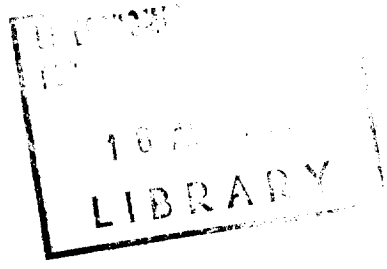


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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA
Standing Committee for the Programme
First session
7-9 May 1983
Baghdad, Iraq
Agenda item 8

DRAFT REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE FOR
THE PROGRAMME
(7-9 May 1983)

A. Background

1. The Standing Committee for the Programme was established in May 1983 in accordance with paragraph 4 of ECWA resolution 114 (IX) which was endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1982/64 on "Establishment of a Standing Committee for the Programme of the Economic Commission for Western Asia." By resolution 1982/64 the Standing Committee for the Programme composed of all members of the Commission, as the main subsidiary organ of the Commission, shall assist the Commission in the execution of its responsibilities for programme review planning, programming, evaluation and co-ordination in the context of the medium-term plan for the period 1984-1989. The 1984-1989 medium-term plan was reviewed in May 1982 by the Ad Hoc Inter-governmental Expert Committee, which assisted the secretariat in the determination of relative priority subprogrammes within its sixteen major programmes.

2. The Standing Committee for the Programme held its first session in Baghdad from 7 to 9 May 1983 in order to review both the Commission's work programme and priorities for the budget period 1984-1985 and the necessary procedures proposed by the secretariat for carrying out its activities (see paragraph 10-40).

B. Election of officers, adoption of the agenda and organization of work

3. After a brief statement by Mr. Ismail A. Al-Delaimy, the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Inter-governmental Expert Committee on the medium-term plan 1984-1989, and a welcome message by the Executive Secretary of ECWA, the Standing Committee adopted item 2 of the provisional agenda and elected the following officers:

Chairman: Mr. Ismail A. Al-Delaimy, Adviser, Ministry of Planning, Iraq.

Vice-Chairman: Mr. Fayek Al Abdul Karim, Commercial Attache, Ministry of Trade, Saudi Arabia.

Rapporteur: Mrs. Nabila Brair, Palestine Liberation Organization.

Mr. George Haddad acted as the Secretary of the Committee.

4. At its first meeting, the Standing Committee adopted the following agenda as contained in E/ECWA/CP/1/Rev.1 and E/ECWA/CP/1/Add.1/Rev.1:

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Election of officers
3. Adoption of the agenda
4. Organization of work
5. General aspects of the programme budget 1984-1985:
 - (a) Resource availability during the biennium 1984-1985;
 - (b) Programme priorities during the biennium 1984-1985;
 - (c) Design of the programme 1984-1985;
 - (d) Co-ordination during the biennium 1984-1985 of the Commission's activities with those of other programmes of the United Nations;
 - (e) Co-ordination during the biennium 1984-1985 of the Commission's activities with those of programmes of regional organizations;
 - (f) Development of evaluation procedures.
6. Review of the programme budget 1984-1985 on a sector-by-sector basis.
7. Other business
8. Adoption of the report of the Committee.

5. The Committee then adopted document E/ECWA/CP/2/Rev.1 for the organization of its work.

C. Attendance

6. The following members of the Commission attended the Standing Committee: *

Bahrain
Democratic Yemen
Egypt
Iraq
Jordan
Kuwait
Oman
Palestine Liberation Organization
Qatar
Saudi Arabia
Yemen Arab Republic

7. The following States Members of the United Nations not members of the Commission attended the Standing Committee in the capacity of observers:

Algeria
Czechoslovakia
France
Germany, Federal Republic of
Hungary
India
Morocco
Netherlands
Philippines
Tunisia
Turkey
USSR

* For the names of the participants in the Committee reference is made to document E/ECWA/CP.1/INF.3/Rev.2.

8. Representatives of the following United Nations bodies and specialized agencies attended the Standing Committee as observers:

United Nations Headquarters, UNCTAD, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP, UNEP, WFP, ILO, FAO, UNESCO, WHO, IMF, ITU, ITC, (UNCTAD/GATT),

9. The following regional and governmental and non-governmental organizations attended the Standing Committee:

AFEI, IFED, AFFI, AIDO, Arab Institute for Training and Statistical Studies, League of Arab States, AOAS, AOAD, AUFP, AMF, ACSAD, Arab Federation of Shipping.

DELIBERATIONS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE

A. Account of proceedings

10. The Standing Committee considered several background documents, E/ECWA/CP/3/Rev.1 through E/ECWA/CP/8/Rev.1, under agenda item 5 of the provisional agenda, "General Aspects of the Programme Budget 1984-1985" in which a number of procedures were proposed by the ECWA secretariat for the purpose of improving programme co-ordination and resource management in ECWA.

11. The Chairman of the Standing Committee for the Programme thanked the Committee members for his election and hoped that he would be able to meet their expectations and serve with even more vigour. He went on to say that in the light of the experience gained during the meeting of the Ad Hoc Inter-governmental Expert Committee in May 1982 which set programme priorities for the region, it was now time to seek the co-operation of the regional and United Nations organizations in co-ordinating their activities with those of ECWA for better results. He felt confident that within this framework the Standing Committee would be able to carry out its important tasks effectively in order to assist the countries of the ECWA region in their development efforts at the regional and national levels.

12. Under this agenda item, Mr. George Haddad, the Secretary of the Standing Committee drew attention to the problem of the zero-growth rate in the United Nations which had affected practically all United Nations organizations. He said that in order to optimize available resources and mobilize additional ones through increased operational activities and joint programming, the best means available would be more programme co-ordination and integration.

13. The representative of Saudi Arabia proposed that because of the importance of the matter and because documents were not available to him on time it was advisable to postpone the meeting for the following day. The floor was open for further suggestions on this proposal. The Egyptian representative wished the meeting to continue discussion as scheduled. Appreciating the concern of the Saudi delegate, the Executive Secretary of ECWA brought to the attention of the distinguished delegates that documents pertaining to the Standing Committee, which was originally scheduled for 22-24 February 1983, were distributed in early January 1983.

14. The Egyptian delegate thanked ECWA for its efforts to submit valuable documents on various aspects of programme planning and co-ordination. He then touched upon the importance of food and agriculture and the petroleum refining and petro-chemical industries in the ECWA region which had been given top priority during ECWA's ninth session. He particularly called attention to implications of those industries in terms of rural development. In his view, solar energy which was plentiful and not depletable in the ECWA region could be beneficially utilized for the welfare of rural peoples in the ECWA region.

15. The representative of Iraq called attention to paragraph 5 of E/ECWA/CP/3/Rev.1 and stressed the significance of energy and food security programmes as priority areas. The representative of Arab UNIDO, in support of the Egyptian delegation, referred to the expert meeting which was held in Jeddah (Saudi Arabia) on petrochemical industries and to the contribution made by the ECWA staff to its deliberations, which emphasized the importance of the development of petrochemical industries in the Arab world until the year 2000. He stated that his organization with the co-operation of Dar al Saudi for Consultancies had made several studies aimed at economic co-operation among ECWA countries.

16. One representative referred to several proposed programme elements in ECWA's 1984-1985 work programme, namely development of selected industrial branches such as the petrochemical industry and the possibility for co-ordinating **such** activities with those of the Arab Federation of Engineering Industries. Similar co-ordination, in his view, was possible between ECWA and regional organizations in the area of scientific and technological capabilities and the transfer of technology.

17. The representative of Qatar said that the State had an important role to play in the co-ordination of regional activities considered essential for achieving the desired objectives. He referred to regional co-ordination in the petrochemical industry which called for co-ordination with regional organizations such as the Arab League and its specialized agencies; such co-ordination activity in his view, would greatly save time and money and **there** should be more effort to make it continuous at every stage.

18. The representative of the United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) felt that co-ordination would achieve better results when organizations exchanged documents such as the programme budget and held meetings. However, he stressed that formal and informal visits would produce even better results, particularly in the areas of water resources development and environmental and sanitation problems with which ECWA was also concerned.

19. The representative of the Arab Fund for Development said that regional programmes should be analysed in depth, and the precise role of each concerned organization should be defined, which, in her view, would naturally lead to better co-ordination.

20. UNESCO's representative drew attention to the fact that ideas put forward in the Executive Secretary's notes were clear and of concern to most organizations, including UNESCO. Referring to areas of co-operation between ECWA and UNESCO in the past he identified certain concrete areas for possible joint co-operation

with ECWA in the future, namely science and technology, statistics, agriculture and social development. He particularly emphasized that within the limits of the available resources and machinery it was possible to establish complementarity among programmes through co-ordinative efforts with a clear understanding that each organization would keep its own personality and characteristics. Appreciating the new proposals for joint activities by the representative of UNESCO, the Executive Secretary of ECWA attached great importance to previous efforts between the two organizations referring particularly to the Paris seminar in 1981 on science and technology and the agreement between them in 1977 to have field visits in co-operation with the Arab League.

21. UNIDO's suggestion for an informal meeting with the representatives of Arab and United Nations regional organizations attending the Standing Committee was considered by the Chairman to be not feasible because of the tight schedule.

22. The Arab Union for Food and Agriculture proposed that ECWA should call for a workshop to co-ordinate the activities of regional organizations in such a way so that the essential priority areas such as food supply, and agricultural industries and engineering were incorporated in their work programmes and plans. In support of this view the Executive Secretary of ECWA stressed the need for further co-ordination which, in his opinion, meant dialogue, i.e., an intensive exchange of information at all levels.

23. The delegate of Saudi Arabia posed the question of how regional programmes and projects could effectively be evaluated. He proposed the formulation of a unified strategy and constructive methods of work. He emphasized the importance of an annual survey of ongoing projects in the region and evaluation of achievements and prospects. Subject-oriented evaluation, in his view, should be country-specific so that accomplishments at the country level could be easily identified.

B. Programmes

24. Under item 6 of the provisional agenda, "Review of the programme budget 1984-1985 on a sector-by-sector basis" there were sixteen working papers (E/ECWA/CP/W.P.1/Rev.1 through E/ECWA/CP/W.P.1/16/Rev.1) before the Committee in which ECWA's activities during the period 1984-1985 were formulated at the programme element level. Heads of the divisions of ECWA introduced their programmes for review and discussion.

25. The Saudi representative said that programme documents had been reviewed and that the implementation of the programmes was important. He referred to the problems of piracy and marine affairs facing the private sector and to the importance of transport, particularly land transport. He requested that ECWA should pay some attention to these problems in the future. The representative of International Telecommunications Union focused attention on the impact of telecommunications on development of the region and on the role of the Arabic language as a means of communication. It was felt that the introduction of modern technology, such as computer software and digitization necessitated some adjustments in the programming activities of regional and United Nations organizations. He observed that ECWA had not included telecommunications in its work programmes although 1983 was the year of international telecommunications. In this connection he drew attention to the ARABTEL project designed for the development of telecommunications networks in the Arab World and Mediterranean region.

26. The Egyptian delegate questioned the wisdom of putting so much emphasis in the ECWA subprogramme on trade with socialist countries and not much on trade with other advanced countries. He expressed the view that from the point of view of resource allocation, it would be advisable for ECWA to reformulate the subprogramme in the light of the recommendations of the Caracas Meeting. It was also suggested that the ECWA secretariat should call for holding systematic

workshops in each specialized field and invite experts to discuss specific issues such as food security, petrochemicals etc. A pre-notification on the activities of organizations, in his view, was a prerequisite for possible joint programming. The delegate of the League of Arab States supported the view that there should be ex ante exchange of information on programmes and projects.

27. The representative of the Arab League called attention to the lack of sufficient synchronization of programmes and plans of regional organizations with those of ECWA and emphasized the importance of subject-oriented studies.

28. In his intervention, the Iraqi delegate regretted that in the ECWA food and agricultural programme, elements devoted to food security had been reduced from nine for the period of 1982-1983 to only six for the period of 1984-1985. He particularly emphasized the importance of the production of cereals, the problem of soil depletion, and the contribution of water resources to agricultural development in the ECWA region. He observed that little attention was given to water in the water subprogramme and suggested that unless management of water resources had been the subject of previous studies in ECWA, the subprogramme should be re-evaluated. Similarly, the delegate of the Arab Union for Fish Production emphasized that fish was an important food item and he suggested that assistance should be extended to member States to enable them to optimally plan and develop fishery. Many delegates supported these views.

29. Referring to the natural resources programme, the delegate of Egypt remarked that in the development of new and renewable sources of energy, solar energy was crucial to the development of rural areas. He further observed that water desalination was an important issue in the region. He asked the secretariat to clarify why these issues were not included in the work programme. Agreeing with this view, several delegates stressed that more attention should be given to the recruitment of national and regional consultants for such important programmes as energy and water. In this connection, the representative

of OAPEC, referring to ECWA's energy subprogramme, inquired into the meaning of integrated energy planning because in his view at the present time there was no institution in the Arab World to tackle such a huge problem. Referring to the OAPEC Second Arab Energy Conference and its forthcoming meeting this year he hoped that there would be some co-operation between the two organizations.

30. The delegate of the Arab Industrial Organization pointed out that joint implementation of projects was one way of circumventing duplication and achieving effective co-ordination. He said that joint programming between AIO and ECWA would allow the adoption of a common stand in the forthcoming UNIDO (IV) Conference, particularly in industrial planning for the LDCs. He went on to say that in 1982 AIO had carried out a complete industrial survey in Yemen and Democratic Yemen and UNIDO also had similar projects in favour of the LDCs of the region. Concerning the programme element on the identification of capital goods industries, he indicated that since AIO was at present undertaking a similar study in the Arab countries, co-operation between ECWA and AIO could increase the possibility for identifying investment opportunities. The delegate also asked whether or not the programme element on trade in manufactured goods in the international trade programme (Programme Element 1.4) was the same as the programme element on trade in manufactured goods in the industry programme (Programme Element 2.1).

31. In regard to the science and technology programme, the Iraqi delegate noticed that there was some overlap between ECWA and UNCTAD activities, and some clarification was requested on whether or not there had been sufficient prior consultations between the two organizations during the programme formulation. In this connection, the representative of the Arab Organization for Food Industries called attention to the state of science and technology in the Arab World and doubted if the ECWA programme in science and technology, which was labeled as a high priority, could be completed in two years. It was suggested that a special committee should be formed to study the programme. It seemed doubtful, in his opinion, that the Vienna Programme of Action could be implemented as scheduled. Several representatives supported these views.

32. In response to the request by delegates for clarification of various aspects of management of water resources, energy, and science and technology, a comprehensive presentation was made by the programme manager of the Division of Natural Resources and Science and Technology.

33. To the specific request of the Egyptian delegation that the application of solar energy should become widespread in the region it was pointed out by ECWA that solar energy was still in the stage of being developed. However, it was replied that, ECWA had already considered setting up a pilot project in the two Yemens and co-operation with the Government of France was well under way in this area.

34. As regards international trade, several delegates centred the Committee's focus on the question of programme/project execution. The Egyptian delegate indicated that although regional trade had important implications for regional integration it had been designated as a secondary priority programme in ECWA's scale of priority. The Chairman of the Committee pointed out that priorities of the ECWA region had already been determined by the Ad Hoc Inter-governmental Expert Committee, and the programme budget 1984-1985 was formulated within this framework. As a practical measure for promotion of trade in the Arab world and in support of the views of the delegates of Saudi Arabia and Qatar on this topic, the representative of the International Trade Centre indicated the possibility for co-operation with ECWA in the area of trade information. Referring to an UNCTAD/GATT technical co-operation project with the two Yemens and a draft project to set up a more structured information system he proposed that ECWA could play an important role as focal point. As an initial point of contact and for further co-ordination, the project documents were requested by ECWA.

35. As regards ECWA's programme of food and agriculture, it was pointed out by the AOAD representative that ECWA could play a central role in sponsoring and supporting projects designed by specialized agencies without actually undertaking the projects. In the point of view of several of the delegates industrialization of agriculture in the region of ECWA was more important than just securing the food supply through import. The representative of Qatar said that a balanced and simultaneous development of agriculture and industry was necessitated by the peculiar circumstances of the Arab world. He hoped ECWA would take these considerations into account when reorienting its programmes in the next cycle. The representative of FAO emphasized project implementation. The delegate of Oman wished to know how small countries such as his could be included in agricultural studies leading to project implementation. The AFFI representative stated that in studies which had been widely distributed his organization identified solutions to 123 projects. Concerning agricultural policies it was said that 15 studies had been made with the co-operation of Arab and regional organizations.

36. Referring to the role of transport and communication in the socio-economic transformation of the Arab World, several delegates agreed that ECWA's programme of transport and communication, which was low in ECWA's priority scale, should be re-evaluated and possibly elevated. In this connection, the delegate of Qatar referred to the stiff competition facing the shipping industry and the inadequate highways system which had affected many countries in the region. The Iraqi delegate called for a unified Arab strategy for transport systems.

37. As regards ECWA's social development and population programmes, several questions were raised by the delegates; for example, the representative of the PLO hoped that there would be a follow-up during the 1984-1985 period to ECWA's special paper presented to the 1979 Regional Preparatory Meeting on the Question of Palestinian Women. It was requested that the paper be presented to the International Year for Women in 1985. The Egyptian representative

questioned whether sufficient co-ordination had taken place between the seemingly interlinked programme element 3.1 "Agrarian systems and alleviation of rural poverty"(promotion of rural development) in the food and agriculture programme and programme element 2.3 "Integrative policies in rural development" in the social development programme. The question of intercountry and rural-urban migration affecting the sectors of agriculture and industry was the special concern of the delegates of Egypt and Iraq. The delegate of Iraq emphasized the role of literacy in the development process and the delegate of Qatar stressed the importance of training. The PLO representative wished to know if the ECWA population programme took account of Palestinians in its analysis. The ECWA programme manager stated that since the PLO is a member of the Commission as a matter of course, the Palestinian people would, be included.

38. The Jordanian delegate questioned whether the ECWA environmental programme had envisaged any practical measures through its co-ordinative efforts, to promptly act in an emergency situation in the region such as that of the oil slick in the Gulf which had far reaching consequences in the region as a whole. Responding to this question, the Iraqi delegate said that Iraq had exerted every possible effort through its national environment committees to find a quick solution to the problem. ECWA's response was that in co-operation with several United Nations agencies the Executive Secretary had already taken steps to set up a task force to study the matter.

39. Concerning the human settlements programme, the major question asked by the representative of Qatar was if the programme could possibly carry out a study reflecting alternatives to the problem of what could be done with vacant residential buildings in the Gulf once their occupants left, which seemed to be the present trend in some parts of the region. The Chairman of the Committee pointed out that in the seminar conducted by a research centre in Baghdad these issues would be discussed and he invited ECWA to make a contribution to the seminar.

40. The representative of Iraq questioned the scientific basis of the human settlements programme. He questioned the programme's emphasis on essentially physical aspects of human settlements and observed that the title of human settlements planning implied that physical and social and economic planning were separate from each other, whereas, in his view, they were organically interlinked and inseparable. The major objective in regional and city planning was, he said, how to organize systematic data on various components of human settlements for the purpose of optimal use of resources. The focus of his analysis was that humans function both at the centre (cities) and peripheries (rural areas). Because of the lack of time, the chief of Human Settlements was unable to present his views on the various elements of the programme.

C. RESOLUTIONS