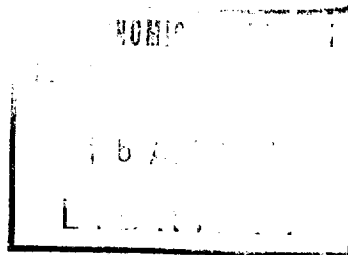




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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

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Item 6 of the provisional agenda

RETROSPECT AND PERSPECTIVE OF THE COMMISSION'S WORK

Note by the Executive Secretary

83-0318

1. On the occasion of the tenth session of the Commission, which is also the first annual meeting held at the Commission's permanent premises, the secretariat considers it opportune to reflect briefly on its role in the process of region-wide co-operation during the past and the coming ten years.
2. During the past decade of its existence the Economic Commission for Western Asia took the first steps towards its ultimate objective of becoming a centre for region-wide economic co-operation within the framework of the United Nations system. It has provided ECWA Governments with a systematic, institutionalized opportunity to work together and to seek practical solutions to common problems of a technical, economic and social nature.
3. The secretariat considers that it has achieved modest progress in its efforts towards: promoting a regional perspective of development and a close relationship with the other developing regions and the international community; deepening awareness - through its various research studies, publications and technical meetings - of the major economic and social challenges facing the region; assisting researchers by making available to them a wealth of quantitative and qualitative information which would have otherwise been beyond their reach; involving the countries in the region in various international negotiation efforts; and helping to put across to the international community the region's conception of the problem of concern to it and to the developing countries.
4. Now at the beginning of the next ten years the secretariat considers it appropriate to submit to the member States for discussion and review some of the main factors which are expected to enhance the Commission's role as a region-wide instrument for co-operation and integration, in line with General Assembly resolution 32/197 on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system.

5. These main factors concern: (a) issues determining and facilitating the functioning of the Commission's secretariat; (b) the functioning of the Commission's policy-formulating **structure** and the secretariat's related methods of work and practices; (c) the involvement of Governments in the activities of the Commission and (d) the co-operation between the Commission and other inter-governmental bodies working at the regional level.

Functioning of the secretariat

Composition of the secretariat

6. The secretariat, placed at the disposal of the Commission by the United Nations, prepares for and services the meetings of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies; carries out research on economic problems of the ECWA region; prepares studies and reports requested by the Commission; maintains contacts with ECWA Governments; contributes as required to the studies and operational work undertaken by the United Nations on a world-wide scale; co-operates with the secretariats of other regional commissions, as well as with the secretariats of inter-governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations on problems relating to the Commission's programme of work.

7. Article II of the Commission's terms of reference specifies that "the Secretary-General of the United Nations shall appoint the staff of the Commission, which shall form part of the Secretariat of the United Nations". Appointment of staff is consequently governed by the rules and procedures laid down by the United Nations Secretariat in line with pertinent resolutions of the General Assembly. Thus, recruitment of ECWA secretariat staff is based on the principle of equitable geographical distribution. To achieve this objective, the General Assembly has established a system of desirable ranges for member States as a guide-line for the geographical distribution for a group of staff in "posts subject to geographical distribution". Most of the posts of the ECWA secretariat fall within this category. The representation of member States in posts subject to geographical distribution is assessed in

relationship to the desirable ranges calculated for each State at their mid-points. On this basis, each member State falls in one of the following categories: unrepresented; under-represented; adequately represented or over-represented.

8. The representation in the secretariat of ECWA member States was as at 30 June 1982 as follows:

<u>Unrepresented:</u>	Bahrain
	Kuwait
	Qatar
<u>Under-represented:</u>	Democratic Yemen
	Oman
	Saudi Arabia
	United Arab Emirates
	Yemen
<u>Over-represented:</u>	Egypt
	Iraq
	Jordan
	Lebanon
	Syrian Arab Republic

9. The above picture, coupled with unsuccessful efforts to recruit nationals from un-and-under-represented nations, has become a serious obstacle to appointing staff for the ECWA secretariat. The geographical distribution requirement is hence the main contributing factor to the present high vacancy rate within the ECWA secretariat. As of 1 April 1983 this rate was 35 per cent for authorized regular and extrabudgetary posts for the year 1983.

10. The secretariat considers that this situation, which affects considerably the implementation of the work programme as well as the administrative support required for the operations of the Commission, warrants the attention of member States. The secretariat believes that temporary solutions could be found until the geographical distribution requirements can be fully met by bringing all member States within the desirable range.

Administrative and programme information
requirements of the secretariat

11. In line with ECNA's terms of reference and pursuant to the programmes of work adopted by the Commission, the secretariat carries out research on the economic and social situation and problems in the ECNA region and undertakes studies and investigations which are required for the implementation of the Commission's operational tasks. In carrying out its responsibility in this regard, the secretariat relies heavily on field information provided by Governments of member States and institutions in the region through either direct field missions or questionnaires. Obviously, the secretariat will need the maximum co-operation of member States for completion of assigned tasks mandated to be undertaken by the secretariat by the same Government. Difficulties faced in access to country and regional data (quantitative and qualitative) have in the past impeded the secretariat's completion of work programmes.

12. The secretariat is also of the opinion that at both the administrative and the organizational level, the co-operation of member States could, somewhat, be intensified so that the limited resources available to the secretariat can be used more effectively. In this connection, member States may wish to consider appointing representatives, preferably at the ambassadorial level, as permanent representatives to the Commission. The secretariat is of the opinion that the system of permanent representatives which is adopted in other regional commissions would facilitate the functioning of the Commission. It would further facilitate the work of the Standing Committee established under resolution 114(IX). The secretariat will be actively pursuing the implementation of this resolution.

Policy-making structure: subsidiary organs

13. During the past decade the methods of work used in the Economic Commission for Western Asia centred around the one-level programme formulating system anchored in the annual sessions of the Commission, which reviewed and adopted the programmes of work proposed by the secretariat. However, with the establishment of the Standing Committee for the Programme as the Commission's main subsidiary organ, and which is meeting concurrently with this meeting, a two-level system of decision-making and programme policy-formulation has been introduced. This new system will now provide for much greater in-depth review of ECWA's work programmes and increased involvement of ECWA member States in the work of the Commission.

14. It is envisaged that this two-level management machinery will be intensively developed during the second decade as a result of the work of the Standing Committee for the Programme and its recommendations to the annual session of the Commission and the policy guidance and specific instructions which will emanate from these sessions.

15. The further institutional development of the Commission's policy and programme management machinery will constitute a great challenge to its member States and will be a primary factor in development of the ECWA region within the context of the United Nations system. The development of the policy-making structure may constitute a burden on member States in both human and financial resources (in terms of participation in inter-governmental meetings) but this will largely be offset by the expected benefits at the regional, subregional, intercountry and national levels in terms of policy co-ordination, standardization, and the facilitation of an exchange and the formulation of common positions in global negotiations in various areas of development.

Plenary sessions of the Commission

16. The introduction of the two-level programme formulation and decision-making system, which will have a profound bearing on the methods of work, calls for, in the opinion of the secretariat, a readjustment of the work during the annual sessions of the Commission. Whereas previously the Commission reviewed the work programme proposed by the secretariat, it will now and in the future consider reports from its subsidiary organ(s) on programme matters, while the **actual** review will be undertaken by the Standing Committee for the Programme and the subject-oriented meetings proposed by it. In order for member States to have a useful perspective on the ECWA programme in relation to the priorities in the region as a whole, the secretariat considers it opportune to include in future session of the Commission an item on the agenda allowing member States to concentrate discussion on a priority theme. Such a theme would be decided upon by the Executive Secretary in consultation with member States. An annual report would need to be prepared for this purpose.

Involvement of Governments in preparations for meetings

17. The concrete and practical character of the work performed by the Commission's subsidiary organ (Standing Committee for the Programme) and the ad hoc inter-governmental meetings organized under the work-programmes of the Commission **requires** careful preparation for each meeting by both governmental delegates and by the secretariat. The required documents and studies are prepared by the secretariat on the basis of available information and data supplied by Governments in response to enquiries.

18. With the expected growing volume of activities and meetings, Governments interested in the solution of particular problems confronting the region as a whole, and which are to be discussed at the inter-governmental level, may wish

to establish focal points at the appropriate ministries or government institutions. The tasks of these focal points would consist of the preparation of a written report; or a contribution on the country's experience to a study, an enquiry or a questionnaire of the secretariat, or the formulation of a position. In this way subsidiary organs(s) and inter-governmental meetings will be provided with substantive reports of high quality on subjects covering a wide range of expertise which it would be impossible for a small secretariat to supply itself.

Co-operation with regional organizations

19. The secretariat's close relations and co-operation with the secretariats of other regional inter-governmental organizations active in the economic field, have to be further developed during the next ten years. The secretariat seeks practical and purposeful co-operation with such regional organizations so as not only to avoid duplication of efforts but also to join forces with them in carrying out effectively work on projects of common interest to all organizations concerned. In this connection, member States may wish to consider issues of co-ordination and co-operation with the Commission at the sessions of other regional inter-governmental organizations. The position of member States needs consequently, to be closely co-ordinated.

20. The secretariat is confident that discussion on some of the problems outlined and solutions proposed will enhance the effectiveness of the ECWA machinery as an instrument for region-wide economic co-operation. The experience of the past decade of quiet, unspectacular but persevering and useful work within ECWA provides the ECWA Governments with a solid foundation on which to build their further co-operation within the context of the United Nations system so as to meet the demands and opportunities of the remaining part of the century.