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REGIONAL CO-OPERATION

Report on the Economic and Social Commission for Asia  
and the Pacific

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly and to the Economic and Social Council the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Report on the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific" (JIU/REP/85/1).

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\*\* See Economic and Social Council decision 1985/101.

REPORT ON THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION  
FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Joint Inspection Unit has produced several reports examining how the United Nations system has contributed to the development of institutions aimed at improving the economic and social conditions of the developing regions of the world. These reports have looked at United Nations and non-United Nations intergovernmental organizations alike. Whilst one JIU report, produced a decade ago, dealt in part with the strengthening of all regional economic commissions to perform the tasks allotted to them, the only report by the JIU on ESCAP (then ECAFE) itself was produced 15 years ago. Much has changed since then. The Inspectors have accordingly considered it timely to examine how well ESCAP is discharging its responsibility, both as a catalyst for economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific, and as a stimulus to South-South linkages in the framework of inter-dependence. The decision to take a critical look at ESCAP's operations also fits conveniently into the series of studies undertaken by the Joint Inspection Unit on what progress is being made in implementing General Assembly resolution 32/197 on restructuring.

2. The review begins, in Chapter II, with a brief look at ESCAP's mandate from its promulgation in 1947 to the present, taking into account the effect of the restructuring resolution. The Inspectors see the traditional roles of ESCAP and its currently more accented operational role as complementary.

3. Chapter III discusses ESCAP as a regional multi-disciplinary centre for social and economic development. It describes ESCAP's structure and the functional arrangements which are in place. Improvements in the setting of the Commission's priorities, expected to lead to an improvement in the development of its work programme, are touched upon. The Inspectors also give a broad view of the Commission's regional, sub-regional and country activities. The large number and vast range of the Commission's meetings suggest that care should be taken to ensure that only meetings expected to produce identified benefits should be undertaken. The commendable aim of sharpening the focus of discussions in the Commission and of highlighting specific issues of importance, the Inspectors suggest, would be assisted by an improvement in the content and presentation of documentation.

4. The Inspectors turn their attention in Chapter IV to ESCAP's technical co-operation activities. Some changes in its organization are recommended. The Inspectors also suggest that donors should respect the criteria set by the Commission for the execution of its work programme.

5. That decentralization is proceeding with characteristic slowness is the inevitable conclusion of Chapter V, which also requests the Secretary-General to commission a study on the structure, duties and responsibilities of staff at the upper echelons of the regional economic commissions, with particular reference to the grade level of the Deputy Executive Secretaries.

6. How various actors in the ESCAP theatre of operations view the Commission forms the subject of Chapter VI. The Inspectors examined these views and make an assessment of their own. The final chapter contains their recommendations.

7. The Inspectors wish to thank the Executive Secretary of ESCAP and staff of the Commission for the ready assistance they gave in the preparation of this report. Thanks are also due to the many delegates who expressed their views and to the representatives and staff of other United Nations system organizations who helpfully responded to the Inspectors' questions.

## II. MANDATE

8. What we know today as the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) began life 37 years ago as the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) by resolution of the Economic and Social Council adopted on 28 March 1947. This act took place less than two years after the signing of the Charter of the United Nations and a mere 17 months after the ending of World War II in the Asian theatre of operations. At that time, Asia was still struggling to emerge from the colonial experience and to overcome the devastation wrought during the Second World War. The signs pointed to the need for co-operative effort and for this ESCAP came into being. Only four Asian nations presided at ESCAP's inauguration in 1947; today 30 Asian and Pacific nations are full members. The original purpose still holds good today:

- to initiate and participate in measures for facilitating concerted action;
- to make or sponsor investigations and studies of economic and technological problems and developments;
- to undertake or sponsor the collection, evaluation and dissemination of economic, technological and statistical information;
- to perform such advisory services as countries of the region may desire, provided that these do not overlap with the United Nations technical assistance programmes;
- to assist the Economic and Social Council, at its request, in discharging its functions within the region in connection with any economic problems, including problems in the field of technical assistance.

9. This basic mandate echoes those of the other regional economic commissions, all of which have been established to help improve the quality and standard of life by concerted action in economic, social, scientific, technical and technological fields.

10. The mandate took on a new emphasis and breadth with the passing of resolution 32/197 some 30 years after the Commission's birth. The resolution enjoined all regional commissions, among other things, to:

- serve as the main general economic and social development centres within the United Nations system for their respective regions;
- exercise team leadership and responsibility for co-ordination and co-operation at the regional level;

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- provide inputs for the global policy-making process of the competent United Nations organs;
- assist developing countries at the request of the governments concerned in identifying projects and preparing programmes for the promotion of co-operation among those countries.

11. On 29 January 1979, the General Assembly, recognizing the potential of the regional commissions to execute the categories of technical co-operation projects described in paragraph 23 of Annex IV to resolution 32/197 <sup>1/</sup> decided, by resolution 33/202, that all regional commissions should have the status of executing agencies in their own right. ESCAP is therefore now able to negotiate independently for the funding of technical co-operation projects, the ideas for many of which germinate within the regional commissions.

12. The Inspectors here note that, as a rule, regional commissions have interpreted their mandates broadly and that, as a consequence, ESCAP's mandate is today not substantially different from its original terms. ESCAP has consistently served the traditional dual purpose for which it was established:

- firstly, to be a focal point at which the economic and social needs of all Asian and Pacific peoples can be articulated and expressed; and
- secondly, to be an arena where action designed to meet these needs can be initiated.

More recently, ESCAP has sought to expand this latter role, its operational one, by becoming the instrument through which blueprints for action are carried out.

13. ESCAP's mandate, in the view of the Inspectors, is entirely consistent. ESCAP will continue to serve as a forum for the discussion of the economic and social needs of the inhabitants of the region and, to be of real use to its constituents, it will have to assist in translating these aspirations into programmes of action. How far it will itself be able, as a Secretariat, to carry out these programmes will be a function of the esteem in which it is held by the international community at large and by those members, in particular, who are in a position to support its programmes financially. Such esteem can only be engendered and maintained by the effectiveness with which ESCAP performs its mandate, bearing in mind the complementary roles of the specialized agencies.

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<sup>1/</sup>"....for intersectoral, sub-regional, regional and interregional projects and, in areas which do not fall within the purview of the sectoral responsibilities of specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies, for other sub-regional, regional and interregional projects."

### III. ESCAP AS A REGIONAL MULTI-DISCIPLINARY CENTRE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

#### The region's size and diversity

14. In the words of a recent JIU report: "the Asia and Pacific region spreads over a large area of 31 million square kilometers, extending from the western border of Iran to the eastern border of Cook Islands, and from the extreme northern border of China to areas of Antarctica under the jurisdiction of Australia and New Zealand in the south. The population of the region was estimated in 1982 at about 2.5 billion, or 56 percent of the world's population." The region contains land, water and human masses of monumental proportions and its countries show considerable diversity in size and level of development.

15. One observer of the ESCAP scene succinctly stated the problem of diversity in the region as follows: "We have three stages of development in the region. There are those countries which are moving to independence and trying to get their act together for this purpose. There are those who have not long entered the realm of independence and are grappling with the social and economic problems this brings in its wake. Finally, there are those countries which have gone through the independence phase and are concentrating on social and economic growth." The Prime Minister of Thailand in his opening address to the 1983 meeting of the Commission touched on these divergencies when he spoke of the developing countries of the region as representing a continuum of development from the least developed economies to economies which had advanced to sophisticated levels of technology. He pointed to the possibilities for the ESCAP region to develop more concrete policy measures "with greater political participation and commitment". ESCAP has to adopt separate mini-strategies to reach the different goals. Its role as a multi-disciplinary centre for the region is, therefore, complex.

#### ESCAP's structure and functional arrangements

16. Before considering ESCAP's activities and performance as a regional multi-disciplinary centre, one must look at the way in which it is organized to carry out its task. What structure and functional arrangements does it rely on?

17. There is the Secretariat whose ten specialist Divisions are the base of the technical effort in the many areas of competence such as Trade and Industry, Transport, Natural Resources, Development Planning, Shipping. These Divisions are supported by the work of the Joint Centre for Transnational Corporations/ESCAP Unit and the ECDC/TCDC, Integrated Rural Development and Environmental Co-ordinating Units.

18. The Office of the Executive Secretary supervises various arrangements for co-ordinating the work of these divisions, the principal co-ordinating mechanisms being the Programme Co-ordination and Monitoring Office, the Technical Co-operation Division and the Project Review Committee. The Development Planning Unit, through its LDC Unit, co-ordinates Secretariat work on LDCs. The Division of Administration provides administrative support to the whole Organization.

19. As important as structures are, if these structural cells are not manned by qualified personnel, the Organization labours at a disadvantage. With this in mind, the Inspectors took a look at the academic qualifications, and related work experience, of ESCAP's staff. ESCAP Professionals have reasonably high academic qualifications: 17 percent are Ph.Ds; 28 percent hold Master's degrees and 34 percent Bachelor's. Twenty-one percent have no university degree. Thirty-four percent hold degrees in economics and most of these are in senior staff posts.

Many Professional staff members, particularly those in the senior grades, have been with the Commission for a long time, have much experience and are thoroughly knowledgeable about the Commission's work. Linguistic ability is high. General Service staff are suitably qualified for the tasks which they are called upon to perform. The Inspectors conclude from this that ESCAP's human resource base, a key element in the development process, is reasonably sound.

20. Using the Secretariat as well as regional and national facilities, legislative committees working in the areas of competence covered by individual divisions aim to bring governmental interests into close touch with the Secretariat. The committees take a long view of strategy and developments necessary in their fields, reviewing and evaluating the performance of the divisions, seeking co-ordination with work being done in the same or similar fields by other organizations of the United Nations system and liaising with their partner committees to avoid conflicts.

21. The Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and other Representatives designated by Members of the Commission (ACPR) is an advisory body to the Executive Secretary. It concentrates on important problems put to it by the Executive Secretary or by the Commission and has given useful advice on issues such as the structure, frequency and duration of Commission sessions, re-assessment of the Commission's priorities, the draft biennial work programme, and procedures for legislative committee sessions. ACPR is also expected to "monitor the progress of the work of the Secretariat".

22. Special regional projects and regional institutions form another link between ESCAP and Member States. ESCAP has assisted in the formation of and given support to such committees as the Committee for Co-ordination of Joint Prospecting for Mineral Resources in Asian Offshore Areas, and the Committee for Co-ordination of Joint Prospecting for Mineral Resources in South Pacific Offshore Areas, the Typhoon Committee and the Interim Mekong Committee as well as regional institutions such as the Regional Mineral Resources Development Centre, the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific, and the Regional Centre for Research and Development of Coarse Grains, Pulses, Roots and Tubers in the Humid Tropics of Asia and the Pacific. The Asian and Pacific Development Centre, which brought together 4 former institutions concerned with aspects of development, only recently moved from ESCAP supervision to control by the participating governments. Network programmes such as the Regional Network for Agricultural Machinery and the Regional Centre for Technology Transfer are also creatures of ESCAP.

#### Programme of work and priorities

23. The 1983 Commission defined more precisely than before what the future scope of the Secretariat's multi-disciplinary work should be. The Commission decided that activities in the work programme should:

- be authorized by the General Assembly or other relevant global conference;
- be appropriate to the Commission's role as the main general economic and social development centre within the United Nations system in the region; and
- not duplicate specific activities of the specialized agencies or other United Nations organs and should co-ordinate international efforts in the field of development.



Criteria for selecting the priority items for the programme element level in the 1984-1985 work programme were accordingly agreed. Activities chosen had to fit one of the prescribed categories:

- First : Major importance to developing countries. The activity should contribute to the implementation of the International Development Strategy or to North-South Co-operation
- Second : Promotion of economic growth and social development leading to alleviation of poverty and to equitable distribution of the benefits of economic growth
- Third : Assistance to the LDCs, land-locked developing countries, and developing South Pacific island countries
- Fourth : Promotion of regional and sub-regional co-operation
- Fifth : Support from member countries at a meeting of the Commission or at an ad hoc Ministerial meeting.

24. These steps were taken in order to "sharpen the focus of ESCAP's activities" and avoid resources being too thinly spread. Preference was to be given to action-oriented, cost-effective and self-sustaining projects. This improved process of selection of activities should allow for a progressive weeding out of non-priority activities whose resources might be better used in the strengthening of the programmes. However, at the time of their review, the Inspectors could find no evidence to suggest that this mechanism was being applied systematically to achieve a shift of resources from low-priority to high-priority programmes. This problem is widespread throughout departments in the United Nations. JIU has written repeatedly on the need to comply with General Assembly resolutions in this regard, the latest commentary being embodied in Chapter II (particularly paragraphs 72 to 75) of document JIU/REP/84/12 entitled "Staff costs and some aspects of utilization of human and financial resources in the United Nations Secretariat". The Inspectors have since been told that, in the preparation of ESCAP's 1986-1987 programme budget, a special attempt was made "to rationalize the programme at the output level and make the elements more specific with a view to facilitating programme evaluation and improving future programme planning". In addition, the Inspectors are also told, an attempt has been made on the same occasion to apply programme criteria rationally, rather than mechanically, given the wide range of development needs of Member States. The Inspectors look with expectation towards improved results both at the planning and execution stages of the programme.

#### Regional and sub-regional activities

25. The range of ESCAP activity on the regional scene is quite wide. A look at the work planned and carried out by the Secretariat in 1982-83 and reported on at the 1983 Commission bears this out. Governments participating in the project on inter-linked econometric models for short- and medium-term forecasting found the activity beneficial to their national development planning, and wished the Secretariat to continue its help to countries in developing techniques for macro-economic projections. A study on "Fiscal Policy for

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Development in the ESCAP region" appearing in the Economic and Social Survey for 1982 showed interesting possibilities for collaboration. Looking beyond the borders of the ESCAP region, consultations have been taking place in co-operation with UNCTAD on trade relations between the socialist countries of Eastern Europe and developing ESCAP countries: the Commission was informed that the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) supported the establishment of co-operative arrangements between the CMEA and ESCAP secretariats. In the field of food security, ESCAP's study on food resources had made a useful contribution in promoting food security as a concrete activity. FAO had followed this up and approved the setting up of a Regional Commission on Food Security for Asia and the Pacific. In these instances something can be seen of ESCAP's role in promoting new alliances and opening new avenues for co-operation.

26. The Secretariat has in other ways sought to bring countries together for mutual benefit and collaboration. The Club for Industrial Co-operation, "an informal gap-filling and flexible mechanism", has promoted co-operation among the developing countries. The Secretariat had assisted in arranging solidarity meetings in various countries, in the last of which, at Kathmandu in 1982, 18 developing countries had participated. As a result, there were many pledges of assistance and support to Nepal in its industrialization efforts. The UNDP-funded Regional Energy Development Project (REDP) being implemented through ESCAP gives the Secretariat an important role in energy resources development. In shipping, the Secretariat had prepared guidelines for maritime legislation aimed at developing maritime resources and the international trade of developing countries. In the trade field, the Secretariat has sponsored a network of information centres for the promotion of inter-regional trade. A Regional Population Data Bank has been established in the Secretariat which is the focal point for the international population information network (POPIN).

27. The Secretariat is expected to provide the services of a think tank from time to time. The reference to ESCAP's role in proposing regional fiscal policies for development was mentioned earlier. The Commission's proposal for the early proclamation of a transport and communications decade for Asia and the Pacific gained approval in 1984. The planning and implementation of this proposed programme will devolve largely on the Secretariat. The Commission has also been asked to study the implications of the Law of the Sea Convention with special reference to the utilization of sea-bed resources. There will be a need to establish a data bank, disseminate information and see to the training of personnel in marine science and technology. This latter responsibility has been given to the Secretariat, though it does not yet have substantive staff in this field.

28. As regional focal point for the Nairobi programme of action in the environment field and the Vienna programme of action aimed at strengthening scientific and technological capabilities of member countries, the Secretariat has to work through or in tandem with many regional and national institutions or networks. The Inspectors had the opportunity to visit some of the regional institutions functioning under the aegis of ESCAP: these were the Regional Mineral Resources Development Centre (RMRDC), the Regional Network for Agricultural Machinery (RNAM), the Regional Centre for Technology Transfer (RCTT) and the Asia and Pacific Development Centre (APDC). Since the Inspectors' visit, APDC has come under the direct responsibility of the countries of the region. There

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is no doubt that these institutions, being "on the ground" and in direct contact with the countries they serve, can enhance ESCAP's encouragement of regional co-operation. RMRDC, RNAM and RCTT all work on the basis that they must respond to the specific needs of countries. The network practice of linking national capabilities and potential to bring about the interchange and development of ideas, technical skills and information, seems to the Inspectors the best way to go: with a minimum core of professionals, the aim would be to stimulate inter-country effort on the basis of need. The Inspectors also agree that countries which participate in these institutions and networks should be prepared to take them over as soon as practicable. ESCAP should be a facilitator rather than an agent: witness the proposal for a sub-regional training centre in housing and planning for the South Pacific in which ESCAP's role is to generate support and interest among teaching institutes and governments.

#### Country activities

29. A small spectrum of country activities will show ESCAP's involvement. The Secretariat arranged for feasibility studies and evaluations which led to the procurement by Sri Lanka of nine container vessels, some of which are already in operation. The Secretariat put together a transport mission of experts in highways, railways, containerization, ropeways, inland water transport, air transport and facilitation to advise Nepal on approaches to an integrated transport system. An integrated district development project in Kagalla (Sri Lanka) had resulted in a long-term development plan for the district. For Thailand, a pilot study had provided a techno-economic look at the feasibility of the electrification of the Bangkok-Chang Mai main railway line. These are but a few examples of useful operations at the country level which are sometimes contested by sectoral organizations. The Inspectors believe that ESCAP's involvement in country activities is justified where the needs for assistance cannot be met by sectoral organizations or when the assistance is specifically requested by member countries, subject of course to the priorities set by the Commission.

#### The 1983-1984 schedule of meetings

30. In a year, from April 1983 to March 1984, the roster of meetings planned covered:

6 meetings of legislative committees which would point the Commission to action in areas of major concern;

10 ad hoc intergovernmental meetings which, inter alia, would bring together Ministers for discussions on industrial and trade topics and involve consultations on special interest topics such as problems of land-locked countries and transnational corporations in the Pacific Island countries;

14 meetings connected with major established regional projects and institutions.

31. Apart from these, over 120 group activities were planned to serve other needs identified in the work programme. These activities covered training courses, seminars, study tours, expert groups and working groups and were to be financed mainly from extrabudgetary sources.

32. The decision to hold as many meetings as planned is not made summarily. Indeed, intergovernmental scrutiny of the ESCAP calendar of meetings is extensive, embracing review at different stages by the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives, by sectoral legislative committees, and by the Commission itself. This layered review mechanism is intended to weed out meetings of marginal utility and to leave a quantum of meetings which would be concordant with and facilitative of ESCAP's role as, among other things, a forum for intergovernmental consultations and decision making, and a focal point for research, study and the exchange of information.

33. The Inspectors are of the view, however, that even taking into account the fact that ESCAP would share with other institutions or agencies the planning and implementation of some of these meetings, so large a number of meetings places a rather heavy burden on the staff resources of the Organization. Two-thirds of the group activities are to be the responsibility of 5 divisions: Shipping; International Trade; Transport; Industry; and Natural Resources. The Divisions of Shipping (19 percent), International Trade (15 percent), Transport (13 percent) will have more than one activity per month on average and possibly two in a month. Preoccupation with meetings does tend to shift emphasis from more concrete forms of co-operation with governments. Care should be taken to ensure that only meetings expected to produce identified substantive benefits are undertaken.

34. Viewed as an approved programme of work to be carried out by the Secretariat in association with Member States, the list of meetings is diversified. A random sample of the group activities planned shows the range: workshop for instructors in use of agro-pesticides; workshop on standardization of jute goods; seminar on negotiation and execution of joint venture agreements with China; Asia-Pacific railway co-operation; environmental management of mangroves, corals and island ecosystems in south Asia; symposium of contractors for construction of oil and gas pipelines; regional seminar on an interlinked country model system for economic forecasting; seminar on principles of flood plain management for flood loss prevention; strategies for the advancement of women; regulating and negotiating with TNCs in the pharmaceutical industry; container terminal management and operations; design and construction of inland waterway craft; remote sensing for geological applications; training in energy statistics. Some impression of ESCAP's effort to reach out into the regional community can be gained from the range of its involvement.

35. ESCAP has made no thorough, objective analysis of its meetings, but it has, nevertheless, carried out some self-evaluation. Its findings are that meetings have been generally successful in the following senses: they have exposed participants to the "state of the art" in several fields and have added to the fund of knowledge in some of these fields; they have been instrumental in fostering collaboration among Member States, and between Member States and the ESCAP Secretariat at the technical, working level; they have provided the means through which Member States articulate their views on matters of concern to the Commission and thus tend to shape the Commission's policies and programme of work; and they have encouraged the sharing of experience at inter-agency and at intergovernmental level.

#### Documentation

36. The documentation produced for the annual meeting of the Commission renders a full account of activities and shows a patient attention to detail. It is arguable, however, whether the same facts could not be presented with a more critical flair. Some delegates to whom the Inspectors spoke thought the

documentation far too much to digest and too diffuse for them to focus on what was important. The use of a theme for the 1984 meeting of the Commission goes some distance towards tightening the focus of the documentation, but this alone will not solve the problem.

37. A good deal of the reporting on activities could be sharper and more to the point. There is too much repetition of the same facts in different places and there is a need to highlight the significant at the expense of the ordinary: all advisory services need not be mentioned; all meetings need not be listed for comment (an annex could provide a complete list if this is thought useful). The pace of the reporting is also too often retarded by the stiff repetitive opening clauses such as "The speaker noted that...", etc. The Inspectors believe there is good scope for a sharp editorial eye to cut out the waste and give the documentation more conciseness and hitting power: the title "Main Issues in the Field of Development Issues and Policies" would, for instance, never pass the acid test.

38. The Inspectors also believe the Commission should be given a critical rather than a merely descriptive view of ESCAP's programme performance. There is a pretty complete absence of graphic presentation in the ESCAP papers - an absence which is more pointed when one reads the "Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific: 1983" which is prepared by ESCAP and which makes full use of very effective graphic presentation. So also does the Secretariat document on "Technology for Development". The ESCAP activities proper, as reported on in the annual documentation, could borrow many of the presentation techniques used in the two documents mentioned. For instance, from year to year it would be interesting to compare in graphic form present programme performance with past; or give a picture of expenditure on different sub-regions or different categories (e.g., LDCs, middle-income countries) of members of ESCAP; or trends in extrabudgetary funding; or proportions of money spent on consultants, fellowships, other training; ESCAP staff advisory missions, etc. The list is neither exhaustive nor categorical. The staff can identify ways in which a graphic presentation could in some instances provide the Commission with a better opportunity to judge the effectiveness of ESCAP's performance. A similar approach should inform the Annual Report of the Commission to ECOSOC.

39. The Inspectors are happy to note that the possibilities of improving the reporting to the Commission have been addressed by the Secretariat in one of its papers (E/ESCAP/345) submitted to the April 1984 Meeting of the Commission. The need to sharpen the focus of discussions and to highlight specific issues of importance has been recognized. Recommendations put to the Commission should also be more concrete in terms of the wished-for result. Improvements in presentation will help to serve these ends.

#### United Nations system and other co-operation

40. The examples of ESCAP's efforts in the previous paragraphs were made possible in good measure through collaboration with United Nations organizations and the specialized agencies. Joint Units have been established in ESCAP with the Centre for Transnational Corporations (CTC) and with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The ESCAP/FAO/UNIDO Fertilizer Network (FADINAP) is another key linkage. Close collaboration has taken place with UNEP and with other United Nations system organizations such as FAO, ILO, UNESCO, UNIDO, WHO and WMO in various matters of environmental concern. UNCTAD and ITC have provided valuable help on trade matters. UNDP has made a great deal of this co-operation possible by entrusting a large proportion of the regional IPF to execution by ESCAP.

UNICEF and WHO have contributed to training in basic community services. ESCAP has also collaborated with a wide spectrum of regional, sub-regional and national institutions, the latter both within and outside the Asia and Pacific region.

Financial resources

41. The foregoing presentation provides a broad sweep of ESCAP's work at country, sub-regional and regional level which has been substantial, both as regards its traditional role as well as its more recently accented operational role. Whilst it is quite clear that the resources put at the disposal of ESCAP are in no way commensurate with the challenges the region faces, there has been, nevertheless, a substantial increase in resources made available to the Commission during the course of the past decade. The bulk of this increase has come through extra-budgetary contributions which have grown from US\$3 million in the 1976-1977 biennium to US\$38.2 million in the 1984-1985 biennium. Regular budget appropriations have increased from US\$15.2 million to US\$36.0 million over the same period, so that today biennial resources available to ESCAP stand at US\$74.2 million. These amounts are expressed in gross terms, no adjustment having been made to offset inflationary trends. Professional staff resources, affected negatively by the impact of inflation, have grown modestly over the past decade: Professional staff financed by the regular budget moving from 168 to 197, and those financed by extra-budgetary resources moving from 12 to 37, in total, an increase from 180 to 234, that is 30 percent or 3 percent per annum un compounded.

42. The impressive growth of extrabudgetary resources, which now stand at a level slightly higher than regular budget funds, suggests to the Inspectors that it would be useful to review and comment upon how effectively ESCAP has managed to make use of these resources.

#### IV. TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION ACTIVITIES

##### Donor influence

43. Before moving into the substance of ESCAP's work, the Inspectors wish to make a point about donor influence on technical co-operation activities, a matter addressed by the Secretary-General in document A/38/258 entitled "Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations system" (see paragraphs 100 to 104).

44. Table I provides information on the sources of ESCAP's extrabudgetary funding. It shows that the relative share of contributions by donor governments and organizations to ESCAP is substantial. ESCAP has rightly welcomed these contributions as a sign of recognition of the usefulness of its programming efforts. The Inspectors would not wish to see either a reduction in or a limitation placed on the flow of these resources. They do see a danger, however, where donor governments place restrictions on the freedom of action of a United Nations organization. During their visit to ESCAP, the Inspectors were struck by the degree of influence of a donor country in one of ESCAP's regional institutions. The case in point goes beyond the familiar tying of contributions to the procurement of goods (including equipment) and services in the donor country and concerns the direct involvement of a donor country in programming decisions, in the selection of candidates, and in the award of certificates at the end of training courses. Such deep involvement in the policy and operations of a United Nations-sponsored institution seems to go beyond what can be considered a normal and acceptable association.

45. There is always a genuine concern about eroding the goodwill of donors and losing much sought after and needed contributions, since such losses could hinder or call a halt to individual projects. Such considerations must, however, take into account the role of the United Nations system as a multilateral institution for development: it is a neutral role, that of a disinterested participant. Donors should respect and support this impartiality. By the same token, donors should see to it that their contributions support the criteria set by the Commission for the execution of its work programme.

##### Organization

46. As described earlier, ESCAP from its early days undertook, in accordance with its mandate, investigations and studies; collected, evaluated and disseminated information on economic and social problems; and performed advisory services, all in support of the economic and social development of the region. Substantial involvement in technical co-operation activities began only in the 1970s: as we have seen, as late as 1976-1977 extrabudgetary resources available for technical co-operation were only US\$3 million. Until then, technical co-operation activities were functionally and operationally merged with the substantive divisions which were responsible for the full cycle of project identification, formulation and implementation, including, in most cases, responsibility for soliciting financial resources. It was only in 1978 that a separate organizational unit for technical co-operation activities was created.

47. The Technical Co-operation Division, which is the focal point for all technical co-operation activity, is responsible for:

- (a) assisting and advising the Executive Secretary on policy formulation, negotiation, co-ordination and management of all technical co-operation activities and programmes;

- (b) programming, co-ordinating and management of all regional projects including regional advisory services;
- (c) the mobilization of extrabudgetary resources;
- (d) providing substantive support for regional training and research institutions;
- (e) maintaining liaison with United Nations bodies and bilateral funding sources;
- (f) co-ordinating ECDC/TCDC activities;
- (g) the administrative and financial aspects of extra-budgetary-funded projects and activities;
- (h) representing the Commission in UNDP/ESCAP programming missions, tripartite review missions on UNDP-funded projects and other meetings relating to technical co-operation and operational activities.

48. Within the Technical Co-operation Division there is an ECDC/TCDC Unit and a Technical Operations Evaluation Unit. This latter Unit is intended to function as an independent management tool for the Executive Secretary in improving the efficiency of ESCAP's technical co-operation programmes.

49. The ECDC/TCDC Unit was established after the Buenos Aires Conference for the collection and dissemination of information as well as for the development of a regional information system to promote economic and technical co-operation among developing countries. It is responsible for the identification and formulation of inter-country co-operative projects, monitoring and evaluation of project implementation, liaison with other United Nations and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

50. The Inspectors welcome ESCAP's involvement in ECDC/TCDC and have noted good progress in the collection and dissemination of information as well as in developing concrete forms of co-operation among developing countries in the region. The most recent example of this is the TCDC seminar organized together with the UNDP office in Beijing, where the TCDC project was concluded. However, it is evident that the full impact of this dimension of ESCAP activity has not yet been felt. One reason is lack of adequate resources; more important is an insufficiently strong emphasis given to TCDC by the United Nations. So, much remains to be done; and ESCAP can do more. Regional centres for the transfer of technology, agricultural machinery and APDC, may usefully serve as appropriate instruments for this purpose, particularly if properly linked in a network with national centres of excellence.

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51. Some observations are, however, pertinent concerning the assignment of extensive responsibility to TCD for the mobilization of extrabudgetary resources. This function was for a long time placed with the heads of the sectoral divisions. When the Inspectors visited Bangkok this was still the case. The experience of the divisions is mixed. Some divisions had good, even excellent, results while those of other divisions were poor. Success or failure is not necessarily a reflection of the persuasive skills of division managers in fund-raising, but is governed partly by the sectoral interests and priorities of donors, which sometimes conflict with the priorities of Member States of the Commission. In any event, division managers do come into contact more frequently with potential donors than the Head of TCD, are more knowledgeable about prospective contacts, and have a more direct interest in fund-raising for their particular sector. For these reasons, and to permit a broader and more diversified attack on resource mobilization, the Inspectors consider that division chiefs should also be permitted to use their familiarity with funding sources and act as agents of TCD in informal contacts and discussions with likely donors, subject to TCD's responsibility for co-ordinating and sanctioning fund-raising, under the policy established by the Executive Secretary.

52. The Technical Operations Evaluation Unit was established as an independent unit in 1980 with financial support from the Federal Republic of Germany on the initiative of the Executive Secretary. The Unit, which is still in the process of establishing itself, is hampered by a lack of resources. In these circumstances, the Chief of TCD has been given the task of supervising the work of the Unit. The Inspectors hope that circumstances will improve in the near future to allow the Evaluation Unit to be placed on a sound footing. They feel that better use of these limited resources would result if they were placed within the Programme Co-ordination and Monitoring Office and if its responsibilities were extended to include regular budget programmes. Concentration of the monitoring function in one office within the Office of the Executive Secretary should leave it in a better position to exercise its role and functions. Such an arrangement would be in line with previous recommendations of the JIU on the organization and location of evaluation units.

53. The Inspectors feel obliged to note and give their support to the initiative of ESCAP in establishing this Unit. They must, however, express their disappointment at the prolonged delay on the part of DIESA in providing adequate guidance to the regional commissions and other organizations in setting up evaluation units. The Secretary-General has more recently indicated that he proposes "permanent solutions for the strengthening of the functions in DIESA, ESCAP, ECLA, ECA, UNCTAD and UNHCS in his programme budget for the biennium 1986-1987" (see A/C.5/39/45 of 19 November 1984.) The Inspectors welcome this proposal.

54. The Programme Co-ordination and Monitoring Office (PCMO). The functions of this Office within the framework of the programme activities of ESCAP centre around developing policy guidelines, participating in the preparation of the medium-term plan and co-ordinating the work programme. The Inspectors have been struck by what appears to them to be a somewhat restricted role and authority given to PCMO in the present distribution of functions in the technical co-operation area. PCMO, as its title suggests, should have a co-ordinating and a monitoring function for ESCAP's total programme, both regular budget and extra-budgetary. As noted above, ECDC/TCDC projects are monitored by that service and evaluation is now being supervised by TCD. These important elements of co-ordination should be relocated in PCMO. The Inspectors would go even further. Many of the functions concerning regular budget and technical co-operation

respectively have been assigned separately to PCMO and TCD. This separation, which is not peculiar to ESCAP but is practised by other regional commissions and central organizations, is artificial and should give way to a single service, headed at an appropriate level and combining responsibilities for regular budget and extrabudgetary operations.

55. A Project Review Committee has been established in order to help the Executive Secretary to determine which projects conform to ESCAP priorities and which are to be submitted to funding agencies and donor governments. The Committee also seeks to ensure that projects are properly designed. The PRC is chaired by the Deputy Executive Secretary and comprises, in addition, the Chiefs of PCMO and TCD, and two chiefs of substantive divisions. The substantive divisions represented on the Committee change each year. This is a welcome innovation in ESCAP as it brings a communal approach to the designing of projects and the raising of funds.

56. The Inspectors found that the PRC is a good mechanism for the review and approval of projects. Remarks were, however, made by some division chiefs to the effect that projects submitted are on occasion rejected without consulting the chief of the relevant division. It was also claimed by some that decisions, on the basis of which only meagre support costs were provided for some projects, appeared arbitrary. Those views may be a natural reaction to the tighter priority-setting policy of the Executive Secretary, but they may also reflect conflict between sectoral and administrative responsibilities. The Inspectors consider the PRC should ensure that it consults with the division chiefs responsible for project submissions in order to stimulate them to see the responsibility for implementing technical co-operation programmes as one which they share with the PRC.

57. The above organizational arrangements are under-pinned by the administrative and sectoral divisions and guided by the Deputy Executive Secretary.

#### Programme performance<sup>2/</sup>

58. The steep growth of extrabudgetary resources put at the disposal of ESCAP has represented a new challenge to its staff. They have been called upon, in a relatively short period of time (6 years), to engage themselves in operational activities at a much livelier tempo than that to which they had been accustomed, a change of pace which requires a change in mental attitude. From all accounts, they have done reasonably well. As regards inputs, the rate of spending has been maintained at around 70 percent of available resources over the three biennia. As for outputs, in the biennium 1982-1983, the first biennium in which technical co-operation performance has been measured separately by the United Nations, the Commission has recorded an average of B in 10 programmes of activity, A in one programme and C in 2, for an overall rating in the upper reaches of the B range, the span of which extends from 50 to 74 percent in conformity with the rating structure established by the United Nations.<sup>3/</sup> The main report (A/39/173) has this to say about ESCAP's overall rating: "In the case of ESCAP, the rating is

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<sup>2/</sup>Based on the delivery of outputs, no distinction being made as to the difference in quality, importance or impact of these outputs.

<sup>3/</sup>Programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1982-1983, Report of the Secretary-General (A/39/173/Add.1, page 19).

largely an artifact of the ranges being used since the actual percentage was 73, only two points below the 'A' range. Given the many methodological shortcomings of the system, there is no significant difference in implementation rates between ESCAP and a unit which has, for example, a 76 percent rate and so is in the 'A' category" (paragraph 15).

59. A few observations need, however, to be made. There have been several departures from the planned programme. Most departures (postponed or terminated activities) were caused by lack of extrabudgetary resources or delays in their appropriations. A contributing factor was lack of government support and participation in programmed activities. Only a small proportion of outputs was postponed or terminated due to insufficient support staff. These reasons suggest that programming may have been over-ambitious and that insufficient consultations may have taken place with beneficiary governments. The JIU has alluded to the latter deficiency on the part of the United Nations system in several of its reports. It is a matter which ESCAP needs to address seriously and urgently.

## V. TWO ISSUES COMMON TO ALL REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMISSIONS

### The two issues

60. This study is part of a series on the implementation of the restructuring resolution. It is the second dealing with a regional economic commission; the first having reviewed the operations of the Economic Commission for Africa (JIU/REP/82/1). In that report, the Inspectors touched on two issues which are pertinent to ESCAP and, indeed, to all other commissions in differing degrees and which are worth spotlighting once more. These issues, which are dealt with below, concern: the process of decentralization to the regional commissions; and the duties and responsibilities in the areas of programming and management at executive level.

### The process of decentralization to the regional commissions

61. The Joint Inspection Unit has addressed the subject of decentralization in several of its reports, calling attention to the fact that decentralization has made slow progress following the adoption of resolution 32/197. In the report on ECA cited above, the Inspectors expressed their views as follows:

"The present 'piecemeal' approach towards decentralization should not continue in the future, because it creates considerable stress and strain where authority and resources are no longer commensurate with responsibilities, and considerable uncertainty among all concerned United Nations staff who wonder when - or how - decentralization will ever be carried out. If the many decentralization and restructuring resolutions are to be given concrete meaning and enactment for the regional commissions, the Inspectors believe the time has come clearly, comprehensively and specifically to determine what 'restructuring' and 'decentralization' mean for the regional commissions, and to take action." (paragraph 139)

62. At its thirty-seventh session, the General Assembly, after considering the report JIU/REP/82/1 adopted resolution 37/214 which called upon the Secretary-General to implement several recommendations made by the JIU and invited him to report to the thirty-eighth General Assembly on the progress made in implementing that resolution. The Secretary-General presented a first progress report through document A/38/505 dated 26 October 1983, Corr. 1 and Add. 1.

63. With specific reference to the issue of decentralization, resolution 37/214, through operative paragraph 3(b), had called upon the Secretary-General "to initiate immediately, in consultation with all concerned United Nations organizations, an examination of the progress made thus far in the decentralization of United Nations activities and to report thereon to the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Economic and Social Council, with a view to determining the specific authorities, responsibilities and resources that should be decentralized and the timing of such decentralization".

64. Document A/38/505 referred to in paragraph 62 gave an account of what had been done till then both as regards certain programme areas as well as in administrative matters. Concerning developments in the administrative field, the Secretary-General concluded his review of personnel matters, an area of particular importance to the regional commissions, by stating: "While recognizing

that progress in delegation of authority has been achieved during the past few years, a further review to determine the scope for additional delegation of authority may be desirable". (paragraph 34) Any possible solution of this issue was, therefore, postponed again. A similar statement promising no immediate action was made on progress achieved in regard to programme issues:

"The above-mentioned review should be seen as part of a process of re-examination of the distribution of tasks and responsibilities within the Organization, pursuant to paragraph 3(b) of General Assembly resolution 37/214. The manner in which the exercise will be pursued in other areas, including further ad hoc reviews will be determined in the light of developments in the work programmes of the entities concerned, the requirements of the programme planning and budgeting process and plans for cross-sectoral analysis and similar programme reviews." (paragraph 55)

65. Whilst solid achievements continue to be slow in coming, the Inspectors note that pursuit of the issues has not come to an absolute halt. In his follow-up report, document A/39/97, the Secretary-General has reported on progress made on programme and administrative issues. Dealing with administrative matters in the field of personnel, the Secretary-General assures that, consistent with certain principles, "a review is now being initiated to determine, in the light of experience, the extent to which a further delegation of authority .... is in order". (paragraph 19) Whilst mention has not been made, in the Secretary-General's latest report, of further progress, if any, in financial areas, it is known that the Secretary-General has established an Advisory Group on Administrative Reform, the aim of which is to render the administration of the Secretariat more efficient and effective, and where financial considerations are expected to weigh heavily in decision-making.

66. It is to be observed that the Advisory Group is composed solely of Headquarters officials; there should be some representation on the committee for the regional organizations on issues in which they have a stake.

67. The Inspectors recognize that some caution is required in tackling the problems of an organization as diffuse geographically as the United Nations. The disparity in the size of organizational entities, coupled with the difficulty of enforcing sanctions when such action is justified contributes to the creation at the centre of a climate unfavourable to the granting of too widespread a delegation of authority. Nonetheless, the Inspectors who have seen at first hand in the field some of the enormous delays occasioned by having to await decisions from the centre in matters which should be settled at regional headquarters, believe there is sound management sense in strengthening the decision-making power of the regional organization. The delays in the implementation of operational activities are indeed both expensive in the loss of valuable time and in administrative paper cost; and where these delays may be attributable to an insufficient delegation of authority, they work to ESCAP's disadvantage, since ESCAP will be judged by no lesser standard than other executing agencies. One of the results of not coming speedily to grips with the problem has been that the process of adjustment or change has become something of a ritual, not too obviously concerned with the realities on the ground.

Duties and responsibilities in the areas of programming and administration and in management at executive level

68. All the regional economic commissions are served by an Executive Secretary holding the rank of Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, by a Deputy Executive Secretary <sup>4/</sup> at the D-2 level, and by division chiefs mainly at the D-1 level. In JIU/REP/82/1, the Inspectors recommended, inter alia, that:

"ECA should divide the duties and responsibilities at the level immediately below the Executive Secretary so that the two areas of 'programming' and 'administration and management' would each be supervised by a D-2 with the necessary experience and capability in that field." (paragraph 142(a))

69. This recommendation was shaped after a careful review of the development of ECA's internal programming processes over recent biennia in the light of the significance of the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act, and in recognition of ECA's attempt to integrate these features and the tenets of the International Development Strategy into an orderly planning framework. These conclusions were also buttressed by an analysis of the policy and operational structures (including monitoring and evaluation of which there was an absence) designed by ECA to breathe life into these plans.

70. In his comments on the recommendation in paragraph 142(a) cited above, the Secretary-General, in paragraph 27 of document A/37/119/Add.1, stated "with regard to the proposal to establish a second D-2 post in ECA, the Secretary-General recalls that, in 1980, the Administrative Management Service (AMS) had recommended that the functions delegated to the Deputy Executive Secretary be increased. Against this background, consideration will be given to the JIU proposal during the preparation of the 1984-1985 programme budget".

71. The "second D-2 post" was not included in the Secretary-General's budget for the 1984-1985 biennium, the Secretary-General having concluded that the establishment of such a post was not then required (A/38/505, paragraph 57(c)). The Inspectors find themselves impelled to make a broadly similar recommendation in the case of ESCAP, particularly in the light of their earlier observations and having taken into account the similarity of the aims, purposes and objectives of ECA and ESCAP (as well as other regional commissions), the broad similarity of their problems, and the similarity of the operational structures, staffing and budgets at their disposal.

The Deputy Executive Secretary

72. The Secretary-General recently appointed the Deputy Executive Secretary of ECLAC as Executive Secretary of that Commission at the level of Under-Secretary-General. The Deputy Executive Secretary, like his counterparts generally in other regional economic commissions, held the grade of "Director" at the D-2 level. This act of the Secretary-General is encouraging to the Inspectors for it appears to confirm our view that the position of Deputy Executive Secretary needs to be recognized at its true worth. It must, in all respects, be seen and appreciated as being but one step removed from that of the Executive Secretary. In the view of the Inspectors, the position of Deputy Executive Secretary demands a person of high intellectual capacity, political sensitivity and drive. Like most deputies in other organizational settings, the incumbent is called upon from time to time to act on behalf of the Head of the Organization. He or she must, therefore, be able to carry out this responsibility at any time, at short notice. The post should carry a rank commensurate with its responsibilities.

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<sup>4/</sup>ECLAC has two Deputies.

73. The Inspectors have expressed this view before. However, they are given to understand that there is a reluctance to come to grips with the issues for one or other of the following reasons:

- (i) it is felt that the present financial climate is such that Member States would not be receptive to the idea of dealing with the matter at this time;
- (ii) the view is held that not all deputy executive secretaries shoulder the same degree of responsibility and should a review prove this true it would be politically unacceptable to upgrade some deputies and not others;
- (iii) it is thought that any upgrading of the deputy posts would automatically trigger requests for reclassifications down the line.

The Inspectors believe that any such reasons for inaction should give way to a more positive approach to the issue and that a review of the level of the post in each commission should be undertaken. It seems to the Inspectors that this ought to be done if only on grounds of equity.

74. The Inspectors accordingly suggest to the Secretary-General that the level of the post of Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP and the other regional commissions be reviewed. In undertaking this review it would of course be necessary to look at the full range of responsibilities and authority of staff at the upper echelons of the commissions.

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## VI. ESCAP'S MULTI-DISCIPLINARY WORK : AN ASSESSMENT

### How effective is ESCAP?

#### Emphasis on operations

75. Where ESCAP formerly put stress on its role as a producer of ideas for regional progress, its emphasis has in recent years steadily become more operational. It is responsible for executing about 20 percent of UNDP's regional programme. It has extrabudgetary funds in the 1984-1985 biennium of US\$38.2 million, with regular budget resources of US\$36 million, and its constituents have been demanding more action-oriented work.

#### The Divisions

76. The divisions are the core around which the activities take place. Not unexpectedly, performance varies among the divisions: some have had a higher ratio of well-qualified staff in posts than others; some have had to depend on extrabudgetary staff where they have only few regular budget posts. Some division chiefs have been unhappy at the quality of some of the professionals under their supervision: the demands of geographical representation sometimes, they say, run counter to the need to have the best individuals in the posts. Occasionally there had been long periods in which a division had no chief appointed.

77. While any division may from time to time have temporary personnel difficulties, the Inspectors considered that there were somewhat too many instances of the problems mentioned above. It was clear that the implementation of the work programme was, to some degree, being adversely affected by them. The Social Development Division, without a chief for some time, seemed to be short of the staff necessary to implement effectively the social side of the Commission's mandate. The Mineral Resources Section of the Natural Resources Division was only at half strength over a period of years; this, despite the importance of the portfolio. The post of Chief of the Division had long been vacant and there had been no Chief of the Energy Section for a long while. The Population Division, with a small number of regular budget staff and a much larger number of extrabudgetary ones, seemed uncertain of its future at a time when the extrabudgetary resources were diminishing. These difficulties obviously had some effect on performance.

78. Two matters touching on the work of divisions struck the Inspectors as worthy of comment:

#### The incidence of inter-disciplinary work

From time to time, divisions worked together on a project, contributing the benefits of their individual experience to a common integrated purpose. There was, however, not a great deal of this inter-disciplinary work in progress. The Inspectors believe that the Secretariat could improve the team work between and among divisions. This leads to the second matter.



Co-ordination inside the Secretariat

The Inspectors detected a tendency, not uncommon in the United Nations, to treat co-ordination as a separate activity distinct from substantive operations. Whilst the Inspectors appreciate the importance of this staff (as opposed to line) function, they nevertheless believe that to be meaningful, co-ordination must spring from the substantive activity. It must be instinctual. Substantive preoccupations must, therefore, plug directly into whatever co-ordination is taking place, otherwise co-ordination becomes a sterile exercise.

79. The Inspectors put much emphasis on strengthening the substantive and professional capability of the divisions. Obviously all specialisms cannot, nor need not, be covered. But there must be a solid core of expertise and experience which can properly respond to the needs and expectations of participating countries. Divisions have to be motivated to pursue their tasks energetically. They take pride in their ability to persuade donors to contribute to areas where help is needed. The Inspectors believe this pride in their abilities should not be discounted: their involvement should be fully exercised in the search for funds and, concomitant with this, divisions should be credited a reasonable share of support funds to follow up on the activities for which they are responsible. This is an incentive which should not be thrown away, particularly in a system which lacks scope for other incentives.

Meetings and group activities

(a) The sessions of the Commission and of legislative committees

80. The 1983 Commission meeting considered, among other things, ways of improving the conduct of the Commission and of legislative committee sessions. It recommended, inter alia, that:

- discussions should be more sharply focused and be oriented to issues which cannot be adequately dealt with by the legislative committees;
- legislative committees with more than one programme should report on each programme every two years;
- ministerial and other intergovernmental meetings should be held only in response to special needs.

These are steps which would tighten the work of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies and improve the rationale for the holding of other intergovernmental meetings.

81. The Commission also considered the question whether sessions should be annual or biennial and was of the view that the Commission should continue to meet annually, especially as ESCAP was the sole ministerial-level forum in the region. The Inspectors take this point. They would, however, like to draw attention to the need for better preparation of annual sessions. As noted earlier in paragraph 21, some useful preparatory work is done through ACPR on an informal basis, and it should continue. Nevertheless, the Inspectors

suggest that consideration be given to the creation of a Programme Preparation and Review Committee which would, in essence, formalize some of the functions of ACPR and prepare decisions for the consideration of ministers. For a speedier and smoother conduct of the session, it might be advisable to organize the meeting of the Committee one week ahead of the annual session.

(b) Other meetings and group activities

82. Some delegates to the 1983 meeting of the Commission thought there were too many meetings organized by ESCAP. One delegation was of the view that the meetings did not cater enough to "meaningful development": their effect was not reaching down to those who were really deprived and in need.

Views of government representatives

83. In commenting on the multi-disciplinary work of the ESCAP Secretariat, representatives of some of the participating countries mentioned what they thought to be some shortcomings:

Lack of top professionals

A portion of ESCAP's work suffered from the deficiency which has been touched on in the comments on "Divisions" above. Government representatives, however, in general spoke highly of many experts recruited by the Secretariat, as well as those provided by RMRDC, RNAM, RCTT and SIAP. This favourable attitude to the latter stems from the practical ways in which the experts of the regional programmes/institutions have been able to help governments at their request, although all the help requested could not be given because of limited resources.

Official missions

From time to time, officials sent by ESCAP to meet with and give counsel to senior personnel and Ministers of government were not of the calibre or status to make their missions successful. The Inspectors recognize that staffing problems in the Secretariat sometimes place it in this unhappy situation, but it is better to cancel a mission, in those circumstances, than to give an inferior service.

Location of projects

Too many projects took place in the capital cities and comparatively few in places where help was most needed. ESCAP's work ought to show up more often in the depressed and under-developed areas. The Inspectors have noted the 1983 Commission's expression of priority interest in these areas and would expect future programmes and projects to reflect this concern.

Projects spread too thinly

ESCAP has been accused of attempting too many activities and spreading itself too thinly as a result. The Inspectors consider there is merit in this criticism. The new criteria established for the priority selection of projects should go some way towards eliminating marginal activities so that efforts could be concentrated on a smaller number of more meaningful projects.

Follow-up deficient

This varies from division to division within the Secretariat. The Inspectors found they could not be categorical but that personnel inadequacies in some divisions as well as the lack of support funds sometimes affected follow-up.

Frequent use of consultants

A number of representatives complained to the Inspectors that outside experts and consultants are engaged for jobs which should normally be performed by ESCAP professionals. After examining this subject, the Inspectors are inclined to believe that although some cases may invite such criticism, in general ESCAP's record is good: increasing use is now being made, as it should, of regular staff with technical ability rather than consultants; and a quarterly vetting of the use of consultants has recently been introduced.

Success rate

The Inspectors encountered many examples of good work done by the Secretariat, and in the course of the Commission's 1983 meeting heard favourable comment on many of these. However, many of ESCAP's activities are seminal in nature: they are meant to encourage others to move into new areas of endeavour. It is not always easy to measure success in such activities which take place through meetings, seminars and training sessions. Since there is no tested evaluation system within the Secretariat, activities tend to be judged subjectively. To counter this, the Inspectors believe the Secretariat should be given an evaluation capability which it can use in order the better to design and monitor its projects.

Agency viewpoints

84. The specialized agencies view ESCAP's activities in differing ways. Some feel that ESCAP is treading on their turf and entering into areas in which they have the expertise. One agency representative put it pithily: "if ESCAP withdrew from this shared project, its absence would not be missed". Other agencies see in ESCAP, with its more intimate knowledge of the socio-economic problems of the area, a possible ally, even an advocate, for some of the reforms they would like to see take place in member countries. The differences vary with the degree of centralization in, as well as with the philosophy and size of, the particular agency. The smaller agencies find collaboration easier.

JIU views

85. It is clear to the Inspectors that the ESCAP Secretariat is involved in many areas of work which mean a great deal to the development of countries of the region. A good proportion of this work has been successful as representatives at the 1983 Commission's meeting attested. There have, however, not unnaturally, been some shortcomings in planning (e.g., too many activities without the professional back-up) and in implementation. But improvements can be made if:

- countries keep a strict eye on the priorities they themselves establish and see to it that the Secretariat delivers on these;
- the Secretariat avoids duplicating the expertise of specialized agencies, but continues to seek the links where intersectoral action is necessary (more interdisciplinary thinking and practice among the divisions in ESCAP will help them);
- special efforts on an increased scale are directed to the most needy countries and particularly to the Pacific sub-region.

86. These aims are not all easy of attainment. A closer community of understanding between the ESCAP Secretariat and the headquarters of the specialized agencies has to be developed. It would, for instance, be very helpful if the regional commission could be brought into the early programming activities of specialized agencies at their headquarters in such a way as to benefit both parties at least through the timely exchange of substantive information between professionals and before the programmes are solidified. ESCAP programming should similarly be exposed to the agencies.

87. A word on the Pacific sub-region. The Inspectors believe the work of ESCAP in this area should be increased. They consider that a stronger physical presence is necessary in the sub-region if the many demands are to be more realistically faced and therefore welcome the initiative of the Executive Secretary of ESCAP in merging the offices of the ESCAP Pacific Liaison Office and the United Nations Development Advisory Team for the Pacific into the ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre, based in Vanuatu.

88. Other measures (some mentioned earlier) which should be taken into account for the improvement of performance are as follows:

(a) Considering ESCAP's aim of fostering integrated development, there does not appear to be enough interdisciplinary work among the divisions. The Inspectors noted some useful collaboration between agriculture and environment and between transport and communication. An improved capability in statistics could, for instance, result from better collaboration among the separate divisions gathering and processing statistics.

(b) The two facets of ESCAP's responsibility for (i) "analysis and forward planning" and (ii) "the execution of projects" require different personnel capacities. Some divisions seem short on one or other of these types. Recruitment needs to be geared to overcome the deficiency where it exists. The divisions must have suitable "in-house" technical capability for the main services they offer.

(c) If operational activities are to be successful, the Administration and divisions must be oriented to action: procedures must aid not impede action. Many divisions complained of procedures which took some of the momentum out of their endeavour. In particular, TCD and the Project Review Committee (PRC) were seen by some divisions as diluting their enthusiasm for winning projects to ESCAP and as putting administrative obstacles in their way. If the work of TCD and PRC is to succeed, the heads of divisions must contribute positively to it. There needs to be more sensitivity to their involvement in the decisions that impinge on their work.

(d) The current pattern of distribution of overhead resources provides the lion's share to the administrative side of the Secretariat. The Inspectors consider that the distribution of overhead resources among the administrative, executive and sectoral branches should be rational with a greater share of resources being channelled toward project support rather than to the expansion of administration. Division chiefs should advise on priorities for the use of project support funds and should be held accountable for funds allocated for these purposes.

(e) An organization which is operational must also develop a rapport with the press so as to build up, in the various countries, some consciousness of the positive role of the Commission in helping them to solve their problems. This task is partly educative, but will also elicit responses which the Commission can assimilate into its experience.

(f) As previously described, there are many functional arrangements for co-ordination within the Secretariat. The Programme Co-ordination and Monitoring Office seeks to bring coherence to the diversity of the separate divisions, though one or two divisions thought its role was more obstructive than helpful. The TCD has yet to find its feet: there were many complaints concerning the length of time it took to carry out simple functions and the procedural/administrative delays encountered. These views, taken together with the remarks of some division chiefs about the functioning of the Project Review Committee, suggest the need for closer consultation among all parties concerned.

(g) The other co-ordinating mechanisms (the ECU, the Joint CTC/ESCAP Unit on TNC, the ECDC/TCDC, IRD and LDC units) try with mixed success to bring separate disciplines together. The Inspectors do not believe that these small units for co-ordination at one remove from the heads of division and reporting to the Executive Secretary, meet the need for an organic co-ordination between and among the divisions themselves. Where the co-ordination unit is part of a division (e.g., Development Planning, Trade) or of a service whose job is to bring a total view to the work of the Commission (e.g., PCMO or TCD), the co-ordination unit has soil in which to find roots. When it is hived off from divisional or "common" services, its capacity to promote meaningful co-operative action is reduced. The ball should be placed in the divisional courts: could not small task forces/working groups made up of members of different divisions explore concrete opportunities for co-ordination between them? Co-ordination arrived at by increased inter-disciplinary contact on an ongoing basis is likely to be more positive.

What of the future?

89. The ESCAP Commission operates in a dynamic environment, and as it continues to help its Member States to improve their condition, economically and socially, and to become influential partners in international economic relations, it expects concrete benefits from its partnership with other members of the United Nations system.

90. The Secretariat is meanwhile conscious of ways in which it can improve its own performance. Some of these ways have been proposed in this report. In a deteriorating economic climate in which resources are increasingly hard to come by, it will have to do even better with less.

91. In the past, ESCAP took initiatives in the fostering of such important schemes as the Asian Highway, the Asian Telecommunication Network and the Asian Population Programme. It gave impetus to such valued institutions as the Asian Development Bank, the Asian Statistical Institute and the Asian Institute for Economic Development and Planning. There is, therefore, no doubt that it has the mental and intellectual resources to continue this support service to the developing countries of Asia and the Pacific. Its thoughtful studies and missions on technology for development, its identification of the pressing need for systematic long-term regional planning in Transport and Communications show ESCAP's readiness to stay in the vanguard. The requisites for it to stay there are only too well known:

- a sensitivity to the problems of the peoples of the region;
- a staff motivated to share in the common effort; and
- sound management of the human and financial resources available.

The Inspectors believe that with the necessary will ESCAP can meet these tests and continue to make a valuable contribution to regional efforts.

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

92. The Inspectors have, throughout the report, suggested a number of ways in which ESCAP should do things differently to improve its performance, both as a community of Member States which frame policy and as the Secretariat which puts this policy into operation. Some of these suggestions come together in Chapters V and VI. The main recommendations fall under three main headings: programme; organization; and resources.

### Programme

93. The Commission has developed a set of criteria which are to apply in the preparation of its work programme. The rational use of these criteria should help to develop a programme of work which responds best to the diversity of the region's needs. This implies that activities, previously approved, which have slipped in relative importance must make room for new activities considered by Member States to address their problems better. Substantive managers, for one reason or another, seem on occasion to cling to familiar territory and show reluctance to break new and unfamiliar ground. Whenever a new dimension is called for, it must be seized upon in the interest of the region.

94. The programme developed must be of manageable size reflecting the resources realistically expected to be received: programmes prepared with too optimistic an eye on resources lead to an inflated programme of work in which priorities are not accurately observed in the programme's implementation.

95. Whilst the preparation of the meetings' schedule is done with care, it seems to the Inspectors that the schedule is too heavy. Documents for these meetings should be concise and should provide for better comparison of programme efforts from one period to another.

96. In view of the above, the Inspectors make the following recommendations:

### Recommendation 1

Member States of the Commission should ensure that:

- (a) the programmes presented to them for approval conform, at the programme element level, to the criteria established by the Commission;
- (b) the programme of work is of a size commensurate with the resources reasonably expected in the ensuing biennium and that undue over-programming is discouraged; and
- (c) meetings are reduced to a manageable number whose anticipated results are realistically assessed and from which identified benefits will accrue. There should be an annual evaluation of the benefits derived from meetings held.

### Recommendation 2

The Secretariat should:

- (a) each year undertake an objective analysis of the impact of meetings held; and
- (b) take steps to improve the quality of documents in terms of content, style and presentation including the wider use of graphic material.

### Organization

97. The Inspectors consider that the recommendation addressed above to Member States of the Commission call for some adjustments to the structure of the Commission: the point has been made in paragraph 81. Member States should also see to it that the network of regional institutions which they have created either in partnership or on the initiative of individual Member States are used to the region's best advantage (see paragraph 28). Accordingly, the Inspectors conclude and recommend that:

#### Recommendation 3

Member States of the Commission should:

- (a) consider establishing a Programme Preparation and Review Committee which would formalize some of the functions now performed by ACPFR and prepare programme decisions for the study of the Commission; and
- (b) continue to make viability a decisive criterion for the existence of regional institutions. These institutions should receive the required financial support from the countries they serve.

98. With respect to the Secretariat, in line with the views expressed in paragraphs 52 and 54 of this report, the Inspectors recommend that:

#### Recommendation 4

The Executive Secretary of ESCAP should examine the feasibility of combining the Programme Co-ordination and Monitoring Office and the Technical Co-operation Division into a single office. The functions of evaluation should fall within this office, which should be headed at a level commensurate with its merged responsibilities.

99. The Inspectors suggest in paragraphs 72 to 74 a review of the grade level of the Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP and the other regional economic commissions, looking at the same time at the full range of responsibilities and authority vested in staff at the upper echelons of the commissions. Accordingly, the Inspectors recommend that:

#### Recommendation 5

The Secretary-General should review the grade level of the Deputy Executive Secretaries of the regional economic commissions.

### Resources

100. Finally, the Inspectors wish to address two recommendations to the Secretariat based on observations made in paragraphs 43 to 45 and 88(d) of the report:

#### Recommendation 6

The Executive Secretary of ESCAP should ensure that:

- (a) the contributions of donor governments are in keeping with and promote the criteria set by the Commission for the execution of its work programme; and
- (b) the distribution of support services between administrative and substantive activities takes into account the seminal role played by the substantive divisions in project activities. The distribution should give more emphasis to substantive activities than it does at present.



TABLE I  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC  
EXTRABUDGETARY ACTIVITIES

Resources available during the period 1976 - 1985 by funding source  
(in thousands of United States dollars)

	1976/77	1978/79	1980/81	1982/83	1984/85	Total	Percentage
I.							
United Nations Funding Organizations							
United Nations Development Programme	72.0	8,277.0	13,311.0	13,358.0	13,580.0	48,598.0	38.6
United Nations Fund for Population Activities	520.0	2,739.0	4,081.0	2,314.0	3,925.0	13,679.0	10.9
Voluntary Fund for United Nations Decade for Women	-	671.0	1,512.0	339.0	683.0	3,205.0	2.5
Specialized and other Agencies	225.0	-	-	603.0	3,676.0	4,504.0	3.6
Sub-Total:	917.0	11,687.0	18,904.0	16,614.0	21,864.0	69,986.0	55.6
II.							
Donor Governments and Organizations	2,026.0	8,208.0	13,868.0	15,207.0	16,368.0	55,677.0	44.3
Other	72.0	-	-	-	-	72.0	0.1
Sub-Total:	2,098.0	8,208.0	13,868.0	15,207.0	16,368.0	55,749.0	44.4
GRAND TOTAL:	3,015.0	19,895.0	32,772.0	31,821.0	38,232.0	125,735.0	-
Percentage:	2.4	15.8	26.1	25.3	30.4	-	100%

TABLE II  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE AT THE OUTPUT LEVEL IN 1978/1979, 1980/1981 AND 1982/1983

Programme of Activity	Number of Outputs																	
	As programmed in Programme Budget			Implemented as Programmed			Departures from Programmed Commitments						Terminated			Additional output		
							Significantly reformulated but executed			Postponed to next biennium								
	1978/79	1980/81	1982/83	1978/79	1980/81	1982/83	1978/79	1980/81	1982/83	1978/79	1980/81	1982/83	1978/79	1980/81	1982/83	1978/79	1980/81	1982/83
1. Food and Agriculture	62	17	80	34	15	71	6	-	4	5	2	1	17	-	4	-	2	16
Technical Assistance			27			6			9			5			7			11
2. Development issues and policies	71	26	29	37	15	14	1	3	9	11	1	4	23	7	2	2	-	3
Technical Assistance			7			3			1			-			3			3
3. Environment	10	6	16	8	3	8	-	-	-	-	3	-	2	-	8	-	-	-
Technical Assistance			24			13			4			-			7			3
4. Human settlements	14	13	22	10	2	4	-	-	2	2	8	13	2	3	3	-	8	-
Technical Assistance			16			2			9			4			1			-
5. Industrial Development	33	33	38	20	17	19	1	-	6	3	12	-	9	4	13	-	-	-
Technical Assistance			50			20			12			10			8			-
6. International trade	29	38	130	27	37	81	-	1	-	-	-	2	2	-	47	-	1	6
Technical Assistance			135			108			4			10			13			-
7. Natural resources and energy	50	36	57	33	23	38	2	1	9	3	12	3	12	-	7	-	-	2
Technical Assistance			53			33			-			3			17			7
8. Population	56	35	110	16	25	81	-	-	8	16	3	5	24	7	16	1	-	3
Technical Assistance			41			9			1			9			22			2
9. Science and Technology	6	3	7	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	4	-	-	3
Technical Assistance			19			12			-			7			-			8
10. Statistics	37	19	38	31	16	32	-	-	-	2	2	4	4	1	-	-	-	2
Technical Assistance			139			59			5			55			10			22
11. Transport I communications and tourism	55	69	81	36	42	53	-	-	13	10	19	-	9	8	15	-	3	-
Technical Assistance			115			66			17			4			28			9
12. Transport II shipping, ports/ and inland railways	44	44	63	39	37	23	-	-	7	-	7	9	5	-	24	-	-	-
Technical Assistance			167			67			48			5			47			4
13. SDHA	40	30	22	31	23	11	-	1	3	3	5	-	6	1	8	-	2	-
Technical Assistance			93			59			1			1			32			10
Total: Technical Assistance:	507	369	693	322	257	437	10	6	61	55	75	42	115	31	151	3	16	35
			886			457			111			113			195			79