

**CONTRIBUTION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM
TO THE PRESERVATION AND
MANAGEMENT OF CULTURAL AND
NATURAL HERITAGE IN WESTERN ASIA**

Prepared by

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Joint Inspection Unit



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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is the fourth and last in a series prepared by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) at the request of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on the contribution of the United Nations system to the preservation and management of the cultural and natural heritage. The first three reports dealt with Latin America (JIU/REP/82/5), Eastern Asia and the Pacific (JIU/REP/83/10) and Africa (JIU/REP/85/5). The present report is devoted to 12 countries of Western Asia (Bahrain, Democratic Yemen, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates and Yemen).

2. For the preparation of the present report we corresponded and held discussions with a number of United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). By this means we assembled relevant documentation and had exchanges of views on the programmes of these agencies (chapter II).

3. We also visited projects in several countries of the region. This enabled us to study the problems of identifying, planning and implementing projects on the preservation and management of cultural heritage (chapter III) and on the conservation of the natural heritage (chapter IV).

4. The conclusions and recommendations are submitted at the end of the report (chapter V).

5. We should like to pay tribute to Mr. Nasser Kaddour, former JIU member, who participated in the early stages of preparing this report.

6. We should also like to express our thanks to the authorities of the countries visited, and to the secretariats of the United Nations organizations and UNDP headquarters and field offices for their diligence in obtaining documentation for us and for taking the time to discuss their projects with us and giving us the opportunity of visiting them.

II. THE PROGRAMMING OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE PRESERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

7. In order to be able to have a useful discussion on the main features of the activities of the United Nations agencies in the sphere of the preservation and management of the cultural and natural heritage in Western Asia, to identify the problems raised by such activities and ways and means of making them more efficient and giving them a greater impact, one must review the programmes implemented by the United Nations agencies concerned and, in particular, UNESCO, FAO, UNEP, ESCWA and UNDP.

A. UNESCO

8. For the sake of convenience, UNESCO's activities are shown below separately, according to whether they belong to the domain of the cultural or the natural heritage.

1. The cultural heritage

9. UNESCO's activities for the conservation and management of the cultural heritage include helping the States of the region to ratify and implement the relevant international conventions and instruments, to prepare policies, strategies, plans and programmes for the conservation and management of the cultural heritage, to implement projects, to acquire equipment, to recruit experts and to organize courses, studies, seminars, etc.

(a) Implementation of international conventions

10. UNESCO is responsible for implementing conventions such as the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, deposited at Paris in 1970. To date, six States of the region have ratified this Convention (Iraq, 1973; Jordan, 1974; Kuwait, 1972; Oman, 1978; Qatar, 1977; and Syrian Arab Republic, 1975). The importance of its ratification and implementation is obvious in view of the fact that this is one of the regions with the greatest wealth of works of art and antiquities threatened by dangers of every kind.

11. In the framework of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, deposited in 1972, UNESCO assists the States of the region to place their cultural heritage on the World Heritage List. A number of countries of the region have thus been able to include prestigious historical sites, or citadels, or even world-famous ancient towns in the List. We may mention here the old city of Shibam and its surrounding wall in Democratic Yemen; in Iraq, Hatra; in Jordan, the old city of Jerusalem and its walls, Petra and Quseir Amra; in Lebanon, Anjar, Baalbek, Jubail (the ancient Byblos) and Tyre; in Oman, the fort of Bahla and in Yemen, the ancient town of Sana'a. This Convention has been ratified by 9 out of 12 of the countries of the region: Democratic Yemen (1980), Iraq (1974), Jordan (1975), Lebanon (1983), Oman (1981), Qatar (1984), Saudi Arabia (1978), Syrian Arab Republic (1975) and Yemen (1984).

12. In order to implement the Convention and on behalf of beneficiary countries, UNESCO organizes the launching of international campaigns to protect sites and monuments. Mention may be made of UNESCO's assistance in international campaigns to preserve the city of Shibam (Democratic Yemen), the archaeological site of Tyre (Lebanon) and the old city of Sana'a (Yemen).

(b) Preparatory missions, institutional support, assistance in the preparation of projects, preparation of studies and reports

13. In the sphere of the preservation and management of the cultural heritage, UNESCO co-operates on a bilateral or regional basis and with the 12 countries of the region in drafting studies and reports, in preparing project documents and in reinforcing Government services and research centres. Under a funds-in-trust agreement with the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, UNESCO assisted the national authorities in creating a King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies which is now fully operational and comprises: a library with a 1,000,000 book capacity and computerized book retrieval system; Islamic manuscripts collection; King Faisal Memorial Museum; the Islamic crafts and manuscripts galleries; conference hall and seminar rooms; a manuscript conservation laboratory; and all relevant technical services such as a microfilm laboratory, a book bindery, a printing workshop, an audiovisual section, as well as cataloguing, indexing and translating sections. In addition, UNESCO organized and supervises the execution of

contractual arrangements for the microfilming of all manuscripts concerning Islamic civilizations in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, and the transfer of the microfilms to the King Faisal Centre in Riyadh. UNESCO sent several missions to Dubai (United Arab Emirates) to examine the possibility of setting up a cultural centre there and related centres in the other Emirates. These missions resulted in the preparation of an outline programme for an international cultural centre in Dubai and proposals for associated cultural and conservation activities and the excavation of archaeological sites of the region. Another UNESCO preparatory mission visited Oman and has taken part in preparing an inventory of ancient castles and historical monuments. Other UNESCO missions were sent to the Syrian Arab Republic to take part in a study on the rehabilitation of the old city of Damascus, and to Jordan, to examine means of conserving ancient paintings north of Amman and the sculptures of Ain Ghazal and of rehabilitating the site at Jerash. The World Heritage Committee provided financial assistance for preliminary works of restoration for the site of Petra in Jordan.

(c) Training, seminars and fellowships

14. At the request of and on behalf of the countries of the region, UNESCO organizes seminars, training courses, and study trips abroad for personnel specializing in the sphere of the preservation of the cultural heritage (archaeologists, museum curators, restorers of objets d'art, etc.). Four fellowships were granted in 1988 for the specialized training of experts working on the site at Shibam (Democratic Yemen); at the request of Kuwait, UNESCO prepared a project for the training of museum experts, and a seminar was organized at Petra (Jordan). Similarly, UNESCO co-operates with the Regional Centre for the conservation of the cultural heritage in the Arab countries (Baghdad, Iraq) in the on-the-spot training of museum curators (12 persons per year). At the request of the Omani authorities, UNESCO has provided a fellowship under the Regular Programme for a training course in manuscript conservation in Egypt.

2. The natural heritage

15. UNESCO's activities in respect of the conservation and management of the natural heritage have for the first time been separated (in the Medium-Term Plan 1984-1989) from those dealing with the cultural heritage. These activities appear under Major Programme X entitled: "The human environment and

terrestrial and marine resources", in Programme X.8: "The natural heritage". The purpose of the Programme is to encourage the preservation of natural sites and of plant and animal species threatened with extinction, by creating a biosphere network and implementing appropriate international conventions.

16. Subprogrammes 1 and 3 of Programme X.8 are aimed at protecting man and the biosphere (Man and the Biosphere, MAB) and, in collaboration with the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), at the establishment of systematic inventories of threatened animal and plant species and ecological areas. To date, 266 biosphere reserves have been inventoried by UNESCO in 70 countries. In the region, only Saudi Arabia has benefited from this type of programme and in May 1987, IUCN submitted a report to UNESCO which referred to the possibility of creating biosphere reserves in that country. In 1986, Qatar requested UNESCO's co-operation in creating an antelope reserve. A UNESCO mission, in fact, visited Qatar in 1987 and, inter alia, suggested that biosphere reserves should be created in that country. However, it does not seem that there has been any follow-up to that suggestion.

17. The second subprogramme of Programme X.8 consists of implementing international conventions such as the World Heritage Convention. However, as far as we are aware, no activity of this type has been initiated in the countries of the region. This is explained in part by the fact that there are no potential World Heritage natural sites yet identified in these countries. Although these countries could implement the natural part of the Convention in respect of training specialists in natural heritage, UNESCO reports that the countries concerned have not asked for assistance.

B. FAO

18. Before describing FAO's main activities in the sphere of the preservation of the natural heritage, it should be pointed out that these activities are considered in the broadest sense and include the conservation of natural resources such as the soil (protection against all kinds of destruction: erosion, desertification); water (conservation of water, control of pollution and wastage, rational management, etc.); forests (reconstitution, protection, restoration), coasts, seas, lakes, river basins (control of pollution, erosion, destruction of beds, pelagic wealth, etc.); and plant and animal

species (better knowledge of species protection of wild or endangered species, protection of genetic diversity, etc.). For convenience, these activities will be grouped under four headings: (1) Co-operation in the preparation of policies, strategies, programmes and plans for the conservation of natural resources; (2) Soil conservation; (3) Water conservation; and (4) Conservation of flora and fauna.

1. Strengthening policies and institutions

19. Some of FAO's activities are directly geared to the preparation of conservation policies and strategies; others are aimed at broader objectives but also comprise important conservation aspects. FAO has been co-operating with Saudi Arabia in strengthening several departments of the Ministry of Agriculture responsible for water conservation (for example, conditioning of sewage). It has also given assistance to the countries of the Co-operation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates) in the preparation of a joint policy, one of the objectives of which is the inventory, conservation and rational use of natural resources.

20. On behalf of the States of the region and as part of activities covering a wider field than conservation, FAO undertakes preparation of studies, organization of seminars and assistance in the formulation of pricing policies for agricultural products to promote a settled way of life for the inhabitants of regions threatened by progressive environmental degradation, drought and desertification. FAO also helps the States of the region formulate and implement policies for promoting better human resource allocation, in particular policies for enhancing the impact of intraregional labour mobility on agricultural development in the region.

2. Soil conservation

21. FAO has many soil conservation activities, ranging from the elaboration of national land use plans for implementing dune-fixing projects and wind erosion control, and including the rational management of grazing and the control of desertification.

22. FAO has been giving assistance to Saudi Arabia as part of a project for the preparation of a national soil survey and classification of agricultural land (UTFN/SAU/015: National Soil Survey and Land Classification) and is considering the possibility of following up an assistance project to the Yemen Arab Republic to introduce a land-use master plan.

23. Both the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and the Yemen Arab Republic have requested assistance in soil conservation and agro-ecological zones studies, which UNDP has agreed to finance.

24. FAO is presently preparing the soil conservation strategy for Africa. Once initiated, this activity will also include other regions such as Western Asia, and assist member countries in developing conservation strategies for inclusion in the national agricultural development plans.

25. FAO has stepped up its co-operation and assistance in resource inventories and agro-ecological zones studies with the following countries: Iraq, Jordan, Oman and the Syrian Arab Republic, in addition to the above-mentioned Democratic Yemen and Yemen. Co-operation with the Arab Centre for the Study of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD) has been initiated in manpower development in this field, as training within the region is considered of utmost importance. Funding for this is still sought.

26. Since the early '70s, FAO has been providing assistance to the Syrian Arab Republic in soil management and conservation programmes in the framework of the integrated rural development programme.

27. The rational management of grazing lands, particularly with a view to avoiding overgrazing, the exhaustion of plant cover and the exposure of land to erosion are a major concern in a region dominated by a dry and often desert climate. FAO co-operates with several countries in the region in implementing this kind of project. For example, mention may be made of FAO's collaboration with the Syrian Arab Republic in the implementation of a grazing management project (Uffat region) and its assistance to the Land and Animal Development Centre in Saudi Arabia (UTFN/SAU/008/SAU).

28. Other projects are aimed at soil conservation by fixing dunes, establishing green belts and forests or rehabilitating irrigation systems.

Here, FAO is engaged in a regional project (RAB/86/034) in the form of preparatory assistance for a cartographical survey of dunes and studies of methods of fixing them and afforestation. In the Yemen Arab Republic, two projects are receiving assistance from FAO; their objective is to control drought by improving the irrigation system (UNO/YEM/001/UNE) and to fix dunes by creating forests (YEM/86/005).

3. Water conservation

29. Water is a rare and precious resource in the region; rainfall is generally low, the drainage pattern is inadequate and the phreatic water table often deep and relatively insignificant. No water conservation technology should be neglected: recycling of waste water, drinking-water pollution control, rational use of subsoil water, monitoring and control of floodwater, etc.

30. FAO does, in fact, use all these methods in the region. In the United Arab Emirates, FAO is co-operating in prospecting for permanent springs (UAE/88/007: Water and Soil Investigations for Agricultural Development). In Qatar and Saudi Arabia, it is providing assistance for research into the water conservation and use (Qatar, UTFN/QAT/003/QAT: Water Resources and Agricultural Development, and Saudi Arabia, UTFN/SAU/016/SAU: Technical Assistance to Regional Centre for Agricultural and Water Research).

31. In Democratic Yemen, the emphasis tends to be placed on flood control and canalization (PDY/84/001: Flood Control of Wadi Bana and Wadi Hassan and OSRO/PDY/301/NET: Emergency Assistance for the Rehabilitation of Water Works). In the Syrian Arab Republic, FAO and UNEP are co-operating in protecting drinking water against pollution by pesticides used in agriculture as part of an integrated regional project.

32. It is also important to mention water harvesting and re-use of waste water in agriculture. Both are important activities of FAO and ongoing projects exist, for example, in the Yemen Arab Republic. Furthermore, salinity represents the single largest reason for the loss of productive land. In this regard, it is worth noting that the FAO Regional Commission on Land and Water for the Near East has been active since 1967 and has covered subject matters such as irrigation, water management, salinity control, drainage, use

and treatment of sewage effluents and supplementary irrigation with intensive co-operation of other United Nations agencies and international institutions such as the Arab Centre for the Study of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD) and the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA). Irrigation practices, especially spate irrigation, were the subject of a training programme organized in the Yemen Arab Republic for the Western Asia region.

4. Conservation of flora and fauna

33. FAO has programmes for conservation and utilization of plant and animal genetic resources including wild species. The twenty-second session of the Conference of FAO adopted an International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, which is based on the principle that genetic resources are a heritage of mankind (resolution 8/83). FAO has also established an inter-governmental Commission on Plant Genetic Resources to monitor the implementation of the principles contained in the International Undertaking. In Western Asia, Bahrain, Iraq, Lebanon, Oman, the Syrian Arab Republic, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and the Yemen Arab Republic are members of the Commission and/or have adhered to the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources.

34. In the area of conservation of wildlife, FAO has co-operated with Jordan in setting up a wildlife park, with Saudi Arabia in on-the-spot training of nationals for managing national parks (UTFN/SAU/002/SAU) and with the Syrian Arab Republic in training specialists in zoological disciplines. FAO has also assisted in the conservation of domestic species such as Arabian thoroughbreds (UTFN/SAU/011/SAU: Genetic Conservation of the Arabian Horse) and some selected species and races of camel.

35. FAO provides assistance to member countries of the region in planning, establishing and managing national parks and other protected areas. Several missions were carried out to this effect. Such activities formed part of the UTFN/SAU/002/SAU project.

36. FAO is working with UNESCO (MAB programme) and UNEP in the field of in situ conservation and management of plant genetic resources within the framework of the Ecosystem Conservation Group. It has prepared several

documents aimed at raising the awareness at various levels of issues at stake and organized relevant meetings and study tours. It is assisting Lebanon to conserve its cedar stands (TCP/LEB/6652) and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in the in situ conservation of Prosopis cineraria and in the evaluation and wise use of this and other multipurpose woody species. FAO may co-operate in a project for the conservation of palm trees in Saudi Arabia. Preparatory missions and consultancies have also been mounted to Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and the Yemen Arab Republic.

C. UNEP

37. Although UNEP's programmes are mainly concerned with environment protection, they include activities directly linked with natural resources conservation. These activities range from the establishment of networks of stations to monitor the evolution of the environment (air pollution, soil degradation, water quality), the collection and dissemination of data on the environment (training of specialists, setting up of national services, etc.), to control of the use of polluting chemicals (establishment of networks of national correspondents, preparation of technical publications, etc.) and the preservation of land or coastal ecosystems, and include the study and the stemming of the pollution of the seas and their resources.

1. The campaign against environmental degradation

38. As part of its programme for monitoring the state of the environment, UNEP carries out the following activities:

(a) Implementation of a Global Environment Monitoring System (GEMS);

(b) Establishment of the International Referral System for Environmental Information (INFOTERRA); and

(c) Updating of the International Register for Potentially Toxic Chemicals (IRPTC).

(a) GEMS

39. The participation of the countries of the region in GEMS to date has taken the form of the establishment of air pollution monitoring stations (Background Air Pollution Monitoring Network: BAPMON): one station is operational in Jordan, one in Qatar and another is programmed in Saudi Arabia; and health networks for monitoring the quality of the air (Air Quality Monitoring Network): three stations at Baghdad, and water quality (Global Water Quality Monitoring Network): ten stations in Iraq, two in Kuwait, five in Saudi Arabia and six in the Syrian Arab Republic.

40. Within GEMS, a number of countries are also taking part in activities to observe the evolution of renewable natural resources, particularly the soil. Eight countries (Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic) have been able, with UNEP's assistance, to prepare maps with a scale to one to five million showing the situation, rate and risks of soil degradation in their countries.

(b) INFOTERRA

41. The International Referral System for Environmental Information (INFOTERRA) brings national and international establishments and experts into contact in order to improve decisions they have taken in environmental information matters. Since its inception, six countries of the region have joined the System (Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Arab Republic) and four have appointed a National Focal Point (NFP). Some countries of the region, assisted by UNEP, have been able to send personnel abroad for training in running an INFOTERRA service in their own countries.

(c) IRPTC

42. The International Register for Potentially Toxic Chemicals (IRPTC) has been expanded by the inclusion of files of computerized data concerning chemical substances, particularly those used in developing countries, to which large population groups in those countries are exposed. This Register, administered by UNEP, replies to questions and requests for information from member States and uses the services of National Focal Points. Four States of

the region (Iraq, Jordan, Oman and the Syrian Arab Republic) have appointed NFPs for IRPTC operations.

2. Desertification control

43. The participation of the United Nations Environment Fund (UNEP) in the efforts by Governments to combat desertification in the region basically takes the form of assistance in drawing up national plans and programmes for desertification control, developing management programmes for pasture lands, and supervising the implementation of integrated agricultural development projects to keep desertification at bay.

44. UNEP has thus assisted two countries (Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic) in preparing national desertification control plans. In Jordan, FAO and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) helped UNEP in 1985 to prepare such a plan. For this task, UNEP enjoyed the co-operation in the Syrian Arab Republic of the Arab Centre for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD). UNEP has also received a request from Oman to prepare a programme for the management of grazing grounds in the south of the country. Lastly, in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, UNEP is helping to implement an integrated agricultural development project in the Lodar region (construction of reservoirs, supply of water-pipes, recruitment of forestry and irrigation experts, etc.).

3. Marine pollution

45. In implementing its marine pollution programmes and marine resource preservation programmes, UNEP is co-operating with the countries of the region either on a bilateral basis or in the context of specialized regional organizations in those countries.

(a) ROPME, PERSGA and MEMAC

46. In Kuwait, UNEP is giving assistance to the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME), which represents 7 of its 12 members (Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) in a study of the unusually high death rate of fish and dolphins in the region and in the creation of data banks. In collaboration

with UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), UNEP is also taking part in a survey of the state of the marine environment in the region and is helping to co-ordinate the assistance provided by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in ROPME's projects.

47. UNEP is giving considerable assistance to the secretariat of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Environment Programme (PERGSA) at Jeddah in implementing joint programmes for monitoring the marine environment, developing the coastal areas of the countries of the region and combating the pollution of the marine environment. A joint working session of PERGSA with UNEP's Oceans and Coastal Areas Programme Activity Centre (OCA/PAC) was held in July 1987 to identify specific activities within these programmes.

48. In Bahrain, UNEP, through the OCA/PAC Programme and the Regional Office for Western Asia (ROWA), assisted the Marine Emergency Mutual Aid Centre (MEMAC) in identifying competent experts and in preparing documentation for the seminar on oil spill solvents (Qatar, 1986).

(b) Bilateral co-operation

49. Two countries of the region (Bahrain and Oman) receive assistance from UNEP. Together with Bahrain, UNEP, and more particularly OCA/PAC, is considering the possibility of arranging for joint activities to protect sea mammals in its territorial waters. Co-operation between Oman and UNEP-OCA/PAC has led to the preparation of an ecological study of Oman's rocky coasts.

D. ESCWA

50. In the field of cultural heritage conservation, ESCWA has provided assistance to the municipalities of Alexandria and Amman for the implementation of urban environmental management programmes. At present, financial backing for the continuation of this project is being sought. This second stage will deal with urban environmental problems in the cities of Sana'a and Manama.

51. ESCWA is also seeking financial support for a project on the promotion of the Islamic architectural and city planning heritage in urban development.

The main objective of this project is to promote the incorporation of Islamic principles for spatial organization in the formulation of plans for city development.

52. In the area of desertification control, ESCWA is making important contributions. For example, the National Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (E/ESCWA/AGR/87/7) had been prepared largely by ESCWA with the assistance of UNEP and FAO. ESCWA assisted also in preparing the National Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in the Yemen Arab Republic (E/ESCWA/AGR/88/2).

53. In the framework of its Science and Technology Programme, ESCWA has, with the assistance of the Federation of Arab Scientific Research Councils and a number of national research centres, organized two expert group meetings which have led to the preparation of two project proposals for co-operation in scientific research on desertification control. The first is entitled "Research Programme on Integrated Desertification Control" and the second "Research in Control of Mobile Sand and Protection Techniques". The first project aims at researching the most rational modalities for exploiting groundwater, for re-vegetation and for integrating the soil-water-plant relationship to avoid high levels of salination. The second project aims at investigating the various component elements of the problems of sand movement and establishing tested and efficient methods through scientific research to deal with them. These projects have found support from Governments in the region and funding is being sought.

54. The preservation and management of the natural heritage of water resources in the ESCWA region has been an important concern for ESCWA ever since its establishment. Several studies and research projects on water resources development and conservation in the ESCWA region were published and distributed in the ESCWA countries.

55. ESCWA has also prepared several ambitious water projects to be implemented during 1988-1990. These projects deal with: (i) use of remote sensing for a hydrogeological map of the ESCWA region with a focus on shared groundwater basins; (ii) an expert group meeting to be conducted on manpower training needs in the water sector in the ESCWA region; and an expert group meeting to be held on water security in the ESCWA region. Meetings have been

held with potential donors and a reasonable hope exists that these projects will be implemented in 1988-1989 through the assistance of regional institutions in addition to ESCWA funds already allocated for this purpose.

56. Furthermore, national policies for water resources development have been established up to the year 2000 in some ESCWA countries such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Other countries in the ESCWA region are now preparing their national water policies. Tentative studies on water resources development policy in the Arab countries until the year 2000 are now being prepared.

E. UNDP

57. In addition to its funding and support activities to programmes and projects for the conservation and management of the cultural and natural heritage carried out by the specialized agencies such as UNESCO or FAO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is implementing projects, mainly in the area of revitalizing activities, promoting traditional arts or enhancing the cultural and natural heritage. It has thus given assistance to the Syrian Arab Republic in formulating a global plan for injecting new life into and promoting traditional crafts (SYR/80/005) and has assisted the United Arab Emirates in setting up and extending a women's crafts centre (UAE/78/004 and UAE/80/009). A UNDP project was entrusted to UNESCO in 1987 for technical support for the restoration of Qalaat al Bahrain. Another UNDP project for technical support to the international campaign for the safeguarding of the old city of Sana'a was signed in 1988.

III. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE PRESERVATION AND MANAGEMENT PROJECTS

58. As we stated in the Introduction to this report, the visits made to numerous cultural and natural heritage preservation and management projects being implemented in several countries in the region by organizations of the United Nations system enabled us to assess the way in which the programmes and activities described in the preceding chapter are being carried out in the field.

59. In order to form a better understanding of the input of these projects and in order to simplify the discussion on the ways and means of securing a greater benefit from them, in this chapter we shall deal with issues proper to cultural heritage preservation projects and keep those issues that relate to natural heritage conservation projects for the following chapter.

60. Projects aiming at achieving better preservation and management of the cultural heritage cover a variety of fields. They range from the launching of international campaigns to preserve ancient cities (medinas) and historical monuments to the preservation of ancient manuscripts, and involve the setting up of museums, the training of specialists (archivists, curators, restorers, museologists, archaeologists, etc.), the recruitment of experts, the provision of miscellaneous equipment and material and the holding of seminars and conferences.

61. In the preceding reports by the Joint Inspection Unit on other regions, and particularly that on Africa (JIU/REP/85/5), we emphasized the positive aspects and advantages that States members derive from their co-operation with the United Nations system, and particularly UNESCO, in the implementation of cultural heritage preservation projects. We also identified a certain number of spheres of co-operation that need to be consolidated, and accordingly recommended a series of practical and specific measures. We shall not revert to those matters, which have been discussed at length. In the context of the present report and on the basis of the visits made to the projects, however, two areas appear to warrant some attention: these are the transfer of know-how and the mobilization of additional funds.

A. The organization of the transfer of expertise

62. Conservation techniques (for monuments, manuscripts and miscellaneous works of art) are transferred to the beneficiary countries through the organizations of the United Nations system by (a) the secondment of instructors (experts, consultants, teachers and lecturers); (b) the training of nationals (the appointment of counterpart personnel in contact with the experts); or (c) the awarding of fellowships and the organization of training courses abroad, in the region or in the country.

1. The experts

63. Our discussions with the project officers in the field and our visits to projects lead us to conclude that, by and large, the countries of the region are satisfied with the experts who are recruited and assisted by the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, and particularly UNESCO. The exchange of experience and the contribution made by the experts would be greater if recruitment was planned six to nine months ahead of time; that would cut down proportionately on delays in the selection and actual posting of the experts.

64. Further, a more accurate description (more detailed and more refined) of the area of specialization of each expert is needed all the more since the range of cultural heritage preservation and management specialization is very broad. At the same time, it should be ascertained that the expert is familiar with the region and, if possible, with its language.

65. The job descriptions of experts should be drafted with special care. Whenever necessary, it could be useful to specify, in the job description, that the expert should be capable of repairing the material provided by the agency and not merely installing it or operating it. It would be of great advantage to the project itself if the expert should also be in a position to give classes and lectures in his/her area of specialization and train one, or possibly more, of the counterpart personnel in his/her area of specialization. This is an important issue, since we have ascertained on more than one occasion that experts have made a stay in a particular country and have left it without carrying out this essential task.

2. Counterpart personnel

66. Responsibility for the appointment of counterpart personnel clearly lies with the authorities of the beneficiary country. It is, however, of great advantage that the executing agency, through contacts with the authorities of the country concerned, ensures that the person appointed: (a) has the appropriate specialization and (b) will stay in his post for the period of time necessary for the completion of his training. We have observed, during our visits, cases where notable differences existed between the areas of activity of the expert and those of the counterpart staff, which made it impossible to train the latter. We have also seen instances of frequent changes occurring in counterpart staff, which impeded any training schedule drawn up by the experts.

3. Fellowship holders

67. Several dozen fellowship holders are trained each year by the United Nations system in the various specialized tasks of cultural heritage preservation and management, mostly outside their country and region of origin. This kind of assistance is highly appreciated by the beneficiary countries and helps to increase the number of specialists of whom there is a very serious shortage. It would, however, be appropriate to introduce some improvements in the process of training holders of fellowships in order to make it more effective.

68. The discussions we held with the officials in charge of the projects visited and the ministerial departments concerned revealed that, by and large, the major difficulty in the way of training larger numbers of fellowship holders (and within shorter periods of time) stems from the fact that the kind of training usually offered corresponds only partly to what is needed by countries in the way of specialized knowledge. There is also an additional, but less important problem, namely, the difficulty of finding classes and training courses in Arabic in the developed countries for holders of fellowships from the region.

69. The solution to these problems lies in reorienting fellowship programmes towards training in the region or the country and preferably on the job. A case in point is a project executed by the United Nations in a country of

the region, which consisted of sending a dozen statues discovered in that country abroad, one at a time, for restoration. We were told that it was not possible to carry out the restoration locally because local techniques and products (solvents, glues, etc.) were unsuitable. We believe that the specialized agency concerned ought to have advised the country to go ahead with training a number of nationals in the techniques used in the restoration, in conjunction with the restoration of the first statue abroad. On their return, the nationals could have restored the remaining 11 statues, in co-operation with junior supervisory staff or local academics who would thus have had on-the-job training. The project ought also to have arranged for co-operation between the restorers and the university faculties and institutes of the country, which would have been requested to design technologies and prepare suitable products. In that way, a number of national agencies would have been put to work on specific local problems, knowledge and technology would have advanced and the experts of the country would have had an opportunity of acquiring experience and practical references, allowing them to offer their services elsewhere and for similar operations.

B. The mobilization of additional financing

70. The region comprises countries with substantial incomes that spare them from the necessity of systematic recourse to external funding for activities related to the preservation of their cultural heritage. Most, if not all, of the projects implemented in those countries are carried out as a result of their contributions (Trust Fund). However, there are also countries that are less wealthy, and two States are classified as among the least developed countries. These LDCs are faced with a large range of capital investment expenditures, current sectoral expenditures and expenditures related to basic activities which, by and large, do not include the preservation of the cultural heritage. The outcome is that the financing of cultural heritage preservation is often left to external donors of whom the United Nations system is high up on the list.

71. The various United Nations programmes and funds deploy considerable efforts and apply a large range of measures to attract all sorts of contributions, from international campaigns to preserve medinas and monuments to regular programmes of agencies, and including special measures for the LDCs, etc. Visits to certain projects give the impression that innovations in

fundraising are not exhausted, particularly in respect of safeguarding the medinas and restoring ancient manuscripts.

1. The safeguarding of medinas

72. It is unusual to find a country in the region that does not have one, two, or several old towns in need of restoration and whose network of economic activities and social fabric does not need revitalizing. In the main, these medinas are over-populated and provide accommodation for the most disadvantaged sections of the population since well-to-do people, no longer prepared to live in conditions in which services, if any, are inefficient and commodities are lacking, tend to leave them.

73. Generally speaking, the projects we were able to visit prove that the United Nations, and in particular UNESCO, provides considerable and judicious aid. The assistance mobilized for the regeneration of craft activities, enabling the inhabitants of the medinas not only to live in them but to earn their living in them, is a striking example. Digressing for a moment, we would point out that certain project officers complain of too many missions and too many visitors dispatched by the organizations of the United Nations system compared with the number of experts, officials or advisers who come in order to do a job of work.

74. In respect of mobilizing additional financing, we believe that the United Nations should study two new possibilities. First, it might help those countries which so wish to set up a fund which would collect the income derived from admission fees to museums, mosques, libraries, craft centres and other historical monuments located in the medinas and use it partly or wholly to finance other activities for renovating and safeguarding the medinas.

75. Second, we would suggest that international campaigns to safeguard the medinas should be launched in the countries of the regions in addition to those campaigns organized in the traditional donor countries. We shall have noticed that public opinion in the region has changed and attaches cultural and artistic importance to these medinas, so that a sizeable number of natural or legal persons would be prepared to help towards financing their preservation.

2. The restoration of ancient manuscripts

76. The countries of the region have a great abundance of ancient manuscripts. There are thousands of them in the towns and villages, in the hands of private individuals, in the mosques, libraries and private collections and they deal with all branches of human knowledge and sciences. UNESCO offers its assistance in restoring, listing and putting on microfiches, etc. as many manuscripts as possible. We have visited some of the projects supported by UNESCO and have been able to see how much the beneficiary countries appreciate this assistance.

77. However, in order to carry this task through to a successful conclusion, efforts would need to be stepped up, mainly by mobilizing material and financial resources and inventing more new processes and methods. In view of the abundance of these manuscripts and the fact that several exist in many copies, we would suggest that some should be loaned to libraries abroad in return for payment for the restoration of a certain number of manuscripts. The country making the loan would retain ownership of the copies handed over and would also benefit from the publicity to which their use by the country borrowing them (displays in their museums, consultation by their research workers, etc.) would certainly give.

78. A thorough study has been carried out at the request of Saudi authorities within the framework of the King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic studies project, resulting in the design of a mobile laboratory which could move from town to town and from country to country, restoring, indexing and microfilming collections of manuscripts. We would suggest that UNESCO should apply for assistance to certain donor countries for the acquisition of such mobile laboratories.

79. Finally, if the publication of the indexes of restored books could be speeded up, it would enable additional funds to be mobilized, it would increase the numbers of users (research workers, scholars and academics) and would make it possible to collect additional funds (subscriptions, lending charges, etc.). It is particularly vital to expedite the indexing operations, because indexing is lagging well behind restoring (the most recent index is 10 years old) and it serves little purpose to restore manuscripts if potential users remain unaware of their existence.

IV. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NATURAL HERITAGE PRESERVATION AND MANAGEMENT PROJECTS

80. As was indicated in chapter II (paragraph 18), the term "natural heritage" is used in a broad sense in this report and covers not only the management and conservation of zoological parks, animal reserves, protected zones and the wild fauna and flora, but also the management and conservation of natural resources such as water, forests, soils, oceans and seas. Repeating what was said in an earlier report on Africa (JIU/REP/85/5) by the Joint Inspection Unit, we understand "natural heritage" to be the sum total of the natural wealth which the present generation has received as a heritage from past generations and which it must manage, without exhausting or polluting it, so as to remain, for future generations, an eternal source of life.

81. In that report, we addressed the problems created by the implementation of natural heritage management and conservation projects, particularly in Africa. The visits to projects in the countries of Western Asia lead us to conclude that the projects implemented in this region give rise, in certain cases, to problems virtually identical to those encountered in Africa and call for recourse to solutions outlined in that report. We shall therefore not revert to the issues that, in our view, have been sufficiently discussed such as, for example, the mobilization of additional funding for projects, the organization of greater participation and the enlisting of support on the part of the public.

82. In the present report and on the basis of the projects visited, we shall confine ourselves to a discussion of subjects requiring analyses and solutions specific to the Western Asian region, including the aid and assistance of organizations of the United Nations system in (a) the preparation of natural heritage conservation and management policies and (b) the strengthening of the services and institutions responsible for the implementation of the policies, regard being had to the low level of activities of these organizations in those two spheres.

A. Assistance in the preparation of natural heritage preservation and management policies

83. In the Western Asian region, the United Nations system is involved in implementing a large number of projects in different spheres of natural heritage conservation and management. These projects are very worth while in themselves, but do not appear to come under a clear-cut national policy or strategy designed for the long term. In the field, there are also projects for the protection of certain animal species (thoroughbred Arabian horses and camels) or plant species (certain species of palm and cedar) supported, in the headquarters of United Nations agencies, by secretariats which are making considerable efforts to relate them to each other in the context of coherent and integrated natural heritage protection and management programmes. However, this process of consolidation and rationalization does not extend as far as the national level. In the course of our visits, we had the impression that the projects being implemented did not relate to a policy clearly based on priorities in the choice of sectors selected, activities undertaken, objectives, resources mobilized or deadlines set.

84. The secretariats of the organizations of the United Nations system should be able to make available to the countries concerned their numerous reports and documents dealing with (a) the importance of drawing up policies that include activities for the development of natural resources and for environmental protection; (b) the need to pursue policies oriented towards cost-effective projects; and (c) the desirability of basing these policies on scientific know-how backed up by statistics, inventories and analyses.

B. Assistance in strengthening conservation institutions and services

85. The projects visited that relate to strengthening institutions responsible for natural resources conservation show that the organizations of the United Nations system in general, and FAO in particular, despite the existence of all kinds of obstacles, are providing valuable assistance to the countries of the region, mainly in three sectors: forests, water and marine resources.

1. Assistance to forestry resources conservation services

86. In certain countries in the region of Western Asia, the forest conservation services are either newly instituted or non-existent.

In other countries, these services have a very small staff working with inadequate resources (for instance, some States do not have a single qualified forestry officer). Most of these countries have no forestry legislation to promote the planting or protection of forests.

87. The situation is gradually improving, however, and, at the request of one country in the region, FAO is helping to strengthen the services responsible for creating tree nurseries producing many thousands of plants which are then made available free of charge to the local communities for the extension or regeneration of the forests. At the request of a second country in the region, FAO is providing assistance in the training of forestry officers and the elaboration of forestry legislation and a forestry management plan.

2. Assistance to water resources conservation services

88. The projects visited that deal with water conservation, mainly the rational administration of subterranean drinking water and the building of small colinear dams in a desert or quasi-desert environment, show that the United Nations system is providing, at the request of the Governments concerned, assistance which is appreciated and delivered in very difficult conditions. Two major difficulties seriously impede the activities of the services responsible for water resources management.

89. First, there is a need to restrain certain villagers who use powerful pumps to draw quantities of drinking water in excess of their needs, thereby incurring the risk of drying up a valuable natural resource. Sometimes the low cost of energy leads peasants to pit wells for their personal use and to equip them with engines and pumps that draw off quantities of water, some of which is wasted.

90. Second, the use of capital-intensive methods very soon places a limit on the financial potential of the State and does not allow as many water reservoirs to be built as in the context of a largely labour-intensive policy.

3. Assistance to marine resources conservation services

91. The region of Western Asia has thousands of kilometers of coastline, opening on to gulfs, seas and oceans, whose protection, conservation and management is of primary importance. Once again, countries infrequently have an appropriate policy and their specialized services usually have few staff. The United Nations system, and particularly FAO, offers help in rectifying both these shortcomings in an effective way.

92. We had an opportunity of visiting a project supported by FAO, which seeks to improve the knowledge of the fishery wealth of the coasts of one country in the region and to launch a fishery resources management policy. Another FAO project in the same country is enabling tests to be carried out on the cost-effectiveness of fish farming as a means of supplementing the harvest of natural stocks.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

93. The co-operation extended by the organizations of the United Nations system to the countries of Western Asia fits into a cultural pattern in many respects proper to the region. The extreme abundance of archeological sites, relics and objets d'art that should be conserved and preserved makes each country in the region virtually an archeological site in itself. This accounts for the magnitude of the task devolving upon the authorities and the United Nations organizations assisting them.

94. The broad range of programmes and activities of the United Nations agencies shows that, with time, their assistance has been extended to cover all aspects of cultural heritage conservation and has taken on many forms materializing in the implementation of numerous projects which are highly appreciated by the beneficiary countries.

95. Climatically and geographically, the region also has distinctive features such as the predominance of a dry climate and of broad desert or semi-desert expanses, features which make conservation programmes and activities, particularly in respect of soils and water, vitally important. Once again, the co-operation extended by organizations in the United Nations systems plays a significant role.

96. Although the specific activities for the conservation of the cultural and natural heritage of the countries of the region carried out by the organizations in the United Nations system have attained sizeable proportions and are of unquestionable utility, they need to be strengthened in four areas: strategy, institutions, training and financing.

1. Strategy

97. Although the organizations of the United Nations system are implementing a large number of projects in the countries of the region, these projects only rarely relate to a clear-cut policy aimed at well defined objectives and based on a logical combination of priorities and resources (see chapters III and IV).

Recommendation No. 1

At the request of the countries of the region of Western Asia, the organizations of the United Nations system should offer assistance in preparing long-term national strategies and medium- and short-term policies for the preservation of the cultural and natural heritage, identifying objectives to be achieved, priorities to be observed and human and financial resources to be mobilized. These strategies and policies should take into consideration the remarks and suggestions made in the body of this report, in particular trade-offs, opportunities, options and priorities. Strategies and policies should also enable the beneficiary countries to concentrate on a limited number of priority projects carefully selected so as to secure tangible results.

2. The institutions

98. We have drawn attention on a number of occasions through this report to the weakness of technical and administrative services entrusted with formulating and implementing conservation strategies, policies and programmes. It is, therefore, essential that these services be strengthened in order to secure better implementation of priority projects identified in the context of national strategies and policies.

Recommendation No. 2

Having regard to the analyses and comments made by the Joint Inspection Unit, the organizations of the United Nations system should, at the request of the countries of the region of Western Asia, streamline and strengthen specialized services in various ministerial departments responsible for the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage. Efficient organization and strengthened resources, as well as greater decentralization of existing services, should be regarded as essential at this stage.

3. Training

99. The role of training, as a means of transferring technologies for the conservation and management of the cultural and natural heritage, has been discussed at some length in this report. The other methods of acquiring these technologies have been reviewed and their respective advantages compared with those of training, which is seen to be the most durable and powerful instrument of all. However, it continues to be insufficient and the number of specialists in cultural and natural heritage conservation is very much below what is needed in most of the countries. The difficulties encountered by the organizations of the United Nations system in training national supervisory staff have been discussed and appropriate solutions outlined in chapters III and IV.

Recommendation No. 3

The organizations of the United Nations system should step up their efforts to train larger numbers of the specialists in cultural and natural heritage conservation needed by the countries of Western Asia. They should give careful attention to the problems and solutions discussed in this report. In particular, they should assign high priority to the training of national specialists as a means of transferring know-how and technologies for preserving the natural and cultural heritage.

4. Financing

100. The programmes and activities for the conservation of the cultural and natural heritage necessitate the mobilization of very considerable financial resources. As we have seen in chapter III, the organizations of the United Nations system have devised a number of procedures and methods which help to raise large sums. More systematic canvassing by organizations of the United Nations system of traditional sources of financing would unquestionably help to mobilize considerable additional funds, but they would probably fall far short of the vast amounts needed. In order to respond to these needs, the organizations of the United Nations system should explore new avenues, some of which have been indicated in that report.

Recommendation No. 4

In order to mobilize additional financial resources capable of being replenished securely and regularly and in order to assign priority to those projects which could be sure of self-financing, the organizations of the United Nations system should improve the design of projects for the preservation of the cultural and natural heritage. In the restoration of monuments and sites, they should assign priority to projects with income-generating objectives. Similarly, they should give preference to natural resources conservation projects which would help to generate the economic wealth needed to finance other projects that are, if possible, more important and more numerous.

