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**Economic and Social Commission  
for Western Asia**

Eighteenth session  
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Beirut

Item 8 of the provisional agenda

**REPORT ON THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED PURSUANT TO RESOLUTION  
175 (XV) ON THE STRENGTHENING OF THE ROLE AND PERFORMANCE OF THE  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA**

Note by the Executive Secretary

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- This document was also issued under the symbol E/ESCWA/C.1/18/11.

## INTRODUCTION

1. Pursuant to Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) resolution 175 (XV) of 18 May 1989, the Executive Secretary, in a letter dated 27 April 1995, addressed an invitation to the heads of the diplomatic missions of the ESCWA member States who were accredited to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Jordanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to attend a meeting of the Advisory Committee in Amman on 3 May 1995. In his letter, the Executive Secretary suggested that the meeting be dedicated to the discussion of the items on the agenda of the eighteenth session of the Commission, to be held in Beirut on 24 and 25 May 1995.

### I. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

2. The Executive Secretary opened the meeting of the Advisory Committee, held at the Marriott Hotel in Amman, at 10.15 a.m. on Wednesday, 3 May 1995. The meeting was attended by a number of heads of diplomatic missions of ESCWA member States accredited to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

### II. DELIBERATIONS

3. The Executive Secretary delivered an opening statement in which he referred to ESCWA resolution 175 (XV) of 18 May 1989 on strengthening of the role and performance of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, stressing the need to revitalize the Advisory Committee whose creation was called for by the resolution and render its role more active.

4. He referred briefly to recent global developments, both political and economic, including the conclusion of the Uruguay Round and GATT-94, as well as the formation of new groups such as the Single European Market and the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA), all of which call for preparedness and cooperation at the regional level.

5. He mentioned the conditions under which ESCWA came into being and under which it operates in the region, where there exist numerous other regional organizations with broader memberships, such as the League of Arab States, and with more abundant financial means, such as the various Arab development funds. While the history of ESCWA was not brilliant, it was nevertheless important, and the time had come to examine the Commission's role—a role that should not encroach on that of any other organization, but should rather make an additional contribution. The challenge was to examine essential issues objectively and, at the same time, with a vision of the future. He alluded in that connection to the issue of water resources, whose scope extended beyond the ESCWA region, and environmental issues.

6. In a presentation of the activities of the secretariat, he emphasized the importance of providing technical assistance to member States and the role of the regional advisers in that connection. He also stressed the need to apply an integrated approach covering specific sectors of the Commission's work.

7. He mentioned the need for ongoing contact between the member States and the secretariat and proposed the creation of a joint mini-committee comprising the diplomatic missions in the host country of the Commission's headquarters and the secretariat.

8. A discussion took place on the question, raised by the head of one of the diplomatic missions, whether the creation of a mini-committee meant the exclusion of some States. The Executive Secretary, in his reply, expressed the desire that all heads of diplomatic missions should take part, but pointed out that the purpose

of such a committee was to serve as a task force for the discussion of relevant issues. Another representative mentioned that the resolution on the creation of the Advisory Committee made no reference to the participation of a representative of the host country of ESCWA headquarters. A third representative spoke of practical problems curtailing his ability to take part in the meetings of the Advisory Committee or the proposed mini-committee owing to the fact that the resources of his diplomatic mission were limited. It was further pointed out that diplomatic missions, being simple intermediaries, were not able to take decisions without referring back to their capitals. The Executive Secretary drew attention to the important role of such intermediaries and the fact that they could serve as effective, permanent links between the member States and the secretariat. Communication, he said, was an important issue in the preparation and coordination of requests. In replying to a question raised by one of the heads of diplomatic missions, he stated that the secretariat was currently correcting correspondence procedures and that the reason why multiple copies of the same publication were sometimes sent to embassies might be to maximize their benefit by distributing them to numerous government agencies in the capitals. Nevertheless, that observation would be examined by the secretariat.

9. The agenda of the eighteenth session of the Commission was distributed among the participants. A representative of the secretariat outlined the discussions that had taken place at previous meetings of the Advisory Committee and said that the related minutes could be sent to the agencies concerned.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

10. The meeting unanimously decided:

(a) To recommend amending resolution 175 (XV) of 18 May 1989 on strengthening of the role and performance of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, so that its operative paragraph 1, sub-paragraph (a), would read as follows:

"1. Decides:

"(a) To invite member States to set up an advisory body comprising the heads of their diplomatic missions in the host country and a representative of the host country to assist the Executive Secretary in the study of problems connected with the work of the Commission;"

(b) To recommend entrusting the secretariat with the drafting of the rules of procedure of the Advisory Committee and submitting them to the member States;

(c) To recommend that the secretariat, in cooperation with the representatives of the member States, should make the necessary preparations for meetings of the Advisory Committee;

(d) To recommend that the Advisory Committee should be convened at least once a year.

11. The meeting, which was also attended by a number of secretariat officials, rose at 11.15 a.m.

Annex

175 (XV). Strengthening of the role and performance of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Taking advantage of the fifteenth anniversary of the establishment of the Commission, and being convinced of the importance of the mission it performs in the service of economic and social development in the region of Western Asia,

Taking note of the report issued in February 1989 on the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia prepared by the Joint Inspection Unit<sup>1/</sup> and of the views put forward in the report as to the benefits that could be derived from further development of the Commission as an effective tool for regional cooperation and economic development in the member States,

1. Decides:

(a) To invite member States to set up an advisory body comprising the heads of their diplomatic missions in Iraq to assist the Executive Secretary in the study of problems connected with the work of the Commission;

(b) To invite member States and institutions of the region to make optimum use of the Commission as a medium for cooperation, coordination, operational research and project execution in the economic and social fields;

(c) To invite member States and regional funds and institutions to make the necessary financial contributions and to sponsor some of the projects which the secretariat is carrying out, so as to enable it to follow up present and future issues in member States;

(d) To invite member States to encourage competent nationals of their countries to serve in the secretariat and to second some of their civil servants for service in the secretariat, in accordance with arrangements to be agreed upon and pursuant to its resolution 161 (XIV) of 5 April 1987 on human and financial resources: vacancies in the secretariat;

2. Requests the United Nations Secretariat to give effect to General Assembly resolution 39/243 of 18 December 1984 on the staff and administrative questions of the Economic Commission for Western Asia and to take into account the circumstances of the secretariat relating to staff reductions;

3. Requests the Executive Secretary to prepare, in consultation with the member States, a report containing proposals and recommendations for the strengthening of the role and performance of the Commission and to submit this report to the Commission at its sixteenth session for its consideration and for the adoption of a resolution on the subject.

3rd plenary meeting  
18 May 1989

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<sup>1/</sup> E/ESCWA/C.1/15/11, to be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session under the symbol JIU/REP/89/1.

