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Item 12 of the provisional agenda

DESIGNATION OF SECTORAL FOCAL POINTS

1. The main goal of ESCWA is to service member States. The achievement of that goal requires the strengthening of relations between the secretariat and the competent authorities in the member States through the ministerial sessions of the Commission, the sessions of its Technical Committee and other meetings, as well as the consultancy services which are provided to member States on their request.

2. ESCWA was affected, as were other international and regional organizations, by the exceptional circumstances the region went through during the past decade. Moreover, the United Nations system has entered a new phase in which it will be re-examining its role vis-à-vis the member States.

3. On that basis, the secretariat is presently assessing its role in the region as well as re-examining its programmes and methods of work in order to increase its effectiveness and strengthen its relations with the member States. The secretariat convened a series of consultations between its technical staff and a group of distinguished experts in different fields. These consultations, held at Amman from 31 January to 3 February 1994, resulted in the identification of a number of priorities which could constitute the pivot of ESCWA programmes, and in a series of recommendations aimed at improving the performance of the secretariat.

4. The secretariat has actually re-examined the way it prepares programmes and has replaced its sectoral approach in planning activities by a new approach which consists in planning activities around a number of main axes. According to this new approach, programmes are implemented in cooperation with related sectors and their success is dependent on the existence of strong relations with the member States. The subject of strengthening relations with member States was raised during the eighth session of the Technical Committee, held at Amman from 11 to 13 October 1993, and the idea of identifying focal points in government institutions in each member country for each ESCWA field of activity was put forward at that time. These focal points would be the link in technical issues between the technical divisions in the secretariat and the corresponding government institutions in the member States. The functions of those focal points are the following:

- (a) To express opinions on programme proposals during their preparation;
- (b) To exchange statistical and technical information as well as studies on specific fields;
- (c) To take part in defining the general framework of the studies issued and meetings convened by the secretariat;
- (d) To express opinions about studies before they are finalized by the secretariat, and especially about the information on the countries which are the subject of the studies;
- (e) To participate in communicating the results of studies undertaken by ESCWA to concerned institutions and individuals.