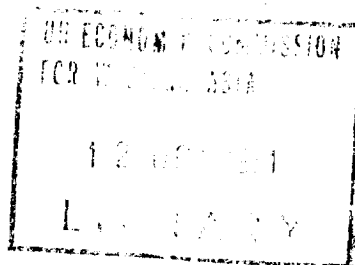




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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

Eighth session  
3-7 May 1981  
Sana'a, Yemen

Communication from the delegation of Egypt

(Note by the Executive Secretary)

On 6 May 1981 the Executive Secretary received the following communication from the head of the delegation of Egypt to the eighth session of the Commission:

"Mr. Chairman,

"May I respectfully remind the chair that the attached statement delivered by the delegation of Egypt at the eighth session of the Commission before the distinguished heads of delegation participating at the session is to be distributed and considered as an official session document.

"Accept, Sir, the expression of my highest consideration.

(signed) Mohamad Said Loutfi,  
Head of the delegation  
of Egypt"

Statement by the delegation of the Arab Republic of Egypt  
delivered at the eighth session of the Economic Commission  
for Western Asia

" Mr. Chairman:

I would like first of all to express our complete satisfaction and contentment with the decision to hold the eighth session of the Economic Commission for Western Asia at Sana'a in our sister country of Yemen. The reasons for this are many:

(Our delegation is aware of the difficulties that prevented the holding of the session at Beirut and earnestly hopes that Lebanon will regain its much-deserved security and stability. The success of the Commission, however, made it imperative that the session be held on time. Accordingly, His Excellency the President of the Yemen Arab Republic and Commander-in-Chief of its armed forces, Colonel Ali Abdullah Saleh, deserves our warmest gratitude, as do the people and Government of Yemen, for consenting to act as host to the present session.

Then again, we have awaited expectantly the opportunity to return to this country and its people after such a long absence in order to marvel at the considerable cultural and material progress that has taken place in Yemen at the hands of its revolution and its leadership. Their achievements are worthy of our highest commendation, especially since they were accomplished in such a brief span of time, as pointed out by His Excellency the Prime Minister of Yemen in his address at the opening session. There is no need to restate the sentiments of the people of Egypt towards this progress; for almost every Egyptian household retains fond memories of the struggle of Yemen for its liberation and prosperity. The memory of our common struggle will always be cherished by us.

Mr. Chairman,

Permit me to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the present session, which was an expression of confidence in your abilities and an act of solidarity with your country in its struggle for economic development. I would also like to congratulate our colleagues the heads of the delegations of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Republic of Iraq, on their election as officers of the session.

Mr. Chairman,

We listened attentively to the thoughtful addresses delivered at the opening session by the Prime Minister of Yemen, the head of the delegation of Iraq in his capacity as the representative of the Chairman of the seventh session and the Executive Secretary of ECWA. My country's delegation intends to share its views concerning the serious matters put forward in those addresses. We would like at this point, however, to register the concern of the Government of Egypt regarding a number of the questions that were raised this morning.

One such point was the reference to the disparities in income that prevail within the same country and also among the different countries of the region. The economic development plan of Egypt has given absolute priority to the needs of the people in general and the people of the rural and least developed regions in particular, with special emphasis on projects dealing with food security, housing security, the construction of a firm infrastructural foundation and the improvement of infrastructure whose development was retarded on account of recent wars.

In the field of economic and technical co-operation with the developing countries and with sister Arab countries, Egypt has given these countries prior consideration in the provision of technical skills and manpower requirements for their economic development plans. The number of Egyptian technicians and workers employed in these countries has exceeded two million. In our humble opinion, this contribution is no less important than contributions in capital and equipment.

We would like to draw attention at this point to a matter that is highly indicative of our conviction that co-operation between Egypt and its sister Arab countries is inevitable. Egypt ceased to be an oil-importing country in 1976, began to export oil in 1977, and consequently, should have witnessed a reduction in the volume of its imports from the Arab countries. In fact, however, the volume of Egypt's import and export trade with the Arab countries actually doubled between 1977 and 1980.

Thus we welcome the proposal put forward by the Executive Secretary when speaking on the Joint Arab Economic Action Strategy that joint Arab economic action should be insulated from temporary disagreements among the Arab countries. The delegation of Egypt declares that it has always been its country's policy to consider all disagreements occurring within the Arab fold as temporary and insignificant. The strategic interests of the Arab people dictate that such disagreements must be overcome whatever the cost.

Mr. Chairman,

In specific response to the Syrian statement, I would like to express our deep regret that this fruitless attempt is being repeated and that the valuable time of the Commission is being repeatedly wasted on a matter that augurs no good for any of the participants at this session. The Syrian request urges the Commission to adopt resolutions on matters that are outside its competence, in order to counter Egypt's membership in the Commission and its right to participate in its activities. Confronted with this action, we can only register our full objection to and complete reservation on all recommendations that may call in question Egypt's membership or its right to participate in the work of ECWA. Any such recommendation would have to be considered as legally null and void. Our objection will be submitted in the form of a session document and my delegation reserves its right to respond in detail to the substance of the Syrian statement.

I would like at this point to ask our colleagues the heads of delegations to avoid at these meetings embarrassing departures from the purposes for which the Commission was established and to avoid transforming the Commission into an arena for vituperation and empty propaganda whose only effect would be to damage our common cause and to obstruct the work of the Commission, which needs all our time and effort for its successful completion.

We, for our part, affirm that the delegation of Egypt will strive to participate in the work of the Commission in a positive spirit and maintaining an objective attitude. It will by, however, with regret that our delegation will be obliged to respond forcefully to any attempt to slander our country, to interfere in its internal affairs or to limit its right to participate actively in the work of the Commission".