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

**PROGRESS MADE DURING 1996 IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997**

Technical cooperation activities

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has continued to undertake technical cooperation activities in the region by providing short-term regional advisory services and monitoring technical assistance projects, which the Commission undertakes in its capacity as an executing or associate executing agency, as well as providing those projects with substantive support.
2. Within the framework of the ESCWA regular programme of regional advisory services for 1996, assistance to member States was rendered in the following main areas: data processing, energy, environment, industrial promotion and management, national accounts and economic statistics, water resources development, social development, the World Trade Organization agreement, statistical sampling and population development. The advisory services provided during the above-mentioned period are summarized in the following paragraphs.
3. In the area of data processing, assistance was provided to the following in the areas specified:
 - (a) Bahrain. Technical support on the development of the optimum utilization of the household survey results for the Central Statistics Organization;
 - (b) Egypt. Preparing and conducting a seminar on Statistics and the Geographical Information System (GIS) and preparation of the final report based on a joint project between ESCWA and Cairo University;

(c) Oman. (i) New methods and procedures for upgrading and improving the level of services at the Information and Documentation Centre - Ministry of Development; (ii) household income and expenditure survey for the Social Statistics Directorate, Ministry of Development;

(d) Palestinian Authority. (i) Review and assessment of working papers for the Scientific Seminar on Data-Processing Analysis for kindergarten students and the labour force in the Palestinian refugee camps in the Syrian Arab Republic; (ii) methodologies of statistical survey of the children and mothers in the Palestinian refugee camps in the Syrian Arab Republic; and (iii) seminar on the statistical survey of the Palestinian labour force and the situation of pre-school children in the Yarmouk refugee camp for the Palestinian Central Bureau for Statistics and Natural Resources;

(e) Qatar. Review of the work plan and technical recommendations on establishing an Agriculture Information Centre - Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture;

(f) Saudi Arabia. (i) General review of computer systems and follow-up of project implementation for the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs; and (ii) new methodologies of data processing on statistical surveys for the Saudi Consulting House for the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs;

(g) United Arab Emirates. (i) Updating computerization system needs for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; (ii) periodic statistical bulletin for the Ministry of Economy and Commerce; and (iii) assessing and reviewing final results of the first and second stages of the national household budget survey for the Department of Planning - Abu Dhabi Emirate;

(h) Yemen. Preparation of documentation for the National Seminar on Methodologies and Results of Household Expenditure and Income Survey for the Central Statistical Organization (CSO).

4. Other activities in the area of data processing included the following:

Meeting with the Director of the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND) and Cairo University officials for the coordination and organization of the third training session on GIS in Cairo.

5. In the area of energy, assistance was provided to the following countries in the areas specified:

(a) Egypt. (i) Development of energy and study of new and renewable sources of energy for the Ministry of Electricity and Energy; (ii) biogas technology incubators and solar dryers for rural areas for the National Research Centre; and (iii) finalizing project document on wind energy for sustainable development of remote areas for the New and Renewable Energy Authority, Ministry of Electricity and Energy;

(b) Saudi Arabia. Preparation of the national development plan for science and technology for 2000-2020 for King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology;

(c) United Arab Emirates. The establishment of a renewable energy application centre in the Emirate of Fujairah;

(d) Yemen. Preparation of the outline of the master plan for electrical generation network expansion for the years 1996-2016 for the Public Electricity Corporation.

6. Other activities in the field of energy included:

(a) Participating in the meeting with the consultants and coordinators for harmonizing the consultancy reports on the assessment of privatization of the electric power sector, held in Cairo;

(b) Participating in the special technical mission to Lebanon for the preparation of a report on the human and material losses and damage resulting from the hostilities in Southern Lebanon, authorized by the Secretary-General in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/22 C.

7. In the area of environment, assistance was provided to the following countries in the areas specified:

(a) Lebanon. Setting water and air quality standards, developing and establishing administrative procedures for environmental reporting, and auditing and inspection for the Ministry of Environment;

(b) Oman. Reviewing environmental issues of common concern and establishing priorities for future technical cooperation between ESCWA and the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Environment;

(c) Qatar. (i) Industrial solid waste disposal operation and management for the Department of Environment, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture; (ii) assessment and recommendations on procedures of waste disposal by local authorities for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture; and (iii) presenting a study on assessment of environmental impact of development projects for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture;

(d) Saudi Arabia. Developing of environmental indicators and indexes for the Meteorology and Environmental Protection Administration;

(e) United Arab Emirates. (i) Preparation of project document for the formulation of a national environmental strategy, and a national environmental action plan for the Federal Environmental Agency; (ii) preparation of administrative procedures for environmental reporting, auditing and inspection for the Abu Dhabi Municipality; and (iii) preparation of national policies for environmental protection and assessment for the Federal Environmental Agency;

(f) Yemen. Environmental issues for the environmental survey of the industrial region in Hadhramaut Governorate for the Environmental Protection Council.

8. Other activities in the field of environment included:

(a) Participating in the meeting of the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region, organized by the League of Arab States and held in Cairo;

(b) Meeting with officials from regional organizations for the protection of the marine environment, organized jointly by the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research and the Kuwaiti Fund for Arab Economic Development, to discuss funding for an integrated regional study in Kuwait;

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- (c) Participating in the 30th annual conference of the Law of the Sea Institute and reviewing papers presented at the conference, held at Al-Ain University, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates;
- (d) Preparing and delivering a lecture on water and environment for the Arab Environment Day at the Food and Environment Control Centre, Abu Dhabi Municipality, United Arab Emirates;
- (e) Representing ESCWA at the opening session of the nineteenth ISO General Assembly on Environment, held at the University of Exeter, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland;
- (f) Participating in the 14th International Symposium on "Water and Arab Gulf Development, held at the University of Exeter, United Kingdom.

9. In the area of industrial promotion and management, assistance was provided to the following countries in the areas specified:

- (a) Syrian Arab Republic. Completion of review of the work plan and formulation of proposals for action plan and research needs of selected enterprises for the Industrial Testing and Research Centre, Ministry of Industry;
- (b) Yemen. (i) Industrial planning and policies within the framework of the project on support for the preparation of the first five-year development plan (1996-2000), in cooperation with the Ministry of Planning and Development, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Department for Development Support and Management Services; and (ii) environmental issues for the environmental survey of the industrial region in Hadhramaut Governorate for the Environmental Protection Council.

10. Other activities in the area of industrial promotion and management included:

- (a) Providing technical support in preparing project manuals to enhance performance level and increase productive efficiency in the sectors of labour, services and industrial production for the Council of Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in Bahrain;
- (b) Participating in the Conference on the Impact of the WTO/GATT and ISO 9000 on the Arab Food Industries, organized by the Arab Federation for Food Industries in Lebanon;
- (c) Participating in the Expert Group Meeting on Comprehensive Study of the Investment Climate in the Arab Countries; organized by the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO) and held in Morocco;
- (d) Participating in the Workshop and delivering a paper on "Concepts, importance and implications of ISO 9000 standards and related codes on the industrial sector in the Gulf countries", organized by the Council of Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs in the GCC and held in the United Arab Emirates.

11. In the area of national accounts and economic statistics, assistance was provided to the following in the areas specified:

- (a) Bahrain. (i) Price and volume indexes for the Central Statistics Organization; and (ii) follow-up of the first mission in connection with price and volume indexes for the Central Statistics Organization;
- (b) Egypt. 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA) for the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS);
- (c) Jordan. (i) Implementation of the 1993 SNA for the General Department of Statistics, Ministry of Planning; and (ii) preparation of the required steps and follow-up of the implementation of the 1993 SNA for the General Department of Statistics, Ministry of Planning;
- (d) Oman. National accounts for the household income and expenditure survey for the Directorate General of Social Statistics, Ministry of Development;
- (e) Palestinian Authority. Reviewing and assessing working papers prepared on the Palestinian labour force, preparation of national accounts bulletin and analysis of data related to economic statistics in the Palestinian camps in the Syrian Arab Republic, for the Palestinian Central Bureau for Statistics and Natural Resources;
- (f) Syrian Arab Republic. Preparing a paper for discussion in a training course on the 1993 SNA with regard to price and volume indexes and other related issues at the Central Bureau of Statistics, Office of the Prime Minister;
- (g) United Arab Emirates. Guidance and technical support for the implementation of the national accounts estimation approaches; and (ii) lecturing on the 1993 SNA at the Planning Department of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

12. Other activities in the area of national accounts and economic statistics included:

- (a) Providing advice on the implementation of the training programme on the 1993 SNA, held at the Arab Planning Institute in Kuwait;
- (b) Participating in the training session on the 1993 SNA and lecturing on main features of the system and boundaries of production and production management at the Arab Monetary Fund, United Arab Emirates;
- (c) Participating in the Seminar on the 1993 SNA and its implementation in North African countries for the Economic Commission for Africa, held in Tangier, Morocco.

13. In the area of water resources development, advice was provided to the following countries in the areas specified:

- (a) Jordan. (i) Follow-up of the formulation of a national water policy for the Ministry of Water and Irrigation; and (ii) evaluation of the research on the possibility of improvement of ancient water-harvesting techniques at the University of Jordan;

(b) Syrian Arab Republic. (i) Preparation of a hydrological map, hydrological data processing and updating of hydrological network for the Ministry of Irrigation; (ii) reviewing and assessing the ongoing and planned water resources and water projects and the progress made in the preparation of water resources maps for the Ministry of Irrigation; and (iii) presenting a paper to the workshop on the application of advanced technologies in water resources management for the Ministry of Irrigation;

(c) United Arab Emirates. Presenting two papers on the assessment of Ham and Zaqt dams in the Emirate of Fujairah, and on management of an integrated water policy for the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in cooperation with Al-Ain University.

14. Other activities in the area of water resources development included:

(a) Participating in the exhibition of the World Water Day celebrations organized by the University of Al-Ain, United Arab Emirates;

(b) Participating in the Seminar on the Integration of Information on Drilling Oil Wells and the hydrology of deep groundwater layers, and presenting a paper on the "Role of the hydrodynamics of groundwater" at the Seminar, organized by the Inter-Islamic Network on Water Resources Management in Amman;

(c) Participating in the Expert Group Meeting on Water Legislation in the ESCWA Region, organized by the ESCWA secretariat in Amman.

15. In the area of social development and policy issues, assistance was provided to the following countries in the areas specified:

(a) Bahrain (i) Providing technical support in the field of women and the family, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and social development centres, for the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs; and (ii) initiating the ESCWA sustainable human development network in Bahrain for the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs;

(b) Iraq. (i) Reviewing and assessing the UNDP Human Development Report on Iraq; (ii) initiating a network for human development and the formation of a social committee for the implementation of the ESCWA/UNDP project on sustainable human development; and (iii) preparing a work plan within the framework of a sustainable human development network for the Planning Agency at the Ministry of Planning;

(c) Jordan. (i) Providing technical support to an income-generation project for women in the context of sustainable human development for the Noor Al-Hussein Foundation; and (ii) preparing the Human Development Report for Jordan within the context of the ESCWA/UNDP project on sustainable human development for the Ministry of Planning;

(d) Lebanon. (i) Reviewing and assessing the conditions of the social development services training centres and preparing a project document on the development and improvement of the role of the social training centres for the Ministry of Social Affairs; and (ii) formulating the strategies and future workplans of the national and NGO (non-governmental organization) committees for the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM);

(e) Syrian Arab Republic. Discussing social development issues and ESCWA future cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

16. Other activities in the area of social development and policy issues included:

(a) Participating in the Workshop on Sustainable Human Development organized by the UNDP in Bahrain;

(b) Participating in the Seminar on Occupational Rehabilitation for Disabled People in the Arab Local Communities, organized by the Arab Labour Organization (ALO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Jordan;

(c) Participating in the meeting of the Jordanian National Committee for Women to formulate procedures for the organization of the Fourth World Conference on Women and defining the role and tasks of different United Nations agencies for that purpose, organized by the Jordan Ministry of Social Development.

(d) (i) Participating in the strategy formulation workshop on employment generation in the Arab Mediterranean countries organized by the ILO International Training Centre in Italy; and (ii) providing technical support for the forthcoming programme on employment generation for women and youth in the Arab Mediterranean countries, organized by the ILO International Training Centre, Turin, Italy.

17. In the area of the World Trade Organization, assistance was provided to the following countries in the areas specified:

(a) Bahrain. Formulation of a preliminary plan of action on the training of the staff of the Ministry of Commerce on how to benefit from the World Trade Organization agreement;

(b) Egypt. (i) Discussing with officials and conducting training on the World Trade Organization agreement for heads of export departments of the industrial companies at the Ministry of the Public Sector; (ii) conducting training for the commercial attachés on the World Trade Organization agreement at the Ministry of the Public Sector; and (iii) lecturing on the commodities and services section of the World Trade Organization agreement organized by the Management Development Centre, the Ministry of Public Enterprises;

(c) Jordan. (i) Reviewing of documents presented to the meeting on future accession to the World Trade Organization agreement for the Ministry of Industry and Trade; (ii) preparing a paper on Jordan's strategy towards future accession to the World Trade Organization agreement for the Ministry of Industry and Trade; (iii) reviewing draft law on protection of Jordanian products for the Ministry of Industry and Trade; and (iv) discussing the plan of action on accession of Jordan to the World Trade Organization agreement with the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the International Trade Centre;

(d) Kuwait. Trade development and the mechanisms of operation and work of the World Trade Organization for the Ministry of Commerce and Industry;

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(e) Lebanon. (i) Preparing a plan of action regarding the eventual accession of Lebanon to the World Trade Organization agreement for the Ministry of Economy and Trade; (ii) discussing with officials in the Ministries of Economy and Trade, Finance, Agriculture and Foreign Affairs, the Lebanese position on tariffs, insurance and the preparation for round one of the negotiations for the possible accession of Lebanon to the World Trade Organization agreement; and (iii) preparation of a discussion paper on the Uruguay Round in the agricultural sector, its impact on exports and the strategy of food products importation, delivered at the Faculty of Agriculture, the Lebanese University;

(f) Syrian Arab Republic. (i) Operational mechanisms to improve and develop trade for the Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade; (ii) preparing a study on the promotion of Syrian exports in view of the new international trade system for the Ministry of Economy and Foreign Trade; and (iii) preparing a discussion paper on the concept of trade development in the World Trade Organization agreement for the Aleppo Chamber of Commerce.

18. Other activities in the area of the World Trade Organization included:

- (a) Participating in two meetings on the Uruguay Round organized by the GCC in Bahrain;
- (b) Participating in the seminar on telecommunications in the Arab world and the effects of the World Trade Organization agreement on the telecommunications sector, organized by the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications in Amman;
- (c) Participating in the seminar on future accession of Jordan to the World Trade Organization agreement, organized by the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the International Trade Centre, held in Amman;
- (d) Participating in the meeting organized by the League of Arab States in Cairo on Arab telecommunication policies and economies, and presenting a discussion paper at the meeting on the effects of applying the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS);
- (e) Participating in the "brain-storming" meeting for the Arab countries in preparation for the Singapore Ministerial Conference and organized by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Geneva;
- (f) Participating in the Singapore Ministerial Conference focusing on the implementation of Uruguay Round results, organized by UNCTAD in Singapore;
- (g) Advising the Libyan authorities on international trade issues in relation to the globalization of the world economy and whether Libyan institutions and economy were sufficiently prepared to join the World Trade Organization, organized by the Department for Development Support and Management Services at the United Nations Headquarters and the UNDP Office in Tripoli.

19. In the area of population and development, assistance was provided to the following country in the areas specified:

Jordan. (i) Preparing the document on the national programme of action (1997-2005) for the Jordanian National Committee for Women; and (ii) reviewing project formulation for the follow-up of gender issues in population.

20. Other activities in the area of population and development included:

(a) Participating in the meeting of the Jordanian National Committee for Women, which was held to formulate procedures for the organization of the Fourth World Conference on Women and to define the role and task of different United Nations agencies, and which was organized by the Ministry of Social Development in Amman;

(b) Consulting and completing with the League of Arab States the outline of technical papers in preparation for the general meeting of ministers of Social Affairs, held in Amman;

(c) Participating in the Arab conference for formulating a plan of action and mechanism for follow-up of the Fourth World Conference on Women, organized by the League of Arab States in Amman;

(d) Participating in the meeting on United Nations strategy on social development for Lebanon, for the Ministry of Social Affairs, Lebanon;

(e) Participating and preparing a discussion paper and lecturing in the expert group meeting on population policies and sustainable development in the Arab region;

(f) Organizing a session on the population impact of the structural adjustment programme in the ESCWA region for the Arab Regional Population Conference, follow-up of the International Conference on Population and Development, organized by several United Nations agencies and the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population and held in Cairo.

21. In the area of statistical sampling, assistance was provided to the following country in the areas specified:

United Arab Emirates. Technical assistance was provided on sampling method analysis, assessment of the results for the first and second stages of the national household budget survey, for the Planning Department of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

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