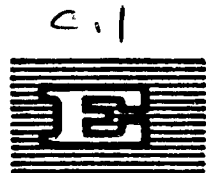
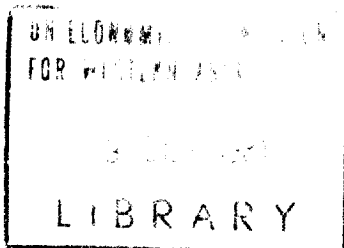




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UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Distr.
GENERAL
E/ECWA/124
1 April 1981
Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

Eighth session

3 - 7 May 1981

Sana'a, Yemen

Item 13 of the provisional agenda

Co-operation among developing countries

81-3906

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I. Introduction

1. The purpose of this report is to highlight the activities and efforts of ECWA during 1980 in relation to the promotion of co-operation among developing countries and to bring to the attention of the Commission the decisions of both the Arab Regional Meeting on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries (Geneva, 21-23 May 1980) and the High-Level Meeting on the Review of Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries (Geneva, 26 May - 2 June 1980).

2. As part of the over-all effort of the United Nations system and within the framework of the pertinent international resolutions and those of ECWA, the secretariat continued to monitor, review and undertake promotional, operational and supporting activities, with a view to intensifying co-operation among developing countries and regional integration.

II. Promotional activities

A. Publications

3. ECWA publishes a number of periodicals which are designed to disseminate factual information on member countries' needs and capacities and to raise issues concerning co-operation and regional integration in specific areas of socio-economic development. The following publications were issued in 1980:

- (a) The Survey of Economic and Social Development in the ECWA Region;
- (b) The 1980 Statistical Abstract of the Economic Commission for Western Asia;
- (c) Studies on Development Problems in Countries of Western Asia;
- (d) The third volume of the annual bulletin, Agriculture and Development;
- (e) Three issues of the Population Bulletin of the United Nations Economic Commission for Western Asia.

4. Efforts are still under-way to raise funds to develop a directory of training courses and programmes, consultancy services and experts available in countries of the ECWA region.

B. Research and reports

5. Studies, reports and other activities relevant to the promotion of regional co-operation and integration which were undertaken during 1980, within the context of the current work programme of ECWA for the biennium 1980-1981, covered a number of substantive areas.
6. On the basis of the resolutions and recommendations of the United Nations Water Conference which constituted the Mar del Plata Action Plan (Argentina, 1977), ECWA undertook a major study concerning the appraisal of water resources, which was completed in 1980. The study deals with matters such as the strengthening of the existing mechanisms and the development of new ones for the purpose of collecting and disseminating data and information on the three interconnected aspects of water resources in the ECWA region: assessment, management and administration, and the conservation of water resources. One of the major conclusions of this study is that unilateral arrangements for the development of water resources cannot lead to an effective and purposeful utilization of those resources unless there is a definite knowledge about the watersheds' main parameters, such as their geomorphology, hydrology, hydrometeorology, agrometeorology, climate, soil vegetation and related socio-economic conditions. One of the major recommendations of the study is that the identification of such parameters and the formulation of projects to tackle water-related problems calls for the closely integrated co-ordination of the financial and technical resources of the region. Furthermore, one programme element in the current work programme deals specifically with the promotion of technical co-operation in the field of water resources development. In this context, a catalogue describing the recent publications on the current or executed water projects in the region is under preparation. A plan of action identifying alternatives for regional co-operation in the water sector will also be formulated. In addition, a report reviewing the preparatory activities in the ECWA region for the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade has been completed. The report touches on regional co-operation issues and deals, inter alia, with institutional arrangements.

7. In the area of science and technology, data have been collected and classified in relation to the project on the analysis of the role, functioning and development of design and engineering capabilities in the ECWA region. Furthermore, a plan of action has been drafted in preparation for a seminar on technology policies in the Arab States, to be held in 1981.

8. In response to pertinent General Assembly resolutions on the full permanent sovereignty of every State over its natural resources (320, (S-VI) and 3281 (XXIX)), a study on natural mining codes and their impact on large-scale exploration in the ECWA region was completed in 1980. The study takes a country-by-country approach to the problems of the identification of the legal basis of mining codes; its major aim is to show how improvement in mining codes can increase possibilities for the efficient exploitation of available and newly discovered mineral resources. Mining is a high-risk industry requiring strong incentives for attracting potential investors. One of the most important recommendations of this study states that, by modernizing the existing mineral codes and formulating an over-all mining policy, it is possible to design and integrate a cohesive method for the utilization of natural mines, so as to further regional socio-economic integration. The major components of such a mining policy as they affect technical co-operation among developing countries are the exploration of new mining deposits on the basis of co-operative effort at the regional level, the raising of the required capital, the provision of employment opportunities, the promotion of regional development, and the integration of the least developed ECWA member States within a common framework.

9. In relation to the International Year of the Disabled and as a follow-up to ECWA resolution 87 (VII), a study on the situation of disabled persons in the ECWA region has been prepared. This issue is to be considered at the eighth session of the Commission under item 6 (b) of the provisional agenda.

10. In the area of rural development, the Commission adopted resolution 82 (VII), which endorsed a programme of action in agrarian reform and rural development for the ECWA region. The programme envisages promotional activities in technical co-operation pertaining to vocational and professional training and research activities in developing countries. The following up to this resolution is reported under the relevant agenda item.

C. Programming and planning

11. In the preparation of the 1982-1983 work programme of the Commission, special attention was given to the question of co-operation among developing countries, which affected virtually all substantive programmes. Furthermore, a specific programme element relating to the promotion of technical co-operation among developing countries was introduced under the heading Programme Planning and Co-ordination. Activities under this element pertain to focal-point functions in co-operation among developing countries; the follow-up to the Buenos Aires Plan of Action for Promoting and Implementing Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries and subsequent high-level meetings, including participation in and the provision of inputs for the high-level meeting in 1983; the identification, formulation and development of appropriate types of technical and economic co-operation among countries of the region; the co-ordination and development of co-operation programmes with existing and new economic groupings in the ECWA region, as well as the Arab world and at the interregional level; the systematic dissemination of information on economic and technical co-operation activities at the regional and interregional levels for the benefit of countries of the ECWA region; and the appraisal of policies and programmes of regional and interregional groupings.

12. Economic and technical co-operation among developing countries will be considered a priority area for programming during the Medium-term Plan period 1984-1989, technical co-operation being regarded as a major instrument for promoting economic co-operation, since these two spheres of co-operation are interrelated and complementary. In this connexion, it can be added that, in order to forge and promote trade and other economic links at the regional and global levels, the crucial role of ECWA in the forthcoming planning period 1984-1989 should be the co-ordination and activation of technical co-operation activities which would create closer ties, deepen the co-operative experience of the ECWA region, provide for further regional integration and contribute to the achievement of the objectives of ECWA in economic

co-operation among developing countries. Thus, in order for ECWA, as a regional development body, actively to carry out the mandates it has received from its own legislative bodies and the recommendations of international and regional forums, the Medium-term Plan, 1984-1989, should include a programme covering the following objectives:

(a) To accelerate the process of correspondence and the submission of questionnaires, so as to reach substantive units within private and government organizations at those subregional levels where actual technical co-operation needs can be identified and decisions made;

(b) To establish and co-ordinate at all levels a regional information system for gathering data on technical co-operation needs;

(c) To develop a strategy for strengthening the research capacities of institutes and academic centres in the ECWA region and for linking such activities with those of inter-regional and intra-regional research institutes;

(d) To intensify programmes for the specialized training of professionals and experts through the provision of national, subregional and regional training courses in subjects of top-priority interest;

(e) To organize small and manageable subregional and regional meetings for the benefit of experts in the region, for the purpose of their exchanging experience on specific subjects, engaging in discussion, sharing the results of research findings and analysing development processes in the region and in the world;

(f) To develop human resources, particularly through education and training;

(g) To expand capabilities in the area of science and technology;

(h) To collaborate in the formulation and implementation of trilateral co-operative programmes in which developing countries with financial capacity participate, in order to facilitate technical co-operation among them;

(i) To strengthen contacts with national and regional focal points in technical co-operation among developing countries;

(j) To collaborate, at the request of Governments, in preparing programmes and identifying feasible and cost-effective regional and subregional projects for technical and economic co-operation among developing countries;

(k) To organize consultative meetings between Governments and national regional groups on methods of action in technical co-operation;

(l) To collaborate with the secretaries of regional financial funds, free trade groups, economic groupings and producers' associations and other sectoral subregional systems and with regional and subregional development and industrial banks, in areas which offer potential for technical and economic co-operation;

(m) To collaborate with appropriate regional and subregional economic groupings, at their request, in identifying and preparing joint projects with the aim of promoting the development of participating countries;

(n) To assist in the exchange and adaptation of experience with regard to development plans and strategies and in the linking of economic integration and free trade systems;

(o) To assist with programmes for the exchange of technical staff between similar specialized institutions at the regional and interregional levels.

III. Operational activities

A. Meetings

13. A number of meetings, seminars and workshops were held by ECWA during 1980 and constituted a major means for promoting technical co-operation among developing countries and establishing a basis of self-sustaining co-operation and integration.

14. The Regional Seminar on Alternative Patterns of Development and Life Styles in Western Asia was held jointly by ECWA and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) at Beirut from 21 to 25 January 1980. Preparations for this meeting included three preparatory and co-ordination meetings. Among the objectives of the Seminar

were the promotion of awareness of alternative policies, institutional frameworks, and action and regional co-operation conducive to environmentally sound development and life styles in Western Asia. As a follow-up, the Commission adopted resolution 81 (VII) entitled "Inclusion of a programme on the environment in the work programme of the Economic Commission for Western Asia". The further follow-up to this question is being reported on under the relevant item (item 6 (b) of the provisional agenda).

15. ECWA held a seminar on the Arab brain-drain at Beirut (4-8 February 1980). The Seminar focused on the movement of highly skilled manpower, analysing its causes and effects, as well as the mechanics of this phenomenon. It reviewed the experiences of certain Arab countries in this connexion and proposed possible courses of action. The experiences of other countries, namely Pakistan, Japan and China, in coping with the phenomenon were discussed from the point of view of their relevance to the Arab brain-drain.

16. The Intergovernmental Meeting on the Development of an Integrated Transport System in Western Asia was convened at Beirut from 3 to 7 March 1980, in accordance with ECWA resolution 73 (VI). The Meeting considered a revised study on the development of an integrated transport system for Western Asia. The study adequately took into account the desire for collective self-reliance expressed by developing countries at Arusha. Furthermore, the Meeting stressed (a) the need to strengthen existing regional bodies in order to secure better co-ordination of matters related to transport development and (b) the need for co-operation between those bodies and ECWA, in order to provide the necessary background for the support mechanism. Furthermore, the following items concerning technical co-operation were emphasized both in the study and at the Meeting:

- (i) Training, and in particular the development of regional and subregional training activities;
- (ii) Co-operation in completing missing road links, and the development of the rural transport network and of railways;
- (iii) The fostering of self-reliance in the region through the construction of dry docks for vessels, particularly small dry cargo carriers.

17. Follow-up work continues with regard to the implementation of the recommendations on transport integration in Western Asia. This subject is being considered by the Commission at its eighth session under item 7 (b) of the provisional agenda.

18. A three-week training workshop on the role of communications in integrated rural development was sponsored by ECWA in the Jordan Development Centre at Amman (5-27 September 1980). Trainees from seven member States participated. Another workshop was also held at Amman on project formulation, implementation and evaluation (16-26 June 1980). Furthermore, a national workshop on the role of women in integrated rural development and co-operatives was held at Aden in September 1980.

19. In relation to new and renewable sources of energy, reports covering solar, wind, geothermal and biogas sources of energy have been prepared. The reports cover research and development efforts, ongoing programmes and future possibilities, with an emphasis on small-scale processes and appropriate technologies for both rural and urban development in the Arab world. A draft regional report, based on consultancy reports, was presented to the ECWA Regional Preparatory Expert Group Meeting held in January 1981, which the technical, economic and policy aspects of the subject were discussed. The report of this Meeting, including its conclusions and policy recommendations, will be submitted to the United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy.^{1/} Subject to the availability of adequate funds, the possibility of organizing a regional exhibition on new and renewable sources of energy may also be considered.

20. Within the framework of regional industrial co-operation and integration, two meetings will be held in 1981 pertaining to the co-ordination of industrialization policies and to the identification of regional projects:

^{1/} Reference is made to document E/ECWA/116 for further information on this subject.

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(a) In preparation for an Expert Group Meeting on the Identification of Projects for Regional Co-operation in the Capital Goods and Heavy Engineering Industries, the following background papers, in which the feasibility of the manufacture of electronic and telecommunication equipment and components is investigated, have been prepared: (i) a paper on the feasibility of establishing a regional telecommunication industry in the ECWA region; (ii) a paper on the feasibility of establishing the manufacture of electric power equipment in the ECWA region; (iii) a paper on the establishment of a telephone cable industry in the ECWA region; (iv) a paper on the establishment of a power cable manufacturing industry in the ECWA region.

(b) In preparation for an Expert Group Meeting on Regional Co-ordination and Industry, two studies have been prepared. One, entitled "Industrialization policies in the ECWA region: an appraisal", reviews and appraises the various measures and instruments of industrial policy adopted in the countries of the region to stimulate and guide manufacturing activities. It also defines a number of adjustments in industrial policy compatible with the need for reorienting and restructuring industrial development in the region. The other preliminary study, entitled "Industrial co-operation: an alternative long-term partial industrialization strategy", reviews and analyses the various economic co-operation arrangements among Arab States during the last three decades and examines the factors which have led to the ineffectiveness of such arrangements in the past; the study outlines an alternative strategy for co-operation, advocating the development of new "package" industries that would lead to balanced benefits for countries participating in such arrangements.

21. Within the context of promoting self-reliance and strengthening subregional, regional and interregional economic co-operation schemes, ECWA is planning to convene in 1981 an Expert Group Meeting on Feasible Forms of Economic Co-operation and Integration in Western Asia. The Meeting is expected to be organized in co-operation with the League of Arab States, the Council of Arab Economic Unity (CAEU) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The objective of the Meeting is to bring about better understanding of the economic factors conducive to

economic co-operation and integration in Western Asia, and those that hinder or obstruct it; to identify forms of such co-operation to which efforts should be directed and the feasibility of and prerequisites for more advanced and workable co-operative arrangements; to formulate action-oriented alternative solutions and policy guidelines for that purpose for consideration by Governments of member States and international and regional intergovernmental organizations concerned with the promotion of closer economic relations among the countries of Western Asia.

22. In preparation for the above-mentioned Meeting, the following studies have been prepared:

(a) The study entitled "Evolution of economic co-operation and integration in Western Asia" provides an over-all view of co-operative efforts and traces the evolution of the institutional machinery and the various forms which this co-operation has assumed. It focuses on intraregional trade promotion arrangements, efforts to expand and diversify industrial and agricultural production, the development of infrastructures, financial and technical co-operation, and the harmonization of development plans and policies.

(b) The "Compendium of Intraregional Trade Statistics in Western Asia, 1972, 1974 and 1976" provides the background data for an in-depth analysis of intraregional trade, with a view to exploring the potential for expanding intraregional trade on the basis of existing production patterns and/or the creation of new production lines.

(c) The study entitled "Main obstacles to and benefits from closer economic co-operation in Western Asia" is concerned with the examination of the factors underlying the limited effectiveness of regional economic co-operation, with the conditions governing intraregional movements of factors of production and with the prerequisites for realizing potential gains and the dynamics of closer integration.

The following two studies are in course of preparation for the Meeting:

(a) The study to be entitled "Commodity trade and factor movement in Western Asia" will analyse the flow of goods, labour and capital among the countries of Western Asia, with a view to highlighting the problems faced and the prospects of bringing about close economic co-operation.

(b) The study to be entitled "Towards a practical approach to economic co-operation and integration in Western Asia" aims to identify - in the light of conditions prevailing in the region and of member countries' experiences with various forms of co-operation and integration efforts, as well as extraregional experiences in this respect - feasible and viable forms of co-operation and the conditions that would need to be fulfilled for their realization.

B. Advisory services

23. ECWA continued to provide technical advisory services to countries of the region, which covered in 1980 the following: development planning, industrial projects identification and formulation; human resources development; statistics and national accounts; the social aspects of human settlements; population statistics; agricultural projects identification and formulation; the economic aspects of energy development; and development finance and Customs administration.^{2/}

C. Institutional support

24. ECWA has continued to support regional training and research institutes. It has been acting as an executing agency of the Arab Planning Institute for Development (RAB/77/002). The Institute conducted, during the academic year 1979/80, short and long-term training courses covering development planning, advanced planning techniques, financial planning and budget preparation, the implementation and follow-up of development plans, project identification and preparation, and plan preparation. In addition, a seminar on the prospects of Arab development in the 1980s and a seminar on problems of housing and human settlements were held. Another institute for which ECWA is an executing agency is the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics (RAB/79/028). The Institute offered, during the academic year 1979/80, two annual long-term courses in applied statistics, short-term courses covering livestock statistics and family budget statistics, and a middle-level country course in applied statistics.

^{2/} For further details of ECWA advisory services, reference should be made to document E/ECWA/120/Add.2.

25. ECWA has also continued to develop and strengthen its relationships with regional organizations through formal arrangements which define the content and extent of co-operation. Thus, in addition to links and agreements already established with regional bodies as well as ad hoc arrangements with some Arab funds, the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) and the League of Arab States, as reported at the seventh session in document E/ECWA/94, relationships with the Federation of Arab Scientific Research Councils were formalised in 1980 by the signature of a memorandum of understanding.^{3/}

26. Within the framework of co-operation between ECWA and OAPEC concerning preparations for the United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy, including the regional preparatory meeting to be held in March, 1981, OAPEC provided the services of consultants to prepare a report on solar energy. Further co-operation will take place, in particular with regard to the Second Arab Energy Conference, scheduled for March 1982.

27. Institution-building to promote and intensify co-operation in the region has been a major preoccupation of the ECWA secretariat. In this connexion, ECWA revised the project document relating to the establishment of the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI). The document specifies the objectives of the project and deals with programmes and activities, the resources needed and the institutional framework and organization of the Institute. It is expected that AUDI will become operational in 1981.

^{3/} These arrangements cover the following regional intergovernmental organizations: the Arab funds for development (AFESD, KFAED, ADFAED), the League of Arab States (LAS), the Industrial Development Centre for Arab States (IDCAS), the Arab Labour Organization (ALO), the Arab Planning Institute (API), the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), the Arab Organization for Administrative Science (AOAS), the Arab Organization for Standardization and Metrology (AOSM), the Council of Arab Economic Unity (CAEU); the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, (AOAD), the Arab Federation for Iron and Steel (AFIS), the Arab Tourism Union (ATU), the Arab Centre for the Studies of Arid Land and Dry Areas (ACSALDA), the Arab Towns Organization, the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC), and the Federation of Arab Scientific Research Councils (FASRC).

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28. The establishment of an Arab Regional Centre for the Transfer and Development of Technology needs further co-ordination. Preparations so far have included the completion of a feasibility study, two interagency meetings and a joint meeting of representatives of Arab Governments and Arab regional organizations (held in 1978). Supported by the Commission's resolution 61 (V) and with the participation of the Federation of Arab Scientific Research Councils and the League of Arab States, a working group meeting was held in July 1979. The working group prepared a draft constitution which was later reviewed at an international meeting held in October 1979. Upon its recommendation, the constitution was then submitted to a legal committee of the League and then referred to its Economic and Social Council. The Council decided at its twenty-eighth session, held at Tunis from 11 to 13 February 1980, that the co-ordination of the work among organizations of the League of Arab States should be strengthened for the time being and gradually developed in order to establish an effective regional centre for the transfer and development of technology.

29. In order to promote regional co-operation in the field of water resources, the establishment of a regional water resources council was considered at the First Regional Water Meeting (Baghdad, December 1977), and the subject was further discussed at the Second Regional Water Meeting (Riyadh, 28 December 1978 - 3 January 1979). An ad hoc intergovernmental committee was subsequently formed and met at Damascus to discuss the possibility of establishing the Council. As a follow-up, the issue was further considered by the Commission at its seventh session in April 1980, during which resolution 83 (VII) entitled "Establishment of the Regional Water Resources Council" was adopted. The resolution states that the Regional Water Resources Council should be established and that its competence should be restricted exclusively to the co-ordination of the efforts of the regional organizations and bodies active in the field of water resources in the region. The follow-up to this resolution is reported under item 6 (b) of the provisional agenda.

IV. Measures in favour of the least developed member countries

30. Recognizing that the best method for the economic integration in the ECWA region of its least developed member countries is the promotion of balanced growth and social equity through co-operation among them, and despite the constraints caused by lack of adequate resources, ECWA continued to undertake activities in favour of those countries. In the light of this recognition, ECWA participated in the preparation of a project Work Plan and a training course on child welfare in Oman. It also provided advisory services to Oman for its new socio-economic survey and to Democratic Yemen for a household sample survey, and for manpower and agricultural surveys. Both Yemen and Democratic Yemen were assisted in developing their five-year economic plans, as well as their statistical services and national accounts. Moreover, ECWA was designated associate executing agency for the project entitled "Development of statistical services in the Yemen Arab Republic". Advisory services were also rendered to Yemen in the identification and formulation of industrial projects and to Democratic Yemen in external trade policy and planning. Further assistance to the latter country was reflected in the National Workshop on the Role of Women in Integrated Rural Development and Co-operatives, which was organized by ECWA and held at Aden from 5 to 21 September 1980. Advisory services were rendered in fact to all the three least developed countries of the ECWA region in the area of Customs administration and legislation.^{4/} In addition, these three countries have requested ECWA to nominate trainees to participate in courses offered at the Arab Institute in Kuwait and the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics at Baghdad.

^{4/} For details of ECWA advisory services, see document E/ECWA/120/Add.2.

31. Research activities undertaken for the benefit of the least developed member countries of ECWA have focused on agricultural development, food security, energy and economic development.

32. As a follow-up to studies previously undertaken on food security in Western Asian countries, and at the request of the Governments of Democratic Yemen and Yemen, a joint ECWA/FAO mission was undertaken to these two countries in October 1980, for the purpose of identifying technical assistance projects aimed at strengthening their food security position. In addition, and also at the request of the two Governments, a study was undertaken on the status of food, diets and bread in Democratic Yemen and Yemen. The mission's reports and the study will form the working papers for a project review meeting to be organized by the two Governments concerned during mid-1981. It is envisaged that this meeting, which will involve potential donors, will lead to the undertaking of a number of technical assistance projects in the two countries.

33. A study entitled "Crop-sharing and tenancy practices in the Yemen Arab Republic", which was funded by the World Bank and completed in 1980, dealt with the issue of how the cost of agricultural production was shared among landlords and tenants, and how the use of new varieties of crops could lead to cost reduction and thus increased output. The study also shows how institutional obstacles such as tenancy affected the growth of productivity in agriculture and how the provision of extension services could improve productivity.

34. In the area of energy, a draft report on an action programme for developing the energy economy of the least developed countries in the ECWA region has been prepared. The report consists of a comprehensive analysis of the energy situation and projects of the two countries and covers the organization and control of the energy economy of both countries. One of the conclusions of this report is that the Aden refinery was designed for the purpose of export only; there are few internal forward or backward linkages, owing to the inadequate use made of oil in the domestic and regional market. The improvement of this old refinery would generate more foreign exchange. Thus, the financing of such a project calls for bilateral and multilateral loan agreements, i.e. investment agreements of the syndicate or consortium type.

35. In the area of economic development, ECWA prepared a draft report pertaining to a macro-economic model for Democratic Yemen and rendered assistance to the least developed countries in the region in connexion with their preparations for the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. Such assistance included advisory services in development planning to the Government of Yemen and in external sector planning and policies to the Government of Democratic Yemen. It also included the briefing of UNCTAD experts assigned to the least developed countries in the region and participation in preparatory meetings and consultations.^{5/} The views of the ECWA secretariat on the substantive content of the Comprehensive New Programme and the required institutional arrangements were reflected in a note which was submitted to the Intergovernmental Group on the Least Developed Countries at its third session and to the interagency consultations on the subject (Geneva, 4-15 February 1980). A report on activities in favour of the least developed member countries of ECWA was prepared as a contribution to the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

36. At the invitation of the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD), two representatives participated in the discussion of a project document prepared by the United Nations Department of Technical Co-operation for Development on the geological and hydrological mapping of Democratic Yemen and Yemen (Kuwait, 15-18 June 1980). Five intercountry projects were identified in the fields of natural resources and agriculture, and were proposed for implementation in those two countries. ECWA expressed keen interest in co-operating with AFESD to implement such projects, particularly in terms of undertaking technical reviews evaluating the projects' funding requirements and preparing technical specifications, the relevant tender document and an over-all assessment of water resources for those countries.

^{5/} The secretariat participated in the Seminar for Senior Planners (Geneva, 6-8 October 1980), concerning individual country preparations for the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, and in the interagency consultations on the Comprehensive New Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries (Geneva, 20 and 21 October 1980).

V. Interregional co-operation

37. ECWA has been actively involved in the identification and promotion of projects that have great potential for interregional economic and technical co-operation. Its interregional activities are closely linked to those of the United Nations development system, particularly those of the other regional commissions, given their similar concerns.

38. A major endeavour towards interregional co-operation was the Arab Regional Meeting on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries (Geneva, 21-23 May 1980) sponsored jointly by ECWA, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The secretariat of ECWA submitted a background paper which dealt with issues concerning technical co-operation among developing countries to be discussed at the Meeting, namely water, desertification, science and technology, scientific and technological institutions, education and technical training, traditional and renewable energy sources, transport and communications. The recommendations of the Meeting provided an impetus for strengthening technical co-operation among Arab States and among Arab and African States. Recommendation 21 is of particular relevance to ECWA, which is requested, in co-operation with ECA, to undertake studies on water, desertification and food security problems in the Arab region, to find solutions and exchange information and experience between the Arab States on the one hand, and the African States on the other hand. The recommendations of this Meeting are reproduced in an addendum submitted for the consideration of the Commission (E/ECWA/124/Add.1).

39. ECWA participated in the High-Level Meeting on the Review of Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries, which was held at Geneva from 26 to 2 June 1980. The Meeting reviewed progress made in implementing the tasks entrusted to the United Nations development system by the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, considered new policies and innovative approaches to further the development of technical co-operation among developing countries, and assessed the availability of financial resources and their effective use by the United Nations development

system, without prejudice to existing programmes. The Meeting also considered its 1981 work programme. The decisions of the Meeting placed stress on, inter alia, transport and communications, the participation of women in development, the establishment and strengthening of national research and training centres whose activities are multinational in scope, urbanization and poverty, the improvement of the capacities of developing countries for technical co-operation, and financial resources and arrangements for technical co-operation among developing countries. Its recommendations are contained in an addendum submitted for the consideration of the Commission (E/ECWA/124/Add.2).

40. In compliance with decision 1/2 of the above-mentioned Meeting, the document entitled "Report on the state of transport and communications among developing countries" (TCDC/5, vol. I and II) is submitted for consideration and action by the Commission (E/ECWA/124/Add.3). The report reviews briefly the historical developments in transport and communication; the self-reliant South-South relationships of the ancient and medieval period, the break-up of this linkage in the period of European expansion, and the colonial and post-colonial dependence of the countries of the South on the North. It examines the transport and communications imbalances that exist between North and South, provides subsectoral assessments of the present state of development of modern transport and communications among developing countries and makes some general observations and recommendations for the improvement of the transport and communication links among developing countries. Volume II (maps, diagrams and tables) helps to compare the quantity, quality and ownership of the transport and communications infrastructure in the North and the South. The views of ECWA on the regional implications of the recommendations pertaining to transport among developing countries are briefly covered in paragraph 16 of this report and further elaborated under item 7 (b) of the provisional agenda.

41. Within the context of a co-operation arrangement concluded with UNCTAD, ECWA became responsible for identifying and selecting candidates from the ECWA region to participate in the UNCTAD in-house training programme on technology

transfer issues; seven member countries which responded to the invitation issued by ECWA nominated 12 candidates for this purpose. Five candidates were finally selected and participated in the training programme, which was held at Geneva from 25 February to 14 March 1980.

42. In co-operation with the other regional commissions, ECWA is making efforts to be associated with the UNDP/UNCTAD programme of economic and technical co-operation among developing countries.

43. A project on the promotion and development of technical co-operation among Mediterranean countries was formulated and efforts are being made to raise the necessary funds for its implementation. The project involves the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), ECWA and ECA. Under this project, four subjects have been selected to constitute the core of a prefeasibility study, namely industrial co-operation, water, energy and agriculture. These sectors are among those suggested by ECWA for interregional co-operation, as well as by ECA and the High-Level Meeting on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries; they also respond to the interest expressed by the Mediterranean countries which are members of ECE.

44. The ultimate objective of this project is the promotion of co-operation between the Mediterranean countries through the identification, formulation and execution of joint economic and technological co-operation activities beneficial to Mediterranean countries of the African, European and Western Asian regions. This, furthermore, will represent the first interregional activity in technical co-operation among developing countries to be undertaken in the Mediterranean basin which will attempt to explore appropriate forms of co-operation between the countries concerned and to establish modalities for implementing interregional technical co-operation projects in the selected key development areas. This project will also be expected to lead to the convening of a joint ECE/ECWA meeting of governmental experts at which common technical co-operation projects will be discussed, agreed upon by the participating countries and formulated for execution.

45. As a follow-up to the Mediterranean Action Plan (4 February 1975) and to UNDP/UNEP projects concerning the protection and development of the Mediterranean basin, ECWA had discussions with the UNEP Regional Seas Programme Activity Centre in September 1980. A number of possible areas for co-operation have emerged. One of these areas relates to a co-operative programme on the practical application of renewable sources of energy. The major objective of this project is to establish a framework for collaboration among Mediterranean countries in further research and development and the generalized application of renewable sources of energy. Within this framework, possibilities of collaboration among European and Arab States could also be reviewed. Another area for co-operation is the feasibility study for the development of a regional co-operative project on Mediterranean coastal human settlements. There are also great potentials for interregional technical co-operation activities in the fields of water resources, soil conservation and tourism.

46. Similar interregional co-operative efforts have continued, following the elaboration of the Kuwait Action Plan (15-23 April 1978). The major objective of this Plan was to establish a framework for an environmentally sound and comprehensive approach to **coastal area development**. A seven-man team visited Kuwait from March to May 1980 to identify institutions and individuals in the region that will participate in the environmental assessment and management projects called for by the Kuwait Action Plan. In July 1980, the Interim Secretariat held a meeting to discuss the question of how regional institutions might become involved in the implementation of certain projects. It seems that the prospects for interregional co-operation in the utilization of regional skilled labour and know-how is great; ECWA, which has been requested by UNEP to participate in the implementation of the Plan, is giving the matter due consideration.

47. As executing agency for the UNDP-assisted interregional pilot project on maritime transport training (TRAINMAR), UNCTAD initiated work on it in January 1980. The project consists of developing, within the training institutions in developing countries of Africa and Asia, training courses needed in the field

of maritime transport. ECWA has associated itself with the TRAINMAR project by proposing a regional project within its framework. Consultations between ECWA and UNCTAD on these matters have resulted in a draft project document entitled "Training development in maritime transport in Western Asia". A major objective of this project would be to design and introduce appropriate courses for senior managers and administrators who want to gain experience in matters concerning (a) the initiation of the expansion of bulk shipping and (b) strategic planning and marketing in bulk shipping. The reason for the choice of this project as a priority is that, in 1979, ECWA countries as a whole owned only 1.5 per cent of world deadweight tonnage and have made relatively few advances in the transportation of bulk cargo by their fleet. The ECWA/UNCTAD project, which is now under serious consideration, contains major technical co-operation components promoting both regional and interregional transport links and capabilities through the establishment of training programmes and the exchange of information and experience with similar institutions in other developing countries.

48. ECWA has also been participating in the work of the ITU Co-ordinating Committee for the Middle East/Mediterranean Telecommunication Network Project. The Committee was established to follow-up the implementation stage of the Master Plan drawn up by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) under this regional project. Members of the Committee include the Arab Telecommunication Union, the Permanent Telecommunication Committee for the Gulf States, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, the Arab Satellite Communications Organization (ARARSAT), ITU and UNDP. The implementation stage of the project provides wide scope for both economic and technical co-operation among the countries concerned, with support from the above mentioned regional and interregional bodies, including ECWA.

49. Contacts and meetings between ECWA and the Interim Fund for Science and Technology for Development have resulted in a project proposal entitled "Regional training programme for the development of technological capabilities in Western Asia", which was prepared by ECWA and submitted to the Fund in May 1980. The main objective of the project is to design and implement an extensive training programme in the form of symposia, seminars and workshops, with the aim of upgrading the professional skills and enhancing the technological capabilities of nationals in the assessment, adaptation, selection and management of imported technology. This project is still under consideration by the Interim Fund. Furthermore, another project proposal has been formulated for possible financing by the Fund. This project is in the form of a regional training workshop focusing on strategic policy problems in the area of imported technology and industrial investment in the Arab region. The immediate objective of this project is to introduce a number of middle-rank officials, selected from various Arab countries, to the long-term problems of imported technology and industrial investment and to upgrade their skills and analytical research capabilities in dealing with these problems.

50. The solution to the problems of desertification (i.e. the aridity and semi-aridity of the land) of particular concern to the ECWA and Sudano-Sahelian regions requires special attention, and the study and analysis of the unknown and interrelated causes of desertification demand concerted action on all fronts. Because of their past and ongoing activities in desertification in such important areas as those of water resources management, livestock management, institutional support for government planning and socio-economic and institution building, dryland farming systems and efficient land utilization and cropping patterns, ECWA and the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office can co-operate to deal with such problems. As a first step in this direction, ECWA has invited the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office to participate in and submit a paper to the forthcoming regional meeting on the management, conservation and development of agricultural resources, scheduled for 19-25 May 1981. It is expected that the synthesized findings of this meeting could lead the way to further co-operative arrangements in the important area of desertification and related technical co-operation activities.