



UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

UN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
FOR WESTERN ASIA
9 SEP 1981
LIBRARY



Distr.
GENERAL
E/ECWA/129
13 April 1981

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

Eighth session
3-7 May 1981
Sana'a, Yemen

Item 6(b) of the provisional agenda

Follow-up action on the resolutions of the Commission

(Note of the Executive Secretary)

1. At its sixth session, the Commission adopted, inter alia, resolution 74(VI), and at its seventh session, it adopted resolutions 77(VII) to 87(VII). The following is a summary presentation of the action that was taken in the implementation of these resolutions.

Resolution 74(VI): Assistance to member countries in the field of development finance and administration

2. Pursuant to this resolution, the secretariat of the Commission carried out a survey to assess and evaluate the state of development finance in the countries of the region. The survey, which was conducted in collaboration with the United Nations Department of Technical Co-operation for Development, covered eight selected ECWA member countries, namely Democratic Yemen, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. The objective of the survey was to ascertain the technical capabilities and needs of member countries in various aspects of financial management and the extent to which assistance could appropriately be provided at both national and regional levels.

3. In accordance with the provisions of paragraph 2 of the resolution, copies of the survey report will be sent to the member countries concerned for their consideration and action. Similarly, in accordance with paragraph 3 of the resolution, the report will also be brought to the attention of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which will at the same time be urged to participate actively in the sponsoring and financing of programmes designed to improve the state of financial management in the countries of the ECWA region. In this connexion, the secretariat has been actively involved in the consultations and discussions with UNDP and the Arab Monetary Fund regarding the possible establishment in Abu Dhabi of an Arab Institute of Finance and Banking. The above-mentioned survey constitutes an input in preparation for the establishment of the Institute.

Resolution 77(VII): Assistance in the reconstruction of Lebanon

4. This resolution requests the Executive Secretary to "co-operate with the United Nations Co-ordinator and with the Development and Reconstruction Council in Lebanon in the study and implementation of projects for the reconstruction of Lebanon". It also recommends establishing a programme to cover this co-operation.

5. Within the context of this resolution and at the request of the Minister of Social Affairs, ECWA prepared a study identifying urgent development projects in South Lebanon. Copies of this study were provided to the United Nations Co-ordinator, and to the Council for Reconstruction and Development (CDR) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Furthermore, ECWA is revising and updating its study on a housing policy for Lebanon which had been prepared earlier.

6. Several meetings were held between the Executive Secretary of ECWA and senior government officials, as well as the United Nations Co-ordinator and the UNDP Resident Representative to discuss modalities for initiating a programme for the assistance and reconstruction of Lebanon. Moreover, ECWA has been actively participating in the United Nations Joint Co-ordinating Committee convened by the Co-ordinator with a view to devising such a programme and to mobilizing resources for its support. Within this framework, a Technical Support Group (TSG) which is to work closely with CDR, has been established. The TSG would be able to draw on expertise available in the United Nations system.

7. The envisaged role of the TSG is to help in:

(a) The evaluation and execution of reconstruction and rehabilitation programmes;

(b) Long and medium-term planning;

(c) The reinforcement of government capacity to plan and execute plans through,

inter alia, administration reform and in-service training.

Resolution 79(VII): Strengthening of the Financial Contributions Account of the Economic Commission for Western Asia

8. The implementation of this resolution will be considered under item 9(b) of the provisional agenda. Document E/ECWA/117/Add.1 refers to this.

Resolution 80(VII): The restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations

9. The implementation of this resolution will be considered under item 14 of the provisional agenda. Document E/ECWA/125 refers to this.

Resolution 81(VII): Inclusion of a programme on the environment in the work programme of the Economic Commission for Western Asia

10. The establishment of an environment programme, starting in 1984, will be considered within the context of the preparations for the Medium-term Plan for the period 1984-1989. As a follow-up to resolution 84(VII), the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Expert Committee on the Medium-term Plan established by the Commission will be convened from 13 to 17 April 1981 at Beirut. This Committee will consider, along with other priority and Medium-term Plan proposals, the establishment of an environment programme.

Resolution 82(VII): Programme of Action in Agrarian Reform and Rural Development for the ECWA region

11. In response to paragraph 2 of the above resolution, the following steps were taken:

(a) The Programme of Action was submitted to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), which promised its support for the implementation of the Programme. In the context of FAO support to the Food and Agriculture Programme operated by the secretariat's Joint ECWA/FAO Agriculture Division, a sum of \$ 77,000 has been earmarked in the programme budget 1982-1983 for the follow-up to the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD). This amount will be utilized for consultancy services in pursuance of the ECWA Programme of Action;

(b) The Programme of Action has been taken into account as far as possible in the preparation of the 1982-1983 programme budget.

12. With regard to paragraph 3 of the resolution, the secretariat has not received any specific contributions from member States for the implementation of the Programme of Action. In this connexion, the secretariat continued to undertake activities in the field of rural development which are directly related to its work programme and to the Programme of Action. Since the adoption of the Programme, it has completed two studies, one on social factors affecting the co-operative movement in selected countries of the ECWA region, and the other on the situation and prospects of integrated rural development programmes in selected countries of the region. During September 1980, two training workshops were held, (a) a regional workshop at Amman, Jordan, on the role of communications in integrated rural development, and (b) a national workshop at Aden on the role of women in integrated rural development and co-operatives. ECWA further participated in a High-level Mission on Rural Development to Yemen, organized by FAO headquarters and in the preparation of the Mission's final report. It also participated in the Regional Training Course for Women Leaders Responsible for Women's Education in Rural Areas, organized by the UNESCO Regional Office for Education in the Arab States.

Resolution 83(VII): Establishment of a Regional Water Resources Council

13. The question of the establishment of a regional water resources council was first raised at the Regional Preparatory Meeting (Baghdad, 11-16 December 1976) for the United Nations Water Conference (Mar del Plata, Argentina, 14-25 March 1977). In order to promote regional co-operation among ECWA member States in the field of water resources development and management, the Baghdad meeting recommended, inter alia, that a water resources council for Western Asia should be established and should be composed of one representative from each of the ECWA member countries.
14. In the follow-up to the relevant resolution of the United Nations Water Conference, the United Nations Economic and Social Council called upon the regional commissions to expand their activities in the water sector and assign specific responsibilities to an intergovernmental committee. It further recommended that the activities of the United Nations organizations and specialized agencies undertaken on the basis of the respective regional programmes be co-ordinated at the regional level through existing institutional mechanisms or those to be established, for the purpose of strengthening their role in that area. It also requested the regional commissions that had not already done so to take the necessary steps to establish an appropriate intergovernmental mechanism as soon as possible.
15. At its fourth session (Amman, 24-29 April 1977), the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to take the initiative in contacting all member States, in order to ascertain which of them were in favour of the establishment of a regional water resources council. The Commission also called upon the secretariat of ECWA to serve as the secretariat of the council, in the event of its establishment (resolution 39(IV)).
16. At the Second ECWA Regional Water Meeting (Riyadh, 30 December 1978 - 3 January 1979), it was decided that an ad hoc intergovernmental committee composed of representatives of five member countries be established, with ECWA working as its secretariat, to study further the possibility of establishing a regional water resources council. This Intergovernmental Committee recommended that the responsibilities of the council, in the event of its establishment, be limited to the tasks of co-ordinating and complementing the activities of existing regional organizations dealing with water resources in the region.

17. The recommendation of the Intergovernmental Committee was submitted to the Commission at its seventh session (Baghdad, 19-23 April 1980), together with a document on the question prepared by the ECWA secretariat and containing three alternative proposals concerning the mandate and terms of reference of the proposed council. As a result, the Commission adopted resolution 83(VII).

18. The ECWA secretariat assessed the financial implications of the resolution, in accordance with paragraph 2(a). These were indicated in an explanatory note on the subject sent to member States on 21 November 1980: total staff costs were estimated at \$ 141,000. As for the other costs (offices and equipment, etc.), they would be borne by the ECWA secretariat at the initial take-off stage, after which the Council would develop into a fully autonomous intergovernmental mechanism with its own secretariat support.

19. The Executive Secretary contacted the member States, inquiring about their willingness to join the Council and the possibility of their providing support to enable the ECWA secretariat to provide adequate secretarial services to the Council. Arab regional funding agencies, namely the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, were also contacted for financial support.

20. Four member States have so far responded to the Executive Secretary's enquiry:

(a) The Government of the Republic of Lebanon indicated its willingness to participate in the proposed board of representatives of the Council and nominated its representative to that board, and informed the ECWA secretariat of its readiness to bear its share of the annual financial requirements of the Council;

(b) The Government of the Republic of Iraq informed the ECWA secretariat of its willingness to participate in the Council in the event of its establishment;

(c) The Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan indicated its willingness to participate as a member of the Council; it also requested an estimate of the financial obligations which would result from its establishment;

(d) The Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia informed the ECWA secretariat that it was not agreeable to the establishment of the Council.

21. The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development informed ECWA of its readiness to co-operate with the proposed Council by providing any pertinent information regarding the water-related projects financed by the Fund.

22. The Executive Secretary is still awaiting the responses of the other member States, as well as that of the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD).

Resolution 84(VII): Formation of an intergovernmental expert committee on the
Medium-term Plan

23. The Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Expert Committee on the Medium-term Plan, established by resolution 84(VII), will be convened from 13 to 17 April 1981 at Beirut. The invitations for the meeting of this Committee were sent to member States in early February. The provisional agenda's main items include (a) programme priorities for the period 1984-1989, (b) the Medium-term Plan for the period 1984-1989, and (c) institutional arrangements for the implementation of work programmes. The recommendations of the Committee will be submitted to the Commission at its ninth session in 1982.

Resolution 85(VII): Census of the Palestinian Arab People

24. The Economic Commission for Western Asia, having considered the progress made in carrying out the projected census of the Palestinian Arab people at its seventh session, requested the Executive Secretary to pursue the necessary measures for the completion of the project on the census and to submit a progress report on this project.

25. Some of those countries in the region in which there are large numbers of Palestinians have announced that they would conduct comprehensive population surveys before 1982. The secretariat of the Commission has made a particular effort to obtain information on the numbers and demographic characteristics of the Palestinians from the censuses of those countries, since the data obtained by them are such as to be compatible with the basic tables drawn up by the secretariat. The countries in question are Jordan, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Syria.

26. Field work has been completed in Jordan (November 1979), Kuwait (April 1980) and the United Arab Emirates (December 1980). Syria has announced the postponement of its census from September 1980 to September 1981. The head of the delegation of Jordan to the seventh session indicated that his government would co-operate with the Commission in this field. Contacts made by the Commission, either directly or in co-operation with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, with responsible officials in Jordan, the United Arab Emirates and Syria have been encouraging. In spite of that fact, none of the countries which have completed field work have yet published the detailed findings of their censuses and the secretariat is continuing its contacts with those countries with a view to obtaining the required data.

27. On the basis of available estimates it is believed that those Palestinians (as defined for the purposes of this census) in these four countries make up about 65 per cent of the total number residing outside Palestine, that is to say about 35 per cent of all Palestinians. When the data required for this purpose are obtained from the four countries in question a large and important part of the project will have been completed.

28. As for the remainder of those Palestinians residing outside Palestine, who are believed to make up about 35 per cent of the total number of such Palestinians, most of them are to be found in Arab countries which have not yet set a data for their upcoming censuses. Their number can be computed with the co-operation of the Palestine National Fund, given the availability of allocations for that purpose, and with the close co-operation of the host countries and their provision of all the facilities for that purpose. Clearly, a census of Palestinians in these countries will require field-work and other technical operations which will require, in addition to the co-operation of statistical agencies, the allocation of appropriate financing.

29. The secretariat of the Commission has been active in implementing the project in close co-operation with the Palestine Liberation Organization. Co-operation and co-ordination with the Organization, represented by the Palestine National Fund, became an urgent necessity after the Fund received financial and technical assistance from the United Nations Fund for Population Activities in order to strengthen its capacities in the field of demographic information on the Palestinians. The secretariat has endeavoured by means of such co-operation to set up the structure which has facilitated a great number of matters connected with the project, in particular the gathering of information in the various countries.

30. The difficulties facing the census of the Palestinian Arab people are without parallel. This is perhaps the first time that a census is being conducted of a people the majority of whom reside outside their homeland. As for those who do reside there, access to them in order to include them in the census is impossible since none of them is subject to Palestinian legislative authority. The difficulty of the census is increased by the fact that great numbers of Palestinians have acquired another nationality and some of them have changed nationality more than once. There is also the rapid and continuous movement of most Palestinians, creating practical difficulties for some Arab countries in supplying the required data.

31. This project is, in essence, one of a long-term nature whose completion depends, for the most part, on the co-operation of the governments concerned whether in gathering data on the Palestinians for the purposes of the census or in facilitating access to data already available to them.

Resolution 86(VII): The economic and social situation and potential of the
Palestinian Arab people

32. In compliance with paragraph 2 of this resolution, the Executive Secretary made the necessary arrangements to allot \$ 100,000 from the Financial Contributions Account, in addition to the amount of \$ 50,000 available under the ECWA regular budget, so as to provide the full amount needed for the completion of the study.

33. As regards paragraph 3, concerning progress made in the preparation of the study, the Executive Secretary took immediate steps after the adoption of this resolution to sub-contract the study to a consultancy firm; for that purpose, several contacts were established with potential firms, and the Centre for Arab Unity Studies was finally selected to undertake this study.

34. In view of the requirements of United Nations rules and regulations, the contract with the Centre had to be submitted to the United Nations Contracts Committee for approval before work could start on the study. This procedure took considerable time, efforts and negotiations before the final agreement of the Committee on the terms of the proposed contract was obtained. Unfortunately, the delay in this necessary course of action, in addition to certain conditions which the Centre could not waive, has made it impossible for the Centre to agree to undertake it.

35. As a result of this unsuccessful attempt, ECWA renewed its efforts to find another possible sub-contractor. It succeeded in engaging TEAM International (Engineering and Management Consultants) to carry out this study. TEAM has initiated action to that effect.

36. ECWA has been in close contact with the Palestine Liberation Organization regarding the above action.

Resolution 87(VII): International Year of Disabled Persons

37. Document E/ECWA/119 refers to the implementation of this resolution.