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**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION
FOR WESTERN ASIA**

**REPORT ON THE THIRD SPECIAL SESSION
8 JUNE 1988**

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
OFFICIAL RECORDS: 1988**


SUPPLEMENT No. 15



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NOTE

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.



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INTRODUCTION

1. This report deals with the work of the third special session of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), which was held in Baghdad on 8 June 1988 in accordance with rule 1(d) of the Commission's rules of procedure.

1. ISSUES CALLING FOR ACTION BY THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COUNCIL OR BROUGHT TO ITS ATTENTION

Issues brought to the attention of the Council

2. At its third special session the Commission adopted the following resolution by consensus:

163(S-3). Conditions of work of the Economic and Social
Commission for Western Asia

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Having met in response to the invitation addressed to it by the Executive Secretary to convene a third special session in order to consider the question of the temporary relocation of the staff of its secretariat outside Iraq,

Having considered the note by the Executive Secretary on the matter,^{1/} the commentary thereon provided by him and the views expressed by the delegation of Iraq, representing the host country,

Expressing its sincere appreciation to the secretariat for the efforts made by it to perform its functions in the service of economic and social development issues in the region,

Also expressing its deep appreciation for all that Iraq, the host country, has generously done in order to enable the Commission to perform its functions in the best possible manner despite the exceptional circumstances the country is experiencing,

Desiring to ensure the stability necessary for the Commission and for the staff of its secretariat to be able to carry out the tasks entrusted to them in an optimum manner,

1. Reaffirms its resolution 35(S-II) of 23 August 1976, on the site of the permanent headquarters of the Economic Commission for Western Asia, and the determination of the Commission to maintain its permanent headquarters at Baghdad;

2. Decides not to agree to relocate temporarily the staff of the Commission from its present headquarters to a site outside Iraq.

8 June 1988

^{1/} E/ESCWA/S-3/4/Rev.1.

11. THIRD SPECIAL SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

A. Attendance and organization of work

3. The Commission held its third special session at its headquarters in Baghdad on 8 June 1988. It decided that its meeting should be closed.
4. The session was attended by representatives of the following members of the Commission:^{2/} Bahrain, Democratic Yemen, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen and the Palestine Liberation Organization.
5. For the election of officers, the Commission adopted the practice of the General Assembly in the case of a special session. Accordingly, Mr. Hisham Hassan Tawfiq (Iraq), Chairman of the Commission's fourteenth session, acted as Chairman and Mr. Abd al-Hamid Mubarak Khalifah al-Kubaysi (Qatar) as Vice-Chairman. In the absence of the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic, from which a Vice-Chairman had been elected at the Commission's previous session, Mr. Ibrahim Jasim al-Bahw (Kuwait) was elected Vice-Chairman. Mr. Mukhtar Hashim Uthman (Egypt) was elected Rapporteur.
6. In accordance with rule 11 of the rules of procedure of the Commission, the officers of the session examined the credentials of delegations and found them to be in order.
7. The Commission adopted the proposals for the organization of its work contained in document E/ESCWA/S-3/2.

B. Agenda

8. The Commission adopted the following agenda, as contained in document E/ESCWA/S-3/1/Rev.1:
 1. Opening of the session.
 2. Election of officers.
 3. Adoption of the agenda.
 4. Request of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the temporary relocation of the staff of the ESCWA secretariat outside Iraq.
 5. Other matters.
 6. Report of the Commission on its third special session.

^{2/} For the names of participants in the session, see document E/ESCWA/S-3/INF.1.

C. Account of proceedings

9. The Commission met in a third special session at the invitation of the Executive Secretary in order to consider the request of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the temporary relocation outside Iraq of the staff of its secretariat. The participants agreed that the question should be discussed in a closed meeting.

10. The meeting began with a welcoming statement by the Chairman of the session, the head of the delegation of Iraq.

11. The Executive Secretary reviewed the background note contained in document E/ESCWA/S-3/4/Rev.1, in which the Secretary-General proposed the temporary move of the staff of the secretariat of the Commission out of Iraq. He explained the reasons for the proposal, which were set forth in that document. He summarized those reasons under three major headings. First: there were reasons relating to conditions affecting the security and safety of the staff. In that connection, the Executive Secretary recalled the circumstances surrounding the removal of the secretariat from Beirut to Amman, back to Beirut and then to Baghdad, which had naturally had an adverse impact on its effectiveness. Such repeated relocation had been brought about by fear, on security grounds, for the safety and even the lives of staff members and their dependants.

12. Secondly: repeated relocation and instability had meant that ESCWA had been unable to perform its functions or had encountered difficulty in carrying them out in an optimum manner in keeping with its capacities and capabilities and in line with the mission entrusted to it by its members. Because of the Iraq-Iran war, the work of the secretariat during the time it had been located in Iraq had encountered many obstacles and ESCWA had found difficulty in pursuing its activities since the host country had been obliged to impose restrictions on external contacts in contravention of the Headquarters Agreement. ESCWA had consequently been unable to conduct its regional activities as mandated, especially since security conditions in Iraq had also prevented outside experts and representatives from travelling to Baghdad because of their own fears and the threat they perceived to their security.

13. Thirdly: ESCWA had, in addition to the foregoing, continued to suffer from its inability to attract qualified staff to work in the secretariat, and that, in turn, had affected its capacity to implement programmes. The Executive Secretary went on to state that the situation outlined had arisen despite the excellent facilities provided to the Commission by the Iraqi Government on its establishment in Baghdad. Security reasons had recently made it necessary to evacuate the dependants of staff members from Baghdad. Together with the other reasons mentioned, they had brought about the request that the present meeting should be convened in the form of an emergency special session so that the Commission could meet before the shortly forthcoming regular session of the Economic and Social Council.

14. The representative of Iraq stated that his Government had taken pains to provide substantial assistance that went beyond its contractual obligations to the United Nations with respect to ESCWA. The Government of Iraq continued liberally to provide aid and to make available the facilities required to the

best of its ability in current circumstances. His Government was not convinced by the reasons advanced by the secretariat as grounds necessitating a relocation, but would like to make it clear that, should the Commission decide to relocate the staff temporarily outside Iraq, it would not insist on its remaining. In such an event, Iraq would assume no financial obligations arising out of any relocation and would be unable to assist in that regard. It would preserve its financial rights and would be solicitous in protecting the rights of those secretariat staff members who were Iraqi nationals. The representative of Iraq reiterated that his country was making every conceivable effort in acting as host to the Commission and was not persuaded of the cogency of the reasons advanced for the relocation of the staff of the secretariat.

15. The representative of Jordan expressed appreciation for the efforts made by the Government of Iraq in providing the facilities necessary for ESCWA to perform its functions and for those of the Executive Secretary and his staff in carrying them out. Jordan was prepared to host the secretariat on a temporary basis and provide it with the necessary facilities in keeping with its needs. He stressed that, given Iraq's current position of strength, a relocation to Jordan would not reflect badly on it.

16. The representative of Saudi Arabia requested the Executive Secretary to be so kind as to respond to the observations made in the statement of the representative of Iraq.

17. The Executive Secretary responded to the remarks and observations made by the representative of Iraq. The representative of Iraq had said that the reasons advanced by the secretariat for a relocation were unconvincing. The major reason for the move was the safety and security of staff members and their dependents. There were, however, other reasons relating to the conduct of the Commission's work, which had been affected by a number of matters, most significantly the lack of adequate communications. The Executive Secretary pointed out that wartime conditions were responsible for the secretariat's inability to make full use of the facilities stipulated in the Headquarters Agreement. He went on to say that, in the event that there was agreement on relocation, the United Nations would enter discussions on all the details mentioned by the representative of Iraq relating to the rights of the host country, whether with respect to the computer or the library, or relating to the rights of those members of the secretariat staff who were Iraqi nationals. He added that the terms on which the temporary relocation would take place would by their nature permit all such matters to be addressed. He pointed out that the transfer of the international school was not under discussion and stressed that the costs incurred by the move would be covered by the savings made under the item of salaries and wages and that the United Nations did not anticipate any increase in general expenditure over and above its budgetary appropriations.

18. The representative of Egypt expressed gratitude to Iraq and offered congratulations on the victories it had achieved. Iraq was defending the Arab nation, which included the members of the Commission. Egypt had been surprised by this unusual proposal, particularly in the light of the victories which Iraq had achieved and which had created a positive situation; the proposal represented a negative element. In view of the fact that none of the diplomatic missions and none of the other United Nations offices in Baghdad had made a request for relocation, the reasons advanced for the proposal were

unconvincing. With regard to current financial circumstances, he stated that the initial cost of the move would be in the order of 5 million dollars at a time when the United Nations was going through a financial crisis. Egypt therefore rejected the justification advanced and did not agree to a temporary relocation of the staff. Member States would not accept that a disservice should be done to Iraq by their agreeing to the relocation proposal. It would appear as if they were punishing Iraq, which was defending itself, the Arab nation and the members of the Commission.

19. The representative of Saudi Arabia congratulated the Chairman of the session and Iraq on the victories that had been achieved and expressed the hope that Iraq would achieve complete victory. He expressed appreciation for the statements made by the representative of Egypt, who had voiced the feelings of one and all. Some staff members might have reasons for fear and concern about wartime conditions. That was indeed a humanitarian factor, but it could not be accepted as a reason to justify relocation since all international institutions and organizations in Iraq were experiencing the same conditions and yet had not demanded relocation. Current circumstances were, moreover, much more reassuring. In the event that some staff members should wish to leave the service, that choice was theirs to make. With regard to the matter of strengthening the establishment of the secretariat and the shortage of qualified staff, the Commission had already adopted a resolution by virtue of which the Gulf States had relinquished their quota of posts so that it could be utilized for the recruitment of the necessary staff members from other States of the region such as Egypt, Jordan or Iraq.

20. The representative of Saudi Arabia requested the Executive Secretary to inform the Commission at its present meeting of any other obstacles he perceived and of any other issues that members might assist him to resolve by approaching the Iraqi Government.

21. The representative of Yemen, speaking also on behalf of Democratic Yemen, commended the statements made by the representative of Egypt. He stressed the assistance that Iraq had provided to the Commission, which was sufficient, pointing out that he had noted no impediment to the Commission's work. He went on to say the reasons advanced by the secretariat for a relocation of the headquarters were not persuasive.

22. The representatives of Bahrain, Democratic Yemen, Kuwait and Qatar endorsed the statements made by the representatives of Egypt and Saudi Arabia to the effect that there should be no agreement to a relocation.

23. The Chairman introduced the draft resolution reproduced in chapter I of the present report, and it was adopted by consensus.

24. The participants agreed to address a telegram of greetings, thanks and congratulations to His Excellency President Saddam Hussein, President of the Republic of Iraq.

25. In closing the meeting, the Chairman, speaking in his capacity as head of the delegation of Iraq, thanked the heads and members of delegations for attending and for their co-operation, which had facilitated the work of the Commission in adopting the relevant resolution. He stressed the commitment of Iraq to continuing to provide any assistance that would help the Commission to undertake the tasks entrusted to it.

Annex

LIST OF DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED TO THE COMMISSION AT ITS
THIRD SPECIAL SESSION

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Title</u>
E/ESCWA/S-3/1/Rev.1	Provisional agenda
E/ESCWA/S-3/2	Organization of work
E/ESCWA/S-3/3	Election of officers
E/ESCWA/S-3/4/Rev.1	Note by the Executive Secretary
E/ESCWA/S-3/5	Report on the third special session
E/ESCWA/S-3/INF.1	List of participants