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DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

Regional reviews of activities pertaining to the International
Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

1. A regional meeting on problems and needs in community water supply and sanitation within the African region was held under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) from 4 to 8 August 1980 at Addis Ababa. The meeting was attended by representatives of 30 member States and by observers from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Children's Fund, World Health Organization, the World Bank and the African Development Bank.
2. Representatives made statements reflecting the situation of water supply and sanitation services in their respective countries. Based on the presentations by the delegations and the documentation on the various agenda items, the meeting adopted a series of recommendations pertaining to various activities in drinking water supply and sanitation, including a review of the current status of services and the related future requirements for technical and financial co-operation, manpower training, prevention and control of water-borne diseases and related environmental problems, and institutional support at the national and regional levels.

Summary of recommendations

3. With regard to assessment of the present status of services and projected requirements, the need was stressed for preparation of specific targets to be achieved during the course of the Decade and to integrate them within respective national development plans, identifying priorities and establishing schedules for project implementation. The meeting recommended that member States that had not

yet prepared plans and programmes for the Decade should do so as soon as possible, preferably before 1982, and commence the implementation of projects without delay, and that all member States should make efforts to integrate the plans and targets for the Decade within their respective national economic development plans. The meeting also recommended that member States should revise and update, as appropriate, data on the present status and future requirements of water supply and sanitation services with reference to the urban and rural subsectors of their population, taking 1979 as the base year and making available such data to the relevant international organizations so that current information on each country could be maintained at the regional and global levels. Furthermore, the meeting recommended that member States should undertake a mid-Decade review in 1985 of the progress in the implementation of their programmes and objectives.

4. Noting that technical and financial co-operation was required by many member States in the preparation of plans and projects, training of manpower and conducting applied research on appropriate technology, the meeting recommended that member States should identify and plan their requirements during the Decade in respect of technical assistance and advisory services and submit their proposals to relevant organizations involved in bilateral and multilateral co-operation for possible support, bearing in mind that the major share of the resources would have to be generated from internal sources within the countries themselves.

5. The need was stressed for financial support from multilateral and bilateral organizations under flexible, favourable and the expeditious terms, taking into account the fact that investments in the sector were generally designed to, and in effect, did give rise to social benefits not directly measurable in financial terms.

6. In relation to the training of manpower required to meet the goals and targets of the Decade, the meeting urged member States:

(a) To institute programmes for training at the professional and subprofessional levels according to their needs and requirements with resources that could be made available from domestic and/or external sources;

(b) To establish and/or strengthen national, subregional and regional institutions and centres for the training of personnel required for the effective implementation of water supply and sanitation programmes, including related environmental aspects;

(c) To conduct and keep under review surveys of national manpower needs and availability;

(d) To promote research and development in the application of appropriate technology;

(e) To promote activities in technical co-operation among African States in the spirit of technical co-operation among developing countries;

(f) To promote village-level technology and industries.

7. Regarding environmental health and prevention and control of water-borne diseases, the meeting emphasized the need to allocate substantial funds to improve environmental health services during the Decade, and recommended that the relevant organizations of the United Nations system should assist member States in this area of endeavour, in particular, with regard to food hygiene and the prevention and control of water-borne diseases, through strengthening national health services, provision of advisory/consultancy services and fellowships, acquisition of laboratory supplies and equipment, provision of assistance with respect to research on low-cost technology and assessment and evaluation of the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of national environmental health programmes with a view to promoting national health laboratories.

8. With regard to the necessary institutional arrangements at the national level for promotion of co-operation among concerned governmental entities, the meeting urged Governments in the region that had not already done so to make efforts to establish suitable national action committees, with a permanent secretariat, responsible for the planning and co-ordination of activities during the Decade, and for bringing together all national bodies concerned with the technical, financial and policy-making aspects. Such committees would co-ordinate their activities with the office of the UNDP Resident Representative, which has been designated to serve as a focal point at the national level in mobilizing the support of international organizations. The meeting also stressed the importance of defining the roles to be played by each governmental agency, allocating specific responsibilities to each, taking into account the need to meet most effectively the essential tasks, such as planning, implementation, operating and maintaining the programme and projects, with the view to minimizing the detrimental effects due to unnecessary overlaps and duplications.

9. With regard to institutional arrangements for international co-operation at the regional level, the meeting emphasized the need for ECA to take immediate action to establish an intergovernmental committee on water resources as approved at the ECA Conference of Ministers at Rabat, in March 1979, in order to provide guidance and oversight on the water resources development activities within the region, including those pertaining to the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade. The meeting also urged that ECA should strengthen its water resources unit pursuant to the recommendations of the African regional meeting on the follow-up to and the implementation of the United Nations Water Conference held in 1978 and of the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1979/67. It also recommended that ECA should convene a regional meeting in 1982 to review the progress made in the implementation of plans and programmes for the Decade and that, in the meantime, efforts should be made to organize, as needed, meetings at the subregional level to promote the exchange of information and experiences among Governments.