

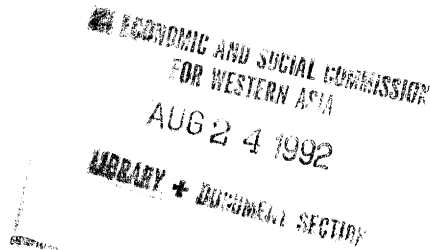
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**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION**

**PROGRESS MADE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 1990-1991**

Report on
activities of the Transport and Communications Decade
in Western Asia (1985-1994)

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific (1985/1994) (hereinafter referred to as the "Decade") was proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution 39/227 adopted on 18 December 1984. On the basis of this resolution, the Transport and Communications Division of the Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA) (sic) prepared a draft programme of action for the Decade in Western Asia, which was adopted by the Commission's Technical Committee at its third session held 20-23 April 1985. On 24 April 1985, the Commission adopted resolution 138(XII) on the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific, in which it requested the Executive Secretary to coordinate and follow up Decade activities to be undertaken in the ECWA region and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

2. In accordance with the above-mentioned resolution, two reports were submitted to the Commission at its fourteenth and fifteenth sessions, in 1987 and 1989, respectively (E/ESCWA/C.1/14/5/Add.1; E/ESCWA/C.1/15/4/Add.6). Through these reports, the member countries were informed of the activities carried out by the secretariat in 1985-1986 and 1987-1988 and on future actions pertaining to the Decade to be undertaken by the ESCWA countries.

3. The Commission in its fifteenth session in May 1989, in its resolution 170(XV) Activities of the Transport and Communications Decade in Western Asia (1985-1994), requested that financial and technical support for the implementation of the projects of the Decade be sought from international, regional and national funding institutions, as well as from other international and regional organizations. The Commission also requested the Executive Secretary to submit a report on the implementation of that resolution to the Commission at its sixteenth session.

4. The aim of the present report, as one of the planned outputs in the Transport and Communications programme of work for the biennium 1990-1991 under programme element 1.6, entitled "Activities of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific (1985-1994) in Western Asia", is to inform the Commission of the present status of ESCWA secretariat pertaining to the Decade.

II. THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETING ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE DECADE

5. The transport and communications programme in Western Asia for the biennium 1990-1991 included an intergovernmental meeting on activities of the Decade in Western Asia which was scheduled for the first quarter 1991. The situation prevailing in the region during that period prevented that meeting from being held, however. Even at a later stage -- during the second half of 1991 -- it was meaningless to hold the meeting, as virtually no progress was achieved in implementing the Decade activities, as will be explained in the following items.

III. COORDINATION WITH THE ESCAP REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME FOR THE TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS DECADE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

6. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) was invited, for the first time, to attend a two-day meeting of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Phase II of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific (1992-1996) in Geneva during the period 10-11 September 1991. In that meeting three issues were discussed in connection with the second draft of phase II of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific: (a) priority areas; (b) priority issues; and (c) future mechanisms for inter-agency coordination and cooperation in the Decade activities in the ESCAP region. The list submitted from 11 different agencies identified 86 projects. However, no specific details regarding project description or costing were given. During the discussion ESCWA raised the following points:

(a) ESCWA had never had the chance to participate in any of the ESCAP region Transport and Communications Decade activities;

(b) Phase I of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific was solely concerned with problem areas pertaining to member countries of the ESCAP region;

(c) The proposed regional action plan of phase II of the Decade is also concerned with activities in the field of the transport and communications sector only in the ESCAP member countries and does not cover the whole continent of Asia, contrary to what was stated in United Nations resolution 39/227 of 18 December 1984;

(d) ESCAP started its activity in phase I of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific in 1985, upon allocation of required funds from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other resources. As for the ESCWA region, funds from UNDP were available in 1987 only and just for preparatory assistance, to cover the cost of preparing the project document of the Transport and Communications Decade in Western Asia;

(e) From the launching of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific in 1985 and until the end of 1989, UNDP allocated a sum of about \$US 10.25 million for the ESCAP region, whereas during the same period the ESCWA region was allocated a sum of only \$US 200,000 from UNDP for Decade activities in Western Asia; that figure is about 2 per cent of the sum allocated to the ESCAP region.

IV. ACTIONS TAKEN BY ESCWA SECRETARIAT

7. ESCWA attended the Economic and Social Council's second regular session of 1991, held in Geneva during the period 3-26 July 1991. Within the themes of regional cooperation in phase II of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic and Social Council passed resolution 1991/75 of 26 July 1991, whereby it:

Urges all appropriate international organizations, particularly the United Nations Development Programme, to contribute effectively to the formulation and implementation of a regional action programme for the second quinquennium of the Decade;

Also requests the Executive Secretaries of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia to promote intergovernmental and inter-agency coordination and cooperation at the regional and subregional levels in the formulation and implementation of a regional action programme for the second quinquennium of the Decade.

8. Within the framework of the ESCWA transport programme for the biennium 1990-1991, the Transport and Communications Division of ESCWA has completed five outputs partially covering 5 thrust areas of the 38 thrust areas, identified in the Project report on preparatory assistance in the programme for the Transport and Communications Decade in Western Asia (1985-1994) (E/ESCWA/TCD/88/IG.1/3/Rev.1). Moreover, the ESCWA secretariat's medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 has been broadened to cover some other identified thrust areas. This is reflected in the Transport and Communications Programme for 1992-1993 which includes nine publications, two ad hoc expert group meetings and two seminars, all of which come under the umbrella of the Transport and Communications Decade.

V. THE PRESENT STATUS OF THE DECADE PROGRAMME AND ACTIVITIES

9. The Transport and Communications Decade for Western Asia has been confronted with a major handicap since its initiation, i.e., it has not been able to secure the necessary basic funds required to get its programme and activities off the ground. Apart from the sum of \$US 200,000 that was allocated as technical assistance to prepare the Decade's project document (completed in 1988), no other financial resources were made available for the Decade. ESCWA was previously informed that UNDP as per resolution 86/30 of 27 June 1986 of its governing council authorized the notional earmarking of \$US 6 million from the unallocated amount of fourth cycle special programme resources for the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific. Out of this amount we were informed that a portion of \$US 1.6 million would be allocated for Decade activities in Western Asia. However, at a later stage, it was discovered that this sum, in addition to other resources, was made available entirely for the Decade activities of ESCAP. ESCAP recently published a report showing that the funds allocated to ESCAP from UNDP for phase I of the Decade (1985-1990) amounted to approximately \$US 10,250,000, and that jointly with other bilateral donors the total funding of phase I of the Decade amounted to approximately \$US 23.0 million.

10. The failure to secure the necessary funds for ESCWA from UNDP has hampered all the Decade's activities in Western Asia, especially as no other financial resources were made available to ESCWA to pursue the activities of the Decade in Western Asia. It was planned to establish a "Decade Unit" for the Transport and Communications Division of ESCWA to follow up Decade activities, besides a network of interested bodies for consultation and coordination on the Decade programme. Since the necessary funds could not be secured, however, neither of these units was established.

VI. PROPOSED COURSE OF ACTION ON THE DECADE PROGRAMME AND PROJECTS

A. The Decade objectives

11. The ESCWA secretariat considers it very important to all member States of the region to take the necessary steps to support General Assembly resolution 39/227 of 18 December 1984 proclaiming the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific, as well as Economic and Social Council resolutions 1984/78 of 27 July 1984 and 1991/75 of 26 July 1991. The Decade was launched with the aims of:

- (a) Improving the transport and communications infrastructural facilities;
- (b) Identifying problems of transport and communications in the region and working out feasible solutions;
- (c) Promoting a more effective and efficient transport and communications network comprising all modes and means in an integrated way;
- (d) Encouraging effective coordination and cooperation in the fields of transport and communications in the region.

B. The Project Report

12. The Project report on preparatory assistance in the programme for the Transport and Communications Decade in Western Asia (1985-1994) (E/ESCWA/TCD/88/IG.1/3/Rev.1) published in March 1989, after being adopted in the Intergovernmental/Inter-Agency Meeting on the Transport and Communications Decade in Western Asia in December 1988, and which was based on fact-finding missions in several ESCWA member States in mid-1987, requires updating, although its basic findings might still be valid, taking into consideration:

- (a) The recent Gulf crisis and its impact on the socio-economic levels of all countries of the region;
- (b) The trend in many countries to adopt free-market economies and its implications for the transport sector;
- (c) The Transport Strategy for the Arab World, which was prepared by the Arab League and endorsed by the Council for Arab Ministers of Transport.

A revised strategy of the Decade would need to focus upon:

- (a) The software side of improving the sector rather than identifying physical projects that would require heavy investment;
- (b) Institutional development, improvement of operation and management and human resource development;
- (c) Telecommunications, postal services and aviation are separate domains from transportation (surface/sea) and are covered by other international agencies [International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), Universal Postal Union (UPU), International Telecommunication Union (ITU)]. Their related

projects could be incorporated in the Decade programme, but would still be the full responsibility of the concerned agency.

C. The programme of work of the Transport and Communications Division of ESCWA

(a) The medium-term plan (1992-1997) for the Transport and Communications Division of ESCWA has been restructured to bring it into line with the Decade objectives and goals;

(b) The programme of work for 1990-1991 has completed five outputs which partially cover some of the thrust areas of the Decade;

(c) The programme of work for 1992-1993 has also been prepared to cover some specific elements of the Decade thrust areas.

D. Funding for the Decade programme and activities

13. Activities under the programme of the Transport and Communications Division for the period 1992-1993 are covered through the regular United Nations budget. However, updating the Decade report and initiating its full programme and activities would require extrabudgetary resources, mainly from UNDP. UNDP would be requested to consider the activities of the Transport and Communications Decade in Western Asia separately and on equal footing with the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and Pacific as it was implemented for ESCAP and to allocate the necessary funds required for implementation of the programme elements.

14. Based upon the recommendations formulated in the final report of the Intergovernmental/Inter-Agency Meeting on the Transport and Communications Decade in Western Asia held 13-15 December 1988 and taking into consideration the proposed course of action on the Decade programme and activities indicated above, the Commission may wish to adopt during its present session a resolution expressing and emphasizing its support for implementing a Transport and Communications Decade for Western Asia and requesting UNDP to provide the necessary funds required to implement the Decade programme elements.

