as to reduce the extent of the additional resources required as a result of added responsibilities arising out of decentralization;
- (e) Submit a report to the Commission at its Seventh Session on the progress made and measures to be adopted.

2. The report under review presents the progress achieved thus far in the decentralization process of both regular programme activities carried out by the United Nations Headquarters and of executing functions for technical co-operation projects.

3. The framework for decentralization was discussed at the meeting of Executive Secretaries held in Rabat in March 1979. At this meeting, it was generally felt that in giving effect to the provisions of resolution 32/197 an important objective should be to maximise the capacity of the Commissions to promote and support co-operation in their respective regions. The need was stressed for a functional approach to this process, which should take into full account the distinct mandates and special character of the Commissions, within the overall structure of the Organization. It was further agreed that the process should contribute to the further development of a framework of mutually reinforcing relations among all United Nations regional and global entities, aimed at strengthening each component of this structure, in the effective performance of its own responsibilities, and at promoting the concerted development of overall strategies which would guide the work of the Organizations as a whole.

4. Agreement was reached at the meeting on the principle that the division of functions between the regional commissions on the one hand and global and sectoral components of the United Nations on the other, should be based on the nature and scope (whether subregional, regional or global) of the activities concerned and on the location of their intended beneficiaries. Thus, certain activities because of their nature and scope need to be retained at the Center and others, for the same reasons, decentralized to the regional level. Within this framework, the meeting agreed on a number of broad criteria which should govern the decentralization of activities to the Commissions. These criteria were to relate to effectiveness and efficiency of programme delivery, concentration and availability of information, and the multisectoral requirements of the activities concerned.

5. Subsequent to the Executive Secretaries' Meeting, a technical meeting of representatives of regional commissions was convened in New York in May 1979, to consider the areas and types of activities which would be amenable to or require an improved pattern of distribution between Headquarters and the regional commissions based on criteria decided upon by the Executive Secretaries' Meeting.

6. Reviewing the various activities undertaken by the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (DIESA) and the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development (DTCD) while bearing in mind the programme priorities of the Commission, the following initial areas were identified by the Executive Secretary in which urgent needs should be met through redeployment of resources:

- (i) Economic Survey of the ECWA Countries (DIESA)
- (ii) Financial management (DTCD)
- (iii) Ocean economics and technology (DIESA)
- (iv) Integrated transport (low-cost road construction in arid areas) (DIESA)
- (v) Programme Planning and Coordination (DIESA).

7. Upon consultations with DIESA and DTCD and following a second technical meeting of representatives of regional commissions held in New York in September 1979, agreement was reached that the Secretary-General would recommend the following posts to the General Assembly for redeployment from United Nations Headquarters (DIESA and DTCD) to ECWA:

- One P-4 for strengthening the Economic Survey of the ECWA Countries (to be decentralized from DIESA).
- One L-5 for regional advisory services in financial management (to be decentralized from DTCD).

The other activities identified by the Executive Secretary and which could not be accommodated through redeployment were forwarded by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly as "further proposals of the Commissions in priority areas". These included for ECWA:

- One P-3 for Programme Planning and Coordination;
- One P-4 for Ocean Economics and Technology; and,
- One P-3 for Integrated Transport Planning (low-cost roads in arid areas).

8. At its 34th session, the General Assembly approved the redeployment of the posts from the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs and the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development. The additional proposals were, however, not approved and were kept in abeyance pending the review by the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) at its 20th session of the Secretariat's study on the policy and programme issues relating to the distribution of tasks and responsibilities between the regional commissions and other United Nations Units, Programmes and Organs concerned. The CPC will report on the result of its review to the thirty-fifth session.

9. In connexion with the General Assembly's decision on the matter, the Secretariat is of the view that the need for "further proposals" results - as is the case with the approved decentralized posts - from the restructuring of the social and economic sectors of the United Nations system which emphasizes increased roles of regional economic commissions as main centres for social and economic development. Hence, the needs of the Commission in these areas should be met through supplementary estimates if such needs can not be accommodated through a redeployment of resources.

10. Human Settlements

The General Assembly, in its resolution 32/162 of 19 December 1977, on institutional arrangements for international co-operation in the field of human settlements, provided the policy framework for consultations and co-operation between the regional commissions and the newly established United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). In that resolution, the Assembly called upon the Centre to supplement the resources of the regions

in formulating and implementing human settlements projects when so required. It also recommended the establishment of regional committees and secretariat units within the regional commissions devoted exclusively to human settlements. It further recommended that the budgetary and personnel resources available to each regional secretariat unit should consist of those available from the regular budgetary resources and those redeployed from the aggregate posts available to the central secretariat, voluntary contributions, including those made to the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundations, as well as selected resources currently available to each region.

In accordance with these provisions, consultations were held at the working level between the Centre and the regional commissions on the work programme for 1980-1981, which identifies the activities to be carried out at the national, regional and global levels and the resources required at each of these levels.

ECWA's programme budget, 1980-1981 (E/ECWA/74) for human settlements was based on the assumption of a redeployment of two professional posts and one local-level post from the Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) to ECWA. However, since the number of posts at Habitat left no margin for redeployment, the Secretary-General submitted proposals for additional resources consisting for ECWA of 2 professionals and one local-level post. Taking into account the recommendation of the ACABQ which considered that it needed more time to review this question, the General Assembly approved these resources as temporary assistance for one year (1980) only. During 1980, Headquarters will resubmit its proposals to the General Assembly.

11. UNCTAD

UNCTAD has expressed its readiness to consult with the regional commissions in order to explore ways and means of decentralizing activities relating to economic co-operation among developing countries to the regional commissions. To this end, a technical meeting of representatives of regional commissions was convened in October 1979 to review the subject matter.

No definite concrete proposals for decentralization were arrived at during this meeting, which has, however, set the point of departure for future steps and follow-up action to be taken upon review of the report of the technical meeting by the Executive Secretaries' Meeting to be held in February 1980.

12. UNDP Projects

In follow-up to resolution 32/197, the executing responsibilities pertaining to the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (Baghdad) were transferred to ECWA as of 1 November 1979. With the transfer of the executing functions for above project, ECWA is now responsible for two regional projects. The executing functions pertaining to the Arab Planning Institute were already transferred to the Commission in July 1977.

In addition, ECWA has been designated associated executing agency for the national project "Development of Statistical Services in the Yemen Arab Republic" for which the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development (DTCD) is the Executing Agency.

UNDP has expressed its readiness, in view of the importance it attaches to interregional co-operation for the promotion of technical co-operation among developing countries, to support projects which the regional commissions could develop at the interregional level in order to expedite the implementation of the Buenos Aires plan of action.

13. The Secretariat will pursue further the question of decentralization in areas identified by the Meeting of Executive Secretaries as well as in other areas.
