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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***Strengthening consultancy services and technical cooperation activities
in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia: resolution 249 (XXII)*

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) adopted resolution 249 (XXII) of 17 April 2003 on strengthening consultancy services and technical cooperation activities in the ESCWA region. Detailed accounts in that regard are provided in two reports of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Commission, namely: "Progress made during 2004 in the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 2004-2005: technical cooperation activities" (E/ESCWA/23/5(Part III)/Add.2); and Financial status of the programme of the Commission for the bienniums 2002-2003 and 2004-2005 (E/ESCWA/23/5(Part II)).
2. Operative paragraph 2 of ESCWA resolution 249 (XXII), cited above, called upon the secretariat to strengthen consultancy services and technical cooperation activities, given that they are of such benefit to member countries. To this effect, the regular programme of technical cooperation financed the provision of short-term advisory services in the areas of water, energy, and gender mainstreaming and advancement of women, in addition to long-term advisory services in the areas of environment, social development, trade and issues related to the World Trade Organization (WTO), science and technology, information and communication technology (ICT), and national accounts. Furthermore, advisory services were provided by staff members of ESCWA in their respective fields of expertise that largely covered the following areas: water, sustainable development, transport, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), economic development and planning, and statistics. The total number of advisory services missions increased from 139 missions in 2003 to 205 missions in 2004, representing an increase of 47 per cent. Additionally, total mission days increased by 71 per cent from 693 days in 2003 to 1,184 days in 2004.
3. Moreover, ESCWA organized a number of national and regional training workshops aimed at the following: (a) assisting member countries in the preparation for their national reports on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing +10) and on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); and (b) enhancing negotiation skills on shared water issues. Equally, ESCWA and Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) co-organized the Arab Regional Workshop on National Sustainable Development Strategies and Indicators of Sustainable Development (Cairo, 12-14 December 2004).
4. In the area of technical cooperation projects, the estimated extrabudgetary expenditures are expected to exceed \$3.7 million in the biennium 2004-2005, representing an increase of 42 per cent over the previous biennium. This increase reflects the special emphasis on projects related to post-conflict reconstruction in Iraq, and socio-economic development and rehabilitation in Palestine. The expenditures for technical

cooperation projects financed from the Development Account during 2004-2005 are estimated at \$1.5 million, and focus on the following: foreign direct investment (FDI); interregional land and land-cum sea transport linkages; technologies for employment and poverty alleviation; and sustainable utilization, management and protection of internationally shared groundwater in the Mediterranean region.

5. During 2004, ESCWA formulated a technical cooperation strategy in an effort to improve the delivery of technical cooperation services. To that end, the secretariat is submitting to the session the "Report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Commission: progress made during 2004 in the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 2004-2005 – technical cooperation strategy" (E/ESCWA/23/5(Part III)/Add.1), which encompasses advisory services, and identifies areas where ESCWA could excel and provide more effective results. This strategy addresses two perspectives in technical cooperation, namely doing the right things and doing things right. The strategy is set to become effective once adopted by the twenty-third session of the Commission.

6. Furthermore, operative paragraph 3 of ESCWA resolution 249 (XXII) requested the secretariat to "expend greater efforts to effect coordination between its research and analysis activities and, on the one hand, its technical cooperation activities and, on the other, its consultancy services". As a response, ESCWA has taken important steps towards increasing complementarities between its normative and analytical work and its technical cooperation activities. During the preparations of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007, particular attention was made to improve linkages and strengthen synergy between the programme of work and the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation (RPTC). Consequently, there was a drive to encompass short-term advisory services covering new and more specific areas within the normative work of ESCWA, thereby, enabling the Commission to better respond to requests from member countries. Within that context, ESCWA proposed a number of capacity building workshops under RPTC to respond to the needs of member countries, in addition to implementing four field projects of regional or sub-regional scope that address regional priorities.

7. Such complementarities, linkages, strengthened monitoring and evaluation of technical cooperation (TC) activities ensure an efficient and effective delivery of outputs in line with global requirements.

8. Equally, operative paragraph 4 of ESCWA resolution 249 (XXII) urged "member countries and local, regional and international donor bodies to increase their financial support for the Commission's consultancy services and technical cooperation activities". To that end, the secretariat exerted additional efforts during 2003 and 2004 to attract more extrabudgetary resources. Additionally, ESCWA is set to establish a project committee with the following aims: (a) to review and assess project concepts; (b) to monitor and evaluate projects at the various stages of the project cycle; and (c) to further streamline efforts aimed at raising substantial resources towards the execution of large regional and sub-regional projects that increase the impact of ESCWA work.
