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REPORT

**FOURTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT,
BEIRUT, 3-5 JULY 2002**

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Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) secretariat held this session pursuant to resolution 198 (XVII) of 31 May 1994 concerning the establishment of a Committee on Social Development in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, which was adopted by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1994/27 of 26 July 1994; and in accordance with the recommendations of the first session of the Committee on Social Development, held in Amman on 25 and 26 March 1997, which were adopted by ESCWA at its nineteenth session, held in Beirut on 7 and 8 May 1997, and with the recommendations of the third session of the Committee on Social Development, held in Beirut on 27 and 28 March 2001, which were adopted by ESCWA at its twenty-first session, held in Beirut on 10 and 11 May 2001.
2. This report outlines the most significant points raised during the discussions on each agenda item. The Committee unanimously adopted the report at its final session, which was held on 5 July 2002.

I. PARTICIPANTS AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. VENUE AND DATE OF THE SESSION

3. The fourth session of the ESCWA Committee on Social Development was held in United Nations House in Beirut from 3 to 5 July 2002. The Committee held four meetings during the session, in which it discussed the agenda items set forth in paragraph 13 below.
4. The objective of the session was not only to strengthen coordination and cooperation between the countries of the ESCWA region in respect of various social development issues, but also to provide an official framework for the discussion of proposals and formulation of recommendations on planning the programmes of work of the ESCWA Social Development Division and ways of developing and improving those programmes in various activities undertaken by the Division, as follows: (a) integrated social policies; (b) population policies; (c) social integration; (d) empowerment of women and incorporation of gender issues in policies, programmes and activities; (e) urban development and housing policies; and (f) provision of statistical data and social indicators.

B. PARTICIPANTS

5. Representatives of the following 12 ESCWA member countries participated in the fourth session of the Committee on Social Development: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.
6. Also attending the session were representatives of certain United Nations organizations, namely, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the World Health Organization, the United Nations Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS), and the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights.
7. Attending as observers were representatives of governmental and regional organizations including the Arab Labour Organization, the General Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture for Arab Countries pertaining to the League of Arab States, the Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe, the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations, the Regional Centre on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development for the Near East, and representatives of non-governmental, national, regional and international organizations.

C. OPENING OF THE SESSION

8. The session was opened by Ms. Mervat Tallawy, Executive Secretary of ESCWA, who made a statement in which she welcomed the participants to the work of the session and affirmed the importance of

the role played by the Committee in discussing the programme of work of the ESCWA Social Development Division and in putting forward proposals aimed at developing that programme and coordinating its activities. In her statement, the Executive Secretary focused on the Commission's concern to promote cooperation and integration with a view to strengthening integrated social and economic development at national and regional level. She noted that a round table discussion of new developments in the legislation, procedures and practices adopted by member countries would be held as part of the session. She also noted that the session was being held at a time when preparations were being made for the 10-year follow-up and review of a number of United Nations international conferences. Ms. Tallawy urged participants to make use of the Commission's experience of cooperating with member countries during the preparations for the Second World Assembly on Ageing, and to continue such cooperation when preparing for other conferences in the future. She called upon member countries to review international and social legislation and the position of their Governments with respect thereto, citing, in particular, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Executive Secretary also focused on the importance of the fourth session of the Committee on Social Development, which coincided with both the restructuring of the Commission and the reordering of its priorities with respect to social development issues, and the preparations for follow-up of the outcomes of international conferences and implementation of their recommendations. In conclusion, she wished participants every success in their work.

9. The sponsor of the session, His Excellency Mr. Asaad Diab, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of Lebanon, made a statement in which he welcomed the participants and affirmed that the issue of development, which was a basic aim for every country, was the primary aim of developing countries.

10. Mr. Diab noted with satisfaction that the programme of work of the ESCWA Social Development Division included issues of especial interest to Lebanon, including, in particular, population policies, the empowerment of women and the provision of statistical data and social indicators.

11. In conclusion, Mr. Diab said that the Commission's sustained initiative in inviting member countries to contribute to planning and developing all aspects of the work of the Division was an exemplary investment of financial and human resources in the development process, because each country had the opportunity to give its views on the relevant programmes and activities, on the basis of its situation and local needs.

D. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

12. Participants unanimously elected Ms. Hanna Qadra, the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, as Chairman; Mr. Abdulla Ibn Amr Al-Amudy, the representative of Saudi Arabia, and Mr. Motahar Ahmed Zabarah, the representative of Yemen, as Deputy Chairmen, and Ms. Marianna Al-Khayyat Al-Sabbury, the representative of Lebanon, as Rapporteur. Participants also appointed representatives of the ESCWA secretariat to the drafting committee, and elected Ms. Seham Ahmed Mahroose, of Bahrain, Ms. Amina Bint Hamdan Al-Hamdan, of Oman, and Mr. Hani Saba, of Palestine, to serve on the same committee.

E. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND PROGRAMME OF WORK

13. At its first meeting, the Committee adopted the agenda and programme of work in the form in which they appear in documents E/ESCWA/SD/2002/IG.1/L.1 and E/ESCWA/SD/2002/IG.1/L.2. Set forth below is the agenda in the form in which it was adopted:

- “1. Opening of the fourth session of the Committee on Social Development.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Proposed organization of work.
5. Discussion:

- (a) Review of accomplishments of the Social Development Division since the third session of the Committee on Social Development;
 - (b) Interventions of member countries.
6. Discussion of various social development issues: follow-up on implementation of recommendations of the third session of the Committee on Social Development:
- (a) Report on social policies (round table);
 - (b) Report on the Population Policies Information System (PPIS);
 - (c) Report on the consultative body of non-governmental organizations;
 - (d) Report on follow-up to some international conferences convened by the United Nations during the 1990s.
7. Review of outcomes of the fourth special session of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (11 March 2002):
- (a) Revised medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 for social development; revised programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2002-2003 for social development;
 - (b) Proposals on programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2004-2005 for social development.
8. Other matters.
9. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fourth session”.

II. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

A. REVIEW OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT DIVISION SINCE THE THIRD SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (Agenda item 5(a))

14. The secretariat presented this item in E/ESCWA/SD/2002/IG.1/3, which included the following information:

1. The activities of the Social Development Division

15. During the biennium 2001-2002, the work of the Social Development Division focused on the following four areas: (a) social policies; (b) the eradication of poverty; (c) community development; and (d) social integration, the principal activities relating to which were as follows: (i) the carrying out of studies and research in fields related to social policies, community development, the eradication of poverty and the social impact of globalization; (ii) the implementation of field projects related to community development and social integration; (iii) the holding of meetings on the convening and follow-up of such conferences on social integration as the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System, the Second World Assembly on Ageing, the World Summit for Children, the Empowerment of the Arab Family, Support for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance; and (iv) cooperation and coordination with regional and international organizations.

2. The activities of the Population Section

16. During the biennium 2001-2002, the work of the Population Section focused on the following areas: (a) the carrying out of analytical studies, demographic estimates, advocacy and awareness campaigns; (b) the

monitoring of population policies in ESCWA member countries by implementing the Population Policies Information System (PPIS) and establishing the Population Information Network (POPIN); and (c) the organization and holding of meetings and workshops.

3. The activities of the Human Settlements Section

17. The work of the Human Settlements Section focused on issues relating to housing, sustainable urban development and social integration. Special attention was devoted to following up implementation of the Habitat Agenda at Arab level. Activities included (a) the carrying out of studies and research, in areas relating to sustainable urban development, environmental sustainability and the development of databases, and the preparation of recurrent publications; (b) the organization and holding of meetings; and (c) the establishment of planning and construction networks.

4. The activities of the Women and Development Unit

18. The work of the Women and Development Unit concentrated on following up implementation of the recommendations of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the special session of the General Assembly entitled, Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-first Century, the 1995 Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2005 and the 1996 Integrated Arab Plan of Action. The Unit undertook activities in the following areas: (a) studies and research, including a survey on developments in the status of women, participation in the Arab family, gender and citizenship and the role of NGOs, and the gender dimension of poverty in Arab countries; (b) the organization and holding of meetings, workshops and training courses; and (c) cooperation and coordination with regional and international organizations.

5. The activities of the Multi-Disciplinary Social Issues Unit

19. The focus of the work of the Multi-Disciplinary Social Issues Unit was on activities that included the holding of a number of conferences, seminars and training courses in order to discuss research and studies dealing with social issues from a number of angles and a comprehensive and integrated point of view. Work also included the development of appropriate means and mechanisms for integrated regional follow-up to some international conferences convened by the United Nations during the 1990s. Unit activities relating to capacity-building and support for NGOs were undertaken in the following fields: (a) studies and research and the organization and holding of meetings; (b) the dissemination of publications, media materials and technical estimates; and (c) cooperation and coordination with regional and international organizations.

6. The consultancy services offered by the Social Development Division

20. Consultancy services were provided by ESCWA at regional and national level. With respect to the former, services were provided in accordance with the medium-term plan for the four-year period, the activities for each biennium of which are incorporated in a programme of work that is undertaken by the technical divisions. The human development-related services provided by the Social Development Division covered the following main areas: social policy, human development, community development and social integration. With respect to the national level, services were provided under the supervision of the Executive Secretary and at the request of member countries, and were undertaken by the regional advisers. Services supply the particular national needs of member countries. During 2001 and 2002, approval was given for 27 requests for technical support, of which it was decided that the assistance for seven should be provided in the second half of 2002. The consultancy services provided fall into five main categories, namely, social development strategies and policies; women, development and civil society; sustainable human development; family support policies; and the development of employment and human resources.

B. INTERVENTIONS OF MEMBER COUNTRIES (Agenda item 5(b))

21. In the context of the reports on the social development-related plans and activities of ESCWA member countries, a review of varying degrees of comprehensiveness was conducted of a number of social

development issues and the results achieved by countries. Those issues and results were concerned, primarily, with the situation of women, human rights, participation, obstacles to social development, means of strengthening social care, and social security networks. A review was also conducted of gains and difficulties in the field of human resource development, the improvement of population particularities, particularly with respect to education, health and housing, community and rural development, the eradication of poverty and the strengthening of the position and role of the family. Interventions were made by the delegations of Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen and covered the outcome of national plans and activities in the various aspects of social development set forth above.

22. Contributions were also made to the discussion by representatives of the United Nations Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS), UNIFEM, the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights and UNESCO.

23. Further contributions were made by representatives of NGOs involved with the national project for primary health care in Lebanon, disability and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women; the Arab Youth Union; the World Federation of United Nations Associations; and the Lebanese Women's Rights League.

24. Participants received copies of the national reports on social development in the fields covered by the session that had been prepared by Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.

C. DISCUSSION OF VARIOUS SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ISSUES: FOLLOW-UP ON
IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE THIRD SESSION
OF THE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
(Agenda item 6)

1. *Report on social policies*¹

25. The representative of the ESCWA secretariat reviewed the most important points of document E/ESCWA/SD/2002/IG.1/5, which may be summarized as follows: the social policy project aims to provide a reference framework that may be used by member countries in planning and developing comprehensive social policy. The aims of the project include (a) to increase understanding of social policies by studying the planning and application of such policies and measures for coordinating related activities and following up implementation; (b) to strengthen the role of Governments and the other relevant parties in improving the provision of social services, by applying integrated social policies; (c) to support national and regional capacities in respect of social policy analysis and provide consultancy services for Government institutions and NGOs; (d) to review the decision-making apparatus in respect of the design of strategies and priorities relating to the various social policies, including the alleviation of poverty, the promotion of productive consumption and strengthening of social integration; and (e) to promote popular participation through supporting the capacities of organizations and ensuring that they are supplied with information and participate in the decision-making process.

26. It is expected that this project, which costs some \$100,000 and is being implemented over 18 months, will achieve the following: (a) provide a reference framework for the spread and implementation of social policies throughout member countries; (b) carry out a groundbreaking survey in a member country and present the results thereof in a meeting that will be held in order to discuss the same and adopt the report relating to the survey; (c) prepare a background study on the challenges faced by social policies and carry out a study on experiences of social policy in the Arab region; and (d) prepare selected studies on certain successful experiences of social policy in Canada, Malaysia, Norway and Tunisia.

¹ A round table discussion on integrated social policies took place in a parallel meeting held on Friday 5 July 2002 that was attended by a number of experts and academics and presided over by Ms. Mervat Tallawy, Executive Secretary of ESCWA.

2. Report on the Population Policies Information System

27. The representative of the ESCWA secretariat made an electronic presentation of document E/ESCWA/SD/2002/IG.1/6, explaining that PPIS was an electronic system that was adapted to the situation of population policies in Arab countries and had been specially prepared in order to monitor and follow up implementation of the population goals planned for the second half of the current decade. The structural and theoretical bases of the system are derived from the principles adopted by the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development that was held in Cairo in 1994, and affirm the importance of incorporating population issues into the development process by formulating and adopting national population policies.

28. The aims of PPIS include (a) the collection and documentation of population policies and programmes in all the countries of the region; (b) the collection and documentation of the indicators that measure implementation; (c) the provision of an electronic resource for the storage and recovery of policies using comparative methods; (d) the identification of the general orientations and strategic vision related to population and economic and social development in the Arab region and in each country; (e) the identification of the position of Arab countries with respect to population policies and the general Government view of what that concept means and the relationship it bears to development; and (f) the identification of the most successful experiences and the useful lessons they provide.

29. The System produces four main types of result, namely, reports on the policies pursued in each country or group of countries; reports on the indicators for each country or group of countries; observatory reports on each group of countries; and reports on the general position with respect to policies of each country or group of countries. The potential results that can be achieved by the System include (a) the provision of a comparative approach for population policies; (b) the extrapolation of significant results of interest to decision makers and researchers; (c) the scientific monitoring of policy implementation at various levels, including the overall and the procedural; (d) the identification of gender-based gaps between social groups; (e) the provision of a reference for national population policies in each country or group of countries; (f) the collection of the texts of population policies and storage thereof in a manner that will facilitate their recovery and comparison; and (g) the classification of data as desired by the user. The mechanism for the implementation of the System depends on three main activities, namely, the preparation of a population policy questionnaire; the formation of national working groups; and the organization of workshops on population policies.

3. Report on the consultative body of non-governmental organizations

30. The representative of the secretariat reviewed document E/ESCWA/SD/2002/IG.1/4, saying that at its third session, held in Beirut on 27 and 28 March 2001, the Committee on Social Development had recommended that ESCWA should use NGOs to establish a regional consultative body, with a view to integrating the roles of the Government, civil society institutions and the private sector. The aforementioned recommendation was submitted to the twenty-first session of ESCWA, which was held in Beirut on 10 and 11 May 2001, and was adopted at the same time as a number of other recommendations by resolution 227 (XXI) of 11 May 2001 entitled "Adoption of the final reports of the subsidiary bodies of the Commission".

31. With a view to implementing that recommendation, ESCWA contacted the relevant ministries in member countries and urged each to designate an NGO to represent the country in the aforementioned consultative body. Replies were received from Oman, which designated the Women's Voluntary Work Coordinating Committee; the United Arab Emirates, which nominated the Human Rights League; Qatar, which appointed the Qatari Red Crescent Association; Jordan, which selected the National Council for Family Affairs; Egypt, which chose the Egyptian Red Crescent Association; and Iraq, which deputed the General Union of Iraqi Women. The secretariat hopes that all the member countries will nominate their representatives to the consultative body of NGOs in order to enable ESCWA to convene that body for a discussion of its duties and role in the programmes undertaken by the Commission.

32. A consultative meeting with civil society institutions in Lebanon was held by ESCWA in Beirut on 23 April 2001, the aim of which was to establish a framework and formulate a process and mechanism for

strengthening cooperation, regulating the relationship and maintaining contacts between both sides. The final report of that meeting included such important recommendations as (a) that ESCWA, in cooperation and coordination with the ministries and non-governmental bodies, should undertake a study on the situation of NGOs in Lebanon and thereafter in other member countries; and (b) that ESCWA should be urged to arrange an annual general meeting for civil society institutions, with the full participation of the aforementioned consultative body.

*4. Report on follow-up to some international conferences convened by
the United Nations during the 1990s*

33. The representative of the secretariat reviewed document E/ESCWA/SD/2002/IG.1/7, saying that since early 1999, the Social Development Division, in cooperation with the UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States, had been implementing the integrated regional follow-up project relating to international conferences in Arab countries. In the third and final year, namely, from March 2001 to March 2002, the Division had continued to implement the activities specified in the project programme of work, in cooperation with Governments, the relevant United Nations agencies and organizations, the League of Arab States and other non-governmental regional institutions, and research and study centres and scientific institutes. There were a number of international conferences for following up which other United Nations organizations had responsibility.

34. Against this background, ESCWA held in Amman, from 3 to 5 September 2001, a regional meeting of the Arab national coordination councils for follow-up to international conferences. A second regional expert group meeting was held in Cairo from 11 to 13 November 2001, on governance, socio-economic development and poverty alleviation. In cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund, the League of Arab States, Government institutions and civil society organizations from Arab countries, the regional seminar on children was held in Cairo from 2 to 4 July 2001, in order to consider a number of documents, studies and reports in preparation for the formulation of an Arab framework for the rights of the child. That framework constituted the Arab vision and contribution to the General Assembly Special Session on Children that was held in New York in May 2002.

35. As part of the effort to develop mechanisms for following-up and monitoring the progress made by Arab countries in implementing the plans or programmes of work adopted by the international conferences, ESCWA followed up the development of an information system for monitoring the status and orientation of social development. That system is built on the premise that a database is essential for studies in the social field, and a tool by which to measure changes and achievements at national and regional levels in the field of social development and, consequently, to follow up the outcome of the recommendations of international conferences. The Commission also produced training materials on the preparation of national reports on follow-up to international conferences. Those materials were used at a training course for NGOs and official departments in Bahrain that was held in January 2002, in response to a request from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Bahrain.

36. The participants' discussion under agenda item 6 of the activities relating to various social development issues, the issues raised during the interventions of member countries in respect of those activities and the activities of member countries, and the interventions made by regional and international organizations and NGOs concerning their plans and activities in the field of social development, raised a number of basic questions, including the following:

(a) The delegations of member countries to the fourth session of the Committee on Social Development commended the efforts exerted by the Social Development Division and congratulated the Division on the quality and technical level of the activities;

(b) A committee on women should be established along the same lines as the Committee on Social Development, in order to monitor and follow up the preparation of a comprehensive evaluative report on the situation of Arab women that could be used as a reference tool by Arab countries and as a basis for the formulation of an integrated policy for the advancement of women. That report could constitute the regional

dimension for the review of what aspects of the Beijing Platform for Action had been implemented 10 years after the convening of the Fourth World Conference on Women;

(c) Human rights must be incorporated into social development programmes and NGOs must participate in formulating social development plans and policies;

(d) Dialogue should be instituted concerning the harmonization of terminology and concepts relating to population and social development policies, basic indicators, priorities and the mechanisms to be adopted by such policies, with a view to ensuring the participation of civil society institutions;

(e) Greater attention must be paid to the issue of publicizing social development-related programmes and activities and action must be taken to put in place suitable mechanisms for spreading awareness of and maximizing the benefit of such programmes and activities. The number of copies of publications, reports and studies should be increased and they should be made available on the Internet, in order to facilitate access thereto and the updating thereof. There is a need for software to be upgraded, in order to make it easier for member countries to update their information and social policies electronically;

(f) Specific standards must be adopted with respect to the members of NGO consultative institutions affiliated with ESCWA, in order to ensure that members are representative of the views of civil society;

(g) Information on the positive and negative aspects of the experiences of certain Arab countries should be made more widely available.

D. REVIEW OF OUTCOMES OF THE FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA (11 MARCH 2002)
(Agenda item 7)

1. *Revised medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005; revised programme of work
and priorities for the biennium 2002-2003*

37. Document E/ESCWA/SD/2002/IG.1/8, which was presented under this agenda item, contained two reports on the outcomes of the fourth special session of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, based on the two documents that were adopted by that session, namely, *Revised Medium-Term Plan for the Period 2002-2005* (E/ESCWA/S-4/3) and *Revised Programme of Work and Priorities for the Biennium 2002-2003* (E/ESCWA/S-4/4). The representative of the secretariat gave an electronic presentation of the two reports on the Social Development Division, its duties, the methods that it employs and the activities which it undertakes.

38. The most important features of the medium-term plan for social development are included in the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 set forth in E/ESCWA/S-4/3. The goal of the subprogramme for social development is to ensure regional cooperation by calling for the pursuit of comprehensive, integrated social policies that take into account the particularities and culture of the region and adopt a practical attitude thereto. Technical responsibility for this subprogramme is undertaken within ESCWA by the Social Development Division, which plays an important part in assisting member countries to deal with such social problems as the uneven provision of basic social services, the need for comprehensive and integrated social policies and the need to deal with the social and cultural impact on society of globalization. The activities of the subprogramme will therefore be directed towards encouraging the application of a comprehensive and integrated social development procedure, based on the right to development. The subprogramme will also be geared towards strengthening positive social and cultural values. As part of the subprogramme, the formulation of policies for social development will remain a priority.

39. The aim of the subprogramme is to implement the following strategies: (a) to encourage the pursuit of well-focused policies, methodologies and programmes that take into account the social context of the issue of men and women and contribute to strengthening integration and justice in the social field; (b) to advise member countries on the formulation of comprehensive and integrated social policies based on research, model projects and best practices; (c) to provide a forum for the establishment of firm communication links

and for the exchange of experiences and best practices between all partners and parties involved in the social development process at regional level; (d) to provide assistance to member countries in strengthening institutions and the capabilities of national and regional mechanisms; (e) to assist member countries in formulating strategies and policies for sustainable human development and taking measures complementary to general policy; (f) to take part in raising awareness of various aspects of the gender issue; (g) to provide member countries and local authorities with the necessary support in formulating appropriate policies and programmes on population and development, improving the material environment, advocating partnership between Governments and local administrations, and increasing capacities to ensure popular participation in development; and (h) to devote particular attention to post-dispute reconstruction of a type that takes into account the economic, social and material aspects of development.

40. The outcomes of implementation of this programme are expected to include (a) an improvement in the capacity of member countries to formulate integrated social policies and programmes that respect cultural values; (b) an increase in the number of social development-related communication mechanisms between the partners and parties involved in the development process at local, national and regional levels; (c) an improvement in the capacity of policy makers to put in place policies, arrangements, mechanisms and programmes designed to alleviate poverty; (d) a strengthening in the response of policy makers to the formulation of policies, programmes and mechanisms that take into account the gender issue; and (e) an improvement in the capacity of policy makers to use their strategies in order to deal with population and other issues of pressing importance relating to good urban governance and security of tenure.

41. Indicators of success include the following: (a) the number of member countries that put in place and implement appropriate social policies; (b) the number of joint committees and projects jointly undertaken by Governments and the institutions of civil society at local, national and regional levels; (c) the increase in the number of measures taken by member countries with a view to reducing poverty and unemployment, amongst youth and women in particular; (d) the number of countries and institutions that demonstrate the gender perspective in their policies, plans and statistics; and (e) the increase in the number of population and other issues of pressing importance and relating to good urban governance contained in the strategies of policy makers.

42. As part of the revised programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2002-2003 set forth in document E/ESCWA/S-4/4, the objective of the subprogramme is to achieve regional cooperation in the advocacy and promotion of integrated social policies that are region-specific, culturally sensitive and operationally inclined. The subprogramme will therefore focus on monitoring social conditions in the ESCWA region and responding to global trends, with the aim of providing analytical assessments for the formulation of social policies. Special emphasis will be placed on social integration, poverty and unemployment, population dynamics, the status of women and urban development. The subprogramme will also provide member countries with advice and technical assistance in formulating integrated social policies, in particular with respect to building capacities to develop strategies, plans and programmes of actions for policies relating to the aforementioned social issues.

43. The subprogramme will also facilitate the negotiation and adoption of common positions and regional strategies, programmes and plans of action on various social issues debated at international forums, by serving as a platform for dialogue during which member countries may exchange experiences and good practices. It will assist in building the capacities of civil society institutions as partners in the development process; promote strategies for participatory development and greater popular involvement in decision-making on social policies; and promote synergy and dialogue between governmental organizations and civil society institutions.

44. The subprogramme will also undertake the compilation and processing of the requisite statistical information and data and develop indicators in various social development fields relevant to its work. It will undertake studies, analyses and projects aimed at assisting member countries in addressing the challenges in those fields.

45. Subprogramme activities will be undertaken in the following areas: (a) servicing of intergovernmental and expert bodies; (b) other substantive activities, including recurrent publications and such non-recurrent

publications as technical material, databases and electronic issuances; (c) international cooperation and inter-agency coordination and liaison, involving participation in activities of funds, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system; and (d) technical cooperation, provided in the form of the advisory services supplied by the Division, ~~group~~ training, including training courses, seminars and workshops, and field projects.

46. Discussion of the revised medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 and the revised programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2002-2003 centred around the following basic points:

(a) The need to follow up international conferences in the region, using national questionnaires and regional reports for presentation at international gatherings;

(b) The need to prepare a model for the technical assistance project to be provided by United Nations organizations, in order to facilitate countries' requests for assistance in specific fields;

(c) The urgent need to focus on the advancement of women, given that it is an issue that is not the sole responsibility of NGOs, but one of the primary responsibilities of Governments that entails the participation of NGOs;

(d) The need to prepare comparative indicators relating to gender statistics. The relevant ministries must make the statistics available and support the specialized agencies in that field, establishing cooperation with the parties involved;

(e) The need to study the impact of globalization and world trade on the situation of women and the relationship of women to such non-traditional labour markets as information and communication technologies and tourism;

(f) The need to break out of the delusive circle of "Arab wealth", in view of the circumstances prevailing in the Arab region, which affect income and investment;

(g) The need to link conceptual frameworks to the social priorities of the region rather than solely to global orientations: concepts cannot be defined by depending on the future cultural structure of such concepts. In this context, the concept of participation raises the issue of the relationship between the political authorities and the community as one that is fundamental to identifying the vision and credibility of the conceptual framework;

(h) The need to urge ESCWA to activate its field activities and strengthen training programmes in order to directly follow up the implementation of social development policies;

(i) The need to take action to promote social change through training programmes relating to management practices as well as through finding the necessary balance between economic and social development and harmonizing the appropriate legislation in order to keep abreast of social change;

(j) The need to undertake comparative and evaluative studies on social development issues, in order to identify the best policies relating to the eradication of poverty and unemployment; hold workshops on social policies and participate constructively with civil society in concentrating on women's issues;

(k) The need to affirm the importance of traditional public policies that take into account the needs of the labour market and to incorporate them with social policies in order to benefit from globalization.

47. Representatives of the secretariat responded to the interventions of the participants, urging member countries to inform the Commission of any new arrangements, measures, legislation and data in order to facilitate the performance of its duties and the provision of excellent services to member countries. It was announced that only limited resources were available under the regular budget for the implementation of field projects and priorities. The Commission urged member countries to provide it with extrabudgetary resources in order to allow it to undertake the greater number of field projects that were necessary in order to achieve social development.

*2. Proposals on programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2004-2005
for social development*

48. The secretariat reviewed a number of constants in the forthcoming programme of work, which will be begun in the autumn of 2003. The most important of those constants is preparation for the review and evaluation of the world conferences that were held in the 1990s and early 2000s.

49. The secretariat asked the delegations of member countries to provide it in due course with relevant proposals, for incorporation into the programme of work for the biennium 2004-2005.

E. DATE AND VENUE OF THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE
ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
(Agenda item 8)

50. Participants proposed that the ESCWA secretariat should inform member countries of the date on which the fifth session would be held, and provide them with the relevant documentation no later than two months prior to the date decided upon.

51. Pursuant to the recommendations of participants, it was agreed that the fifth session of the Committee on Social Development would be held at ESCWA headquarters in Beirut in the year preceding the convening of the twenty-third ESCWA session, at a date to be determined in due course. The Commission was requested to make the arrangements for invitations to the meeting.

F. RECOMMENDATIONS

52. The recommendations made by the fourth session of the Committee on Social Development are set forth below:

(a) The ESCWA secretariat should be provided with the information and data that is necessary to facilitate the performance of its duties in implementing the social policies project, in view of the importance of that project; member countries were urged to participate in the relevant activities;

(b) Member countries should participate effectively in the national and regional campaign for security of tenure and good urban governance that is part of the global campaigns for security of tenure and good urban governance. In this context, it is important to establish national committees that can coordinate with ESCWA in supervising that campaign;

(c) A committee on women should be established that includes representatives from ESCWA member countries and is responsible for identifying priorities, monitoring development and coordinating women-related plans and programmes;

(d) Nominations for membership of the consultative body for NGOs affiliated with ESCWA should be put forward by those countries that have as yet nominated no representatives. The secretariat of ESCWA should hold the first annual meeting of that body forthwith, with a view to specifying its duties and programme of work, particularly in the field of participation with Governments, the coordination of regional positions at international level and presentation of a report on that matter to the fifth session of the Committee on Social Development;

(e) Action should be taken to continue the updating of laws and legislation, in order to keep abreast of changes; pursuant to undertakings and conventions relating to human rights; in implementation of the decisions, recommendations and undertakings adopted by international and regional conferences; and on the basis that development is a human right;

(f) The ESCWA secretariat should organize a consultative meeting with specialists in order to standardize terms and concepts in the field of social development;

(g) The ESCWA secretariat should study the social impact of globalization, particularly on the labour market and on social development, and should link that to non-traditional employment opportunities for women;

(h) Indicators should be formulated in order to measure achievements realized in implementing social development-related work plans and programmes; integrated social and housing policies should be formulated and the importance should be stressed of regional integration with respect to the eradication of poverty and unemployment;

(i) The ESCWA secretariat should undertake studies on problems relating to the family, including divorce and other issues that hinder the building of the family, and incorporate them in the activities of the field project to empower the Arab family and strengthen its role in development and social cohesion;

(j) The ESCWA secretariat should prepare and present a regional report on the situation of Arab women, in the light of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2005. The report should include progress made, obstacles and future expectations, in preparation for commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the convening of the Fourth World Conference on Women;

(k) The training programmes undertaken by the Social Development Division should be expanded to include methods of disseminating experiences in the field of local development, small projects, urban development, population and integrated social policies;

(l) The consultancy services provided by ESCWA in the field of social development strategies and policies should be strengthened, as should those in the fields of evaluating and developing programmes and plans and the participation of the various sectors of civil society;

(m) The various specialized social cohesion activities undertaken by ESCWA should be directed towards the strengthening of field activities and programmes oriented towards marginalized groups, special attention being paid to those with special needs and the regions that benefit least from development yields;

(n) The projects implemented by the ESCWA secretariat in the countries of the region should be evaluated, with a view to promoting an objective methodology for evaluation and avoiding the repetition of any programmes and projects that have failed to achieve their intended development goals;

(o) Cooperation and coordination should be strengthened between ESCWA, the League of Arab States and its organizations, United Nations organizations and their specialized agencies on the one hand and with the national institutional mechanisms, committees and councils on the other, with a view to reviewing and evaluating what has been implemented in the decade that has passed since a number of United Nations conferences were held in the 1990s;

(p) The bureau of the fourth session of the Committee on Social Development should be considered the party responsible for following up the recommendations made during the session;

(q) Close attention should be paid to the suffering of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories, and they should be provided with the assistance necessary to assure them of a dignified life and appropriate housing. Social and economic sectors should be rehabilitated and the international community be urged to take action to end the Israeli occupation and the wars taking place in the Arab region, lift the sanctions imposed on certain countries and settle the issue of prisoners in accordance with the international legal authorities and the relevant international resolutions, particularly those concerning the establishment of the Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

G. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ITS FOURTH SESSION (Agenda item 9)

53. The Committee adopted the draft report on the work of its fourth session on the understanding that the agreed amendments would be incorporated therein.

