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Summary of
the National Paper
of the Syrian Arab Republic

(Final Version)

Introduction

The Syrian Arab Republic is greatly interested in the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development due to its belief in the major role played by science and technology in socio-economic progress. It should be noted that zionist agression, which became more serious after Syria attained its independence, has hampered our progress and led to the occupation of part of our land after the displacement of the Palestinian people by the force of modern weaponry and sophisticated technology.

In these distressing circumstances, Syria draws attention to the importance of basing international relations on the humanitarian principles and ethical values adopted by the international community and on respect for the spirit as well as the letter of the principles and resolutions of this community before transferring science and technology.

I. The utilization of science and technology for developmental purposes:

(1) The state of technological dependence:

The technological dependence from which Syria is currently suffering is a relatively recent phenomenon since, for thousands of years, our country was a principle centre of creativity in the world before the industrial revolution brought about a radical change which finally gave Europe ever-increasing preponderance. Under the mandatory regime large installations such as railways, electric power stations, banks, commercial agencies and insurance companies were established by foreign companies under inappropriate terms and conditions and these installations became the chief instruments for economic exploitation and intervention and the exercise of colonialist domination. During and after the nineteenth century the country made several attempts to build a modern State but these were thwarted by the intervention of the major

powers and the country eventually fell under military occupation. After independence in 1945 the country rapidly took measures to protect and develop the economy, most of the foreign installations were expropriated and considerable efforts were made to expand the educational system, train specialists and establish an infrastructure and developmental planning methods were adopted.

(2) Evaluation of measures adopted at the national level:

Syria has made diligent endeavours to transfer and utilize technology for purposes of development by, for example, establishing numerous specialized study and research centres. However, these centres were not supervised by a higher scientific administrative body responsible for formulating their plans, co-ordinating their activities, overcoming the administrative and financial difficulties which impede their progress and evaluating the results of their work. We now believe it to be essential to have such an administrative body which must possess sufficient authority to act and make changes in accordance with the requirements of socio-economic development plans.

(3) Analysis of problems:

Technological dependence persisted inspite of the efforts made after the achievement of independence. There were three main reasons for this:

- the accelerating pace of progress in the developed countries due to the escalation of the scientific and technological revolution;
- the continuation of various forms of foreign exploitation, military pressures and wars;
- the failure to create an independent national technological capability.

These endeavours undoubtedly led to a considerable amount of scientific and technological progress although the national technological capability is still far from achieving its desired goal. Although some problems are inherent in the political, educational and social structure, the main problem in the scientific and technological field in our country is inadequate experience and organization.

(4) Appropriate recommendations for the solution of the above-mentioned problems at the national level:

(a) The establishment of a body responsible for the formulation of scientific and technological policy, planning and project budgeting, co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation;

(b) Streamlining the body responsible for formulating educational and cultural policy and the intensification of efforts to eradicate illiteracy and raise the educational standard;

(c) The establishment of a department, within the body responsible for the formulation of scientific and technological policy, to be concerned with methods for the transfer of science and technology and the registration of patents and licences for their use;

(d) The establishment of boards with a specialized scientific secretariat in each technical ministry or sector of the national economy in order to co-ordinate the activities of the experimental and research centres therein;

(e) The adoption of appropriate measures to deal with the problem of the brain drain and the migration of technical manpower;

(f) The introduction of modern administrative methods in all sectors, especially in complex projects;

(g) The strengthening of bodies specializing in the study of projects and the strengthening of bodies concerned with implementation, control and operation in the various sectors of the national economy;

(h) The promotion of local Arab and international scientific and industrial conferences;

(i) The development and constant updating of curricula at universities and technical training colleges and taking development plans into consideration when awarding scholarships for students to study abroad;

(j) The promotion of scientific research at universities, especially in connexion with development projects, and the encouragement of co-operation between universities and applied research centres;

(k) The development of educational aids and informational programmes in order to disseminate scientific and technological knowledge among the people;

(l) The introduction of science and technology as an integral part of the development plan by:

- formulating a special development plan for science and technology;
- using science and technology in the formulation and implementation of sectoral projects;
- using scientific and technological methods in the preparation of plans;

(m) Planning the development of a local capability in scientific and technological research;

(n) Turning projects under contract to foreign organizations into opportunities for the acquisition of expertise, participation in the study and implementation of projects and the utilization of local personnel wherever possible in the implementation of these projects;

(o) The undertaking of studies with a view to determining scientific and technological priorities;

(p) The establishment of centres specializing in the applications of science and technology:

- for the sectors of the national economy, linked to ministries;
- for the various scientific fields, linked to universities;

(q) The establishment of a centre for scientific information and documentation;

(r) Co-ordination between national, Arab and international scientific and technological policies in order to achieve the desired objectives of human welfare;

(s) The allocation of a minimum amount of funds to scientific and applied research and associated scientific services and the establishment of a national fund for this purpose. The formulation of plans aimed at raising the number

of scientists engaged in such research and services up to an acceptable level, while paying due regard to the quantitative and qualitative improvement of intermediate technicians.

II. Institutional arrangements and forms of co-operation:

(a) Institutional arrangements at the national level:

Syria believes it to be important that long-term scientific policy be formulated by a supreme body linked to the highest authority in the State but final arrangements have not yet been made in this respect. Syria appreciates the assistance which it has received from certain United Nations organizations in establishing its scientific and technological institutions and looks forward to further co-operation and to overcoming the difficulties which are hindering the effectiveness of such co-operation;

(b) The role of the developed countries:

(1) There is a need to establish a new code of conduct for the transfer of technology, including the closed transfer of information through transnational corporations;

(2) We view the role of the developed countries as one of co-operation in:

- the development of the local capability of the developing countries through training and the provision of information and equipment;
- the participation of experts from both the developed and the developing countries in identifying scientific and technological problems and attempting to solve them in their laboratories;

(c) Arab and regional co-operation:

With regard to the importance of the exchange of information and expertise between the Arab and the developing countries in general, Syria supports the decisions of the CASTARAB Conference and proposes the establishment of Arab centres for the formulation of scientific and technological policy and scientific and technological information and the establishment of an Arab fund for scientific and technological research. Syria also endorses support for

existing organizations attached to the League of Arab States and a review of their activities and achievements in order to enable them to discharge their functions in the most efficient manner.

Regarding the exchange of information and expertise, Syria also proposes co-ordination between the countries of the Arab World and those of the Third World on the one hand and the developed countries on the other. This co-ordination could take the form of specific bilateral or multilateral programmes;

III. Utilization of United Nations and other international organizations:

In this respect it should be recommended that more financial support be given to scientific and technological projects related to development, whether general projects connected with scientific and technological information, specifications and applied research or agricultural, health or other projects of more limited scope at the regional and national levels. This support requires that the governing councils of development agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and the Arab Development Fund etc. take the necessary decisions to finance the above-mentioned projects and submit a report to the 1981 Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations regarding the action taken in connexion with this recommendation.