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**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION
FOR WESTERN ASIA**

Expert Group Meeting on the Development of Policies
and Programmes for the Elderly in the ESCWA Region
19-21 October 1993
Cairo

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION
FOR WESTERN ASIA

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DOCUMENT SYMBOL

AIDE-MEMOIRE

The Meeting is to be organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in collaboration with the United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, the International Institute on Aging and the Arab Centre for Development and Futuristic Research.

A. Background

Recent demographic trends have raised the prospects of a rapid ageing of population structure in countries of both the more and less developed areas. This massive potential for ageing in the near future, in contrast with the current youthfulness of much of the world's population, has critical implications in the field of socio-economic policies. The main bodies of the United Nations have been particularly concerned with these aging-related policy imperatives for over a decade. In 1978, the General Assembly decided to convene a World Assembly on Aging whose tasks would be to launch an international action programme aimed at guaranteeing social and economic security for elderly people as well as opportunities for them to contribute to national development (General Assembly resolution 33/52). The World Assembly on Aging was held in Vienna in 1982 and the participants adopted the Vienna International Plan of Action on Aging which was unanimously endorsed as the first comprehensive international instrument with regard to the elderly and which emphasized the close relationship between the ageing of population and the development process.

The General Assembly also requested that a review of the implementation of the Vienna Plan of Action be carried out regularly (General Assembly resolutions 37/51, 41/96 and 42/51) and urged Governments to intensify their efforts to implement its recommendations (General Assembly resolution 43/93). The review of the implementation of the Plan of Action was undertaken in 1984-1985, and the second review and appraisal in 1989-1990.

At the regional level, a central role was foreseen in the Plan of Action for United Nations regional commissions. It was recommended that they organize, taking into consideration the international reviews, a periodic review of regional plans. In the ESCWA region, successive national and regional declarations have drawn attention to the importance of the welfare of the elderly and of their integration into everyday social life.

The Arab Declaration on Developmental Social Welfare Policies, for instance, states that the changes taking place in population structure must be taken into account together with the social priorities and new orientations that they entail. Recent years have indeed witnessed drastic and critical changes in the political, economic and social structure of the Arab countries. These changes are, no doubt, attributable to a number of factors, the most significant being oil wealth, armed conflicts and political disturbances in a number of countries of the region together with changes in social values. First, the declining levels of fertility and significant improvement of health care will ultimately result in higher growth rates of elderly persons than those of total population in most countries of the region.

Furthermore, the traditional concept of the extended family is undergoing changes which have an increasingly negative effect on the situation of the elderly. Besides, the migration of relatively young Arab workers has left a large portion of elderly persons in the labour-sending countries (particularly in rural communities). Armed conflicts and instability in some areas of the ESCWA region affected the population structure. A study of both the humanitarian and the developmental dimensions of the issue of ageing in the ESCWA region was therefore needed. At the request of the United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, ESCWA undertook in 1989 a preliminary investigation entitled "Aging in the ESCWA region", which aimed at drawing a regional profile of the ageing by outlining major demographic trends and describing the services received by the elderly and the policies and programmes adopted in their favour. In 1993, ESCWA updated ageing-related statistical indicators and carried out a study entitled "The aging situation and its developmental implications in the ESCWA region".

This background at the international and regional level provided the ESCWA secretariat with insight into the major topics that should be brought to the attention of organizations, institutions and ministries responsible for the formulation and implementation of programmes and policies for the elderly in the countries of the ESCWA region.

B. Objectives

The Meeting is specifically aimed at providing a forum for experts: to meet and exchange information on ageing issues; to assess the major demographic and non-demographic factors affecting the growth of the elderly population in both absolute and relative ways; to review policies, programmes and services for them in countries of the region; and to study the United Nations programmes on ageing in its second decade (the strategies and global target setting for 2001). Furthermore, participants are expected to formulate and adopt the "Regional Plan of Action for 2001" with clear regional targets.

C. Participants

The Meeting will be attended by some 15 experts selected on the basis of their knowledge of the main agenda issues and of their professional experience in the field of ageing.

D. Date and venue

The Meeting is scheduled to be held in Cairo, Egypt from 19 to 21 October 1993.

E. Language

The Meeting will be conducted mainly in Arabic, and also in English whenever possible.

F. Financial arrangements

It is expected that the Meeting will be funded jointly by ESCWA and the United Nations Fund for Aging. The experts who are invited by ESCWA at the

organization's expense will be given the standard United Nations DSA in Cairo, in addition to the economy-class return ticket to/from Cairo.

G. Passports, visas and health certificates

Participants will be responsible for making the necessary arrangements in order to process the passports, visas or health certificates that might be required by the Egyptian authorities.

H. Accommodation and transportation from/to the airport

A number of good hotels are available in Cairo. In principle, participants are requested to make their own hotel reservations, making reference to their participation in the United Nations Meeting as some hotels may offer special rates. However, those who wish ESCWA to handle the booking may fill out and return the attached hotel reservation form.

The Cairo airport is located on the outskirts of the city of Cairo. Taxis and buses are readily available.

I. Channels of communications

All correspondence concerning the Meeting should be addressed to:

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