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REVISED MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 2002-2005**Programme 18. Economic and social development in Western Asia*****Overall orientation***

1. The overall orientation of the programme is to nurture comprehensive, integrated equitable and sustainable economic and social development, at both the national and regional levels, that would ultimately allow the countries of the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) to effectively manage the rapidly changing economic world environment and enhance the quality of life for the people. To this end, the programme will stimulate regional cooperation and integration by providing support to member countries in formulating regional programmes, mechanisms and solutions in both the economic and social fields that would assist them in achieving synergies and common positions, thus facilitating both regional integration and a balanced integration into the world economy while taking into consideration national, regional and global concerns.
2. The ultimate contribution of ESCWA is based on assisting member countries in creating an enabling environment that would stimulate the achievement of sustainable development with its three interdependent and mutually reinforcing components: economic development, social development and protection of the environment.
3. The direction of the programme is provided in resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Economic and Social Council which, in its resolution 1818 (LV) of 9 August 1973, established the terms of reference of the Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA) and which, in its resolution 1985/69 of 26 July 1985, amended those terms in order to underscore the social dimension of the functions of the Commission, at which time the name was altered to the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in order to reflect that change. Further direction to the programme is provided in ESCWA resolutions, in particular, ESCWA resolution 220 (XX) on the adoption, by ESCWA member countries, of the Beirut declaration, dated 27 May 1999, on the occasion of the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Commission. The Beirut declaration presented a vision of the role and tasks of ESCWA for the twenty-first century aimed at enhancing the role of the Commission at the regional level, in line with the Secretary-General's efforts to revitalize the performance of the United Nations at the dawn of the third millennium. The direction of the programme is also guided by the recommendation of the twenty-first session of the Commission in May 2001 that ESCWA secretariat activities should focus on a limited number of priorities and be correspondingly restricted. It was also recommended that attention should be focused on Arab regional integration and the study of mechanisms that would activate this integration; and on reviewing the existing organizational structure of the secretariat in order to best serve Arab integration.

48. Activities of the subprogramme will allow ESCWA to play the role of focal point for the region, together with the United Nations Statistics Division and United Nations and international organizations for the collection, processing and customization of data and updating databases shared with those agencies. These data will serve as the input for a number of statistical, economic, social and technical studies for all ESCWA subprogrammes. This will enhance the integrity of information within ESCWA and, also, between ESCWA and all other United Nations and international bodies. Contributions will be made to the building of the statistical capacity of member countries by providing them with assistance in upgrading the statistical capabilities of their national cadres and improving and expanding their statistical infrastructures in accordance with international criteria, concepts and methodologies, in order to facilitate the implementation of international programmes and recommendations.

49. Member countries will be assisted in the adoption and utilization of economic statistics, national accounts and measuring indicators, mainly the sustainable development indicators (SDI), needed for monitoring development policies as well as implementation of corrective measures and adjustment of economic policies. A core of social statistics and measurement indicators will be developed for adoption by ESCWA members countries in order to monitor various aspects of the quality of life development goals as specified in the road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, such as employment, poverty, gender and other issues. Activities will promote cooperation and the exchange of information, views and experiences among national statistical agencies in the region, with a view to enhancing regional harmonization and integration and improving the regional role in the international arena with regard to statistics.

Expected accomplishments

50. Expected accomplishments would include: (a) improved national capacity for the production and dissemination of quality statistics; (b) improved capacity of member countries for the implementation of comparable national accounts; (c) improved capacity of member countries for the production and utilization of sectoral statistics and indicators to measure productivity and efficiency and monitor development policies in these sectors and in particular, sustainable development indicators and statistics in new areas such as gender and poverty; and (d) increased production and utilization by member countries of a core of social indicators needed for monitoring social development policies.

Indicators of achievement

51. Indicators of achievement would include: (a) increase in the number of member countries using statistical tools and international statistical standards for analysis; (b) increase in the availability of national economic and social data using timely, reliable and comparable national accounts; (c) increase in the utilization of sectoral statistics and indicators, especially with regard to regional integration indicators and statistics in new areas; and (d) increase in the inclusion of core social indicators in decision-making.

Strategy

8. Within ESCWA, substantive responsibility for this subprogramme is vested in the Sustainable Development and Productivity Division (SDPD). The ESCWA region is marked by its tendency to desertification along with scarcity and uneven distribution of water resources and the existence of substantial, but unequally distributed, fossil and renewable energy reserves. The region is also known for the low productivity and weak competitiveness of the production sector which is due, at least in part, to the inefficient use of water and energy, particularly in agriculture and industry. Accordingly, activities will target four interrelated components, namely: (a) integrated sustainable management of water and energy resources; (b) sound environmental policies; (c) sustainable development through competitiveness and harmonization of the production sectors; and (d) policies and measures for integrating the social dimension in the sustainable development process.
9. Regional cooperation mechanisms in these areas will be formulated and promoted. Efforts will also be exerted to increase awareness of decision makers and users with regard to critical water and energy issues. Member countries will be assisted in addressing the consequences of economic reform policies and restructuring and privatization in these sectors.
10. Particular emphasis will be placed on the identification of appropriate solutions for the problems involved and advocacy for the rationalization of the utilization of water and energy resources. The subprogramme will promote integrated sustainable management policies and policy measures for available and potential water and energy resources by providing training programmes and materials on building institutional and human capacities in the management of these resources, leading to more efficient use thereof, particularly in agriculture and industry. This would further lead to continuous updating of the database of water and energy resources, and, eventually, to a geographic information system for these resources.
11. Special attention will be given to the formulation and promotion of regional cooperation mechanisms and the legal and technical aspects of such cooperation in the management of shared water resources and energy networks.
12. Member countries will be provided with advice on ways and means of incorporating the right to development in the management of water, energy and environment protection. In particular, support will be provided to decision makers in their efforts to integrate into their policies and plans the social aspects of managing water, energy and environment. Ways and means of increasing the access of the poor, especially poor women, to cheap energy and water, especially clean water, will be identified, and options that would facilitate the creation of new jobs and generate income, particularly for poor women, will be pursued.
13. Activities will facilitate the establishment and coordination of monitoring and reporting mechanisms on environmental issues, maintaining and developing region-wide indicators of sustainable development and promoting the implementation of the relevant chapters of Agenda 21 by supporting Governments in their efforts to integrate environmental considerations into their development policies and facilitating the development of regional positions and proposals, which will be reported in the global agenda of the forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development, in cooperation with relevant regional organizations.
14. Support will be provided to member countries in the formulation and implementation, at the national and regional levels, of coordinated sectoral policy tools in agriculture and industry, including national and regional harmonization of norms and application of certification and accreditation schemes.
15. Special attention will be paid to enterprise development, networking and clustering, innovative schemes in management and technology and improved linkages between technology and sectoral

utilization of promising ICT applications and success stories; and (d) improved access of the poor strata of the population in the region to ICT in order to reduce the digital divide.

Indicators of achievement

41. Indicators of achievements would include: (a) the number of countries accepting and/or adopting ESCWA policy recommendations on ICT; (b) the number of governmental, private sector and civil society institutions participating in networking schemes at the national and regional levels; (c) the number of countries implementing promising ICT applications; and (d) increase in the number of ICT programmes and training facilities that target the least advantaged groups in society.

Subprogramme 6. Comparable statistics for improved planning and decision-making

Objective

42. The objective is to improve the statistical capabilities of countries in the region for informed decision-making and improve the availability and timeliness of comparable statistical information.

Strategy

43. The activities of this subprogramme will be coordinated by the Statistics Coordination Unit, which reports to the Deputy Executive Secretary. These activities will be conducted in collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division and other United Nations international and regional agencies for the use of harmonized statistical concepts, methodologies and questionnaires compatible with internationally recognized statistical standards, within and outside the ESCWA secretariat. This would contribute to the development of reliable, timely, standardized and customized national and regional statistics and indicators needed by policy makers, analysts, decision makers, public and private enterprises, researchers and regional and international organizations in the ESCWA region. It would also meet the demand generated by the necessity of producing statistics and indicators for following up on the recommendations of United Nations global conferences.

44. The PSDD will undertake the development of customized sectoral statistics and indicators in order to meet the policy-making and planning requirements of ESCWA member countries effectively in specialized areas such as agriculture, industry, energy and water resources, environmental and other systems of statistics and development indicators. It will also provide advisory services and training aimed at increasing the technical capacity of countries in the region.

45. The SDD will undertake the development of customized social statistics and indicators to meet the social policy-making requirements of those States and their civil societies effectively in specialized areas such as, gender-disaggregated data, population, education, unemployment, urbanization and other systems of statistics. It will also provide advisory services and training aimed at increasing the technical capacity of countries in the region.

46. The EAD will undertake responsibility for increasing the technical capacity of countries in the region and, in particular, the implementation by ESCWA member countries of the 1993 system of national accounts and international comparison programme in order to produce purchasing power parity-comparable statistics that effectively meet regional policy-making and planning requirements of those States and develop customized economic statistics and sustainable development indicators.

47. The GRID, will undertake the development of customized statistics and indicators on international and intraregional flows of goods, people and capital between member countries, as well as spatial, transport, infrastructure and regional integration indicators. It will also provide advisory services and training aimed at increasing the technical capacity of countries in the region.

4. Substantive responsibility for the programme is vested in the Commission. The overall strategy of ESCWA is designed around six interdependent and complementary subprogrammes. In fulfilling its objective, ESCWA will place emphasis on further integration of the human and social components into development planning; focusing on building institutional and economic management capacity; increasing productivity and competitiveness of production sectors and increasing the use of available human resources; formulating and promoting positive social values and supporting civil society and governance.

5. The main elements of the strategy to be pursued by ESCWA reside in the following:

(a) Assisting member countries in coping with the multidimensional requirements of globalization through fostering competitiveness, based on economic efficiency and the acquisition of the requisite technological skills;

(b) Serving as a platform for networking and exchange of experiences and best practices among member countries, among all actors in the development process and in particular, civil society institutions, in support of transparent governance, and among United Nations agencies with a regional mandate;

(c) Advocating a multisectoral approach in addressing issues of common programmatic concern, chiefly, poverty reduction, gender mainstreaming, least advantaged groups, acquisition of information and communication technologies, transparent governance and partnership with civil society institutions, popular participation and issues related to the environment;

(d) Advising member countries on the integration of the human and social dimensions of development into their policies by focusing on capacity-building with regard to human resources; proposing mechanisms through which to identify the specifications and qualifications required of human resources that would enable member countries to become the driving force of social and economic development; and providing appropriate training and technical assistance in relevant fields;

(e) Providing assistance in producing and/or generating reliable, customized, harmonized regional data and indicators compatible with internationally recognized statistical standards, as a tool for sound analysis and judicious policy formulation; assisting in data collection, research and analysis, and monitoring trends;

(f) Providing continued support to the least developed member country (Yemen) and other countries with special needs and, in particular, in terms of promoting post-conflict development and reconstruction in ESCWA member countries that have witnessed war and civil strife.

6. In fulfilling its mandates ESCWA has maintained, and shall continue to maintain, cooperative arrangements with member countries and with a host of United Nations and non-United Nations regional organizations, notably the League of Arab States, the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations, other regional commissions, the United Nations Development Group, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the International Labour Organization and the Bretton Woods institutions.

Subprogramme 1. Integrated policies for the management of regional resources for sustainable development

Objective

7. The objective of this subprogramme is to have a positive impact on regional integration and cooperation among ESCWA member countries, based on a concerted approach to integrated sustainable management of water and energy and the production sectors.

recommendations and schemes for enhancing the attractiveness of their business-environment for domestic and foreign investment; and (d) number of countries adopting efficient export policies resulting in increased export performance.

Subprogramme 5. Information and communication technology for regional integration

Objective

34. The objective of this subprogramme is to increase the capabilities of member countries to harness information and communication technologies (ICTs) for their development.

Strategy

35. Within ESCWA, substantive responsibility for this subprogramme is vested in the Information and Communication Technology Division. The subprogramme will provide support with regard to the development of ICT policies, infrastructure, and applications. To this effect, the subprogramme will take advantage of the convening power of the United Nations and aim at forging partnerships between the various regional stakeholders. It will build upon and add value to existing regional activities by helping to coalesce and scale up these efforts through facilitating coordination and collaboration among governments, NGOs and the private sector, as well as the relevant regional and international institutions. It will also pursue issues related to ICT-for-development as well as those identified in the Millennium Declaration that are of relevance to ESCWA countries.

36. The rapid development of ICT has opened untapped potentials that could be put to the service of sustainable development and enable ESCWA countries to integrate into the global economy. However, the challenge imposed on the developing countries by the ever widening digital divide has given rise to a number of initiatives aimed at arresting this trend and turning it into a digital opportunity. Chief among these is the ICT Task Force, led by the United Nations and launched on 20 November 2001. This initiative is global in its conception, yet aims to be regional and specific in terms of national and regional needs and in particular, the needs of the poor and marginalized groups.

37. The subprogramme will organize stakeholder campaigns and help develop broad-based programmes in order to raise awareness among decision makers and top officials of the region with regard to the impact and implications of ICT on various sectors and on national and regional development policies. Advocacy creation will be sought through organizing regional seminars for policy makers, facilitating the development and promotion of national e-strategies and policies, and human and institutional capacity-building.

38. As a regional node, the subprogramme will establish cooperation and coordination mechanisms between regional players, both public and private, engaged in ICT development activities in order to promote coherence and synergy and identify joint endeavours. It will also conduct detailed studies in order to harmonize standards and protocols for interconnectivity.

39. The subprogramme will monitor and assess, from the ESCWA regional perspective, ICT applications relevant to the issues of ICT-for-development and make recommendations in this respect. The subprogramme will thus serve as a catalyst for the pooling of experiences.

Expected accomplishments

40. The expected accomplishments would include: (a) increased response of member countries to integrated ICT policies in the development process; (b) improved connectivity in and between member countries; (c) increased positive impact on selected fields of development, through wider

development, in order to harness the efforts of individual member countries to enhance competitiveness and turn innovations into an effective vehicle for development. Efforts will be made to assist member countries in filling the gaps in vertical chains and/or in the introduction of knowledge-based high-tech industries by promoting development of the production and service sectors in order to achieve maximum value-added, competitiveness and sustainability to the economies of member countries and the region. Measures to facilitate capacity-building will be identified in order to enhance the productivity, competitiveness and environmental compatibility of service, industrial and agricultural outputs.

Expected accomplishments

16. Expected accomplishments would include: (a) increased ability of member countries to formulate integrated policies for the efficient and sustainable management of water and energy resources; (b) increased interest of member countries in regional cooperation in the management of shared surface and groundwater resources and energy networks; (c) increased capacity of member countries in the formulation and implementation of policies and policy measures for sustainable development; and (d) increased use by member countries of tools and techniques to enhance productivity and competitiveness in the production sectors.

Indicators of achievement

17. Indicators of achievement would include: (a) the number of countries formulating environmentally sound policies, policy measures and technologies for the management of water and energy resources; (b) the number of countries accepting to consider joining in the implementation of the formulated regional framework for cooperation in management of shared surface and groundwater resources and energy networks; (c) the number of countries adopting and implementing policies and environmental management measures and safeguards to protect the environment and decrease pollution; and (d) the number of countries adopting innovative technology and management initiatives to enhance competitiveness and more sustainable and efficient use of such technology.

Subprogramme 2. Integrated social policies

Objective

18. The objective of this subprogramme is to achieve regional cooperation in the advocacy and promotion of comprehensive and integrated social policies that are region-specific and culturally sensitive and have a practical orientation.

Strategy

19. Within ESCWA, substantive responsibility for this subprogramme is vested in the Social Development Division (SDD) which assumes an important role in assisting member countries in addressing such social problems as the unbalanced provision of basic social services, the need for comprehensive and integrated social policies and the need to address the social and cultural impact of globalization on society, including the uneven distribution of the benefits of trade liberalization and the rapid pace of technological change. The subprogramme will therefore be oriented towards the promotion of an integrated and holistic approach to social development that is based on the right to development and the promotion of positive cultural and social values. Under this subprogramme, the establishment of policies for social development continues to be a priority.

20. In carrying out its mandates, the subprogramme will pursue the following strategies:

(a) Promoting focused, gender-sensitive policies, approaches, methodologies and programmes that contribute to furthering social integration, inclusion and equity;

- (vi) Organizing awareness drives on the role of the Arab Free Trade Area and other bilateral agreements in order to better prepare member countries for trade liberalization and build regional capacity in this area;
- (b) Responding to the trends of global trade liberalization in order to minimize potential threats and seize the opportunities offered by:
- (i) Closely monitoring and analysing the evolving trends of the new regional and global trading systems, with special emphasis on the Arab Free Trade Area (AFTA) and the World Trade Organization (WTO);
 - (ii) Conducting expert meetings and capacity-building workshops in order to better prepare member countries for future rounds of multilateral negotiations and formulate a concerted strategy on issues of common interest;
 - (iii) Providing advisory services to member countries on various AFTA and WTO issues as well as partnership agreements;
- (c) Assisting member countries in defining efficient inter-Arab trade and export policies for their main products in order to halt the decline in the share of the ESCWA region in international trade and improve their regional and global trading performance. In order to take advantage of increased international competition, advice will be given to member countries on ways of improving free competition in domestic markets for imported products or services. The subprogramme will also study the possible negative impact of competition on domestically produced goods and provide advice on ways and means of developing local competitive capacity;
- (d) Enhancing regional development through encouraging domestic as well as foreign investments. To this end the subprogramme will:
- (i) Review, assess and analyse existing credit and investment policies and incentives and legal environments in selected member countries, drawing comparisons with selected success stories, such as those of the Republic of Korea and Japan, with particular emphasis on intraregional incentives;
 - (ii) Formulate specific recommendations for the improvement of existing investment laws, regulations and incentives in order to increase significantly the attractiveness of member countries to domestic and foreign investments, with particular emphasis on intraregional capital flows and the return of capital invested outside the region;
 - (iii) Formulate agreements on such recommendation to be adopted by the respective member countries.

Expected accomplishments

32. Expected accomplishments would include: (a) increased facilitation of transboundary flows of goods, services, persons and capital among member countries; (b) increased awareness among member countries of the challenges to their economies and opportunities created by the new regional and international trading systems; (c) increased attractiveness of member countries for domestic, intraregional and foreign investment; and (d) increased export capacity of ESCWA member countries.

Indicators of achievement

33. Indicators of achievement would include: (a) the number of countries accepting and/or adopting harmonization schemes proposed by ESCWA in order to facilitate transboundary flows of goods, persons and capital; (b) the number of countries responding to ESCWA initiatives on globalization and regional integration; (c) the number of member countries accepting and/or adopting

(b) Providing advice to member countries on the formulation of comprehensive and integrated social policies, based on research, pilot projects and best practices, that take into consideration the strong and intricate links between the economic and social aspects of development, with special emphasis on poverty and unemployment reduction, employment-linked education, empowerment of women, social integration and population, urban development and housing;

(c) Providing, through ESCWA, a forum for the establishment of stable networking links and the exchange of experiences and best practices between all partners and actors in the social development process at the regional level, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and in order to further popular participation, transparency and accountability in relation to social policies in general and urban governance in particular, as a prerequisite for sustainable socio-economic development;

(d) Furnishing assistance to member countries in strengthening institutions and the capacity of national and regional mechanisms leading to integrated regional responses and concerted actions in relation to the agendas of global conferences;

(e) Assisting member countries in formulating strategies and policies for sustainable human development and integrated policy action, with particular regard to poverty and unemployment reduction and with a focus on youth and women, through improving access to better education and upgrading skills to correspond to the needs of the new labour market. To this end, ESCWA will conduct field surveys and analyses on the employment status of youth and women, labour force supply and demand, business associations, improvements to employment policies and the possibility of exchange of labour among member countries and, also, advising or implementing projects on self-employment opportunities;

(f) Contributing to increasing awareness of gender issues through conducting media campaigns, organizing meetings and workshops on critical issues, building the capacities of national mechanism for the empowerment of women and their advancement by advocating an approach based on gender equity and equality in the region, including the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into policies, plans and programmes;

(g) Providing support to member countries and local authorities in formulating appropriate, innovative and integrated policies and programmes on population and development, improving the physical environment and advocating partnership between governments and municipalities and increasing capacity for popular participation in urban development at the local level, particularly in cities and other urban areas;

(h) According special attention to post-conflict reconstruction which takes into consideration the economic, social and physical dimensions of development.

Expected accomplishments

21. Expected accomplishments would include: (a) improved ability of member countries to formulate integrated social policies and programmes that incorporate advantageous cultural values; (b) increased networking mechanisms for social development among partners and actors in the development process at regional, national and local levels; (c) improved capacity of policy makers in formulating poverty reduction policies, measures, mechanisms and programmes to implement projects aimed at providing the population with opportunities for productive employment; (d) increased responsiveness of policy makers to the formulation of gender-sensitive policies, programmes and mechanisms, understanding of the main issues involved in the empowerment of women and awareness of the significance of gender mainstreaming; and (e) improved ability of policy makers to address, in their strategies, population issues and critical issues with regard to good urban governance and security of tenure.

Indicators of achievement

22. Indicators of achievement would include: (a) the number of ESCWA countries formulating and implementing appropriate social policies; (b) the number of joint committees and projects between

development goals; (b) increased use by member countries of regional integration indicators; (c) improved capacity of member countries and business associations for monitoring productivity trends and the performance of the production sectors; and (d) improved capacity of member countries to assess their comparative economic situation at the regional and international levels and improved capacity of decision makers in member countries for timely intervention.

Indicators of achievement

29. Indicators of achievement would include: (a) increase in the number of countries utilizing economic forecasting models and multidimensional and interdisciplinary indicators of development; (b) the number of regional economic reports published using regional integration indicators developed by ESCWA; (c) the number of member countries using economic indicators to assess the performance of production sectors; and (d) increase in the number of assessments by member countries of their economic reform policies and their comparative economic situations.

Subprogramme 4. Regional integration and responding to globalization

Objective

30. The objective of this subprogramme is to facilitate transboundary flows of goods, services, persons and capital in order to meet the challenges posed by the trend towards globalization.

Strategy

31. Within ESCWA, substantive responsibility for this subprogramme is vested in the Globalization and Regional Integration Division (GRID). The strategy includes four complementary components, namely:

(a) Integrating regional markets to cope with emerging economic blocs. Emphasis will be on facilitating transboundary flows of goods, services and persons, through:

- (i) Continuous development of the integrated transport system in the Arab Mashreq (ITSAM), which has already been launched. To this effect the subprogramme will target regional agreements on harmonization of standards of the modal components of ITSAM network, developing a regional transport database through the harmonization and networking of statistical information from national systems as well as the formulation of a methodological framework for policy analysis and application;
- (ii) Improving inter-Arab trade and tourism by facilitating border-crossing at ports and inland by reducing customs and operational formalities;
- (iii) Cooperating with regional commissions in the development of operational schemes for building the capacity of member countries to develop land and land-cum-sea interregional linkages;
- (iv) Promoting United Nations agreements such as the FAL Convention of 1965 and the TIR Convention of 1975;
- (v) Promoting the adoption and application of the recommendations of global initiatives such as the Economic Commission for Europe Centre for the Facilitation of Procedures and Practices for Administration, Commerce and Transport and the trade efficiency programme of UNCTAD;

Governments and civil society institutions at regional, national and local levels; (c) increase in the number of measures introduced by member countries in order to reduce poverty and unemployment, especially among youth and women, and ensure adequate education and/or technical training facilities for the poor; (d) the number of countries and institutions incorporating a gender perspective into policies, plans and statistics, leading to greater participation of women in the labour force, increase in the number of poor women starting their own businesses, changes in legislation in favour of women and increase in the number of countries acceding to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women; and (e) increased number of population issues and critical issues of good urban governance in the strategies of policy makers.

Subprogramme 3. Economic analysis and forecasting for regional development

Objective

23. The objective of this subprogramme is to increase the capacity of member countries to coordinate their economic policies and achieve economic development by providing quantitative assessment of economic and financial data and trends.

Strategy

24. Within ESCWA the substantive responsibility for this subprogramme is vested in the Economic Analysis Division (EAD).

25. The strategy will target three related issues: (a) macroeconomic performance and trends; (b) analysis of the performance of production sectors; and (c) economic forecasting. Implementation of the subprogramme would require the provision of assistance to member countries in formulation of appropriate economic policies and development strategies in response to the new challenges and opportunities. Thus, the subprogramme will conduct in-depth reviews, assessments and analyses of the economic situation and trends in the region with a view to providing information and tools to member countries that will enable them to meet national and regional policy-making and planning requirements effectively and contribute to regional integration.

26. The subprogramme will also undertake analysis of the main trends in the production sectors of the economy as well as comparative economic studies among a set or subset of selected service and production sectors in member countries in order to assess the comparative strengths of these sectors at the domestic and regional levels. It will also analyse macroeconomic issues and the performance of production sectors using current analytical, forecasting and policy simulation tools. It will follow up international economic trends and transitions relevant to national and regional economies, especially analysis of their impact on employment and other social issues. Analysis will also be conducted of regional financial markets and the mobilization of financial resources; fiscal developments; trends in foreign and domestic debt; banking systems and credit markets; and trends in the environment of increased competitiveness. Member countries will be supported in order to increase their capacity for economic analysis in decision-making at all levels. This will be achieved through organizing training programmes, preparing training material and providing technical assistance, with emphasis on the analytical skills aspects of human resource development and the use of a harmonized set of microeconomic and macroeconomic indicators and tools, as well as economic forecasting models and multidimensional and interdisciplinary indicators of development.

27. The subprogramme will also focus on the assessment of economic reform policies in member countries and their impact on employment and social issues.

Expected accomplishments

28. Expected accomplishments would include: (a) utilization of macroeconomic variables and trends and also main trends in the production sectors of the economy by decision makers in achieving