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**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY  
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION:  
PROGRESS MADE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993**

Report on

progress made in the ESCWA plan to implement  
Agenda 21 in the region, for submission to the  
Commission on Sustainable Development



## SUMMARY

1. In the present note, the Executive Secretary submits a suggested draft report of ESCWA to comply with General Assembly resolution 47/191 of 22 December 1992 on institutional arrangements to follow up the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in which the General Assembly requested "United Nations regional commissions to examine the relevant provisions of chapter 38 of Agenda 21" at their next sessions and submit reports on their specific plans to implement Agenda 21" through the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Economic and Social Council.
2. Further, in paragraphs 21 and 22 of the same resolution, the General Assembly called for reports to be made for submission to the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Economic and Social Council on steps taken to adjust activities, programmes and medium-term plans as appropriate to implement Agenda 21.
3. The suggested draft report is designed to facilitate the Commission's discussion and formulation of its report to the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Economic and Social Council. The report is subject to redrafting. Consequently, the text would have to be redrafted to correspond to decisions of the seventeenth session of ESCWA.
4. The Commission may wish to take note of the present report and to point out those measures which it considers appropriate for their effective follow-up, within the framework of ESCWA's future activities.

## Introduction

5. The premise of Agenda 21 is based on the idea of sustainable development, which was defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (also known as the Brundtland Commission) as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This includes environmental, economic and social dimensions as well as the concept of inter-generational equity. The process of working towards living sustainably is an essential component of UNCED's message, and central to the philosophy of Agenda 21. Hence, it is important that these process-related issues be considered in an integrated manner to emphasize the linkages among various topics, as well as the social, economic and environmental impacts of actions. Accordingly, the Commission, in operative paragraph 2 of its resolution 165 (XV) of 18 May 1989 requested the secretariat "to take all environmental considerations into account in the implementation of the Commission's work programme, especially in the areas of agriculture, industry, transport, natural resources, energy, social development and human settlements." Furthermore, in adopting resolution 180 (XVI) of 2 September 1992, the Commission stressed the need for the improvement of environmental management to achieve sustainable development as outlined in Agenda 21. It endorsed the Arab Declaration on Environment and Development and Future Prospects adopted by the Arab Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development (Cairo, September 1991), which incorporates the results of the Conference in the works and programmes of the Commission. In addition, the said resolution called for the establishment of an Arab and international inter-agency coordinating committee on environment and

development for the ESCWA region that would bring together concerned agencies and bodies with the purpose of promoting environmentally sound and sustainable development and implementing Agenda 21.

6. The secretariat, recognizing that there is no single blueprint of sustainability, as economic and social systems and ecological conditions differ widely among the ESCWA and Arab countries, took a number of initiatives to provide a general framework on the basis of which each country would have to work out its own concrete policy implications for sustainable development. The success of such policy depends to a large extent on several interdependent factors: political will, administrative commitment, appropriate investment, dedicated research and development, and public participation. Of particular importance were the recommendations of the ESCWA Seminar on Alternative Patterns of Development and Lifestyles for Western Asia (held in Beirut from 21 to 25 January 1980); the workshop on Basic Human Needs in the Arab Region organized by the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in 1980; the African Ministerial Conference on Environment, convened in Cairo in 1985 (especially recommendations of direct relevance to the Arab countries in North Africa); the Arab Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development convened in Tunis in 1986; and the technical reports prepared by ESCWA and submitted and endorsed by the Arab Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development (Cairo, September 1991), including the Programme of Action for Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development in the Arab Countries. All these initiatives, particularly the one pertaining to the regional preparations for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) were reported to the sixteenth session of ESCWA (Amman, 30 August - 3 September 1992).<sup>1/</sup>

7. All environmental and developmental issues of Agenda 21 are highly relevant to the ESCWA countries, although the nature and the extent of the problems vary because of diversity in terms of physical and socio-economic characteristics among the ESCWA and Arab countries. However, in their input to preparations for the 1992 Rio Conference, the Arab countries drew particular attention to the following issues:

- (a) Protection and management of land resources by combating desertification and by rehabilitating degraded lands;
- (b) Development and protection of water resources;
- (c) Rural and urban development and improvement in the quality of life;
- (d) Environmentally sound management of wastes and toxic and hazardous chemicals;

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<sup>1/</sup> For further details see: "Report on Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond in the ESCWA Region" (E/ESCWA/16/3(Part I)/Add.2); "Follow-up action on resolution 165 (XV) on environment and development in the ESCWA region" (E/ESCWA/16/4/Add.1); "Follow-up action at the regional level on United Nations world conferences and ESCWA regional meetings" (E/ESCWA/16/5 [Section II] and E/ESCWA/16/5/Suppl.1, pertaining to UNCED).

(e) Improvement of human health, sanitation, and the well-being of all inhabitants;

(f) Conservation of biological diversity;

(g) Protection of the atmosphere by combating climate change, depletion of the ozone layer and transboundary air pollution;

(h) The issues of climate change and biological diversity are the subject of ongoing global negotiations. However, none of the Arab countries are among the 20 countries responsible for the bulk of emissions of greenhouse gases in the world. However, the Arab countries are adopting a positive approach in these negotiations.

8. The Second Amman Declaration on Arab Population Conference, in emphasizing the concept of sustainability, recommended measures to be taken to combat poverty, unemployment and to improve the quality of life in urban and rural environments and industrial areas. In this context, the Declaration elaborated on the following guidelines:<sup>2/</sup>

(a) Human development and its relationship to development;

(b) Population, environment and development;

(c) Population distribution and urbanization;

(d) International migration;

(e) Women, population and development;

(f) Maternal and child health and family planning;

(g) Information, education and communication;

(h) Structural adjustment and population policies;

(i) Arab and international cooperation.

9. The interactions of human activities with environmental and natural resources usually take place in a region-specific manner, and those interactions which are detrimental to the environment may effectively be managed and regulated only within a regional socio-economic context. It would be pertinent in this context to explore the ways in which ESCWA could enhance regional development and cooperation to make development practices more sustainable.

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<sup>2/</sup> For further details see: Second Amman Declaration on Arab Population Conference, the Arab Population Conference, Amman, 4-8 April 1993 (E/ESCWA/POP/1993/9).

A. UNCED reinforces ESCWA's regional responsibilities

10. After reviewing Agenda 21, it is safe to assume that virtually all of ESCWA's programme activities are addressed in Agenda 21 and that the general thrust of Agenda 21 is to reinforce ESCWA's regional role and mandates for sustainable development.<sup>3/</sup> ESCWA, like other regional commissions, is a decentralized body of the United Nations system with multidisciplinary and intersectoral characteristics, which is mandated to foster regional economic development and cooperation.

11. In common with other organizations and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, ESCWA was involved since the beginning in the preparatory process for UNCED. Its contribution was in the following basic areas: (i) participation in relevant meetings which aimed at providing inputs to the preparatory process of the Conference; (ii) direct assistance to member countries--and through cooperation with the League of Arab States, Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment (CAMRE) to all Arab countries--to facilitate their participation in the preparatory process of UNCED; (iii) convening, in cooperation with the League of Arab States (CAMRE) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Arab Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development (Cairo, September 1991) as a forum for discussing environment and sustainable development issues relevant to the Arab countries;<sup>4/</sup> (iv) participation in the UNCED meeting itself; and (v) follow-up meetings for the regional implementation of Agenda 21. The inputs of ESCWA have been commensurate with its mandate to play the central regional coordinating role for development activities within the United Nations system and in keeping with its experience in the region. Furthermore, following post-Rio General Assembly resolution 47/191 of 22 December 1992, hitherto disparate environment-related activities of ESCWA were consolidated and strengthened, and efforts were intensified to ensure that ESCWA's activities contributed effectively to sustainable development and to integrate developmental and environmental considerations into the programme activities of ESCWA.

12. Resolutions adopted both by the General Assembly of the United Nations and by ESCWA reflect the increasing global concern over environmental problems. In resolution 165 (XV), the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to take all environmental considerations into account in the implementation of the Commission's work programme, especially in the areas of

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<sup>3/</sup> For further details, refer to ESCWA draft reports submitted to the Technical Committee for the Assessment of UNCED (League of Arab States, Cairo, 11 January 1993). Among these are the following reports, the last three in Arabic: (a) "Summary of Agenda 21" (E/ESCWA/ENV/1992/16/Rev.1); (b) "Environment and development and future prospects: the ESCWA plan of action" (E/ESCWA/ENV/1992/7); (c) "Review of follow-up of UNCED" (E/ESCWA/ENV/1993/WG.1/3); and (d) Outcome of UNCED: Toward an Evolving Environmental Programme for the Arab Region (E/ESCWA/ENV/1992/18).

<sup>4/</sup> For further details see: Report of ESCWA on the Arab Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development (E/ESCWA/ENV/1992/1), including the Programme of Action for Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development in the Arab Countries; and the Arab Declaration on Environment and Development and Future Prospects. These documents were submitted to the Rio Conference.

agriculture, industry, transport, natural resources, energy, social development and human settlements. That resolution was, in part, a response to the Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond, formulated by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 42/186 of 11 December 1987, and to the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, Our Common Future, which was welcomed by the General Assembly in resolution 42/187 of 11 December 1987. Agenda 21 contains many of the elements essential for sustainable development outlined in the Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

B. Framework for activities related to Agenda 21

ESCWA's medium-term plan

13. The ESCWA medium-term plan constitutes the principal policy framework for the Commission and is conceived as a plan for the Organization, subject to review from one biennium to the next. One of the eight priority or target areas of the medium-term plan for 1992-1997 (revised version) is environment. The other seven are: food and agriculture; development issues and policies; industrial development; natural resources; population; public administration and finance; and social development and welfare. There are also other areas common to sustainable development which, together with the eight target areas, should be addressed in all ESCWA activities. These elements are: energy; human settlements; science and technology; statistics; transport and communications; and women and development.

14. Agenda 21 provides a significant opportunity to integrate developmental and environmental considerations into priority areas to support sustainable development in the region. It reinforces ESCWA's role and responsibilities to further economic cooperation and integration in Western Asia. In the field of environment, desertification, industrial waste management, human ecology, global warming, climatic change and environmental degradation caused by the Gulf war, the Executive Secretary in introducing the draft medium-term plan pledged full support for these issues with a view to identifying environmental problems that required attention and to initiate activities in areas related thereto.<sup>5/</sup>

15. The Commission, in its resolution 180 (XVI) stressed the need for the improvement of environmental management to achieve sustainable development as outlined in Agenda 21. In this respect, and in line with General Assembly resolution 47/191 of 22 December 1992 on plans to implement Agenda 21 of UNCED, the Executive Secretary arranged for consultation meetings on the restructuring of ESCWA programmes (Amman, 31 January - 3 February 1994) to facilitate cross-referencing with Agenda 21 and to give a clearer overview of ESCWA's integrated work programme.<sup>6/</sup>

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<sup>5/</sup> See the ESCWA medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 (revised version) (E/ESCWA/PPTCO/1992/IG.1/3/Rev.1) submitted to the sixteenth session of ESCWA (Amman, 30 August - 3 September 1992).

<sup>6/</sup> For further details see: Consultation Meetings on the Restructuring of ESCWA Programmes (31 January - 3 February 1994). The conclusions and recommendations of the meeting guided the reformulation of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997.

16. The consultation on restructuring produced five core themes concerned with broad issues of regional priorities: (i) regional cooperation; (ii) regional development and prospects within the regional and international context; (iii) management of natural resources and environment; (iv) improvement of the quality of life; and (v) economic and social reconstruction and rehabilitation.

17. The restructuring of ESCWA programmes followed two tracks. The first track was the plenary of experts and ESCWA programme managers, held under the guidance of the Executive Secretary. The plenary focused on main background papers prepared for the meeting, concerning itself with the broad issues of defining strategic objectives and the barriers to their achievement, and outlining measures to be taken for regional cooperation.

18. On the second track, a series of technical working symposia were held concurrently with the Plenary. The three subsectors on (i) economic development; (ii) social development; and (iii) sectoral and cross-sectoral development issues were chosen because of their relevance to the region and the objectives of the medium-term plan. In each working group, discussion was initiated by presentations from members of a panel, which included ESCWA sectoral experts and an independent regional expert. The moderator of each panel was a representative with reputable international experience.

19. At a more operational level, the consultation for restructuring proposed the following newly formulated subprogrammes, with new components:

(a) Economic development issues and policy analysis: economic research and policy analysis ; mobilization of financial resources for development; trade and tourism; transnational corporations; and special issues;

(b) Social development issues and policy analysis: population; human development and productive employment; women; human settlements and community development;

(c) Natural resources, energy and environment;

(d) Food and agriculture: food, agricultural policies, and rural development strategies;

(e) Industry, technology and transport;

(f) Statistics and information services and support.

20. The discussion also highlighted a number of ways in which ESCWA, based on its accumulated experience, could support regional cooperation and sustainable development at the policy, informational and operational levels.

21. The activities of ESCWA in sustainable development and in the promotion of Agenda 21 will be governed by five basic considerations. First, the implementation of environmental assessment and management programmes is fundamentally the responsibility of member countries. The role of ESCWA in particular is to encourage, support and assist in the development of sustainability components of Agenda 21 programmes, as well as to ensure the availability of information to achieve sustainable development goals. Second,



Agenda 21 is to be carried out over a period of time with the involvement of many participants from Governments, representatives of main socio-economic sectors, regional and international organizations and others in achieving sustainable development goals. As a regional organization, ESCWA will coordinate and encourage other regional organizations and United Nations agencies, professional, business and non-governmental organizations and community action groups to take measures with national Governments for the implementation of sustainable development programmes. Third, the mutuality of interest between developed and developing countries in achieving sustainable development provides a compelling argument for North-South cooperation and for enhancing South-South cooperation for the implementation of Agenda 21. Fourth, many cost-effective measures for addressing global environmental issues are possible in the South, provided that the North provide financial assistance and extend technical cooperation to the South. And fifth, managing the transition to sustainable development involves all sectors of the economy and should be done on the basis of clear targets and appropriate time-frames and financial flows to support the transition process toward the implementation of Agenda 21.

C. Highlights of ESCWA implementation of Agenda 21

22. Agenda 21 (chapter 38), paragraph 38.30 and 38.31, calls upon the regional economic commissions to play a leading role in coordinating regional and subregional activities by sectoral and other United Nations bodies to assist member countries in achieving sustainable development. Furthermore, it requests the commissions to review and modify ongoing activities, as appropriate, in the light of Agenda 21, and to pursue active cooperation and collaboration with other relevant organizations at the regional level, together with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and UNDP, to strengthen the national capacity of member States.

23. The principal aim of ESCWA in implementing Agenda 21 is to assist its member countries in strengthening their capabilities in environmental management and sustainable development. With this aim in mind, ESCWA organizes training courses, promotes collaborative research on substantive issues related to Agenda 21 and regional development, extends technical advisory services, serves as a forum for the exchange of experience, and fosters the exchange of publications and information on national and regional socio-economic development and planning.

24. Since UNCED took place, ESCWA, in cooperation with the League of Arab States (CAMRE), has held numerous discussions for the regional implementation of Agenda 21. For each of the high-priority regional issues, the present document contains information on activities undertaken by ESCWA, for post-Rio implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/191 on institutional arrangements to follow up UNCED. These issues include: integration of environment and development in decision-making; sustainable agriculture and rural development; water resources management; changing consumption and production patterns; poverty, sustainable development and human well-being; and role of technology in sustainable development. Each of these major priority areas include planned or proposed action to promote sustainable development at the regional level. Furthermore, specific environment-related activities, including in-house and regional coordination for the implementation of Agenda 21, are also included in the report.

D. Integration of environment and development in decision-making  
(Chapters 8, 28, 31 and 37 of Agenda 21)

25. Although the environmental dimension has been "implicitly" incorporated in development planning only in recent years, development planners and scholars have become increasingly concerned about the interrelationship among environmental problems, resource depletion and poverty and the ways in which development is promoted in the region. Many countries of the region are confronted with environmental problems associated with industry, in addition to land degradation, soil erosion and desertification. The situation in the ESCWA region is further complicated by rapid population growth and the spread of poverty, which causes the productive capacities of environmental and natural resources to regress.

26. ESCWA, in cooperation with UNEP, initiated implementation of a project to assist Jordan in strengthening environmental management and planning capabilities. The basic principle underlying the project was that sustainable development must be the long-term goal of Jordan. For this to happen, it is essential that the concept of sustainability be incorporated into the national planning process, so that the needs of the current population are met without dangerous degradation of the natural resources endowment from which the coming generations must fulfil their own needs.<sup>7/</sup> The second phase of the project will commence soon after finalization of overview reports. This experience will be evaluated with a view to developing modalities for the effective integration of environmental concerns into development planning.

27. As an integral part of this research project, a technical meeting was held in Amman on 27 June 1993 to review the development performance of selected sectors of Jordan's main economic activities ranging from agriculture, to industry, to tourism, with a set of criteria pertinent to the concept of sustainable development, as well as to identify viable strategies that would result in environmentally sound, sustainable national development practices. The major research and training areas identified for further follow-up and investigation include: identification of key indicators for sustainability and monitoring systems, institutional arrangements for sustainable use of natural resources; economic dimensions of environmental planning and management; and organizational and procedural aspects of environmental impact assessment (EIA).<sup>8/</sup>

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<sup>7/</sup> For further details see: (i) Report on the technical meeting of the group of consultants participating in the project for strengthening environmental management and planning capabilities in Jordan (E/ESCWA/ENV/1993/10), Amman, 27 June 1993; and (ii) Draft final report of the National Workshop on Strengthening Management and Planning Capabilities for Environment in Jordan (E/ESCWA/ENV/1993/12 [in Arabic]), Amman, 8 December 1993.

<sup>8/</sup> Issues of indicators of sustainability, including EIA and the economics of sustainability, are planned for implementation by the secretariat for the period 1994-1995.

28. In this connection, it is worth noting that the Second Amman Declaration on Population and Development in the Arab World stated the following:

"Arab successful and continuous development depends on the levels of economic growth and social progress, including diversification of productive capacities and increasing rates of production through reliance on the optimal rational utilization of material and human resources, as well as the use of environmentally safe technology and the integration of environmental considerations in planning operations and economic policies with a view to improving the quality of life for the present generations, without jeopardizing the rights of future generations, as well as achieving equitable distribution, creating job opportunities and satisfying the basic material and moral needs of Arab men and women."<sup>9/</sup>

29. Future research activities of the secretariat on alternative options for sustainable development at the regional level should address questions such as:

(a) Selection of criteria in terms of economic viability, socio-political acceptability, and environmental soundness in relation to the regional development performance of ESCWA countries from the perspective of sustainable development;

(b) Ways and means of enhancing scientific information on ecological sustainability for integration in decisions for promoting sustainable regional development;

(c) What alternative organizational arrangements would be most flexible to allow regional comparative advantage for sustainable development, given uncertainties and regional variations in natural resources endowment.

### 30. Action

(a) The concept of sustainability should be adopted as the goal of national socio-economic development policy;

(b) National economic policies and decisions on investment should take full account of their impacts on natural resources and the environment;

(c) Environment impact assessment, environmental cost-benefit analysis and other related procedures should be made part of the decision-making process for development projects, transfer of technology, and regulatory measures;

(d) Incentives and disincentives should be introduced to ensure the rational use of natural resources, which constitute the capital on which development depends;

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<sup>9/</sup> See: Second Amman Declaration on Arab Population Conference (E/ESCWA/POP/1993/9), para. 10.

(e) The development of national indicators of sustainability should be instituted to monitor the path to sustainable development, resource conservation and environmental protection;

(f) National environmental institutions should be strengthened and should play a more active role in decision-making;

(g) National research and development capacities should be strengthened and should be directed to finding appropriate solutions to contemporary environmental problems and to keeping abreast of emerging environmental issues;

(h) Sustainability is for the people. Therefore, public awareness and participation should be accorded the highest priority in national development strategies.

E. Sustainable agriculture and rural development  
(Chapters 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 32 of Agenda 21)

31. The ESCWA region covers around 5 million square kilometres, of which 97 per cent is desert, the rest being arid and semi-arid zones. Furthermore, land resources in the region have been subject to varying degrees of degradation by different processes. Wind and water erosion are common. But the most serious land modification problems arise from excessive irrigation. Soil degradation has led in some cases to desertification. Though the ESCWA countries are predominantly arid and semi-arid, agricultural land has been lost to non-agricultural activities due to the lack of appropriate national land-use policies, rapid population growth and poverty.

32. Lack of regional cooperation for agricultural development to enhance region-wide comparative advantage, in addition to the deterioration of scarce land resources, is leading to an increase in regional food imports, consequently compounding efforts to eradicate rural poverty.

33. Activities undertaken to assist member countries to prepare for strategies for agricultural resource conservation and action plans to combat desertification include various technical reports, plans of actions, and capacity-building support.<sup>10/</sup>

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<sup>10/</sup> For further details see: "The national plan of action to combat desertification in the Sultanate of Oman" (E/ESCWA/AGR/1993/13); National plan of action to combat desertification in the United Arab Emirates (E/ESCWA/AGR/1993/16); Desertification Control Project: Integrated natural resource management for sustainable agricultural development in Bahrain" (E/ESCWA/AGR/1993/8); "Desertification control project in Yemen" (E/ESCWA/AGR/1993/15 [in Arabic]); "Rehabilitation of the agricultural sector in Lebanon: agricultural credit" (E/ESCWA/AGR/1993/4 [in Arabic]); "Rehabilitation of the agricultural sector in the occupied Palestinian territories" (E/ESCWA/AGR/1993/9 and E/ESCWA/AGR/1993/9/Add.1 and 2); Status of agricultural extension in Jordan and ways and means of developing it (E/ESCWA/AGR/1992/11); Status of agricultural extension in the Syrian Arab Republic and ways and means of developing it (E/ESCWA/AGR/1993/11).

34. Addressing the broader themes of rural development, the secretariat organized in cooperation with other regional organizations various symposia and expert group meetings to focus on the related issues of agricultural planning, farm management and sustainable agricultural development.<sup>11/</sup>

35. In addition to undertaking conceptual studies, the secretariat publishes Agriculture and Development in Western Asia; compiles and disseminates data and undertakes operational activities and group training.<sup>12/</sup>

36. Action

(a) Undertake activities aimed at improving food security; maintain a balance between population and the local carrying capacity of land through incentives and disincentives; formulate national land-use plans to eliminate any conflict in land use and optimize sustainability of agricultural land;

(b) Intensify efforts to rehabilitate degraded agricultural land and areas affected by desertification, as well as rehabilitate degraded rangeland

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<sup>11/</sup> For further details see: "Assessment of rural development policies and programmes in the Sultanate of Oman: lessons learned" (E/ESCWA/AGR/1993/3 [in Arabic]); "Assessment of rural development policies and programmes in Lebanon" (E/ESCWA/AGR/1993/7); "Assessment of rural development policies and programmes at the regional level: ESCWA countries" (E/ESCWA/AGR/1993/12 [in Arabic]) and Proceedings of the Expert Group Meeting on Assessment of Policies and Programmes of Rural Development in the ESCWA Countries (E/ESCWA/AGR/1993/14 [in Arabic]); National Training Workshop on Project Planning and Analysis (Muscat, 8-28 May 1992); National Training Workshop on Farm Management, Project Planning and Analysis (Beirut, 13-25 September 1993); Regional Training Workshop on Agricultural Policy Analysis (in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Regional Office for the Near East (RNEA), and the Institute of National Planning (INP) (Cairo, 14 November - 2 December 1992).

<sup>12/</sup> For further details see: Agriculture and Development in Western Asia, No. 14 (E/ESCWA/AGREB/XIV) and No. 15 (E/ESCWA/AGREB/XV); National Farm Data Handbook: Jordan (E/ESCWA/AGR/1993/2); "Study on trade in agricultural commodities in the region of Western Asia (E/ESCWA/AGR/1993/17) (in cooperation with FAO); National Training Workshop on the Use of Computers in Farm Management Survey, Data Processing and Project Analysis (Amman, 24 October-5 November 1992); Training Workshop on Planning and Appraisal of Agricultural and Rural Development Projects (Amman, 22-26 August 1993 and 21-25 November 1993, organized in cooperation with the Jordanian Cooperative Organization); Training Workshop on Planning and Appraisal of Agricultural and Rural Development Projects (Jerusalem, 26 July-12 August 1992: In response to ESCWA resolution 184 (XVI) of 2 September 1992 on the economic and social conditions of the Palestinian Arab people in the occupied Palestinian territories); and Third Arab Symposium on Planning and Development of Fisheries and Crustacea in the Arab World (Damascus, 9-12 May 1993, in cooperation with: FAO; the Arab Federation of Fish Producers, and the Syrian State Organization for Fisheries).

and improve its productivity. In this context, the secretariat will assist member countries in the preparation of resource conservation, management policies, strategies and national plans of action to combat desertification and in the formulation of specific desertification control projects in addition to promoting the establishment of a regional network on desertification;

(c) Adopt appropriate agricultural technologies to prevent land degradation and support national and regional efforts for the rehabilitation of the agricultural sectors of those ESCWA countries affected by wars and civil strife;

(d) Assess and evaluate rural development policies and programmes for capacity building to enhance rural development and sustainable agriculture;

(e) Exchange information and experience and conduct training to promote regional and subregional projects for sustainable agriculture and rural development.

F. Water resources management  
(Chapter 18 of Agenda 21)

37. The availability and quality of fresh water are of primary concern, especially vis-à-vis agricultural development in the region, which is the largest user of water in the ESCWA region. Though most surface water is used for irrigation, groundwater is of primary importance for most Gulf countries. However, water used for irrigation is for the most part used inefficiently due to inadequate irrigation technologies and excessive use of water, which is provided almost free or very heavily subsidized. This has led to waterlogging and salinization in many countries. Over-exploitation of groundwater resources in some areas has led to changes in the hydrological cycle and intrusion of saline water into aquifers along coastal areas of the Gulf. Because of the scarcity of fresh water, there has been a growing tendency in some countries to use water of marginal quality for irrigation. This could lead to negative environmental and health consequences (especially in the case of recycled municipal water). Apart from agriculture, the provision of safe drinking water for a growing population and for industry is posing marked challenges to several ESCWA countries.

38. The activities of ESCWA have focused on water resources assessment and management, regional cooperation and institutional and capacity building. In this context ESCWA, in cooperation with UNEP and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), is implementing a project for assessing water resources in the region using remote sensing techniques. The secretariat is also initiating the establishment of a regional water training network, as a mechanism for regional cooperation among existing institutions and organizations engaged in training and capacity building for sustainable water resources. Furthermore, ESCWA has put forward ideas for promoting a regional water resources council. Toward this end, it organized the Regional Symposium on Water Use and Conservation (held in Amman from 28 November to 2 December 1993), which provided a forum for government representatives and decision makers to elaborate on plans for the development, conservation, management and

utilization of water resources in the region, with a view to enhancing regional and global cooperation on water resources management.<sup>13/</sup>

39. Since the 1980s ESCWA has been paying particular attention to issues of:

(a) Water resources assessment to evaluate available and potential water resources; assessment of the prevailing hydrological and hydrogeological conditions and the environmental parameters of different water sources with special emphasis on protecting resources from contamination or pollution, and safe drinking-water quality. In this context, ESCWA implemented the first stage of a regional assessment of water resources (shared watersheds of Wadi Sirhan [Jordan/Saudi Arabia] and Wadi Bana [Yemen]);<sup>14/</sup>

(b) Water security, through public awareness measures and convening expert group meetings on the subject of water security in the region;<sup>15/</sup>

(c) Protection and enhancement of water quality, to augment current water supplies through utilization of treated wastewater from municipal, agricultural and industrial sources;<sup>16/</sup>

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<sup>13/</sup> For further details see: "Report on cooperation among ESCWA countries in the field of shared water resources" (E/ESCWA/17/4(Part I)/Add.3); "Report on the establishment of a regional committee on natural resources" (E/ESCWA/17/4(Part I)/Add.4); "Report on the progress achieved in the implementation of the Mar del Plata Action Plan" (E/ESCWA/17/4(Part I)/Add.5); Water resources planning, management, use and conservation in the ESCWA region (E/ESCWA/NR/1993/21); and Survey of water resources activities in the ESCWA region: 1992 (E/ESCWA/NR/1993/7).

<sup>14/</sup> The ESCWA/UNEP/IDB project on the assessment of water resources using remote-sensing techniques in the ESCWA region aims to improve the state of knowledge of water resources in the region. Its activities include interpretation of images with intensive computerized hydrological analysis. Regional maps will be produced to formulate options for the development and management of major water resources, and to formulate measures to combat desertification at the subregional level.

<sup>15/</sup> ESCWA organized the Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Water Security in the ESCWA Region, held in Damascus, from 13 to 16 November 1989. The Meeting urged member countries, inter alia, to develop, manage and utilize their national water resources in harmony with the environmental and sustainability concept;

<sup>16/</sup> ESCWA has carried out studies on wastewater reuse and its applications at the regional level. A study on desalination of brackish water ("Working paper on non-conventional water resources contribution to the alleviation of water scarcity in Western Asia [E/ESCWA/NR/89/WG.3/WP.4]) was implemented, with recommendations for member countries on ways and means of improving water quality and living conditions of rural populations, as well as of providing sufficient water supplies for sustainable agriculture and rural development.

(d) The phenomenon of seawater intrusion, particularly in the coastal areas of the ESCWA region. In this context, a project document is being prepared to initiate a pilot project to identify suitable technologies for specific areas to combat sea water intrusion in selected ESCWA countries, taking into consideration the potential impact of sea level rise due to climatic changes on freshwater resources in the coastal aquifers of the ESCWA region;<sup>17/</sup>

(e) Capacity-building initiatives to enhance member countries' efforts for integrated water resources management. In this area, the secretariat has initiated collection and compilation of data pertaining to water resources, including designing the structure and modules for an appropriate water database and application of software to realize a regional database for water resources.<sup>18/</sup>

40. In the area of human resources development, the secretariat convened the expert group meeting on Water Security in the ESCWA Region, held in Damascus from 13 to 16 November 1989, to, inter alia, improve manpower skills and capabilities in the field of water resources development (1989). Among the recommendations of this meeting was the establishment of a regional training network to harmonize curricula, fields of specialization, training and educational facilities within the region. The secretariat is taking measures to follow up on this and other recommendations.

41. Finally, issues of regional cooperation to promote sustainable water resources management are among the priorities of the ESCWA secretariat, particularly initiation of a mechanism for regional coordination in water resources management. ESCWA has successfully developed a mechanism for an annual coordination meeting of organizations active in the water sector, comprising: ESCWA; the UNESCO Regional Office for Science and Technology for the Arab States (ROSTAS); the Arab Centre for the Study of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD); the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO); and other regional Arab and United Nations bodies.<sup>19/</sup>

#### 42. Action

(a) Formulate national/regional strategies for the development of water resources. Such strategies would include: establishing inventories of water

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<sup>17/</sup> An overall assessment of sea water intrusion in the coastal areas of the region was undertaken by the secretariat.

<sup>18/</sup> See report "Planning and design of an ESCWA water resources database (EWDB)" (ESCWA/NR/1993/20).

<sup>19/</sup> The Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Water Security in the ESCWA Region (Damascus, 13-16 November 1989) called upon the ESCWA secretariat to initiate the establishment of a regional water council, under the auspices of the Commission. The envisaged council should include experts from within and outside the region concerned with water resources. In this spirit, ESCWA hosted the Regional Inter-agency Meeting on Coordination and Cooperation in the Water Sector (Amman, 28-30 July 1992).



resources; monitoring the state of such resources; and using appropriate water-budget models to ensure rational, non-excessive exploitation of resources;

(b) Institute environmental impact assessment and cost-benefit analysis as part of any water resources development activities;

(c) Formulate and implement legislation and sanctions such as pricing mechanisms, incentives and disincentives to ensure and encourage the efficient use of available water resources, especially in irrigation;

(d) Enhance public awareness about water scarcity and the necessity of rational use of water resources;

(e) Monitor groundwater quantity and quality. Emerging problems should be identified and dealt with in a timely fashion;

(f) Direct research and development at developing appropriate recycling of wastewater for use in irrigation or industry. The environmental and health aspects of such water reuse must be thoroughly evaluated;

(g) Establish joint programmes at the subregional and regional levels for education, training and research in water management, water-pollution control and wastewater recycling;

(h) Establish joint programmes, plans of action, and other mechanisms for promoting regional and subregional coordination and cooperation for appropriate management of shared surface water and groundwater resources.

G. Changing consumption and production patterns  
(Chapters 4 and 30 of Agenda 21)

43. The region is characterized by many flagrant contradictions, with varying environmental effects. In the affluent societies, excessive reliance on the State and the adoption of luxurious lifestyles contradicts the cultural and value heritage of the region, and is incompatible with sustainable development and aspirations for the future. In the case of societies with scarce resources, poverty and population increase will lend to further degradation of environment. The core of sustainable development involves supporting the framing of ecologically balanced and culturally viable development policies that reconcile development, conservation, and the rational, sustained use of natural resources, including policies for the transfer of safe and non-polluting technologies. The Arab Declaration on Environment and Development and Future Prospects pointed out the deterioration of the natural environment in the Arab region caused by the unsustainable development prevailing in the region. It further asserted that preservation of the environment will be achieved through combating the basic obstacles of poverty, ignorance and disease.<sup>20/</sup> Efforts to link environmental improvement and development should recognize local and global responsibilities.

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<sup>20/</sup> See: Arab Declaration on Environment and Development and Future Prospects (E/ESCWA/ENVHS/1992/1). The Declaration, as well as the Report of ESCWA on the Arab Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development (E/ESCWA/ENV/1992/1) (held in Cairo, 10-12 September 1991), was adopted for submission to UNCED.

44. Achieving the goals of sustainable development is linked to changing the unsustainable models of development prevalent in developed countries. According to a report, the modern industrial economy has led to unprecedented use of energy and raw materials and unprecedented generation of wastes. This is exacerbated by wasteful and inefficient patterns of consumption which have characterized past industrialization in developed countries, and which are being increasingly replicated worldwide.<sup>21/</sup> Over the past two decades, most ESCWA countries have pursued the strategy of long-term national development with emphasis on industrialization as a vehicle for rapid economic growth. Though this strategy has contributed to the broadening of the economic base, it has in many cases profoundly impacted the natural resource base and the environment of the region. Two groups of problems have become prominent. The first stems from the use of natural resources and mining and from industrial demand for land, water and energy. The second--and the most common--group of difficulties arise because of industrial wastes and by-products (liquid and solid) discharged into the environment, causing damage to both people and ecosystems.

45. ESCWA has initiated steps to introduce sustainable development goals in the implementation of its programmes, with the objective that the region as a whole embark on efforts to protect its natural resources, and to build up its human capital to obtain, now and in the future, an improved quality of life for its people. Environmental policy and strategy are inseparable from energy options strategy. The studies undertaken by ESCWA cover environmental inputs, which play a key role in decision-making in energy-related investment. The efforts of ESCWA to develop new and renewable sources of energy and promote energy efficiency and energy conservation are largely motivated by environmental concerns over both resource availability and pollution.<sup>22/</sup>

46. The region has witnessed over the last decade a remarkable expansion in industrial production capacity, especially in resource-based industries, such as petrochemicals, fertilizers, cement, textile and food industries. However, in the context of changing global and regional conditions to promote industrial production, ESCWA is promoting in its activities rehabilitation and modernization for cleaner production processes. Furthermore, ESCWA is providing assistance in building capacity, implementing international

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<sup>21/</sup> See the report of the Secretary-General of UNCED "Combating poverty, changing consumption patterns, and demographic dynamics and sustainability" (A/CONF.151/PC/100/Add.2) (Cf. chapters 2, 3, and 4 of Agenda 21 and para. 18 of A/CONF.151/PC/100/Add.2).

<sup>22/</sup> For further details see: "Report on the progress made in the implementation of the Nairobi Programme of Action for the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy during the last decade" (E/ESCWA/17/4(Part I)/Add.6); "Optimization of energy use in oil refining (case-studies of Al-Zarqa oil refinery, Jordan, and Aden oil refinery, Yemen) (E/ESCWA/ENR/1993/9); and Proceedings of the Interregional Symposium on Gas Development and Market Prospects by the Year 2000 and Beyond (E/ESCWA/ENR/1992/19)(Damascus, 20-26 June 1992).

conventions and protocols related to industrial development, and assessing the environmental soundness of industrial technologies.<sup>23/</sup>

47. Action

(a) Coordinate with international and regional organizations and assist member countries in formulating and implementing sustainable industrial strategies;

(b) Support member countries' efforts in capacity-building to develop, absorb and diffuse cleaner production processes and determining environmental soundness of industrial technologies;

(c) Make an analysis of current styles of nonsustainable industrial development in selected industries in the region;

(d) Facilitate the integration of environmental considerations into industrial development;

(e) Develop appropriate technologies, incentives and regulatory measures to maximize recycling and reuse of reclaimable industrial wastes;

(f) Orient research and development programmes towards the improvement of existing waste management technologies and the development of appropriate new technologies that are environmentally sound;

(g) Undertake a comprehensive study on the chemicals industries in the region, with the objective of proposing legislation/regulation for regional cooperation on chemical safety;

(h) Provide advice and assistance to improve the environmental management of existing industries in the region;

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<sup>23/</sup> For further details see the following: Assessment of environmental management of the General Establishment of Industries in Abu-Dhabi (E/ESCWA/ENV/1992/10 [in Arabic]); "Cleaner technology in Bahrain: an assessment study (E/ESCWA/ENV/1992/15). The study covers the following industries: aluminium, petroleum refining and petrochemicals; iron ore processing; food processing; cement manufacturing; plastic piping; paint formulation; ship maintenance and repairing; and the inorganic chemicals industry. "Environmental management in the Egyptian chemical industries: experience and prospects" (E/ESCWA/ENV/1993/4). The chemical industries covered include: detergents; match manufacturing; electroplating; textile finishing; leather tanning; pulp and paper manufacturing; nitrogen fertilizers; dyes and organic chemicals; tyres and inner-tube manufacturing; and the petroleum and petrochemicals industries. Environmental Management in the Industrial Cities of Saudi Arabia (Phase I: Riyadh Industrial Cities; and Phase II: Jeddah and Dammam Industrial Cities) (E/ESCWA/ENV/1993/6). The study covers 19 major industries in the Kingdom ranging from dairy industries to aluminium products.

(i) Promote public participation in the process of sustainable industrial management through local initiatives and partnerships between the public and private sectors.

H. Poverty, sustainable development and human well-being  
(Chapters 3, 7, 8, 9, 24, 27 of Agenda 21)

48. Economic and social factors are the root cause of environmental degradation. In this region, continuous political tension is draining resources toward armed conflicts, otherwise needed for socio-economic development. According to World Bank estimates, one third of the Arab countries' population is living under the poverty line (per capita annual income of less than \$420). While some of the actions called for in Agenda 21 have already been initiated and others are ready for joint programming, the issue of reducing poverty requires tremendous efforts for regional, inter-Arab, and global cooperation.

49. In combating poverty, Agenda 21 clearly refers to the issue as one of the causes and effects of environmental degradation and unsustainable management of resources. Treating poverty as a component of development/environment issues allows for the clarification of the intimate relationship between poverty and poor environment. Hence, solutions to the problems of poverty in the ESCWA region cannot be separated from efforts to improve environmental quality. Addressing this issue is among the priorities of ESCWA in post-UNCED period.

50. Despite considerable advances in dealing with social and health problems in some ESCWA countries, the environmental basis for further improving the situation is deteriorating. In several countries, inadequate shelter and basic amenities, rural underdevelopment, overcrowded cities and urban decay, lack of access to clean water, poor sanitation and other environmental deficiencies continue to cause widespread disease and death, ill health and intolerable living conditions. Poverty, malnutrition and ignorance compound these problems. As with poverty, a relationship exists between drug abuse and environmental degradation. In dealing with this problem, ESCWA proposed promoting regional cooperation and made recommendations to those member countries most affected for biennium 1992/1993, crop substitution and rehabilitation of affected areas.

51. During the biennium 1992/1993, ESCWA undertook studies and organized meetings and training workshops on social issues including: the population impact of labour movements associated with the Gulf crisis on the socio-economic profile of the most affected ESCWA countries; and unemployment in the region.<sup>24/</sup>

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<sup>24/</sup> For further details see: "Survey of social trends and indicators in the ESCWA region" (E/ESCWA/SD/1993/4); "Review of national policies and programmes for crime prevention and control in the ESCWA region" (E/ESCWA/SD/1992/11 [in Arabic]); "Review of national policies and programmes to combat drug abuse in the ESCWA region" (E/ESCWA/SD/1992/10 [in Arabic]); "Impact of drug abuse among youth in the ESCWA region: approaches to social

52. Action

(a) Public awareness of the significance of population planning for improving the quality of life should be strengthened;

(b) As part of preventive measures, public awareness in rural areas should be enhanced vis-à-vis environmental disease and the health risks of irrational use of agrochemicals;

(c) Public participation at all stages of planning, decision-making and management is necessary for achieving integration of the economic, social and environmental objectives of sustainable rural development. The role of women must be emphasized at all these stages;

(d) Environmentally sound urban planning should receive priority attention in urban renewal schemes and human settlements strategies;

(e) Accelerated efforts should be made to rehabilitate squatter settlements;

(f) Studies should be made to investigate the impact of the region's cultural endowment on current economic development models, including culturally-driven change in consumption patterns;

(g) Studies should be initiated to orient unemployed labour towards projects for public and community services including maintenance of resources;

(h) Youth should be encouraged to conquer desert and remote areas for settlements;

(i) An innovative approach is necessary to combat poverty, ignorance and disease in rural and random settlements as the main causes of environmental degradation in the region.

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reintegration" (E/ESCWA/SD/1993/3); "Assessment of the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons in the ESCWA region at the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons and agenda for future action" (E/ESCWA/SD/1992/13); "The introduction, adaptation and transfer of new, appropriate technologies for disabled persons in the ESCWA region" (E/ESCWA/SD/1992/5); "Marginalized youth groups and measures to promote their participation in development" (E/ESCWA/SD/1992/12); "Demographic and related socio-economic data sheets for countries of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, as assessed in 1992" (E/ESCWA/POP/1993/12); Proceedings of the Arab Population Conference (E/ESCWA/POP/1993/11); Expert Group Meeting on Unemployment in the ESCWA countries (Amman, 26-29 July 1993) and Expert Group Meeting on Human Development in the Arab world (Cairo, 6-9 December 1993), two expert group meetings organized by ESCWA in response to regional social issues as contained in Agenda 21; Arab Population Conference, Amman, 4-8 April 1993 in preparation for the World Population Conference to be held in Cairo in 1994; Environmentally Sustainable Shelter Techniques in Southern Arabia (E/ESCWA/HS/1993/2); Proceedings of the Symposium on Low-cost Housing in the Arab Region (E/ESCWA/HS/1993/4); "Shelter and public amenities in rapidly-changing urban areas: crisis housing" (E/ESCWA/HS/1993/3).

## I. Role of technologies in sustainable development

53. The role of technology in the sustainable development process, as reflected in Agenda 21, follows two paths: clean, safe and efficient technology to produce new goods able to reduce poverty; and new technology to minimize the environmental impact of current production systems. Furthermore, the issues addressed by the Vienna Conference on Science and Technology are still valid in the region. Therefore, building and strengthening the region's endogenous science and technology capabilities and infrastructure, together with improving the region's advantage in the technology transfer process, remain the priority of ESCWA. At the regional level, there is ambiguity with regard to policy measures and mechanisms to support research and development, and encourage technological change and innovations in basic and new technologies. Hence, ESCWA will continue addressing issues related to: technology assessment; linkages between the science and technology apparatus and the production and service sectors; challenges and opportunities created by new and advanced technologies; and the impact of international development on technology transfer.<sup>25/</sup>

### 54. Action

(a) Cooperate with international and regional organizations to assist member countries in the field of science and technology for development and promote cooperation among them;

(b) Conduct studies, and organize expert group meetings to formulate environmentally sound technology policies. Assist industrial enterprises in the acquisition and development of cleaner production technologies and processes and in the application of standards and quality control measures;

(c) Organize training courses for officials and personnel in the public and private sectors to develop technological capabilities in various aspects of technology policy, technology assessment, technology management and transfer of technology;

(d) Conduct studies, expert group meetings and training courses in cooperation with other concerned regional and United Nations bodies to study new and advanced technologies with a view to benefiting from the opportunities

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<sup>25/</sup> For further details see: "The integration of science and technology in the development planning and management process in the ESCWA region" (E/ESCWA/NR/1993/15); "The implications of new and advanced materials technologies for the development of the ESCWA countries" (E/ESCWA/ID/1992/16); Report on promotion of cooperation among ESCWA countries for the setting up of a centre for space science and technology education" (E/ESCWA/17/4(Part I)/Add.8). Related workshops, training and expert group meetings include: the High Level Workshop on the Implications of New and Advanced Materials Technologies for the Economies of ESCWA countries (Damascus, 21-24 September 1992); Workshop on Integration of Science and Technology in the Development Planning and Management Process (Amman, 27-30 September 1993); and Expert Group Meeting on the Substitution of Ozone-depleting Substances in the ESCWA Region (Amman, 1-2 December 1993).

created and challenges posed by these technologies in the field of informatics, micro-electronics, biotechnology, genetic engineering and new materials, for example;

(e) For existing industries and science and technology institutions, the secretariat will conduct advisory services and coordinate with UNIDO activities to rehabilitate and improve industrial efficiency, promote modernization, efficient utilization of raw materials, improvement of technical and managerial skills, standard and quality, employment opportunities and women participation;

(f) Conduct studies, seminars and meetings and provide advisory services for the establishment of industrial and science and technology support institutions, to develop entrepreneurs capabilities and promote the private sector, in particular small and medium sized enterprises with emphasis on technology and agro- based industries;

(g) Monitor and assess industrial development in the region and update the region's industrial information systems, utilizing regional and international systems and networks. Disseminate information and distribute publications on technology to fill the existing knowledge gap in science and technology in the region.

(h) Promote the responsible use of natural resources in the development of production activities that favour sustainable development. In particular, promote efficient energy use and the use of new and renewable energy sources.

#### J. ESCWA Environment Subprogramme

55. The ESCWA environment subprogramme seeks to realize the broad goals established in the medium-term plan. To achieve this goal, the activities undertaken are grouped into the following environmental agenda:

(a) Assisting target groups (legislative, planning and environmental organizations in the member countries) in setting priorities, building institutions, and implementing programmes for sound environmental stewardship;

(b) Ensuring that the programme of the Commission incorporates environmental impacts in its activities and projects;

(c) Assisting other substantive divisions in building the links between poverty reduction, environmental protection and sustainable development;

(d) Monitoring, analysing and reporting on regional and global environmental challenges through participation and reporting on major issues of Agenda 21.

56. To achieve the above, the environmental activities of ESCWA are divided according to the following framework:

##### 1. In-house coordination

57. In July 1993, just one year after UNCED, the Secretary-General approved the new structure of ESCWA, whereby an Environment Coordination Unit was

established within the Natural Resources Division.<sup>26/</sup> The Unit has a number of responsibilities, among them:

(a) Undertaking studies and surveys that allow the Commission to discharge its responsibilities in the environmental sphere;

(b) Reviewing the programmes of the Commission to ensure that all ESCWA projects address environmental considerations whenever appropriate;

(c) Providing advice and assistance in planning and implementing the Commission's activities on environment and monitoring the progress of such activities.

## 2. Cooperation outside ESCWA

58. As a regional Commission, ESCWA is entrusted with the main responsibility of proposing policies and actions to support development and further economic cooperation and integration in Western Asia, in collaboration and coordination with relevant national, regional and international bodies.<sup>27/</sup> As such, ESCWA is the natural focal point for cooperation in post-Rio follow-up to UNCED, including implementation of Agenda 21. On broader issues, ESCWA has cooperated with UNEP, the focal point for environment.

59. At the policy level, ESCWA has participated in the discussions of the United Nations system-wide medium-term environment programmes and other joint United Nations documents that have been coordinated by UNEP and others for submission to the Commission on Sustainable Development. At the working level, ESCWA has participated in meetings at the headquarters of UNEP in Nairobi and its Paris-based Industry and Environment Programme Activity Centre (IE/PAC) on numerous occasions, in addition to ongoing activities with the regional office of UNEP in Bahrain.

60. Cooperation with UNEP was close throughout the development of the ESCWA environment subprogramme. UNEP officials participated, inter alia, in the preparatory meetings to formulate the basic outline for documents presented to the Arab Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development (Cairo, 10-12 September 1991) in preparation for UNCED.

61. As far back as 1989, both UNEP and ESCWA renewed their commitment to developing environmental projects and suggested a number of areas of common interest. A memorandum of understanding was signed in 1990 to formalize joint implementation of four projects ranging from incorporating the environmental dimension into planning, to desertification, ozone-depletion and water resource management using remote-sensing technology.

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<sup>26/</sup> See Secretary-General's Bulletin ST/SGB/Organization, Section: ESCWA, 26 July 1993, p. 13.

<sup>27/</sup> For further details see Economic and Social Council resolution 1818 (LV) of 9 August 1973.



62. In keeping with its mandate, ESCWA has participated in work carried out by other United Nations bodies on achieving sustainable development. In addition to regular participation in the work of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), etc., ESCWA has increased its participation in various inter-agency coordination activities on specific sustainable development issues, including preparations of documents for the Commission on Sustainable Development.

3. Regional coordination for the implementation of Agenda 21

63. During the biennium 1992-1993, the Environment Coordination Unit followed up on the implementation of ESCWA resolution 165 (XV) to ensure that substantive discussions of the Commission take environmental considerations into account in the implementation of the work programme.<sup>28/</sup> Furthermore, having coordinated regional preparations for UNCED, including the adoption by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment of the Arab Declaration on Environment and Development and Future Prospects for submission to UNCED, the secretariat followed up on the programme implementation within ESCWA of priority areas listed in the Arab Declaration.<sup>29/</sup> The Unit also--in cooperation with regional Arab organizations concerned with environment and sustainable development--followed up post-Rio steps for a cooperative approach toward implementing regional components of Agenda 21.<sup>30/</sup>

64. In the context of para. 27 of General Assembly resolution 47/191 of 22 December 1992, the Commission adopted resolution 180 (XVI) stressing the need for the improvement of environmental management to achieve sustainable development as outlined in Agenda 21. The Commission, having endorsed the Arab Declaration on Environment and Development and Future Prospects, called for coordination and cooperation at the regional level for the implementation of Agenda 21, through the establishment of an Arab and international inter-agency mechanism to exemplify regional cooperation for sustainable development and the implementation of Agenda 21.

65. ESCWA, in cooperation with and with the approval of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment (CAMRE) and other regional organizations, established the Joint Committee on Environment and Development

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<sup>28/</sup> For further details see E/ESCWA/16/5/Suppl.1.

<sup>29/</sup> For further details see E/ESCWA/17/4(Part I)/Add.1.

<sup>30/</sup> In this context, ESCWA, in cooperation with the League of Arab States (CAMRE) and other regional organizations, participated in preparing technical documents for the assessment of Agenda 21 and in further steps required to initiate capacity-building efforts, including implementation of the Arab Programmes for Sustainable Development. For further details see E/ESCWA/ENV/1993/7, E/ESCWA/ENV/1993/8 and E/ESCWA/ENV/1993/9.

in the Arab Region (JCEDAR).<sup>31/</sup> JCEDAR includes all Arab countries represented by the League of Arab States (CAMRE), ESCWA, UNEP and other regional Arab organizations, and offers the comparative advantage of bringing together all Arab countries, and providing a regional forum for debate and for establishing an effective environmental cooperative policy for the implementation of Agenda 21.<sup>32/</sup>

66. Among the objectives of JCEDAR are:

(a) To use JCEDAR as a forum for constructive Arab regionwide debate, aimed at developing a regional Arab approach for the implementation of global/regional projects for environmental protection and sustainable development;<sup>33/</sup>

(b) To help maximize the advantage from international sectoral efforts for the preservation of natural resources and the protection of environment, including global and regional efforts to reduce poverty, which is causing environmental degradation;

(c) To promote Arab participation in regional and global initiatives to implement sustainable development policies and Agenda 21;

(d) To promote regional and inter-Arab coordination for capacity-building, and to promote implementation of joint activities to protect the environment and improve the quality of life.

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<sup>31/</sup> ESCWA hosted the meeting to establish JCEDAR in Amman, 7-8 April 1993. For further details see "Review and follow-up of UNCED" (E/ESCWA/ENV/1993/WG.1/3 [in Arabic]); and "Agenda 21 programme areas" (E/ESCWA/ENV/1993/WG.1/3[Suppl.1] [in Arabic]).

<sup>32/</sup> For further details see Report of the Executive Secretary to the Commission on regional cooperation and coordination in the field of environment and sustainable development (E/ESCWA/17/5/Add.2).

<sup>33/</sup> In October 1992 CAMRE adopted the following programmes for sustainable development in the Arab region: combating desertification and increasing the green area (chapter 12 of Agenda 21); combating industrial pollution (chapter 30 of Agenda 21); environmental education, awareness and information (chapter 36 of Agenda 21); marine environment and coastal areas (chapter 17 of Agenda 21); development and rational use of water resources (chapter 18 of Agenda 21); sustainable development of nomadic areas (chapters 12 and 26 of Agenda 21); human settlements (chapter 7 of Agenda 21); institutional development and support (chapter 37 of Agenda 21); environmental information network (chapter 40 of Agenda 21); human resources development (chapters 34-36 of Agenda 21) conservation of biodiversity (chapters 15-16 of Agenda 21); and development of environmentally sound technologies (chapters 34 and 35 of Agenda 21). For further details see UNEP/League of Arab States/CAMRE: The Arab Programmes for Sustainable Development.

67. In line with the Arab Declaration on Environment and Development and Future Prospects, and also chapter 40 of Agenda 21, ESCWA introduced an activity to compile information on the natural resource base of the region, as well as indicators for the state of the environment, in its environment subprogramme activities for the biennium 1992-1993.<sup>34/</sup> This activity is a component of a regionwide activity also initiated by JCEDAR for the biennium 1994-1995 to start networking initiatives to build an environmental information system for policy makers in the region. JCEDAR, in its third meeting (Cairo, April 1994), elaborated on these initiatives and agreed on further steps to promote environmental information networking in the Arab region.

68. Promotion of responsible sustainable rural and agricultural development is another major activity of JCEDAR for the biennium 1994-1995. In this regard, ESCWA as a core and founding member is entrusted, in cooperation with FAO and other regional Arab organizations, to prepare technical reports for the forthcoming ministerial-level Arab Conference on Rural and Agricultural Development (1995).

69. In addition to the newly established JCEDAR, ESCWA has served as a forum for regional cooperation and coordination among its member countries in dealing with issues of environment and sustainable development since late 1970s. The practical experience of ESCWA in providing technical assistance in the fields of natural resources, energy, industry, science and technology, and economic development and integration is a useful basis for collaboration in the protection of the regional environment and in capacity-building for the implementation of Agenda 21.

K. Resource requirements for the implementation of Agenda 21 in the Arab region

70. Subsequent to UNCED and pursuant to General Assembly resolution 47/191, ESCWA could, inter alia, promote the implementation of the Rio agreements, in particular Agenda 21.

71. Activities undertaken by ESCWA have a number of unique advantages that could serve the needs of the region and the Arab countries that are members of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). Since the region has many features that bind its countries together, there are a number of opportunities for cooperative responses to an array of challenges. In this context, ESCWA, in cooperation with the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment (CAMRE), UNDP, UNEP and other sectoral Arab organizations, supports the implementation of the following Arab programmes for sustainable development:

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<sup>34/</sup> For further details see "Compilation and computerization of a database on environment" (E/ESCWA/ENV/1993/11 [in Arabic]). The technical annex of this report includes 29 tables and 18 figures on various socio-economic and environmental indicators pertaining to Jordan as a case-study for the region.

- (a) Programme for combating desertification and increasing the green area (chapter 12 of Agenda 21);
- (b) Programme for combating industrial pollution (chapter 30 of Agenda 21);
- (c) Programme for environmental education, awareness and information (chapter 36 of Agenda 21);
- (d) Programme for marine environment and coastal areas (chapter 17, sections A-F of Agenda 21);
- (e) Programme for development and rational use of water resources (chapter 18, sections A-F of Agenda 21);
- (f) Programme for sustainable development of nomadic areas (chapters 12 and 26 of Agenda 21);
- (g) Programme for human settlements (chapter 7 of Agenda 21);
- (h) Programme for institutional development and support (chapter 37 of Agenda 21);
- (i) Programme for the establishment of a network of environmental information (chapter 40 of Agenda 21);
- (j) Programme for human resources development (chapters 34, 35 and 36 of Agenda 21);
- (k) Programme for conservation of biodiversity (chapters 15 and 16 of Agenda 21);
- (l) Programme for development of environmentally sound technologies (chapters 34 and 35 of Agenda 21).

72. Another major challenge is to make use of the natural resources of the countries of ESCWA region in ways that would maximize its contribution to equitable development while preserving the resource base for sustainable development.

73. The implementation of Agenda 21, including new concepts of sustainability and sectoral policies with regard to research, training, planning and resource conservation--particularly for more efficient use of natural resources in the ESCWA region--continues to be a pressing need in all countries of the region.

74. Because of the comparative advantage afforded by its functions and programmes, ESCWA is in a privileged position to cooperate with UNDP, UNEP, and the League of Arab States (Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment) in implementing regional sustainable development programmes in the Arab region, as well as to act upon any recommended courses of action by the Commission on Sustainable Development.

75. These tasks demand the mobilization of new and additional financial resources, in order to accelerate sustainable development in the Arab region. Regarding programme activities for the biennium 1994-1995, additional resources are requested to implement the following:

(a) Compilation of information available on the natural resource base of the ESCWA countries, as well as sustainability indicators of the state of the environment (\$50,000);

(b) Regional coordination for mutual technical and institutional assistance for the establishment of environmental information for decision makers in the region (\$100,000);

(c) Establishing criteria in terms of economic viability and socio-political acceptability pertinent to the regional development performance of ESCWA countries from the perspective of sustainable development (\$30,000);

(d) Support for regional priority projects (in line with Agenda 21) approved by CAMRE and UNEP, namely:

(i) Combating desertification and increasing the green areas in the Arab region;

(ii) Environmental management of industrial development at national and regional levels;

(iii) Environmental awareness, education and information.

76. Components of these ongoing projects are included in the ESCWA programme of work for the medium-term plan (1992-1997). However, an additional \$300,000 is required to accelerate regional implementation of projects on desertification, industrial pollution, and environmental awareness and information.

