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**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION**

**FOLLOW-UP TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED
BY THE COMMISSION AT ITS TWENTY-SECOND SESSION**

*Cooperation between ESCWA member countries with respect to shared water resources
and the Arab network for the integrated management of water resources:
resolution 244 (XXII)*

Summary

At its twenty-second session, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) adopted resolution 244 (XXII) dated 17 April 2003 concerning cooperation between ESCWA member countries with respect to shared water resources and the Arab network for the integrated management of water resources.

Pursuant to the various paragraphs of that resolution, the secretariat undertook a range of activities as part of its aim to encourage member countries to complete their approval of memorandums of understanding relating to bilateral cooperation projects on shared water resources and to support projects that will lead to the final establishment of the Arab network for the integrated management of water resources.

This report contains a brief outline of the measures that have been taken by the secretariat pursuant to resolution 244 (XXII) concerning cooperation between ESCWA member countries with respect to water resources and the establishment of the Arab network for the integrated management of water resources.

I. MEASURES TAKEN BY MEMBER COUNTRIES WITH RESPECT TO THE MEMORANDUMS OF UNDERSTANDING ON SHARED WATER RESOURCE BILATERAL COOPERATION PROJECTS

1. With respect to the basalt aquifer shared by Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, in 2004 the two Governments reached agreement on a final version of a memorandum of understanding, which they will sign once the financial resources necessary to implement its articles are available.
2. In regard to Al-Kabeer Al-Janoubi river, shared by Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, the two States have taken steps to activate the agreement that was signed on 20 April 2002 concerning the management of that river. The relevant measures that have been taken include the following:
 - (a) Field visits to the catchment basin of the river organized by the Ministry of Irrigation of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Lebanese Ministry of Energy and Water;
 - (b) Many meetings between the two parties, held with a view to identifying the technical assistance required in order to strengthen and uphold the agreement that both have signed and expand the scope of shared water resource-related activity;
 - (c) Identification by the specialized authorities in both countries of their needs with respect to implementation of the agreement. In that context, they have asked ESCWA to provide technical assistance in preparing four studies on the correct bases for applying the principles of integrated water resource management in the basin and in training staff employed in the basin in the settlement of disputes over shared water resources.
3. As for the alluvial aquifer shared by Oman and the United Arab Emirates, there is in principle a move towards coordination between the two countries with a view to joint management of that resource.

II. MEASURES TAKEN BY ESCWA WITH A VIEW TO ESTABLISHING THE ARAB NETWORK FOR THE INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF WATER RESOURCES AND ACTIVATING ITS OPERATION

4. Subsequent to the adoption of resolution 244 (XXII), ESCWA began to take the necessary measures for the establishment of the Arab network for the integrated management of water resources, with a view to strengthening regional cooperation between the various national parties in each country of the region with respect to the integrated management of water resources (IWRM).
5. Set forth below are the most significant activities undertaken by ESCWA as part of the process of establishing the Arab network and activating its operation:
 - (a) The formulation of the network institutional framework and bylaws;
 - (b) The identification of the scientific institutes and bodies involved in IWRM and urging them to join the network;
 - (c) The evaluation of the training and capacity-building needs of the various relevant sectors of the countries of the region, namely, technical staff, decision-makers and academics.
6. ESCWA also established an electronic site devoted to the network, with a view to facilitating effective communication between stakeholders and access to information on the network and its members and planned activities. The site is updated regularly and is available at: <http://www/cap.net.org/ShowNetworkDetail.php?NetworkID=3>.
7. In cooperation with the German Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources, ESCWA produced a training manual on the application of IWRM methods in the ESCWA region, which covers

technical, social, economic, institutional and legal aspects and dimensions related to the eradication of poverty and the participation of women. As one way of distributing this manual, ESCWA organized capacity-building training workshops and a Briefing of High Level Officials on the Application of IWRM, which was held in Beirut on 13 September 2004 and was attended by representatives of regional ministries of water, environment and agriculture.

8. In cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Water Education and the Arabian Gulf University in Bahrain, ESCWA organized several workshops concerned with the activation of the network, including a workshop on knowledge mapping for IWRM, which was held in Cairo from 5 to 8 May 2003. A further workshop was held in December 2003, the aim of which was to train two network member experts who had been given the task of preparing to train all other members in IWRM. Another workshop, on identifying IWRM training needs, was held for network members in Bahrain from 10 to 12 February 2004.

III. ESCWA ACTIVITIES RELATED TO SHARED WATER RESOURCES

9. The focus in ESCWA activities related to shared water resources was on assisting member countries in building their capacities in respect of negotiating skills and the resolution of disputes over the management of shared water resources. In 2004, ESCWA held three training courses in that field for Lebanese, Palestinian and Syrian officials.

10. ESCWA prepared two studies on shared groundwater in Iraq and Yemen, with a view to emphasizing the need for member countries to cooperate in the management of shared groundwater aquifers. It also prepared a manual on the settlement of disputes over internationally shared water resources and distributed it to member countries.

11. ESCWA has ensured that its programme of work for the biennium 2006-2007* and, in particular, the subprogramme concerned with integrated policies for the management of regional resources for sustainable development, contains activities linked to follow-up of implementation of resolution 244 (XXII). The document cited contains a review of the activities that will be implemented by ESCWA as part of that subprogramme.

* ESCWA, *Draft programme of work for the biennium 2006-2007*, document submitted to the twenty-third ESCWA session, Damascus, 9-12 May 2005, E/ESCWA/23/7, Subprogramme 1.

