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**REPORT OF THE  
EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON REVIEW OF  
PROGRAMMES OF REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS  
ACTIVE IN THE FIELD OF WATER RESOURCES  
AMMAN, 12-14 SEPTEMBER 1994**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Expert Group Meeting on Review of Programmes of Regional Organizations Active in the Field of Water Resources was convened in Amman from 12 to 14 September 1994. The main objective of the meeting was to discuss the modalities of cooperation and coordination among United Nations organizations and Arab regional agencies involved in various water-related activities.

2. Representatives of the following United Nations bodies and specialized agencies attended the meeting:<sup>1/</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization/Regional Office for Science and Technology in the Arab States (UNESCO/ROSTAS); World Health Organization/Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean (WHO/EMRO).

3. Representatives of the following governmental and non-governmental regional organizations also attended the meeting: Arab Centre for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD); Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD); Inter-Islamic Network on Water Resources Development & Management (INWRDAM).

4. A representative of the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (*Bundesanstalt für Geowissenschaften und Rohstoffe* [BGR]) of Germany attended the meeting. Experts from Egypt, Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic also attended the meeting as resource persons.

## II. OPENING SESSION (Agenda item 2)

5. The meeting was opened by the Officer-in-Charge of ESCWA on behalf of the Executive Secretary. In his statement, the Officer-in-Charge referred to the role of the various United Nations entities in promoting cooperation in the field of water resources and the efforts at closer coordination of activities in this respect. He indicated that, in spite of tangible positive results, coordination of activities on water was still far from the goal of a well established and efficient mechanism for facing such challenges as the shortage of water resources and improving the efficiency of water management. A number of priority areas were suggested on the basis of joint programming, joint implementation of water projects and a regular exchange of information through the establishment of a regional database and information network.

6. The provisional programme of work was adopted with a slight change in item 4 as shown in annex II.

## III. REVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF PREVIOUS INTER-AGENCY MEETINGS (Agenda item 3)

7. The representative of WHO/EMRO presented the recommendations of the first meeting of the Regional Inter-agency Task Force on Land and Water Resources, held in Alexandria in 1993. The presentation of the representative of WHO/EMRO was extensively discussed by the participants. The questions raised during the deliberations centred on the role of the Inter-agency Task Force, its terms of reference and the need for a permanent secretariat. Most participants were inclined to designate the ESCWA secretariat as the permanent secretariat of the Inter-agency Task Force in view of its activities in the field of water resources

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<sup>1/</sup> See annex I for the list of participants.

and as a follow-up to the recommendations of the second session (22 February to 4 March 1994) of the Committee on Natural Resources (CNR) and the Commission on Sustainable Development.

8. However, the representative of WHO/EMRO later pointed out that the first meeting of the Regional Inter-agency Task Force on Land and Water Resources (Alexandria, Egypt 22 February 1993) had recommended that the WHO Regional Office serve as the secretariat of the Task Force and prepare for the next meeting.

9. The representative of ESCWA briefed the participants on the previous regional inter-agency meeting held in Amman on 28 and 29 July 1992. He indicated that the deliberations of the participants in the meeting had focused on updating the document on the assessment of water resources in the Arab world and following up on the preparation of the required maps for the issuance of the Arab Water Atlas. In his presentation, the representative of ESCWA added that the meeting had also called for joint action for the establishment of a water database, including training centres in the region.

#### IV. PRESENTATIONS OF THE WORK PROGRAMMES

(Agenda item 4)

10. The representative of ACSAD presented the current activities, which included training workshops and expert group meetings, modelling, geographic information systems, isotope techniques, water harvesting and remote sensing. He also briefed the meeting on seven projects planned for 1995 and 1996 in the fields of integrated management of water resources, integrated water information systems, use of appropriate techniques for water resource development, principles and methodologies for the management of shared groundwater basins, Arab water security, water resources of ephemeral wadi-systems and monitoring of meteorological and hydrological plans.

11. The representative of UNDP informed the meeting of the activities undertaken through the UNDP Country Programme for Jordan (1987-1991). He indicated that those activities comprised guidelines for water resource policies, a computerized data bank, the establishment of mathematical models for water management and updating the national water master plan. He further indicated that UNDP technical assistance covered cooperation with the Government of Jordan for the establishment of a planning unit within the Ministry of Irrigation with the objective of strengthening the national capacity in water resource planning. He added that such activities were undertaken under project JOR/92/007. Referring to activities carried out at the regional level, he briefed the meeting on two projects entitled "Current Technologies in Water Resources Management in the Maghreb and the Mashreq" and "Regional Network for Supplementary Water Management under Rainfed and Improved Water Management at the Farm Level".

12. The representative of UNESCO/ROSTAS outlined the two major programmes (IHP-4 and IHP-5) that had been carried out in the field of water resources. The activities covered such issues as groundwater protection, rainfall water management, conflict analysis and management as well as training and public awareness programmes and meetings. He also proposed specific action for coordination within the United Nations System and with regional organizations. Most of those proposals were agreed upon by the participants and reflected in item 5 of the present report.

13. The representative of UNEP focused on the UNEP subprogramme on management of fresh water resources, implementation of Agenda 21, particularly chapter 18 of the Agenda, and involvement in projects in the ESCWA region.

14. Regarding the first point, the representative of UNEP identified areas of activities, including integrated management of shared water resources, preparation of the relevant action plan, capacity-building and training. The second point raised by the representative of UNEP related to UNEP activities with regard to chapter 18 of Agenda 21. In this connection emphasis was placed on the following:

- (a) Integrated water resources development and management;
- (b) Assessment of water resources;
- (c) Protection of water resources, water quality and aquatic ecosystems;
- (d) Drinking water supply and sanitation;
- (e) Water and sustainable urban development;
- (f) Water for sustainable food production and rural development; and
- (g) The impact of climate change on water resources.

15. The third point highlighted the involvement of UNEP in the following activities:

- (a) Assessment of water resources in the ESCWA region using remote-sensing techniques;
- (b) An expert group meeting on the implementation of Agenda 21 for integrated water management in Western Asia to be organized by ESCWA in cooperation with UNEP;
- (c) Improving environmental health conditions in rural areas of some Middle Eastern countries;
- (d) Environmental management of fresh water resources in West Asia.

16. The representative of the UNEP Regional Office for West Asia (ROWA) indicated that the UNEP regional office was entrusted mainly with identifying environmental issues of regional priorities and setting plans for implementation. He further indicated that UNEP/ROWA, in addition to its cooperation with ESCWA regarding the project on Assessment of Water Resources in the ESCWA Region Using Remote-Sensing Techniques, had collaborated with ACSAD on groundwater pollution and the rehabilitation of the saline soil in the Euphrates river basin. Another project consisting of a training course on water quality, monitoring and assessment had been carried out by UNEP/ROWA in cooperation with WHO/EMRO.

17. The representative of UNEP/ROWA also cited the project on assessment and monitoring of pollution from land-based sources in the Gulf area and the Red Sea as being of particular importance owing to the fact that most of the countries in the region increasingly relied on desalination of sea water. He concluded by saying that joint programmes were being implemented in cooperation with the League of Arab States, the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

18. In his presentation, the representative of AOAD indicated that one of the priority areas of his organization was the efficiency of water use, particularly for agricultural purposes. AOAD was therefore particularly concerned with improvement of irrigation techniques, water supply for rural areas, wastewater

and brackish water use in irrigation. To this end, he added that AOAD cooperated with different regional and international organizations in providing support and rendering technical assistance to improve irrigation schemes and facilitate technology transfer and the adoption of appropriate water legislation.

19. The representative of the WHO Centre for Environmental Health Activities (CEHA) outlined the activities at both the national and regional levels. Such activities included national and regional meetings, studies, technical assistance, training and exchange of information. The programmatic areas covered were the following:

- (a) Community water supply and sanitation (CWS);
- (b) Environmental health in rural and urban development and housing (RUD);
- (c) Health risk assessment and chemical safety (PCS);
- (d) Control of environmental hazards (CEH);
- (e) Food safety (FOS);
- (f) Refugee camps and emergencies (RCE);
- (g) Information exchange (IE).

20. The representative of BGR began by defining the functions and responsibilities of his organization. He highlighted the technical cooperation project carried out by BGR all over the world. He gave examples of projects in Jordan, Pakistan, Turkey and Yemen. He also cited the example of technical cooperation between BGR and ACSAD in the preparation of a regional model for the Great Palmyra basin (Syrian Arab Republic). The representative of BGR informed the meeting of the major components of the technical cooperation project being carried out in cooperation with ESCWA in the field of water resources.

21. The representative of INWRDAM indicated that the main objective of his international organization was to develop a data bank, maintain regular and systematic exchange of information and initiate joint projects, particularly on research and development. Among the various activities of INWRDAM, training programmes appeared to be areas of high priority. Those training programmes were aimed mainly at the following:

- (a) Creating awareness of the significance of scientific and technological inputs to achieve better water resource management;
- (b) Promoting know-how on efficient water resources development and utilization;
- (c) Demonstrating applications of emerging computer-based techniques for information management;
- (d) Bringing together professionals from Muslim countries to debate issues related to the management of water resources.

22. The representative of ESCWA then outlined the programme of work for 1994-1995. He made special reference to the Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on the Application of Remote-Sensing Techniques and

Isotope Hydrology for Water Resources Exploration and Development, the establishment of a mechanism for promoting regional cooperation in the water sector and the assessment of water quality in the region. He also indicated that a number of projects were being implemented in cooperation with UNEP, the Islamic Development Bank and BGR.

#### V. ACTIVITIES FOR INITIATING JOINT ACTION

23. The meeting identified areas that lent themselves to joint action in the implementation of water projects. It agreed that joint action would include identification of the members of the task force, definition of regional priorities and joint programming of activities. In this context, the meeting discussed the possibilities of joint action in such areas as water resource assessment, integrated water resource management, water quality, application of modern techniques and technologies, issues regarding shared water resources and training networks.

#### VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

24. The meeting endorsed the recommendations of the previous inter-agency meetings held in Amman (28 and 29 July 1992) and Alexandria (22 February 1993) on the establishment of an inter-agency task force for joint programming and implementation of projects.

25. It was noted, however, that the responsibilities of the secretariat of the Inter-agency Task Force had been shifted at similar meetings between UNESCO/ROSTAS, WHO/EMRO and other agencies. It was therefore recommended that, at the next meeting, a specific agency be designated to serve as the permanent secretariat of the Inter-agency Task Force.

26. Recognizing the multi-disciplinary nature of the functions carried out by ESCWA and its mandate in the field of water resource development and management, it was recommended that ESCWA serve, in the meantime, as the secretariat of the Inter-agency Task Force and organize and host the next meeting. To this end, ESCWA would approach the agencies with regard to the venue and date of the next meeting.

27. The meeting identified the members of the Inter-agency Task Force as the United Nations agencies and the regional and international organizations active in the field of water resources. A list of the Inter-agency Task Force members would be finalized after contacts had been made by the designated secretariat and upon the agreement, during the next inter-agency meeting, of the representatives of the agencies concerned.

28. It was agreed that the following priority areas would constitute the background for coordination among the agencies concerned:

- (a) Diffusion of advanced techniques for the assessment of water resources;
- (b) Groundwater protection;
- (c) Rainwater management;
- (d) Demand management;
- (e) Conflict analysis and resolution (legislation and regulatory frameworks);

- (f) Urban water resource management and a database and information system;
- (g) Capacity-building;
- (h) Public awareness and community participation;
- (i) Technology transfer and adaptation;
- (j) Establishment of a regional database and exchange of information for joint programming of activities and implementation of regional projects.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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Annex II

PROGRAMME OF WORK

<u>Monday, 12 September</u>	<u>Item</u>
9-10.30 a.m.	1. Registration of participants
10.30-11 a.m.	2. Opening session:  - Statement by the Executive Secretary - Adoption of the Programme of Work
11-11.30 a.m.	Coffee break
11.30 a.m.-12.45 p.m.	3. Review of recommendations adopted in the previous Inter-agency meeting and the meeting of the Inter-agency Task Force on Land and Water Resources held in Alexandria on 22 February 1993 and assessment of the current status of coordination among agencies active in the water sector.
12.45-1.15 p.m.	Coffee break
1.15-2.30 p.m.	4. Presentation of work programmes of ACSAD, UNDP, UNESCO/ROSTAS, UNEP, UNEP/ROWA, AOAD, WHO/CEHA, BGR, INWRDAM and ESCWA.
<u>Tuesday, 13 September 1994</u>	
9-11.00 a.m.	Item 4 ( <i>continued</i> )
11-11.30 a.m.	Coffee break
11.30 a.m.-12.45 p.m.	5. Discussion of activities for initiating joint action in the following areas:  (a) Integrated water resources management; (b) Updating water resource assessment; (c) Water quality control; (d) Application of remote-sensing techniques and isotope technology for water resource exploration and development; (e) Shared water resources; (f) Training water network; and (g) Others.
12.45-1.15 p.m.	Coffee break
13.15-2.30 p.m.	Item 5 ( <i>continued</i> )

Wednesday, 14 September

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|-------------------|--|
| 9-11.00 a.m.      | 6. Measures to strengthen coordination |
| 11-11.30 a.m.     | Coffee break                           |
| 11.30 a.m.-1 p.m. | 7. Adoption of the report              |



