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**REVIEW OF ACTION TAKEN IN THE FIELD OF WATER RESOURCES SINCE
THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON WATER RESOURCES**

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. Pursuant to the programme of work and priorities for the biennium 2002-2003, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) undertook a number of extrabudgetary field activities. Such activities reinforce and enhance the practical aspect of the programme of work, facilitating and providing additional resources for the subsequent implementation of recommendations concerning the regular activities of the medium-term plan. Furthermore, those activities are consistent with the trend within the United Nations towards expanding field activities and increasing cooperation between the regional commissions, as well as with the concerns expressed by some member countries and the resolutions adopted by ESCWA at its twenty-first session, held in 2001, in which member countries were urged to increase their cooperation in the field of water resources. Such activities are equally consistent with the recommendations of earlier sessions of the Commission and expert group meetings which also called for greater regional cooperation between member countries, capacity-building and an increase in the number of advisory services provided to member countries. Set forth below is a summary of the most important of those activities.

A. IN THE FIELD OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION

2. Activities in this field comprise practical examples of regional cooperation-related programme activities and, in particular, the study concerning a mechanism for strengthening regional cooperation in the management of groundwater resources. The three projects described hereunder were undertaken in this regard:

1. Project for the sustainable use, management and protection of shared groundwater in the Mediterranean region

Preliminary preparations were made for this project during the Expert Group Meeting on Legal Aspects of the Management of Shared Water Resources that was held in June 2000. The following activities were carried out in preparation for the project:

(a) Funding was provided for a brief preliminary study on shared groundwater resources in the Mediterranean region, that was completed in February 2002;

(b) In February 2002 a consultative meeting was held in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The aim of that meeting was to discuss the preliminary results of the study and agree the broad outlines of a project proposal for submission to donors;

(c) The aforementioned project proposal was prepared between January and May 2002 in cooperation with some 12 parties, three of which were international organizations, namely, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Economic Commission for Africa and UNESCO, and seven European institutions, including universities, specialized Government bodies and consultancy companies. Certain specialized centres in the region were also involved, including the Arab Center for the Study of Arid Zones and Dry Lands and the National Center for Remote Sensing, Lebanon. Albeit the proposal was submitted to the European Union for funding, fierce debate over available funds led to none being available for the project;

(d) An amended, detailed project proposal was prepared and submitted to the United Nations Development Account in July 2002. If the project is provisionally approved for funding, additional consultations will be held with the executive parties in order to identify the responsibilities to be undertaken by each. Implementation will not begin before 2004 and will continue for two years.

2. Pilot projects aimed at strengthening cooperation between ESCWA member countries in respect of shared water resources

Such projects will aim to reinforce cooperation between ESCWA member countries in respect of shared water resource use. The following three pilot projects will be supported:

(a) A project for the management of the basalt aquifer shared by the Syrian Arab Republic and Jordan. This project is considered to supplement the earlier study that was produced in 1996. It contains a shared model vision for the improved management of the groundwater aquifer and the preparation of a memorandum of understanding between the two countries. It will be funded by the German Government technical cooperation programme. Representatives of the two States met in Beirut and agreed upon the elements of the cooperation project, after which ESCWA prepared a draft memorandum of understanding on implementation of the activities agreed by both parties. Currently, the final touches are being put to this memorandum before signature (implementation period from February 2002 to mid-2004);

(b) A project for the management of the aquifer shared by Oman and the United Arab Emirates (Abu Dhabi). Contacts were initiated in respect of this project with the Environmental Research and Wildlife Development Agency in Abu Dhabi, and funding will also be provided by the German Government technical cooperation programme (in the course of preparation);

(c) An evaluation of the water resources of the Jordan River basin (first stage): a study financed by the Regional Office for West Asia, United Nations Environment Programme (ROWA/UNEP) (Bahrain office), as part of a project to evaluate water resources throughout the world. The study is being prepared by a group of experts from the General Corporation for Environment Protection, the University of Jordan, Al-Balqa' Applied University and the Ministry of Irrigation of the Syrian Arab Republic. The group was selected in accordance with a proposal from ROWA/UNEP (in the course of preparation; first stage: April to September 2002). It is expected that the second stage of this project, which includes a detailed analytical study and field studies, will begin in 2003 and last for longer than one year.

3. Workshop on dispute management

Arrangements for this are currently being made as part of the German Government technical cooperation programme. The workshop is expected to be held before the end of 2002 or in early 2003, subject to the availability of funds (in the course of preparation).

B. IN THE FIELD OF CAPACITY-BUILDING

3. The following projects come under this heading:

(a) Project for capacity-building in the water and environment sectors in the west Asia region: this project is being prepared in cooperation with the former International Institute for Infrastructural, Hydraulic and Environmental Engineering (IHE), which has now become the UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water

Education. The aim is to establish an integrated concept of water resource management in the region, and to form an Arab network for integrated water resource management. Implementation of the various activities of this project will depend on the degree of cooperation that can be achieved with the network of training and research centres working in the field of water in member countries. As part of this project, ESCWA has undertaken the following activities:

- (i) Preparations for a workshop jointly funded by ESCWA and the Government of the Netherlands. Funding was provided for the preparation of a first survey of water-related training and research capacities, needs and priorities in member countries and the requirements for establishing a regional network for training in the field of water resources. This covered specialized institutions in four member countries, namely, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic. In other member countries, namely, Egypt, Palestine and Yemen, the survey covered centres funded by the Government of the Netherlands which provide training and carry out research in the water and environmental fields. The findings of the survey were contained in a document which was presented to the workshop that was held in March 2002;
- (ii) A workshop on capacity-building in the water sector in the west Asia region was held in preparation for the above-mentioned project. It was attended by some 32 participants from ESCWA member countries who represented the aforementioned training centres; representatives of ministries and specialized institutions; and experts from the region and from certain specialized organizations. The aim of the workshop was to evaluate the water-related training needs of member countries and identify priorities in this area. Further aims were to evaluate the capacities of training centres in the region and the role which they could play in this regard; and to lay down the broad outlines of the components of a training project in the water sector;
- (iii) A project proposal was prepared and preliminary negotiations held with some donors. A provisional commitment of 250,000 Euros was made by the Government of the Netherlands for the partial funding of the project, with the proviso that additional funding of at least equal value should be provided by member countries or by an Arab or foreign funding institution. The World Bank also committed the sum of US\$ 30,000 (implementation period from March 2002 to end 2003);

(b) Preparations for the cooperation project with the German Government: in February 2002 a number of meetings were held with the working group from the German side in order to prepare for the latest stage of the cooperation project with the German Government, represented by the German Agency for Technical Cooperation and the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources. At those meetings, it was agreed that the project should include the following elements:

- (i) The formulation of a guide to the application to water resources of integrated management practices in ESCWA member countries (implementation period from June 2002 to June 2004);
- (ii) The implementation during the period from June 2002 to June 2004 of a set of capacity-building activities including the following:
 - a. A training workshop on the guide to the application to water resources of integrated management practices in ESCWA member countries;
 - b. A workshop on the re-use of treated waste water and the use of such water, together with rainwater and surface water resources, to recharge groundwater aquifers;

(c) Cadastral study and workshop on water tariffs in ESCWA member countries and methods of designing water tariffs in the drinking water sector. This activity comprises a cadastral study of drinking water tariffs in ESCWA member countries, with a view to learning the practices used by those countries in

this respect. When the study has been completed, its outcomes will be presented at a workshop, at which participants will be familiarized with modern practices with regard to such tariffs. It is intended to carry out this activity in cooperation with the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and the German Government (in the course of preparation);

(d) Study on the formulation of a framework for the national water policy in Lebanon: in response to a Lebanese Government request, US\$ 25,000 of funding is being provided for this study by the United Nations Development Programme (Lebanon). It will be carried out over a four-month period on behalf of the Ministry of Energy and Water. The study will deal with the issue of the framework for water policy by building the capacities of staff in the aforesaid Ministry in respect of groundwater legislation and water tariffs (implementation period from July to October 2002).

C. CONSULTANCY SERVICES

4. Through the water team, ESCWA provides consultancy services to member countries on demand, as resources permit. Such services have included the following two projects:

(a) The project of assistance to southern Lebanon: preparation of the reference conditions for three drinking water projects, each of which covers a group of villages in southern Lebanon. Preliminary estimates have been made of the cost of each project, and the necessary funding is being awaited (May 2002 to date);

(b) Project involving the experimental plant in Qatana, Syrian Arab Republic, which uses natural methods to treat sewage water (August 2002 to date).