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Item 6 (i) of the provisional agenda

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

**REPORT ON THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED PURSUANT
TO RESOLUTION 175 (XV) ON THE STRENGTHENING OF THE ROLE
AND PERFORMANCE OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION
FOR WESTERN ASIA**

Introduction

1. The Advisory Committee was established by ESCWA resolution 175 (XV) of 18 May 1989, in which the Commission, inter alia, invited "member States to set up an advisory body comprising the heads of their diplomatic missions in Iraq to assist the Executive Secretary in the study of problems connected with the work of the Commission."

2. At the eighteenth session of the Commission, the above-mentioned resolution was amended by resolution 208 (XVIII) of 25 May 1995 on the representation of member States in the Advisory Committee established pursuant to ESCWA resolution 175 (XV). The resolution read as follows:

"The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

"Taking cognizance of the Executive Secretary's note on the strengthening of the role and performance of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

"Taking into account the recommendation of the Advisory Committee dated 3 May 1995 concerning the amendment to paragraph 1 (a) of resolution 175 (XV) on the strengthening of the role and performance of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

"Decides to amend the above paragraph as follows:

"To invite member States to set up an advisory body comprising the heads of their diplomatic missions in the host country, or such persons as may be delegated by their

Governments and a representative of the host country, to assist the Executive Secretary in the study of problems connected with the work of the Commission'."

3. In the period 1995-1997, the Advisory Committee was reactivated to become an important subcommittee of ESCWA. The reactivation and the strengthening of the role of the Committee are part of the efforts being made by the ESCWA secretariat to promote participation by the government departments concerned in ESCWA member States in the formulation of the Commission's programmes, as well as in following up their implementation in terms of critical assessment and evaluation, including pointing out any deficiencies in performance.

4. At the Advisory Committee's meetings, the Executive Secretary expressed the hope that the role of the Committee would be strengthened and expanded. That would help him to better identify the developmental needs of ESCWA member countries, and to keep abreast of the views and assessments provided by the departments concerned in those countries regarding the activities and performance of the Commission. Criticism and guidance by the departments concerned in member States was indispensable to the success and the development of the work of the Commission. At another meeting, the Executive Secretary once again stressed the importance of the Advisory Committee, which currently held biannual meetings, constituting a major forum through which the observations of the member States could be channelled, especially since the ESCWA ministerial sessions were only held once every two years. Hence, the secretariat has consistently submitted all new proposals on new developments to the Advisory Committee. The agenda of the ESCWA eighteenth session was actually considered and discussed at the four meetings held by the Committee in 1995-1997. The completion of the organizational structure of the Committee was also discussed, with a view to establishing the dates of its meetings, and its chairmanship. The Advisory Committee also reviewed a report on its activities in 1995. It was then decided that one of the major issues of interest to member States should be considered: accordingly, a review was carried out on the problem of water resources in the region, and the economic implications of the establishment of the World Trade Organization. The Executive Secretary reported on the developments since the last meeting of the Advisory Committee, including his official visits to member States, and his participation in the meetings convened by the Secretary-General. The Executive Secretary and his colleagues in the secretariat can answer Committee members' enquiries regarding the issues under discussion, on any other issues they may wish to raise.

5. The Advisory Committee is being helped in its consideration, discussion and assessment of the valuable suggestions submitted by the fact that the heads of the diplomatic missions in the host country, the temporary seat of the Commission, are kept up to date with ESCWA activities in all fields. They attend all ESCWA meetings in the host country, including the meetings of experts and of the technical committees established in the fields of Statistics, Social Development, Water, and Energy, and they receive copies of all the papers and reports issued by ESCWA. This has enabled members of the Committee to follow up the activity and performance of ESCWA.

6. The Executive Secretary should like to express his profound gratitude to the members of the Advisory Committee for their positive response and active participation in the consideration and discussion of the agenda items at its meetings. He should also like to express his appreciation for the valuable observations and suggestions submitted by the Committee members, which facilitated the preparations for the eighteenth and nineteenth ESCWA sessions. The secretariat has also benefited from the views and comments of the Advisory Committee in the implementation of its activities in all fields of development.

