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**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia**

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**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION****PROGRESS MADE DURING 2002 IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2002-2003***Technical Cooperation Activities***A. INTRODUCTION**

1. ESCWA has continued to undertake technical cooperation activities in the region. These are complementary to its normative and analytical activities and ensure continued links to development realities on the ground. The main strategic task of technical cooperation is to enable member States to fulfil commitments that have emerged at global conferences and summits, in addition to those related to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

2. At present, the Secretary-General is conducting a review of technical cooperation activities in the context of his reform plan, entitled *Strengthening the United Nations: an agenda for further change (A/57/387)*. Indeed, the roles and responsibilities of the multiple United Nations entities involved in the tasks of technical cooperation and capacity-building have become confused and complex. It is therefore imperative to ensure a clear division of labour, with the goal of avoiding duplication and achieving optimum and effective use of resources and more effective interactions among entities.

3. To this end, the Secretary-General has established guiding principles. These state that the responsibility for a given technical cooperation activity lies with the entity that is substantively best-equipped to assume it; that collaboration is required among leading agencies and United Nations entities; that United Nations entities must benefit from knowledge or expertise originating from outside the United Nations system; and that technical cooperation must be delivered by entities that have an established field presence and experience.

4. Within this frame of reference, regional commissions affirm that their leading role in the area of technical cooperation can be attributed to their local dimension. This grants them advantages over other entities and ensures their ability to be cost effective in dealing with issues pertaining to member countries. Regional commissions are in a strong position to strengthen the capacity-building of member States with regard to the implementation and monitoring of common international goals and are well equipped to disseminate good practices and update information concerning strategies for addressing regional priorities.

5. The leading role of ESCWA and its proven expertise with regard to technical cooperation assistance to member States has been confirmed repeatedly. Since its inception, the mandate of the Commission has been concerned with regional economic and social development. Its main objective has been to contribute to the capacity-building of its member States, largely through operational work in the field and by providing advisory services to member States.

6. ESCWA is the leading agency at the regional level according to the Joint Inspection Unit Report of 2002, *United Nations System Regional Presence and Coordination: the Case of Arab Countries*. Moreover, the report implies that ESCWA must take a leading role with regard to integrating normative and technical activities, bearing in mind the needs of the region and those of its member States.

7. Technical cooperation expertise, through which regional commissions have consolidated their normative, analytical and operational programmes, with a focus on priority areas, has contributed to capacity-building and has promoted an integrated approach to development.

8. However, despite the substantial regional contribution of ESCWA in the area of technical cooperation, activities related to advocacy and technical assistance must be further streamlined, strengthened and confirmed. ESCWA is attempting to establish strong links between its regular programme of work and technical assistance activities and regional advisory services, based on priorities that have been identified in its programme of work. In addition, further financial support would enable ESCWA to expand its services in areas where activities can be specifically tailored to the direct needs of member States. Increased support from member States with regard to the operational, normative and analytical programmes of the Commission is essential to ensure that economic and social development goals are met at the country level, and for increased efficiency in the implementation of common objectives and goals at the international level.

## B. TECHNICAL COOPERATION ACTIVITIES AT THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL \*

### 1. *Training*

9. The purpose of training workshops has been to assist member countries in the area of capacity-building. These have focused on local community development; rational utilization of energy; increasing farm water-use efficiency; use of development indicators; population issues and the Population Policies Information System; production and utilization of gender statistics; national follow-up to global conferences; adoption of SNA 1993; management of water resources; increased understanding and improved negotiation skills pertaining to World Trade Organization (WTO) issues; and improved entrepreneurial skills for small and medium enterprises.

### 2. *Projects*

10. Technical cooperation relies on the formulation and implementation of projects. Moreover, the implementation of projects is largely dependant on the availability of extrabudgetary resources and/or cooperation with other organizations and United Nations bodies and agencies. Such projects are reviewed as follows:

(a) ESCWA completed the implementation of a pilot project, funded by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). This was concerned with generating activities for persons with disabilities. In addition, ESCWA and DESA co-financed, and are implementing a follow-up to the Braille Computer Training Project in Lebanon by establishing an online Braille service. The aim of this activity is to improve employment opportunities for those who are visually impaired and to establish a Documentation Centre for the dissemination of information concerning the latest information and communication technologies for the

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\* The text in Section B, 2, is largely extracted from the Report of the Executive Secretary on the Activities of the Commission (E/ESCWA/22/4(Part II)/Add.1).

blind. The project included a series of workshops on self-reliance and the employment of disabled persons and a Meeting on Disability Measurements (Cairo, 1-5 June 2002);

(b) ESCWA initiated a number of projects under the Development Account, which is administered by DESA for the biennium 2002-2003. These included the following:

- (i) Networking of Expertise on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the Member States;
- (ii) Capacity-building in Developing Interregional Land and Land-cum-sea Transport Linkages in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Economic Commission for Africa (ECA);
- (iii) Strengthening Statistical Capacity in the ESCWA region. The project aims to strengthen national statistical systems in the countries of the ESCWA region and to promote interregional cooperation among these countries;
- (iv) Capacity-building in Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business in the Mediterranean;

(c) ESCWA collaborated with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in implementing a project on Networking of Expertise on FDI in the Member States of ESCWA. To this end, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between UNCTAD and ESCWA in May 2002. Under the umbrella of this project, a Regional Workshop on International Methodological Standards for Data Compilation on Foreign Direct Investment was organized (Beirut, 28 October – 1 November 2002);

(d) ESCWA has developed joint fields of cooperation in the areas of social development with the national offices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the Arab world;

(e) ESCWA and UNDP are jointly implementing a project on gender statistics and poverty issues. The project, initiated in 1997, aims to strengthen the capacities of Arab countries with regard to the production, use and dissemination of gender statistics that are likely to influence policies and promote changes for the benefit and empowerment of women;

(f) ESCWA and UNDP/Lebanon co-organized a Workshop on Water Tarrification and Groundwater Legislation in Lebanon (Beirut, 17 January 2003) under the umbrella of the National Policy Framework for Water Resources in Lebanon. This project aims to strengthen the capacities of major government institutions in the area of integrated water resources management;

(g) Cooperation between ESCWA and UNDP/Jordan has been centred on the implementation of two projects, Regional Support for UNDP Programme and Pipeline Development and Towards Integrated Social Development Policies in Jordan;

(h) ESCWA is providing assistance to UNDP/Iraq with regard to the formulation of a national human development report. Furthermore, UNDP/Egypt and UNDP/Syrian Arab Republic are administering the financial monitoring of ESCWA local community development field projects in their respective countries.

#### C. COOPERATION WITH FUNDING AGENCIES

11. ESCWA has maintained efforts to establish contacts with funding agencies to provide assistance with regard to capacity-building in member countries.

12. Regional organizations, including the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and the Islamic Development Bank have provided assistance to ESCWA with regard to implementing certain technical assistance activities.

13. For example, ESCWA and the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations collaborated on a number of projects pertaining to community development services, training of local community development workers and Braille computer training for the blind.

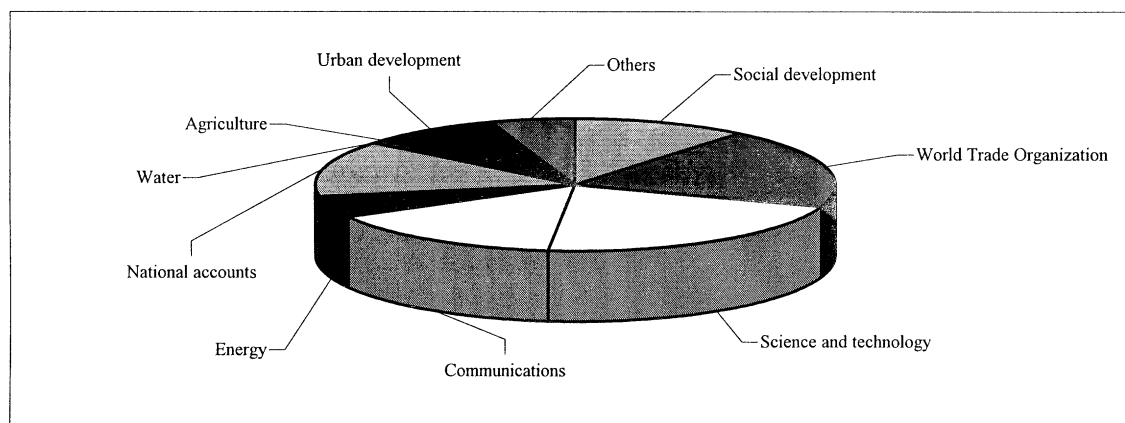
14. In the past, the joint efforts of ESCWA and the French Fund and the Dutch Fund were instrumental in promoting technical cooperation. At present, the German Fund, composed of the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources of Germany (BGR) and the German Institute of Technical Cooperation (GTZ), are financing a regional project on water resources, which is of primary importance to ESCWA and its member States.

#### D. ADVISORY SERVICES

15. Short-term regional advisory services continue to support technical cooperation activities in the region. The purpose of providing regional advisory services is to assist member States in solving problems encountered in national and development efforts. These services are provided with regard to the preparation and implementation of national policies, plans and programmes, and in relation to capacity-building activities organized for officials of member States who bear policy-making, planning and management responsibilities. In addition, they are provided with regard to the identification and formulation of projects.

16. Within the framework of the ESCWA regular programme of regional advisory services for 2002, assistance to member States and organizations was rendered in the following areas: energy, international trade, social development, urban development and housing, statistics (national accounts and economic statistics), science and technology, telecommunications and computer networking and water resources. The figure below presents an overview of advisory services in 2002, by field. The table in the annex features the number of missions rendered to member States during 2002.

**Figure. Overview of advisory services in 2002, by field**



Source: Compiled by ESCWA, from various sources.

17. Regional advisors participated in a number of specialized meetings at the regional, subregional and national levels. Their substantive participation included often presentation of papers.

18. The advisory services provided during the above-mentioned period are summarized in the following paragraphs.

19. With regard to *energy*, assistance was provided to the following countries and organizations in the areas specified below:

(a) *Bahrain*: Advice to the Ministry of Electricity and Water on the use of water heaters operating on solar energy in the industrial and commercial sector; the use of solar energy in street lighting; and on conducting a seminar on the importance of solar energy and its applications;

(b) *Jordan*: Advice to the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources concerning an energy consumption survey in the industrial sector.

20. With regard to *international trade*, assistance was provided to the following countries and organizations in the areas specified below:

(a) *Lebanon*: Review of draft agreements concerning the establishment of a free trade area for the Ministry of Energy and Water;

(b) *Qatar*: Advice to the Planning Council with regard to preparing a study on WTO Agreements and their relation to consumer protection;

(c) *Yemen*: Review of a draft memorandum for submission to WTO on the foreign trade system of Yemen.

21. Other activities included participation in several training workshops and seminars in Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia and the preparation of technical papers and the delivery of lectures on WTO issues and policies.

22. With regard to *social development*, assistance was provided to the following countries and organizations in the areas specified below:

(a) *Bahrain*: A group of ESCWA experts assisted the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs with regard to an ESCWA project on social policies and provided advice on conducting a training workshop on the preparation of a national report on the implementation and evaluation of social development projects;

(b) *Iraq*: Advice to the General Federation of Iraqi Women on a project concerned with improving the situation of women;

(c) *Jordan*: Formulation of a programme of action related to 21 proposed projects for the development of the youth sector in Jordan;

(d) *Qatar*: Creation of a questionnaire on the issue of the social conditions of the family in Qatar for the Family Development Centre and collaboration with regard to preparations for a workshop on strategic planning;

(e) *United Arab Emirates*: Advice on policies to be adopted by a human development resources programme and on requirements pertaining to labour plans for higher education institutes;

(f) *Yemen*: Preparation of proposals to improve activities and future projects of the recently established Ministry of Technical Education and Vocational Training.

23. With regard to *urban development and housing*, assistance was provided to the following countries and organizations in the areas specified below:

(a) *Bahrain*: Advice on the formulation of housing policy and shelter strategy;

(b) *Lebanon*: Advice on the implementation of a technical assistance project concerned with the upgrading of skills and small business capacities in South Lebanon;

(c) *Egypt*: Advice on organizing a regional Arab conference concerning improving standards of living through sustainable urban development for the General Organization for Physical Planning;

24. With regard to *water resources*, assistance was provided to the following countries and organizations in the areas specified below:

(a) *Bahrain*: Advice on the indoor treatment and reuse of wastewater (grey water);

(b) *Syrian Arab Republic*: Advice to the Ministry of Irrigation on a project concerned with the recycling of treated wastewater in Qatana, and to the Ministry of Communications on a national water desalination and treatment strategy.

25. With regard to *national accounts and economic statistics*, assistance was provided to the following countries and organizations in the areas specified below:

(a) *Oman*: The development of a statistical mechanism in relation to manpower for the biannual report on Government employment statistics; recommendations to the Ministry of Civil Service concerning two projects on manpower statistics and manpower planning, and advice to the Ministry of National Economy on procedures to be implemented in the finance section pertaining to the application of SNA 1993;

(b) *Syrian Arab Republic*: Advice on an economic survey pertaining to SNA 1993 and advice on the construction of supply and use tables for the Central Bureau of Statistics;

(c) *United Arab Emirates*: Advice to the National Accounts Department of the Ministry of Planning pertaining to SNA 1993. In addition, assistance was provided with regard to an economic survey plan, field training, customs declaration forms for foreign trade statistics and the new statistical form for inter-Gulf States trade traffic, for the Directorate of Statistics; further advice was provided on a statistical system, data collection, tabulation and processing of data and manpower statistics for the Dubai Municipality.

26. With regard to *science and technology*, assistance was provided to the following countries and organizations in the areas specified below:

(a) *Iraq*: Advice to the Ministry of Planning on the creation of technology incubators, and on a technology transfer mechanism for the National Committee for Technology Transfer;

(b) *Kuwait*: Advice on a development of information and technology (IT) project;

(c) *Lebanon*: Advice to the National Council for Scientific Research of the National Centre for Remote Sensing on presenting a draft contribution to the national policy for Science and Technology, and on drafting a project document concerning a technology incubator;

(d) *Saudi Arabia*: Advice on the application of an e-government project for the Ministry of Planning and on the Comprehensive National Plan for Science and Technology within the framework of the national Long-term Development Plan 2001-2020, jointly prepared by King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology and the Ministry of Planning;

(e) *Syrian Arab Republic*: Preparation of a document on the creation of a technology park for the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre and advice pertaining to the Syrian Industrial Strategy for the Ministry of Industry;

(f) *United Arab Emirates*: Coordination with Al Ain University on revitalizing scientific partnerships among universities, research centres and institutions;

(g) *Yemen*: Development of e-government and e-learning projects and advice on segments of the second five-year development plan.

27. With regard to *telecommunications and computer networking*, assistance was provided to the following countries and organizations in the areas specified below:

(a) *Lebanon*: Preparation of a document pertaining to a mobile IT project, within the framework of assistance to South Lebanon;

(b) *Oman*: Advice on data communication speed for existing network performance and security measures, on technical connectivity requirements and on computerization plans for the application of human resources for the Ministry of Civil Service;

(c) *Qatar*: Advice on an implementation mechanism pertaining to an IT centre for the Supreme Council for Family Affairs;

(d) *Syrian Arab Republic*: Advice to the Ministry of Communications on enhancement and upgrading telecommunications infrastructure; appropriate modalities were proposed for conducting related studies and investigation.

Annex

NUMBER OF MISSIONS RENDERED TO ESCWA MEMBER STATES DURING 2002

Country	Fields																								
	Water		World Trade Organization		Social development		Science and technology		Communication		National accounts		Energy		Agriculture		Urban development		Substantive divisions		Number of missions				
	Mission	Days	Mission	Days	Mission	Days	Mission	Days	Mission	Days	Mission	Days	Mission	Days	Mission	Days	Mission	Days	Mission	Days	Mission	Days			
Jordan	..	..	2	19	1	13	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	70	6	
United Arab Emirates	..	..	..	..	3	19	3	16	1	2	3	17	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	59	10	
Bahrain	1	10	..	..	1	6	1	3	..	..	..	..	2	17	..	..	1	6	1	4	..	..	46	7	
Saudi Arabia	..	..	3	13	..	..	4	31	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	44	7	
Iraq	..	..	..	..	1	12	2	16	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	28	3	
Kuwait	..	..	2	9	..	..	1	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	11	3	
Yemen	..	..	2	10	1	11	1	7	2	11	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	39	5	
Syrian Arab Republic	..	..	..	..	..	..	4	13	2	6	1	11	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	39	11	
Oman	..	..	..	..	1	3	1	4	1	6	2	10	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	23	5	
Palestine	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Qatar	..	..	..	..	2	16	..	..	4	14	3	12	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	46	10
Lebanon	..	..	10	21	..	0	6	12	5	11	3	14	1	3	..	..	7	47	..	..	..	..	108	32	
Egypt	..	..	1	2	2	7	..	..	2	5	1	5	..	..	..	..	1	6	1	7	..	..	33	8	
Others	..	..	2	7	..	..	1	6	..	..	2	10	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	23	5
Number of missions	1	10	22	85	12	87	24	110	17	55	15	79	6	58	..	..	9	59	6	18	..	..	569	112	

Source: Compiled by ESCWA, from various sources.

Note: Two dots (..) indicate an amount that is nil or negligible.