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**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION****PROGRESS MADE DURING THE YEAR 2000 IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2000-2001***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 the technical assistance projects which the Commission undertakes in its capacity as an executing or associate agency, as well as providing those projects with substantive support.
2. Within the framework of the ESCWA regular programme of regional advisory services for 2000, assistance to member States and organizations was rendered in the following areas: agriculture, energy, environment, international trade, social development, statistics (data processing and national accounts), science and technology, telecommunications and computer networking and water resources. The advisory services provided during the above-mentioned period are summarized in the following paragraphs.
3. With regard to *agriculture*, assistance was provided to the following countries and organizations in the areas specified below:
 - (a) *Lebanon*: Advice on and ideas for a proposed ESCWA-United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) joint project for Lebanon in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy and Trade, the Ministry of Industry and the UNIDO regional office in Lebanon; and participation in the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Regional Conference for the Near East;
 - (b) *Oman*: Assistance to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in the evaluation of current project proposal techniques; the computerization of the financial appraisal of private sector projects for soft Government finance; the proposal of mechanisms to encourage private sector investment in agriculture and fisheries and assistance in determining the need for a staff training programme;

(c) *Palestine*: Assistance to the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation in preparing ideas on agricultural development issues, development-planning ranking and privatization exercises, proposals for a project-evaluation training course and for expanding the role and improving the accountability of non-governmental organizations (NGOs); and the preparation of ideas on a proposed project for the vertical integration of agriculture and fisheries and the objectives of that project;

(d) *Yemen*: An ESCWA delegation, led by the Executive Secretary, provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Planning and Development and the Ministry of Industry in the development of a plan for enhancing the efficiency and competitiveness of Yemeni industry by means of, *inter alia*, vertical integration.

4. Other activities included participation in the workshop entitled "What Makes your Firm Internationally Competitive?", part of the Third Mediterranean Development Forum (MDF3) organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Bank and Middle East/North Africa (MENA) and held in Egypt.

5. With regard to *energy*, assistance was provided to the following countries and organizations in the areas specified below:

(a) *Jordan*: A review of the technical studies and papers presented to the seminar that was conducted in cooperation with the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources on the outcome of a survey on energy consumption in the household sector. Joint authorship of a paper on a comparative study of the results of the 1986 and 1995 surveys of energy consumption in the household sector. An evaluation of the current state of the National Energy Research Center. An assessment, carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, of wind-speed measuring instruments and the feasibility of updating new devices at the Center;

(b) *Palestine*: An evaluation of the current electrical energy sector, proposals for new alternatives and a discussion of the problems faced in developing the sector.

6. Other activities included the following, which were undertaken in the Syrian Arab Republic: presentation of a paper on the development of wind energy technology to the training workshop on entrepreneurial development in renewable energy organized by the Ministry of Electricity and UNDP. Participation in the seminar on energy efficiency and conservation organized by the Ministry of Electricity. Presentation of a paper entitled: "The Interconnection of Electrical Systems in the Arab World" at the seminar on energy and energy sources in the Arab world which was organized jointly by the Syrian Engineering Union, the Arab Engineers Association and the League of Arab States (LAS), and held in the Syrian Arab Republic.

7. With regard to *environment*, assistance was provided to the following countries and organizations in the areas specified below:

(a) *Bahrain*: Assistance to the Ministry of Housing, Municipalities and Environment in drafting a constitutional framework for the environment and completing the conventional procedures for the formulation of a draft document on the development of a national environmental strategy and action plan and implementation and monitoring procedures. Participation in a seminar on environmental standards;

(b) *Kuwait*: Presentation of a paper entitled "Terms of Reference for the Preparation of a National Environmental Strategy and Action Plan for the State of Kuwait". Assistance to the Environmental Protection Agency in the preparation of 11 terms of reference for the National Environmental Strategy for Kuwait;

(c) *Syrian Arab Republic*: Discussion of the environmental policies and strategies that have been implemented. Preparation by the State Planning Commission of by-laws relating to recently-enacted

environmental legislation. Preparation of a list of proposed environmental indicators applicable to local conditions, to be used in the establishment of a statistical database for the Environmental Protection Authority at the Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs;

(d) *Yemen*: Participation in the discussions held by the National Water Resources Authority on the preparation of plans and policies for the protection of groundwater quality and the development of the Authority's human resources with a view to enforcing water-related laws. Assessment of existing requirements for water quality monitoring and protection by means of a water-quality-monitoring survey. Support for an environmental epidemiological study requested by the National Water Resources Authority. Preparation of a project document for the Environment Protection Council on the Mukalla industrial zone.

8. Other activities included the following:

(a) Presentation of a paper on the development of environmental indicators to a training workshop, organized by the Egyptian Ministry of Environment, on environmental indicators and their role in the preparation of policies and strategies. Preparation of a list of environment-related activities for the seventh session of the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR), held in cooperation with the secretariat of the Arab Ministerial Council of Environment at LAS in Egypt. Participation in the meeting of the Steering Committee of the Programme for Combating Desertification and in the first meeting of the Steering Committee for the preparations for the Rio+10 World Summit, organized by LAS and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Participation in joint JCEDAR and Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment (CAMRE) executive office meetings organized by LAS in order to discuss and adopt plans in preparation for the Rio+10 World Summit. Presentation of a paper on environmental issues relating to the quality of transboundary water resources. Participation in the Expert Group Meeting on Legal Aspects of the Management of Shared Water Resources in the ESCWA Region, held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt;

(b) Presentation of ESCWA regional views to the MENA Region Environment Strategy consultation meeting held in Jordan by the World Bank;

(c) Participation in the meeting on the Global Environment Fund and national coordination jointly organized by the Lebanese Ministry of Environment and UNDP and held in Lebanon. Presentation of a paper to the workshop on the "Strategy for Monitoring and Reporting" project organized by UNDP and held in Lebanon;

(d) Participation in the Workshop for Strengthening the Environmental Awareness of Directors of Environment Divisions in Television and Radio Stations, organized by the LAS Arab Labour Organization and held in the Syrian Arab Republic.

9. With regard to *international trade*, assistance was provided to the following countries and organizations in the areas specified:

(a) *Bahrain*: Advice to officials of the Ministry of Commerce on World Trade Organization (WTO)-related issues. Discussion of an ESCWA meeting on WTO to be held in Bahrain in 2001;

(b) *Kuwait*: Review of the study on the impact of the Uruguay Round on the industrial sector in Kuwait prepared by the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR);

(c) *Oman*: Advice to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries on WTO-related issues and the impact of WTO agreements on Omani agricultural policies. Participation of resource person in the training programme on the Uruguay Round and future multilateral trade negotiations on agriculture organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries;

(d) *Saudi Arabia*: Advice on the feasibility of establishing a special section of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Eastern Province, responsible for international trade;

(e) *United Arab Emirates*: Advice on the preparation, in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Ministry of Economy and Commerce, of a plan of action for the implementation by the Chamber of Commerce of WTO agreements;

(f) *Yemen*: Advice on WTO-related issues and Yemeni accession. Participation in meetings with national committees, organized by the Ministry of Supply and Trade, on Trade in Goods, the Agreement on Agriculture, the Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). An ESCWA mission to Yemen led by the Executive Secretary discussed a future programme of technical assistance in WTO-related matters.

10. Other activities included the following:

(a) A meeting with the Bahraini Engineering Society concerning a seminar, which was postponed, on WTO agreements and their impact on engineering consultancy services in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Submission of a paper, which had been prepared for that seminar, on GATS and engineering consultancy services in the Arab world;

(b) Presentation of a memorandum on general WTO-related issues to the comprehensive session at the Center of Arbitration, Ain Shams University. Presentation to the preparatory meeting for the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC 2002) and the Annual Meeting for Telecommunication Development in the Arab Region, organized by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), of memoranda on future negotiations related to WTO and telecommunications agreements in the Arab world and the impact of those agreements. Presentation of a paper to the 8th Annual Conference of Arab Economists, held in Egypt, on forthcoming WTO agricultural negotiations, entitled: "Arab Agriculture on the Threshold of the Twenty-first Century", organized by the Council for Arab Economic Unity (LAS);

(c) Participation in the review of UNDP regional project RAB/96/001 aimed at strengthening the capacity of Arab States to adjust to globalization. The meeting was organized by UNDP and held at its regional headquarters in Jordan;

(d) Presentation of a memorandum on WTO agreements and health services to a world conference on the impact of globalization and the provisions of WTO agreements, including TRIPS, on health care in Islamic countries, which the Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences plans to hold in October 2001. Presentation of a memorandum on the impact of WTO agreements on Gulf States to a workshop on preparing the economies of the Gulf Cooperation Council States to adjust to new local, regional and international socio-economic developments, organized by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Planning. Presentation of a memorandum on the future of trade and investment and the WTO approach to investment to a workshop on direct foreign investment in the Arab world, organized by the Arab Planning Institute (API), Kuwait;

(e) Two memoranda were presented to the workshop, organized by API and the Central Bank of Lebanon, on assessing and analyzing the new foreign trade system. The first concerned the impact of WTO agreements on the Arab world, while the second dealt with GATS and financial services, and Lebanon's accession to WTO. The following three memoranda were presented to the workshop on "Arab Countries and the future of WTO Negotiations" organized by API: "Arab Countries and WTO", "Procedures involved in WTO Accession Negotiations" and "Crude Oil and its By-products in Relation to WTO Rules". A memorandum on GATS (financial sector) in relation to the rights and obligations of Arab countries and future negotiations involving those countries was presented to a conference on the opportunities and challenges represented by the reorganization of Arab economic and financial cooperation, organized by the Union of Arab Banks. A memorandum on Arab countries' experience of WTO negotiations was presented to the workshop on Lebanon's accession to WTO organized by the Lebanese Ministry of Economy and

Trade, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and ESCWA and held in Lebanon;

(f) Three memoranda on accession procedures, GATS and the impact of Saudi Arabia's accession to WTO were presented to the seminar on trade policy organized by the World Bank and the Institute of Public Administration, Saudi Arabia. Memoranda were presented to the seminar on the WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanism. Future cooperation between ESCWA and the Islamic Development Bank, Saudi Arabia, on WTO-related issues was explored;

(g) A memorandum on E-commerce and future WTO negotiations was presented to the GITEX 2000 Conference organized by Datamatix in the United Arab Emirates;

(h) A memorandum on accession to WTO was presented to both the Symposium on International Trade, WTO Issues and the Least-developed Countries (LDCs) and the brainstorming meeting of Arab LDCs organized by the Ministry of Supply and Trade, UNCTAD and ESCWA and held in Yemen;

(i) A memorandum on the impact of TRIPS on the pharmaceutical industry in the Arab world was presented to the seminar on the impact of globalization and WTO agreements on the future of Arab drug industries which was organized by the Arab Company for Drug Industries and Medical Appliances (ACDIMA) in Tunisia.

11. With regard to *social development*, assistance was provided to the following countries and organizations in the areas specified:

(a) *Iraq*: A review was carried out of the social care policies that are currently applied. The development of vocational training and employment schemes was assessed. A programme was prepared to assist the General Federation of Iraqi Women in developing its capacities and the effectiveness of its service delivery;

(b) *Oman*: As part of the sixth five-year plan for the Sultanate of Oman, a review and evaluation of the education sector report was carried out at the Ministry of National Economy. Progress made in the preparation of the Omani Human Development Report was reviewed and appraised. ESCWA participated in working groups at the Ministry of National Economy;

(c) *Qatar*: The activities and organizational structure of NGOs was reviewed. An appropriate strategy for the Qatari Family Development Centre was developed;

(d) *United Arab Emirates*: Developments in various social sectors including education, health and social services were reviewed. Social development reports were prepared by a number of researchers. A work plan to develop social services-related activities at the Ministry of Planning was prepared;

(e) *Yemen*: An ESCWA team led by the Executive Secretary explored the technical assistance needed to prepare a poverty report for the Ministry of Planning and Development. Assistance was provided in the preparation by the Ministry of Social Security and Social Affairs of a strategic framework for social welfare.

12. Other activities included the following:

(a) The participation of a source person in the workshop organized by the UNDP office in Iraq on sustainable human development in Arab countries. Presentation to that workshop of a paper on Arab endeavours to adopt concepts and present reports on sustainable human development and, in particular, the Omani experience in that regard;

(b) Presentation of a paper on the formulation of social research to the seminar on women's NGOs in Saudi Arabia organized for the Faisaliyah Welfare Association, the Women's Welfare Society and the King Abdul Aziz Welfare Association.

13. With regard to *data processing*, assistance was provided to the following countries and organizations in the areas specified:

(a) *Egypt*: Advice was provided on the establishment of a Geographic Information System (GIS) with a special programme component on crime. A project document and guidelines for establishing a database on civil status were prepared. A website was established at the National Center for Social and Criminological Research in order to enable feedback on drug abuse to be received;

(b) *Kuwait*: Advice was provided on the development of statistical and economical data and a sample household budget for 1999/2000 was evaluated. Studies and preliminary budget results were reviewed and evaluated for the Statistics and Information Sector department at the Ministry of Planning. Advice was given and discussions held on technical matters related to the civil registration of the population and the tabulation of demographic statistics for the Public Authority for Civil Information;

(c) *Lebanon*: Advice was provided on the establishment of GIS. Documentation related to multi-indicators on statistical clusters and quality of life was reviewed. A project document for the Central Statistical Administration was prepared;

(d) *Palestine*: Advice was provided on the results of the comprehensive demographic survey of the Palestinian people in the Syrian Arab Republic; the survey forms submitted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) office in Damascus were reviewed; the date and venue of the seminar on the survey results were discussed; the project entitled "Statistical Plan for Providing and Establishing Databases on the Palestinian Refugees during 1998/2000 in Syria and Lebanon/Palestine" (RAB/99/A13 – ESCWA 38/15) was reviewed, and its continued viability was assessed for the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and National Resources;

(e) *Syrian Arab Republic*: Advice was provided on conducting a training workshop on sampling, databases and building a computer network for the Irrigation Department at the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, and on the work plan for information technology, staff training and computerization at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. The existing roads network database was reviewed. A framework was established for the application of an electronic database and advice was provided on the preparation of a draft document on the promotion of technological performance for the Ministry of Transport;

(f) *United Arab Emirates*: Advice and assistance were provided in drafting plans for the restructuring of GIS and its application in the Ministry of Planning. Advice was provided on holding a training workshop for staff in the Statistics Section of the Department of Planning in the Ministry of Health. A number of documents related to the work and functions of the General Information Authority were reviewed.

14. Other activities included preparing for a seminar, organized jointly by the Jordanian Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources and ESCWA, on the uses and economics of energy consumption in the household sector in Jordan, reviewing technical papers presented to that seminar and submitting a technical paper on the evaluation of statistical methodology and results.

15. With regard to *national accounts*, assistance was provided to the following countries and organizations in the areas specified:

(a) *Bahrain*: Advice was provided on the pre-experimental population and housing census carried out by the Central Statistics Organization during the period from May to July 2000;

(b) *Jordan*: Estimates prepared by financial and other sectors were reviewed and assessed. Counterparts were provided with guidance and training in methods of compiling national accounts. Assistance was provided in the formulation and review of integrated non-financial and household accounts and staff were trained in methods of compiling integrated economic accounts. In the Department of Statistics, statistical field questionnaires were reviewed, developed and modified and advice was provided on ways of increasing the efficiency of field survey data collection;

(c) *Lebanon*: Proposals were submitted regarding the preparation of project documents on the technical assistance that is to be extended to the Central Administration for Statistics (CAS); CAS was advised on a future study of tourism in Lebanon. Advice was provided on System of National Accounts (SNA) 1993, and the implementation thereof was assessed;

(d) *Oman*: At the Directorate General of Economic Statistics, Ministry of National Economy, terms of reference were prepared for a sampling expert, samples were selected for forthcoming surveys and survey plans were reviewed. Advice was provided on improving the statistical formats of the field surveys that are carried out as part of the statistical survey plan for the period from 2000 to 2003. Advice was provided on the current status of statistical data and on the coordinating mechanism in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and its role vis-à-vis the National Centre for Information;

(e) *Qatar*: The statistical framework of women's economic activities in the labour market was examined, a scheme was prepared for a survey of Qatari women of working age and the results of that survey were analysed. Proposals were put forward regarding the contents, tabulation and analytic outlines of the final report for the Qatari Family Development Centre;

(f) *Syrian Arab Republic*: The construction of SNA financial accounts was reviewed and regulated. Assistance was provided with staff training and the process of evaluation at the Central Bureau of Statistics was continued;

(g) *United Arab Emirates*: Price statistics, index numbers and staff training were reviewed and developed. A study was carried out on the appropriate organizational relations between data producers and users, with particular reference to the requirements and status of the National Accounts Unit. Advice was provided on maximizing the use of information and communications technology (ICT) in restructuring the Ministry of Planning;

(h) *Yemen*: Applying United Nations criteria, the statistical classification to be adopted by the Central Statistical Organization was reviewed and amendments were proposed.

16. Other activities included the following:

(a) Participation in a regional workshop entitled "Economically Active Population: Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment" organized jointly by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and ESCWA and held in Egypt;

(b) Participation in and contributions to the workshop entitled "National Accounts: Government and Financial Sectors" organized by the Jordanian Department of Statistics and LAS. Presentation of memoranda at the workshop entitled "Quarterly National Accounts Statistics" organized by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and held in Jordan;

(c) Presentation of lectures at the regional workshop entitled "The Links between the Balance of Payments and the 1993 System of National Accounts" organized by IMF, the United Nations Statistics Division in New York and ESCWA, and held in Lebanon.

17. With regard to *science and technology*, assistance was provided to the following countries and organizations in the areas specified:

(a) *Kuwait*: A project document was prepared as a part of the formulation of a plan for establishing a technology incubator at KISR;

(b) *Oman*: As part of a report on the science and technology research programme, a presentation was prepared on the national research and development initiatives that are an element of the national development plan proposed by the Ministry of National Economy. An information system project was reviewed and a plan was proposed for the reorganization of information and information technology (IT) management in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. A project document on technological manpower planning (human technological resources audit) was formulated for Sultan Qaboos University;

(c) *Saudi Arabia*: Assistance was provided to the Ministry of Planning in the formulation of a national IT strategy for Saudi Arabia, in the education and training areas in particular;

(d) *Syrian Arab Republic*: Assistance was provided in formulating the organizational structure of the new Ministry of Technology Transfer and Development and introducing IT and networking. A number of projects concerning the improvement of performance and the absorption of new technology were proposed to the office of the Prime Minister;

(e) *Yemen*: The Executive Secretary of ESCWA led a technical delegation to the Ministry of Planning and Development with a view to promoting ESCWA technical assistance to the Government of Yemen. At the National Information Centre, assistance was given in the formulation of an ICT policy and a five-year development plan for the Yemen. At the Ministry of Planning and Development, assistance was provided in the formulation of science and technology requirements for the second five-year development plan and for the period from 2000 to 2005.

18. Other activities included the following:

(a) Presentation of two papers, respectively entitled "The Role of National Innovation System in Enhancing the Local Capacity for Product Development" and "Impact of Local Product Development on Arab Economy" to the workshop entitled "Product Development in the Arab Region", which was organized by the Arab School of Science and Technology in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Regional Office for Education in the Arab States and the Arabian Gulf University Joint Programme for the Training on Management of Scientific Research and Transfer of Technology (STEMARN) and held in Bahrain;

(b) Presentation of a paper on the role of IT in promoting Arab economic cooperation to a seminar on future Arab economic cooperation organized by the Abdul Hamid Showman Foundation and held in Jordan;

(c) Presentation of a paper on the Arab school of encipherment technology to the seminar on the Arab scientific heritage which was organized jointly by the Lebanese National Council for Scientific Research, the Lebanese University, the Syrian Higher Institute of Applied Science and Technology and the University of Aleppo. Participation in the Second Arab International Telecommunications Conference (AITEC-2000), organized by International Business Events, the Lebanese Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications and LAS. Presentation of a lecture entitled "Arabic language and the IT industry" at a seminar on the Arabization of software which was organized by the Lebanese American University (LAU). Presentation of a lecture on the software industry, its impact on the national economy and the trend towards a knowledge-based economy for the Lebanese-Syrian Symposium on Information and Communication Technology Development, organized by the Syrian Computer Society in Damascus and Beirut. Participation in a workshop on the role of ICT in libraries and information centres, which was held in Baaqlein National Library. A review of a report on trade efficiency prepared by the World Bank for the Lebanese Ministry of Economy and Trade. Participation in the Expert Group Meeting on Coordination of Technology Policies to Increase Productivity and Competitiveness within the Global Context: Capacity-building Initiatives for the Twenty-first Century, organized by the National Council for Scientific Research, Lebanon. Participation in a workshop on the Arab brain drain, which was organized by the Centre for Arab Unity Studies. Presentation

of a lecture on the promotion of and economic returns from informatics functions to a seminar on Lebanese youth and new criteria for development thinking, organized by the Scientific Development Branch in Lebanon. Participation in the Expert Panel on Information Technology and Development Priorities; Competing in a Knowledge-based Global Economy, organized by ESCWA and held in Lebanon. Preparation of a background paper entitled "Knowledge Based Economy: Arabization of Information Technology";

(d) Presentation of a paper to a seminar on IT industries in the Syrian Arab Republic organized by the Syrian Computer Society. Participation in the workshop entitled "Electronic Commerce in Syria: Prospects and Opportunities", organized by the Ministry of Commerce and Foreign Trade and the Arab School of Science and Technology. Review of the fourth stage of UNIDO/UNDP project No. SYR/96/004 concerning the establishment of a national standardization information centre at the Syrian Arab Organization for Standardization and Metrology (SASMO). Participation in the mission related to "Test and Validation of the System" organized by UNDP and UNIDO and executed in the Syrian Arab Republic;

(e) Presentation of a paper on the missing links between research and development and economic and social development activities in Arab States to the symposium entitled "Scientific Research Outlook in the Arab World and the New Millennium: Science and Technology" organized by the University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates;

(f) Presentation of a study on the Arab IT industry, and the knowledge-based economy to the Third Arab Conference on and Exhibition of Electronics, Telecommunications and Software, organized in Tunisia by the Ministry of Industry and the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO).

19. With regard to *telecommunications*, assistance was provided to the following countries and organizations in the areas specified:

(a) *Bahrain*: Assistance was provided in the formulation of policy and legislative procedures for the promotion of electronic commerce: guidelines and the framework for an action plan were presented to the Ministry of Transportation;

(b) *Iraq*: The existing computer-based telephone-billing network was assessed and a suitable alternative customer-care system was proposed. Assistance was provided in carrying out a national study for the Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications on the rate of communications traffic;

(c) *Oman*: The quality of technology and communications was assessed, and the basic Ministry of Commerce and Industry informatics and statistical database was organized;

(d) *Palestine*: The Palestinian development plan for the period from 1999 to 2003 was reviewed and appraised. On behalf of the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, the part of that plan which deals with the transport sector was assessed, and a comprehensive framework for port-planning was proposed;

(e) *Qatar*: Assistance was provided in upgrading the services of the Qatar General Petroleum Company (QGPC) Central Library: library services were evaluated and recommendations put forward regarding the Internet, a new catalogue system linking the library to other national libraries and training for QGPC staff;

(f) *Syrian Arab Republic*: A preliminary assessment was carried out of the transportation sector's ICT needs. The organizational chart was restructured in order to include ICT-related activities and a structure for computer-based applications was formulated for the Ministry of Transport. A review was carried out of the progress made in preparing a study on the technical feasibility of creating a transport sector information and communications network within that Ministry;

(g) *United Arab Emirates*: Procedures used to collect foreign trade data from the seven Emirates were studied. It was suggested that a network should be used for the rapid collection of data and that a foreign trade database should be created for the Ministry of Planning. The appropriate organizational relationship between data producers and users was examined, with particular reference to the requirements and status of the National Accounts Unit, and with a view to maximizing ICT use in arranging the organizational structure of the Ministry of Planning. The Directorate of Maritime Seaports was advised on and given an evaluation of the system currently used in Port Zayed with regard to the handling of general cargo and storage equipment and recommendations were made on the need to develop that system;

(h) *Yemen*: The Executive Secretary led an ESCWA technical team which visited various Government departments and ministries, including the Ministry of Planning and Development. At that Ministry, the proposed five-year development plan and schemes for the period from 2000 to 2005 were reviewed and assessed with respect to ICT. Assistance was provided in formulating an ICT policy and preparing a five-year plan for the National Information Centre.

20. Other activities included the following:

(a) Presentation of a paper on the use of ICT in statistical infrastructure and conceptual changes to a workshop on the construction and development of a modern statistical database for GCC States, which was organized by the Central Statistics Organization in Bahrain;

(b) Presentation of a paper on the state of communications and information infrastructures in the Arab Mashreq to the workshop entitled "Knowledge and Education" held as part of the third Mediterranean Development Forum (MDF3) organized by UNDP, the World Bank and MENA. Participation in the seminar entitled: "The Development of International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT2000) for the Arab States Region", organized by ITU and its Regional Office for the Arab States, the Meeting of the Arab States Region on the participation of the Arab States in the work of the ITU-D Study Groups and the Preparatory Meeting of the Arab States to the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly to be held in Montreal, Canada, from 27 September to 6 October 2000, the last two of which were organized by ITU. Participation in the Arab Regional Annual Meeting on Telecommunications Development and the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Telecommunications Development Conference, organized by the ITU Regional Office in Egypt;

(c) Presentation of a paper on the state of the information and communications infrastructure, with particular reference to the ESCWA region, to the annual conference of the Iraqi Academy of Science. Presentation of a paper on regional ICT-related project initiatives to the seminar on the software industry at the Academy of Science. Assistance in updating the telecommunications system, the drafting of recommendations on that system and on the hardware and software to be used in internal and external networking, and assistance in integrating the private branch exchange (PBX) system for the UNDP Office of Iraq;

(d) Participation in the workshop on the role of ICT in libraries and information centres organized by the Baaqlein National Library. Preparation of a review for the Lebanese Ministry of Economy and Trade of the report on trade efficiency prepared by the World Bank. Participation in the ARABCOM 2000 meeting on the role of telecoms companies in the private sector in the Arab region, the first Syrian-Lebanese symposium on ICT development, organized by the Syrian Computer Society, and the Expert Group Panel on Information Technology and Development Priorities, organized by ESCWA and held in Lebanon;

(e) Study of the requirements for setting up an information network on Islamic capitals and cities as a part of a project to be financed by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), for the Organization of Islamic Capitals and Cities, Saudi Arabia;

(f) Presentation of a paper on information and communications infrastructure and the pre-requisites for E-commerce to the Third Arab Conference on and Exhibition of Electronics, Telecommunications and Software, organized by AIDMO and the Tunisian Ministry of Industry;

(g) Presentation of papers, including one on the introduction of electronic data interchange (EDI) and e-commerce, to two workshops on trade procedures and formalities for project execution and e-commerce organized by the Ras Al Khaimah Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture. Presentation of an intervention on telecommunications to the Fourth International Arab Conference: GATS and its effects on the Arab Economy, organized by the Arab Society of Certified Accountants and held in the United Arab Emirates.

21. With regard to *water resources*, assistance was provided to the following countries and organizations in the areas specified:

(a) *Oman*: On behalf of the Ministry of Water Resources, tables were compiled and reviewed and a plan of action devised for the Aflaj Protection Project;

(b) *Syrian Arab Republic*: On behalf of the Ministry of Irrigation, a review was conducted of progress made in three water projects, namely, Qatana Waste-water Treatment Management, Mathematical Module for Baradah Springs and Water Harvest. With regard to implementation by the national team of the last of these projects, advice was provided and a work programme prepared. The study on the water network in Qatana was reviewed. A waste-water treatment experiment was evaluated and a hydrographical map of the project was reviewed for the Ministry of Irrigation, the Water Research Centre and the Ministry of Housing and Utilities;

(c) *United Arab Emirates*: Presentation of an abstract entitled "Wastewater Treatment by Infiltration through Dune Sand", to the Conference on Wastewater Management for a Better Environment which was organized by Abu Dhabi Municipality and UNDP. Advice was provided to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries on the design and maintenance of three dams, namely, Bieh, Ham and Safd;

(d) *Yemen*: The Executive Secretary led an ESCWA team which took part in a discussion with the National Water Resources Authority on the protection of water resources by combating pollution and the conservation of dams, in addition to advising on groundwater exploration and well-siting and design.

22. Other activities included the following:

(a) Presentation of a paper on issues and requirements for enhanced cooperation in the utilization and management of shared water resources to the Expert Group Meeting on Legal Aspects of the Management of Shared Water Resources in the ESCWA Region, organized by ESCWA and held in Egypt;

(b) Presentation of papers to the Fourth Session of the Committee on Water Resources and the Expert Group Meeting on Implications of Groundwater Rehabilitation for Water Resources Protection and Conservation, organized by ESCWA and held in Lebanon. The papers concerned groundwater rehabilitation issues, the priorities of the water sector in the ESCWA region and the water-related advisory services provided to ESCWA member States during the period 1998-1999.
