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**JOINT PAPER OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSIONS FOR THE FIRST
MEETING OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
OF THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

(31 January-11 February 1994)

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. SUMMARY OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSIONS' PERSPECTIVE ON THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT	3
III. REGIONAL COMMISSIONS' PERSPECTIVES	9
A. ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA (ECA)	11
B. ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE (ECE)	23
C. ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (ECLAC)	31
D. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (ESCAP)	43
E. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA (ESCWA)	59
IV. CONCLUSIONS	73

I. INTRODUCTION

Paragraph 14 of General Assembly resolution 47/92 on the convening of a world summit for social development "Requests the regional commissions to include in their programme of work for 1993 the World Summit for Social Development, with particular emphasis on the social situation in their respective regions, including proposals, and to prepare an integrated report to be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session".

In compliance with this mandate, the regional commissions submitted to the General Assembly a progress report of the activities of the regional commissions in preparation of the Summit along the following lines: a) social development in the commissions' overall work programme in the past few years; b) the activities undertaken in 1993 in compliance with General Assembly resolution 47/93 (research, seminars, technical assistance, intergovernmental meetings); and c) the activities planned for 1994.

At the same time, each regional commission began to prepare substantive reports for the purpose of offering guidelines for the member countries' preparatory activities for the summit from a regional perspective.

Some of these reports have been completed, such as "The social summit: a view from Latin America and the Caribbean. Note by the secretariat" (LC/G.1802(SES.25/5) and "Social development strategy for the ESCAP region towards the year 2000 and beyond" (ST/ESCAP/1124), while others are still in preparation.

The purpose of the present document is to submit to the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee of the Whole an integrated summary of the substantive views of the regional commissions on the World Summit for Social Development and the results that they expect from this global gathering.

The document is organized as follows: a summary of the general trends in social development in the various regions and of the three core issues to be addressed at the Summit (enhancement of social integration, alleviation and reduction of poverty and expansion of productive employment) (section 2); a summary of the perspective of each regional commission (section 3); and, finally, a few brief conclusions (section 4).

II. SUMMARY OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSIONS' PERSPECTIVE ON THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

a) General aspects

1. The momentous changes produced by the end of the cold war and the increasing globalization of the world economy, based on the communications revolution and rapid scientific and technological progress, have had both positive and negative consequences for developing countries.
2. On the one hand, they have ushered in unprecedented opportunities for achieving human progress, peace, the universal respect for human rights and more participative political systems. On the other hand, they have unwittingly set the stage for greater inequity, even in the more developed economies, as well as the persistence of high poverty levels, which today affect two thirds of the inhabitants of the planet.
3. These ambivalent effects of recent trends are present in all developing regions, although with different characteristics and degrees. Negative economic effects have been particularly severe in those regions where armed strife has occurred, such as in certain subregions of the African continent.
4. Generally speaking, in all of the regions, with the exception of Africa and, in some aspects, Western Asia, progress has been achieved in the most basic areas of social development, such as educational coverage, basic health care, sanitation and in other areas connected with welfare and social security. Fertility rates have decreased. In some countries, there has been progress in creating employment, improving environmental conditions, and increasing security conditions. In some instances, underprivileged social groups and minorities have found a new voice. However, these advances, practically without exception, have also been accompanied by negative trends that have led to frustration, loss of hope, violence and growing social tensions.
5. In Europe, the slow-down in economic activity in general and the severe economic and social problems affecting the transitional economies have introduced instability into a region that at one time faced no major serious problems of social development. The present situation is marked by rising unemployment, relative poverty and growing social tensions —particularly with respect to migrants—, which are expressed in an exacerbated nationalism, intolerance and even violence.
6. Despite a moderate recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean, high levels of inequity persist; these are manifested in an increased incidence of poverty, a worsened income distribution, and a deterioration in the provision of social services, all of which threatens the stability of the newly democratic systems.
7. Despite spectacular growth and solid prospects in several of the economies of Asia and the Pacific, 13 of them are still among the 43 least developed economies of the world. Deep social

inequalities persist, generating economic, social, ethnic, religious and linguistic tensions. One manifestation of these tensions is the enormous number of political and economic refugees. The number of illegal refugees living in more stable, prosperous neighbouring countries in the last few years is estimated at 10 million, not counting the millions who have emigrated to other regions.

8. Tensions have been heightened in Western Asia by the consequences of the Gulf War, aggravating the existing problems of unemployment, poverty, drug abuse, untold numbers of disabled people and refugees, and a massive influx of returnees.

9. In Africa, more than a decade of economic decline has been accompanied by a significant deterioration, even a reversal, of earlier gains in human welfare and well-being. About half the region's population lives in absolute poverty. Malnutrition and hunger is widespread. Serious regressive tendencies can be observed in employment, health, and education, especially of girls and women, and perennial armed conflicts and civil strife continue to afflict the region.

10. The reports from each region clearly show that without high quality, environmentally sustainable economic growth, whose benefits can be transmitted to all social sectors, it is impossible to solve the problems mentioned. This kind of growth depends on the achievement of more favourable conditions for international trade and the absorption of technological progress by developing economies.

11. However, the kind of economic growth that is actually taking place in the economies that are recovering and even attaining acceptable or high levels of expansion does not necessarily resolve the problem of social inequalities and exclusions; thus the need to simultaneously seek economic growth and more social equity.

12. This calls for an integrated approach, choosing economic policies that promote social equity along with growth, and social policies that emphasize not only social equity but also productivity and efficiency. Such an approach keeps to a minimum the trade-offs between growth-oriented policies and those that seek to increase well-being and income distribution, and also achieves maximum complementarity between the two objectives.

13. Emphasis should be given to those policies designed to generate productive employment; disseminate technology, particularly in agriculture; achieve food sufficiency and nutrition; provide support for micro-, small and medium-size enterprises; increase savings, and especially, promote investment in human resources.

14. This integrated policy approach, aiming at simultaneous economic growth and social equity, should be implemented in the context of public and private efforts to expand democracy, respect for human rights, tolerance, protection of minorities and social participation, and to reach acceptable levels of environmental sustainability in the development processes.

15. This twofold approach is fully applicable to the three core issues of the World Summit for Social Development, namely, enhancement of social integration, alleviation and reduction of poverty, and expansion of productive employment, which are considered separately.

b) Social integration

16. The different regional analyses show that social integration is essential for economic and social development, in that it enables different individuals and groups in society to live and work together towards shared objectives that do not contradict one another and that transcend individual and group interests. Social integration, therefore, is the process that gives every person and social group in a country the opportunity to participate in development and enjoy its benefits.

17. The above-mentioned global trends imply that all of the regions are experiencing serious difficulties with respect to both social cohesion and offering equal opportunities for different social groups to participate in decision-making and to partake in the benefits of development. These difficulties are obviously aggravated by the economic recession affecting a number of regions and countries.

18. Obstacles to social cohesion are illustrated by the relative inability of many countries to reach basic consensus on how their political system should function, and therefore their incapacity to manage their internal conflicts through peaceful means and negotiation. This situation is particularly striking in Africa, where two thirds of the 52 African countries were immersed in civil conflicts in 1993, with incalculable human cost.

19. Serious conflicts marked by high levels of violence have also taken place in other regions. Despite some advances in democratization and the observance of human rights, serious contradictions have arisen between new cultural values and traditional identities. Solutions have not been found, and there has been an outbreak of ethnic, religious and linguistic strife and a repression of minorities, often endangering the very unity of countries. This kind of situation has arisen, to varying degrees, in Asia, Africa, Western Asia and in some of the European countries with transitional economies.

20. The following needs appear to cut across all the regions: to modernize the State; to decentralize public action; to create a closer relationship between political leaders and the citizenry; to make public administration more transparent; to strengthen civil society, opening up more channels of representation, especially for non-governmental organizations; to encourage tolerance and cultural pluralism; and to reconcile modern universal values with the cultural traditions of each region and country.

21. The reports of the different regions also point to the need to adapt social policies to social change: for example, to bring them into line, in Western Asia, with changes in family patterns; in Europe, with an ageing population and one-parent households; and in all of the regions, with the need for profound reforms in the educational and health-care systems.

22. With respect to equal access for different social groups to the benefits of development, there is a notable increase in problems of exclusion and marginalization of the most deprived social groups. A major concern is the cultural, economic and political discrimination still affecting women, despite the achievement of more equality in the legal sphere and the labour market.

23. Young people in all of the regions are among those most affected by social tensions and economic constraints. The difficulties they face in entering the labour market, together with the crisis in the educational system, leave them particularly vulnerable to violence and delinquency. Many neither study nor have productive employment.

24. To differing degrees, all the regions suffer from serious problems of exclusion of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities; in the case of Western Asia, there is the additional problem of large numbers of people left handicapped by armed conflicts. Other regions must cope with refugees and displaced persons; the latter number 20 million in Africa, or half the whole world's refugees.

25. All the foregoing indicates that in the area of social integration, besides national policies for confronting present difficulties, a whole new area is opening up for international cooperation, which should include the exchange of experiences in strengthening public institutions devoted to social development, health care, education, protection of human rights, environmental sustainability, population policies, integration of women into development, the cultural dimension of development and the protection of children, among others.

c) Alleviation and elimination of poverty

26. The alleviation of poverty is a priority objective for all of the regional commissions. Leaving aside technical discussions on how to determine the poverty line, the commissions concur that millions of people today are deprived of their most basic needs and live in conditions beneath human dignity; this population should be at the core of development efforts.

27. Poverty, both absolute and relative, is present in all of the regions. It affects almost 200 million people in Latin America and the Caribbean, or 46% of the population; 94 million of these (22% of the population) live in absolute poverty. Asia has 800 million poor, the highest concentration in the world. The most dramatic increase in poverty has been in Africa. In 1985, more than 105 million Africans lived in poverty. That number rose to 216 million by 1990, and is projected to reach 304 million by the year 2000. Poverty is also massive and widespread in Western Asia. Further, the incidence of poverty is beginning to grow in Europe as a result of recession and unemployment. In Eastern Europe, particularly in the territories of the former Soviet Union, poverty is acquiring alarming proportions.

28. There is an obvious inverse correlation between economic growth and levels of poverty, although economic growth is a necessary but not a sufficient condition to eliminate poverty. In any case, macroeconomic equilibria and economic expansion that creates productive employment and better wages offer a way to escape for those who are living in poverty because of unemployment, non-productive employment or low wages.

29. Other forms of poverty are left unresolved by mere growth, such as the different forms of rural poverty that are so widespread in some regions. For example, during the 1980s, 80% of the rural population in several Asian countries were poor. They suffered from a lack of arable land, low productivity, lack of protection from floods, and barriers to the use of infrastructure and social services. In sub-Saharan Africa, 60% of the rural population lives in poverty. Similar problems are found in Western Asia and in a number of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

30. This situation generates a permanent exodus from the countryside to the cities, with the resulting consequences of urban overcrowding, environmental degradation and worsening poverty. In urban areas, poverty is widespread among those in the informal sector of the economy who lack marketable skills and access to credit.

31. All this points to a clear need in both urban and rural areas for the poor to accumulate capital, and therefore for policies that will increase their productivity by training present and future manpower, providing access to credit and offering technical assistance to micro- and small enterprises.

32. Besides producing diagnostic studies, surveys and statistics, the State should play a complementary role in compensating especially those sectors in extreme poverty, and, through taxes and other mechanisms, producing an efficient, balanced social budget targeted primarily at the poorest of the poor.

33. As ESCAP and ECLAC point out, even in a context of growth and efforts to achieve more social equity, social security safety nets must be provided to protect the sectors most exposed to short-term difficulties such as agricultural hazards or periodical adjustments from falling into chronic poverty. The success of all these policies depends on the participation of their target population as a counterpart to the State.

34. Even though poverty takes different forms in different regions, in all of them a disproportionate number of women live in poverty. This fact directly affects the number of poor children. In Africa, for example, it is estimated that the number of women living in absolute poverty rose by 50% in the last 20 years, compared to an increase of 30% for men in the same period.

35. Efforts to alleviate poverty provide important opportunities for regional and international cooperation. These include, in particular, the promotion of new forms of external financing to complement the domestic efforts of less developed countries to increase the volume and quality of investments to benefit the poorest segments of society, and the establishment of information networks on anti-poverty policies that allow for the exchange of available experiences and information.

d) Expansion of productive employment

36. The reports from the regional commissions lead to the conclusion that the creation of more productive employment is the key to a strategy that links economic growth and higher levels of social equity.

37. The importance of growth for the creation of more productive jobs is clearly seen in the experience of the Asian countries that have achieved high growth rates in recent years. Despite massive infusions of technological progress, they have been able to generate new productive employment, thereby producing sweeping social changes that will most likely continue in the near future.

38. The situation in Africa, on the contrary, is tremendously regressive. Even though precise data are unavailable, indications are that productive labour in the region grew at an average annual rate of 2.4% in 1991, while the work force increased by 3.2%; formal-sector employment dropped from 10% in 1980 to 8% in 1990, and unemployment rose from 7.7% in 1978 to 22.8% in 1990 and is projected to soar to 30% by the year 2000.

39. Expanding productive employment is difficult all over the world. Unemployment in Europe and North America reached 30 million, jumping by a third in two and a half years. Unemployment rose to 10% in Western Europe and is even higher in the transitional economies. And the changes presently taking place threaten to produce even higher levels of unemployment in the future.

40. Everything indicates that this situation in the developed countries is not of a short-term nature, and that new initiatives are needed, such as job sharing, reforms in unemployment insurance systems, retraining, support for small and medium-size enterprises in the context of a strategy of economic development leading to higher sustainable growth.

41. One aspect that makes unemployment and underemployment even more alarming in all the regions is the extremely high proportion of youth aged 15-24 that finds itself in this situation.

42. In order to create higher levels of productive employment, it is necessary to steadily increase investment to maintain high levels of capital formation, develop policies to promote competitiveness-enhancing production and technology, encourage greater investment in human resources, and generate a new relationship between wages and productivity levels, taking into account stability and worker participation.

43. The informal sector, both urban and rural, is still a very important part of the economies of all the developing regions. Therefore, an essential element of any general development strategy should be to raise productivity in that sector. Thus it will be essential to develop plans for training, infrastructure development and improvement of the working conditions in that sector.

44. The changes in the patterns of production that are taking place in different ways and with varying intensity in all of the regions suggest the need to provide aid and protection for workers who relocate. Therefore, policies must be promoted that lower the costs of instability and of adapting, retraining and reconverting manpower, at the same time providing for efficient unemployment insurance plans.

45. The issue of international labour-force mobility is becoming more important and complex. Recent data from Western Asia indicate that the total number of foreign workers in the Gulf countries reached 5,128,000 by mid-1990, comprising more than two thirds of the labour force in that area and growing by 3.3% during the 1985-1990 period. In the Asian and Pacific region, more than a million citizens were working as contract labourers in other countries both inside and outside the region in 1989.

46. These massive displacements have heavy economic, social and cultural repercussions and are seriously vulnerable to conflictive political situations, like those at the time of the Gulf War.

47. It appears essential, therefore, to establish regional and international agreements on labour mobility that can predict the effects generated by economic integration programmes, coordinate migration policies and protect the human rights of migrant workers.

48. In an increasingly globalized economy, world trade and competitiveness must be made compatible with the rights of workers, giving priority to and enforcing basic international labour regulations.

49. Along with the above-mentioned areas of regional and international cooperation, information systems could be set up that allow for exchanging experiences in successful productive job creation and innovations in employer-employee relations.

III. REGIONAL COMMISSIONS' PERSPECTIVES

A. ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA (ECA)*

* Text submitted by the Economic Commission for Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Development can be sustainable only to the extent that it is human-centred. This leads inexorably to the belief that new and imaginative ways must be found to respond to such common challenges as the persistence of poverty and wide disparities in the quality of life, high levels of unemployment, the adverse social effects of market-based strategies of economic management, disintegration of the social fabric, misgivings about environmental degradation and pollution, and instability wrought by ethnic tensions and associated conflicts.

Nowhere, perhaps, is the intensity of human deprivation more acutely felt than in the African region. Africa remains the only region where human and social conditions continue to give grave cause for concern. More than a decade of economic decline has been accompanied by a significant deterioration, even reversal, of earlier gains in human welfare and well-being. About half the region's population lives in absolute poverty. Malnutrition and hunger is widespread. Soaring unemployment and underemployment have reached unacceptably high proportions. A host of diseases, including the resurgence of those previously controlled, threatens the health and lives of millions of Africans. Access to education, especially of girls and women, has declined affecting adversely the formation of the skills needed for self-reliant and sustained development. Perennial armed conflicts and civil strife continue to afflict the region resulting in the loss of human life, displacement of people and an army of refugees.

The reversal of this alarming state of affairs requires a comprehensive and concurrent attack on all fronts. African governments and people, must bear the major responsibility for meaningful and lasting change. However, a conducive external environment and assured support must complement our efforts.

Africa and its external development partners must take stock of prevailing conditions and commit themselves to an Actionable Agenda for Human and Social Development in the region. To this extent, the Summit has a special meaning for Africa and its people. This conviction underlies the essence of the African Common Position on the World Summit for Social Development.

The Common Position is presented in five sections. Section I reviews the state of human and social development in Africa. This is followed by a discussion in section II of the major concerns, objectives and targets to be achieved in these areas during the next two decades.

I. THE STATE OF HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

Today, an overwhelming majority of Africans are caught in a vicious circle of poverty, unemployment and underemployment, malnutrition and hunger, disease and ill-health. These adversities combine in a destructive manner to magnify other social problems including weak family structures, crime, drug abuse, homelessness, street children, delinquency and prostitution.

Through increasing inequities, disparities and social polarization, the common feature of these inauspicious trends is that they engender the marginalization and exclusion of social groups such as women, the permanently unemployed and the poor. Social disintegration has been to such an extent that the social fabric in most countries is worse off today than they had been at independence.

On top of this, millions of lives are being lost through armed conflict and civil strife creating in its wake refugees and displaced persons. Africa's human and social predicament is complex in origin but may be attributed to the combined interplay of economic, social and political factors. The economic crisis arises fundamentally from the lop-sided structure of African economies compounded by policy failures in economic management and institutional weakness.

Several external factors have also contributed to the region's economic difficulties. Prominent among these is the dramatic collapse of Africa's exports in both volume and prices during the 1980s. As a result, export earnings have plummeted and recurrent balance-of-payments crises have been accompanied by external debt which for the region as a whole had reached US\$ 281.8 billion by the end of 1992.¹ A crippling debt service burden drains the region of well over US\$ 10 billion annually, diverting resources desperately needed for development.

Over and above this, in many countries a crisis of governance encompassing such well-known shortcomings as the near absence of democratic structures, popular participation, political accountability and transparency, policy and institutional weaknesses is pervasive.

Against this background, human and social conditions are no more perilous anywhere in the world today than in Africa. Key indicators of human well-being declined precipitously during the 1980s, a trend that has continued in the 1990s. To this extent, earlier gains in such areas as health, education, food self-sufficiency and nutrition, among others, have been reversed. This section reviews major areas of concern in the state of human and social conditions in the region.

A. Poverty

Fewer opportunities for productive employment in the context of stagnating economies, a population of 622 million in 1992 and an average annual growth rate of 3.2%, present perhaps the most fundamental challenge for dealing with the poverty problem at its roots. Time-series data on per capita income leads to the inescapable conclusion that poverty in Africa is severe and brutal. Per capita income in the region as a whole declined from US\$ 732 in 1980 to US\$ 654 in 1992 or at an average annual rate of 1%. For

¹ ECA (Economic Commission for Africa), Economic Report on Africa 1993 (E/ECA/CM.19/3), Addis Ababa, 1993, p. 30.

sub-Saharan Africa, real per capita income declined from US\$ 563 in 1980 to US\$ 485.² Over 105 million Africans were deemed to be living in poverty in 1985. By 1990, this number had increased to 216 million and is projected to reach 304 million people —about half the region's population— by the year 2000.³

Rural poverty is most pervasive. The income and consumption of some 60% of the rural population in sub-Saharan Africa fall below nationally defined poverty lines.⁴ But rapid urbanization, now approaching 10% of population, has been accompanied by spiralling growth in urban poverty.

In general, the burden of poverty is most severe among women, and female-headed households. Moreover, the poverty of women has direct implications to the poverty of children. About a third of African households are estimated to be headed by women. It is further estimated that the proportion of women living in absolute poverty rose by 50% over the last 20 years as against 30% for men over the same period.⁵

These trends are all the more alarming as projections show that the incidence of poverty in Africa will increase while falling in other regions of the world. The distribution of global poverty is estimated to shift dramatically towards Africa, increasing its share from 16% in the mid-1980s to the startling figure of 32% at the turn of the century.⁶

It follows from this that the challenge of poverty alleviation has assumed greater urgency in the 1990s than it had during the independence era of the 1960s. Aside from the political, economic and social marginalization of the poor, the effects of poverty are particularly damaging to the family structure and the prospects of social integration.

B. Unemployment and underemployment

Although data on productive employment in Africa are incomplete, outdated and unreliable, nevertheless available evidence points to a severe crisis in employment. Productive employment in the region grew at an average rate of 2.4% per annum in 1991 while the labour force increased at a rate of 3.2% during the same period.⁷

² ECA data bank, October 1992 (per capita figures are given in 1980 prices).

³ World Bank, World Development Report, 1990, Washington, D.C., 1990, p. 139.

⁴ Jazairy Idriss, Mohiuddin, A. and T. Panuccio, The State of World Rural Poverty: An Inquiry in its Causes and Consequences, New York, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), 1992, p. 1.

⁵ Ibid., see also UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), The State of the World's Children, 1994, New York, 1993; and Transitional Government and Ethiopia/UNICEF, Children and Women in Ethiopia: A Situational Report 1993, Addis Ababa, 1993.

⁶ ILO/JASPA (International Labour Organisation/Jobs and Skills Programme for Africa), African Employment Report 1992, Addis Ababa, 1992.

⁷ ILO (International Labour Organisation), Yearbook of Labour Statistics, Geneva, 1992.

In terms of distribution, the share of the labour force in formal sector wage employment is not only low but also decreasing, from a regional average of 10% in 1980 to less than 8% in 1990.⁸ On the other hand, employment in the urban informal sector showed an upward trend during the 1980s and accounted for 25% of the labour force in 1991, suggesting an increasing informalization of the labour market.⁹ The agricultural and non-farm rural sectors accounted for the remaining two-thirds.

Open unemployment is estimated to have risen from 7.7% in 1978 to 22.8% in 1990 and is projected to increase to 30% by the year 2000.¹⁰ Unemployment is especially high in urban areas although its incidence is increasingly beginning to surface in rural areas as well. The unprecedented rates of migration of the rural population to urban areas has exacerbated the unemployment problem in urban centres. Other factors contributing to the worsening employment situation in some countries include drought, degradation of the physical environment, and civil strife.

In addition, the resort to retrenchment and a freeze on employment in the civil service and State-owned enterprises, as part of public expenditure cuts that accompanied economic recovery programmes, has contributed to unemployment. During the early 1980s, the public sector accounted for over 50% of formal sector employment in the region. This is expected to fall to 30-35% of formal wage employment during the 1990s.¹¹ Few redeployment or retraining schemes have been initiated or sustained. Moreover, retrenchment has generally not been accompanied by substantial wage increases, better conditions of service, and other incentives for those who remain to reduce the incidence of corrupt and unethical practices arising out of personal hardship, and to enhance public sector productivity and improve morale.¹²

A particularly disturbing feature of unemployment trends is the growing preponderance of young persons (15-24 years old) among the unemployed. Moreover, within this category, young women tend to experience higher rates of unemployment. Africa is the only region where the proportion of young persons in relation to the overall population will continue to grow over the next 30 years.

Evidence has also emerged to support the conclusion that unemployment is creeping up "the educational ladder".¹³ This is in fact paradoxical. On the one hand a growing number of both secondary school and post-secondary school graduates cannot find jobs partly because modern sector jobs are simply not there but also because the educational system is turning out too many graduates of dubious relevance and quality. Yet, on the other hand, there is a massive brain drain of indigenous high-level professionals and technicians, thereby necessitating the employment of expensive expatriate and technical assistance personnel.

⁸ ILO/JASPA, African Employment Report..., op. cit., p. 13.

⁹ Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁰ ILO/JASPA (International Labour Organisation/Jobs and Skills Programme for Africa), Report on the ILO/JASPA African Employment Report 1992 (E/ECA/PHSD/MFC/93), Addis Ababa, 1993, p. 2.

¹¹ ILO/JASPA, African Employment Report..., op. cit., p. xii.

¹² ECA (Economic Commission for Africa), Strategic Agenda for Development Management in Africa in the 1990s (E/ECA/CM.19/11), Addis Ababa, 1993, pp. 4-7.

¹³ ECA (Economic Commission for Africa), Measures for Solving Educated and Graduate Unemployment in African Countries, Studies in Human Resources Development series, No. 1 (ECA/PHSD/HRD/92/2[(b) (viii)]), Addis Ababa, 1992.

Underemployment, that is relatively low productivity, is a condition that is found in Africa's large rural sector as well as the growing informal sector. It increased throughout the 1980s and is estimated to affect about 90 million people in the region.¹⁴ The causes include the poor health and nutrition status of large sections of the work force, the inappropriateness of education and training, and rudimentary techniques of production. National policies and economic management have rarely provided an enabling environment for the stimulation of entrepreneurial impulses.

Against the background of high inflation in most countries, real wages fell by about 10% per annum between 1980 and 1990. Indeed, real minimum wages in many African countries fell below nationally defined poverty lines.¹⁵ This also has adverse implications for the incentive structure and labour productivity.

Living standards have been severely eroded because of falling real wages and increasing unemployment. This has contributed to the incidence and spread of poverty. Together with unfavourable social and political conditions, this reality is forcing many African professionals, technicians, and even unskilled labour to move to other countries in search of better prospects. Indeed, the brain drain is yet another constraint on efforts to promote economic recovery.

C. Literacy, education and training

Access to education and training at all levels in Africa continues to be limited. This is evident from declining gross enrolments. Between 1985 and 1989 gross enrolment at primary school level increased at an annual average rate of 2%; secondary level at 5.3% and tertiary level at 5.9%.¹⁶ However, by the early 1990s, growth in enrolments at all levels represented between one third and a half of those in the 1970s, with primary education recording the highest decline. This is evident by the declining proportion of African children of the relevant age group in primary school, from 79% in 1980 to 72% by 1990.¹⁷ These figures are alarming because of Africa's relatively high rate of illiteracy.

Low female enrolments and high female drop-out and repeater rates also characterize many African countries' educational systems. Education for women is particularly important because of its proven multiplier effects on the development process. Studies have shown that increasing levels of female education are inversely correlated to high levels of fertility. In addition, female education generally has a positive impact on the nutrition status of the family, thereby reducing chances of morbidity and mortality.

¹⁴ United Nations, Economic Crisis in Africa, Report of the UN Secretary-General prepared for the Session of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the UN General Assembly, New York, 1991, p. 31.

¹⁵ ILO/JASPA (International Labour Organisation/Jobs and Skills Programme for Africa), African Employment Report 1990, Addis Ababa, 1991, p. 39.

¹⁶ UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), Statistical Yearbook 1991, table 2, Paris, 1992.

¹⁷ Donors to African Education News Letter, vol. 5, No. 2, Paris, International Institute for Educational Planning, 1993.

Cuts in public spending on education, limited secondary school places, rising cost of attendance, and pressures on children to earn income have reversed what was a steady improvement in school enrolment. Less than a third of African children now attend secondary school. Similarly, enrolments in vocational and technical training have significantly declined. Furthermore, only 2% on average of the relevant age group are receiving post-secondary and tertiary education. These trends in conjunction with out-moded curricula, teaching methods, and inadequate resources have adverse implications for skill formation and consequently for informal sector and enterprise development. Accordingly, the capacity to utilize and assimilate modern development ideas and technologies is limited.

Moreover, views are being advanced in some circles to the effect that Africa need not put much emphasis on higher education, especially university education, since its comparative social rate of return is much lower than secondary and primary education. This is an erroneous policy stance that ignores many realities. For example, such policy fails to acknowledge the important role of the university for preparing and supporting people in positions of responsibility in government, business, and the professions. It also underestimates the key role of universities as centres of development-related research in fields ranging from economics to environment; and natural resources to nationality issues; and minimizes the importance of the link between indigenous human resource and the indigenization of the development process. Declining trends in education and training pose a serious obstacle to sustainable development. In this regard, literacy, education and training at all levels must be viewed as critical investments to be protected from budgetary cuts.

D. Food and nutrition

Africa is essentially an agricultural and pastoral region yet food and agricultural output has declined substantially since the 1960s. Today, about 25% of food requirements are met through imports from abroad and food aid. While drought, desertification and other natural factors have contributed to the decline in food production, it would be incorrect to blame the food crisis entirely on the weather. Policy failure and political instability are also key factors among the causes of the food crisis.¹⁸

With the decline of food production per capita, the daily calorie in-take averaged only 92% of requirements during the last 10 years. The number of Africans unable to obtain the minimum requirements of 1600-1700 calories has increased from 99 million in 1980 to 168 million in 1990/1991.¹⁹

One of the consequences of the lack of food self-sufficiency is the prevalence of severe malnutrition in terms of protein-energy malnutrition (PEM), iron deficiency anaemia, vitamin A deficiency and iodine deficiency disorders. Children have been the most affected. In 1990, out of 177 million malnourished children in the world, some 30 million were Africa children.²⁰

¹⁸ Eshetu Chole (ed.), Food Crisis in Africa: Policy and Management Issues, New Delhi, Vikas, 1990, p. v.

¹⁹ FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), The State of Food and Agriculture, Rome, 1992.

²⁰ UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), The State of the World's Children 1991, New York, 1991.

Moderate to severe PEM increases the risk of dying of infectious diseases by factors of 3 to 8 respectively. Similarly, nutritional anaemia and vitamin A deficiency increase morbidity and mortality in young children, while iodine deficiency disorders are associated with impairment of mental and intellectual functions in children and adults.²¹

E. Health

Africa's socio-economic crisis has had a particularly devastating effect on the health sector resulting in severe budgetary cuts and a virtual collapse of the health infrastructure in many countries. Essential drugs are in acute short supply or not available at all. The ratio of health service personnel to population is one of the worst in the world; e.g., in 1985 in sub-Saharan Africa one doctor served an average of 27,000 persons compared to 450 persons in industrialized countries.²² Moreover, this average masks serious differences between countries as well as between rural and urban areas within countries, for instance, 1:80,000 in Burkina Faso; 75,000 in Rwanda; 40,000 in Niger and so on.²³

A very high percentage of Africans continue to succumb to diseases which in other regions of the world have been overcome through improvements in public health and living conditions and the application of preventive methods. Many common illnesses, including gastro-intestinal complaints, parasitic infections, malaria, tuberculosis, cholera, diarrhoea, measles, etc., are claiming many lives. On top of this, the HIV/AIDS pandemic is raging across the region.

The data is simply staggering. Malaria killed almost 1.5 million under-5 children in 1989.²⁴ On average, diarrhoea claims the lives of 1.5 children annually. It is estimated that in 1991 some 42% of all cases of diarrhoea in the world occurred in Africa.²⁵ Significant continent-wide progress has been made in preventive health through the Expanded Programme of Immunization (EPI) against the six major killer diseases affecting children. However, diseases such as malaria, diarrhoea, pneumonia and acute respiratory infections which claimed the lives of scores of children cannot be covered by EPI.

The spread of the AIDS epidemic in Africa poses a major threat. Of the estimated 12 to 13 million people world-wide infected with AIDS in 1991, about 50% were in Africa.²⁶ By 1993, 7 million Africans were believed to be infected of which 1 million were new born babies. Unless effective measures are taken to control the risk of infection, nothing short of a major catastrophe awaits.

It is clear from the foregoing that practically all indicators show that rates of morbidity and mortality are higher in Africa than the rest of the world. Indeed, Africa's under-5 mortality rate at 179 is the highest in the world. The average life expectancy of 55.5 years is 10 years lower than the world

²¹ OAU/UNICEF (Organization of African Unity/United Nations Children's Fund), Africa's Children, Africa's Future: Background Sectoral Papers, New York, 1992, pp. 37-38.

²² World Bank, Social Indicators of Development, 1990, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990.

²³ World Bank, African Development Indicators, 1992, Washington, D.C., 1992, p. 315.

²⁴ ECA (Economic Commission for Africa), Report on the African Social Situation in 1993 (E/ECA/CM.19/CRP.1), Addis Ababa, 1993.

²⁵ WHO (World Health Organization), 1991 World Health Statistics, Geneva, 1992.

²⁶ United Nations, Report on the World Social Situation 1993, New York, 1993, p. 39.

average. Needless to say, disease and sickness lower the productivity of the population, increases poverty, with adverse consequences for the economy.

F. Conflict, civil strife and social disintegration

Armed conflict occurs within and between states when contending groups and factions resort to violence rather than peaceful means to settle disputes. During the period 1960 to 1976, there were more than 20 major internal and border wars. Ten more were added to this number during the 1980s which continues to grow as new conflicts erupt in the 1990s in countries such as Angola, Chad, Liberia, Somalia, the Sudan, and Mozambique. More recently, armed insurrections among ethnic groups have affected Burundi, Djibouti, Mali, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo and Zaire. While reliable data on casualties from such conflicts is hard to come by, the number of people estimated to have lost their lives between 1960 and 1990 is around 7 million.

Civil strife is closely associated with challenges to authoritarian structures of government, as well as ethnic and communal confrontations. Allied to this, the deepening socio-economic crisis, the exclusion of disadvantaged and marginalized groups, poverty and alienation, have resulted in the weakening of the family and increased social disintegration. Crime, delinquency, prostitution, drug abuse, child neglect, and family tensions are some of the results.²⁷

Armed conflict, civil strife and social disintegration, have a devastating impact on Africa's social and economic progress including the destruction of physical and social infrastructure, irrigation systems, and agricultural activities, the collapse of civil society, the breakdown of the family and the displacement of people. On this last point, over 20 million Africans are refugees and displaced persons. This represents about half of the world's refugees.²⁸

Concomitantly with the decline in all the indicators of human and social development is the virtual collapse of African institutional capacity in this area. Hospital and health centres lack basic equipment and amenities; schools lack basic necessities such as chalk; African universities and institutions once the training ground for the region's leaders, professionals and technicians have now been reduced to empty shells. The morale of those working in these institutions has reached rock bottom. But perhaps the most serious shortcoming is the lack of institutional capacity to formulate, implement and monitor human development. without a concerted effort to rebuild and rehabilitate African institutions, all talk about development and change will remain wishful thinking.

²⁷ ECA (Economic Commission for Africa), The impact of Social and Economic Changes on the Family: Policy and Programme Implications, Tunis, United Nations Africa and Western Asia Preparatory Meeting for the International Year of the Family, 1993.

²⁸ UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), The State of the World's Children 1992, New York, 1992.

II. AFRICA'S MAJOR HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT CONCERNS AND OBJECTIVES

An urgent task and challenge facing Africa is to mount a persistent attack on the underlying causes of human deprivation and indignity. The urgency of dealing with the multiple challenges of human deprivation as well as restoring dignity to millions of Africans is predicated on the recognition that the human being must be at the centre of all development efforts. Indeed, the poor and marginalized, especially women and youth, expect nothing less than recognition of their plight and sustained action to overcome the vulnerabilities under which they live.²⁹ In this regard, four major interrelated areas of concern can be identified as follows.

- alleviating poverty;
- creating productive employment and income generation;
- enhancing social integration, national cohesion, peace and political stability in the region; and
- promoting democratization and fostering popular participation.

These concerns are mutually reinforcing and require concerted action on several fronts to meet such objectives as:

- putting the well-being of people at the centre of all development initiatives, policies and programmes;
- ensuring that population policies are formulated and implemented in coordination with policies aimed at addressing environmental degradation;
- giving due attention and priority to the social implications of market-based strategies of economic management;
- investing in human resource development, especially in such areas as education, health, social services, and housing; and promotion of food self-sufficiency and security;
- providing a conducive environment for entrepreneurship and enterprise development leading to the generation of productive employment and income; and
- fostering peace, political stability and social integration.

Sustained development without effectively tapping and utilizing human capacities and capabilities is neither conceivable nor feasible. Indeed, it is a truism that human development "weaves development around people, not people around development".³⁰ In other words, development has to encompass the aspirations of the people and be sustained by the people themselves through their full and active participation.

The human dimensions of development must underlie all other objectives, be they economic, social, cultural, political or environmental. Africa must break out of the vicious cycle of poverty, appalling social conditions and dependence to achieve self-reliance and self-sustained growth and

²⁹ United Nations, International Conference on the Human Dimension of Africa's Economic Recovery and Development: The Khartoum Declaration, Addis Ababa, 1988, pp. 10-11.

³⁰ UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), Human Development Report, 1992, New York, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 2.

development. To do this, nothing short of the transformation of African economies is required. This can be accomplished only through investing in and building up peoples' capacities as well as improving social and economic conditions.

An environment of political stability, peace and human security are necessary conditions for people to act with confidence, assurance and predictability. It follows from this that the human cost of armed conflicts and internal strife in two-thirds of the 52 African states in 1993 is incalculable.³¹ It should be clear therefore that human security, peaceful ways of conflict management, and political stability are fundamental prerequisites for human-centred development.

To this extent, the importance of a sustained attack on the multi-faceted dimensions of poverty through the release of entrepreneurial dynamism, income generation activities and productive employment cannot be over-emphasized. Without innovative and imaginative strategies for productive employment and income generation, economic stagnation and poverty will persist.

This leads inexorably to the conclusion that human-centred development must be the focus of national and international interventions and efforts to promote economic recovery and sustainable development.

The reversal of Africa's unfavourable human and social conditions requires nothing less than a reorientation of the whole basis of development in the region. Such reorientation must build upon and strengthen indigenous capacities and capabilities and instill self-confidence. In all this, the empowerment of the people, and in particular women and youth participation as agents of positive change must be a necessary accompaniment. What is needed is a comprehensive and integrated strategy of development and structural transformation in which human development concerns must form the core. Such a strategy calls not only for major policy shifts and redirection of resources to human development at the national level, but also similar actions by Africa's development partners including international development agencies, bilateral donors, NGOs and people's organizations.

³¹ This negates the *raison d'être* of the development process itself. It has been observed that "we cannot develop people if they are dead"!

B. ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE (ECE)*

* Text submitted by the Economic Commission for Europe.

SELECTED SOCIAL ISSUES IN THE UN/ECE REGION

INTRODUCTION

After the momentous changes in central and eastern Europe over the past few years, the Economic Commission for Europe now comprises 53 member countries with enormous diversity in geographical location, size and magnitude of their economies and populations, and the level of political stability. Mainly as a result of the ongoing transformation in this part of Europe, the ECE region ceased to be an élite group of moderately to highly industrialized countries with well developed, yet different welfare policies and programmes, and relatively few major social problems.

Recent developments, in both market and transition economies, indicate a number of disturbing tendencies. In the transition countries these include continuing declines in economic activity, growing unemployment, falling real incomes and growing labour-related relative poverty, and the multiplication of a variety of social problems, which in the new democracies in central and eastern Europe greatly contribute to social tensions. In the market economies, the recent trends suggest continued economic stagnation or weak recovery of economic activity, levels of unemployment unprecedented since the 1930s and major strains on the welfare systems, which bring to the forefront compounding social problems.

The Commissions's mandate was and remains restricted to economic developments and issues in this now highly heterogeneous region, to the exclusion of related social trends and problems. Recent work of the Commission, therefore, has been focused on macroeconomic and related developments in major sectors, such as environment, transport, trade and statistics with a particular emphasis on issues arising from the political, economic and institutional transformations under way in transition countries. However, as the multifaceted activities of the Commission focusing on the various development issues could not be carried out in isolation from social trends, which are tightly interwoven with economic trends, in recent years the ECE secretariat has been active in developing a knowledge base in a variety of social areas. These areas comprise, *inter alia*, labour markets, with focus on unemployment, labour-related relative poverty, various population groups, salient demographic developments and statistical methodologies and data.

I. LABOUR MARKETS AND LABOUR-RELATED RELATIVE POVERTY

At the beginning of 1993, 30 million people were unemployed in western Europe and North America, an increase of more than one third in two and a half years. The unemployment rate has already exceeded the 10% mark in western Europe compared with less than 9% in 1991.

One of the most disturbing features of the current labour market situation is that the unemployment rate for persons under 25 years of age has risen considerably during the last two and a half years. The youth unemployment rate in western Europe reached nearly 20% at the end of 1992, and has continued to grow since. The highest youth unemployment rates were in Spain (33%), France, Italy, Ireland (about 28% in all three) and, probably, Turkey. The share of young persons in total unemployment has thus reached disturbing levels in most countries. In Italy half of all the unemployed were younger than 25 years. In the United Kingdom, Ireland, Spain, Sweden and Canada the share of youths in total unemployment was about one third or more. This huge army of unemployed young persons is not only an enormous economic waste but, unlike the elderly unemployed in general, is also a major factor behind the serious aggravation of a range of social problems.

Given the present record low levels of consumer confidence and the relatively weak economic fundamentals in general, particularly in the large west European economies, the expected upturn is likely to be much more gradual than previous recoveries. Cyclical rates of unemployment can therefore be expected to increase further and put additional pressure on budget deficits, which have already soared in the last two years due to higher interest rates, foregone tax income and increased unemployment-related expenditures.

Not surprisingly, unemployment began to move to the top of the economic policy agenda in 1993. Long-term unemployment trends in ECE market economies were considered by the Senior Economic Advisers to ECE Governments at their twenty-ninth session, held in June 1993. When reviewing the situation in western Europe, the Senior Advisers stressed that the persistence for too long of high levels of unemployment—that is, between 10% and 20%—runs the risk of encouraging dangerous political movements and forms of protest and of increasing protectionist forces to the detriment of all. For the present levels of unemployment to be substantially reduced, measures such as job sharing, reforms in unemployment insurance systems, retraining, support for small and medium-sized enterprises, are essential but unlikely to suffice. Important though they may be, these measures need to be put in the context of a strategy of economic development which should lead to higher and sustainable growth. Thus, one of the main challenges facing policy makers in western Europe at the present juncture is to keep inflation down without using unemployment as the crucial instrument. Over the years the ability of national governments to follow independent fiscal policies has been circumscribed by changes in the international payment system, and especially by free capital movements. However, there is a broad consensus that the economic policy objectives which used in the past to be sought through national policy, including employment as a priority goal, can still be achieved through enhanced international cooperation in one form or another.

The situation with regard to employment is still more serious in the transition economies of eastern Europe. Although unemployment grew at a slower pace than was expected during the early phase of the transition period—until 1991—it has since gained momentum and the growth of mass unemployment has become one of the main challenges which policy makers and the community at large have to address in eastern Europe and the successor states of the former USSR. This high level of

unemployment is generally explained by the combined effects of the collapse of traditional markets due to the dismantling of the CMEA, the destruction of the production system linked with the former command economy (which so far has not been completely replaced by the new system) and the need for stabilization policies which have negative effects on output and employment.

In 1992 most of the countries of the region experienced double-digit rates of unemployment (measured by standards which are believed to understate unemployment levels). At the end of the year some 6.5 million people were registered as unemployed ranging from 5% in ex-Czechoslovakia to 14% in Poland and 17% in Bulgaria. Rates of over 15% may well last for years. Indeed, there are compelling reasons to believe that in most transition economies unemployment may continue to rise rapidly as privatization gets under way and bankruptcy laws are brought into effect. Furthermore, concern is being raised about the increased precariousness of working conditions of many workers who are gradually pushed into low-income types of work.

As in western Europe, among the social groups which have been the most affected by these negative trends are young people and women. Throughout the region, youth unemployment has been rising sharply as employment opportunities in the "official" economy dried up. In several countries over one third of the registered unemployed are under the age of 24.

There is also in many transition countries mounting concern about the employment of women. Under the former system which was characterized by the so-called "unemployment on the job", women were relatively well integrated into the labour force —even though many problems arose from many working women's onerous double-day work. With the threat of massive unemployment the fear now is that women will lose their status as full labour force participants and be relegated to the dubious position of "secondary worker".

Another group hard hit by rising unemployment trends and the restructuring process under way is older workers. In most transition countries, the trend, as in western Europe, is towards the displacement of such workers and growing resort to earlier retirement schemes. As a result of these trends, many pre-pension age workers are pushed into the margin of the labour force and find it hard to avoid severe declines of their living standards.

Notwithstanding the different methodological approaches in establishing poverty lines, the problem of labour-market related poverty is likely to assume dramatic proportions in the transition economies of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Concern at the social implications of this development explains the anxiety to get social safety nets into position and the increasing willingness of western countries to support their construction with technical and financial assistance.

If this problem of rising poverty, unemployment and labour precariousness is to be effectively addressed in the future it will be essential to analyse more in-depth the many-sided links which exist between employment conditions, unemployment trends, emerging structures of labour markets and the provision of adequate safety nets.

II. POPULATION TRENDS AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF SELECTED POPULATION GROUPS

Interconnected with social and economic developments in the region are the population changes typical of the demographic maturity associated with low, often sub-replacement fertility, and low and still falling mortality. These population shifts are characterized by slow and, at times, negative population growth, and advanced and accelerating population ageing. They are compounded by international population movements, which are no longer restricted to South-North migration but increasingly involve East-West movements and new migration streams arising, in part, from dissolution of multi-ethnic states in central and eastern Europe. These demographic trends give rise to distinct population groups that require full social integration.

Age structures of populations in all member countries have undergone profound changes over the past few decades, and the changes are projected to continue into the early next century. As the share of the young declines, the proportions and numbers of the elderly (population aged 60 and over) increases. Among the elderly, in the majority of the countries, the proportions and numbers of the oldest old (elderly aged 75 and over) increase at a faster pace than those of persons below 75. These ageing trends go hand in hand with a gradual emergence of the multigenerational family, a family that consists of four, and increasingly five generations and has relatively small numbers of members in each generation. The aggregate population ageing and the accompanying family transformation pose major policy challenges to governments in the areas of old-age pension schemes, health care for the elderly, and long-term care for the oldest old. They also pose challenges for a fuller integration of the elderly, especially those with major disabilities, in the family, community and the society at large.

Advanced and accelerating population ageing is primarily a consequence of the long-term downward trends in the average family size. This fertility decline has been brought about by declines in marriage rates, which have, however, been largely compensated in recent decades by increases in non-marital cohabitation, and a decrease in the number of children couples choose to have. These trends have been associated with major gains in the educational attainment of women, increases in female participation in the labour force, and shifts in values toward family and children. Moreover, in addition to families consisting of couples in their first marriage who may or may not have children, a prevalent family form of a few decades ago, relatively numerous are families of cohabiting couples, one-parent families, and so-called reconstituted families. The increase in the numbers of lone-parent families have been particularly rapid in north and west European countries and in North America. Social policies to accommodate needs of lone-parent families and families of cohabiting couples are gaining in importance in response to shifting family and reproductive behaviour.

In the past five years, many ECE countries have experienced surges in uncontrolled immigration. The numbers of illegal migrants, asylum seekers, displaced persons and refugees have been rising in both western Europe and North America. Although immigration of foreign workers has been largely controlled at a low level, other forms of regular migration, especially those arising from family reunification, have continued unabated. In central and eastern Europe and in the territory of the former Soviet Union, the emergence of new independent states, economic hardship, ethnic strife and civil wars have all contributed to population movements which could not have been anticipated only a few years ago. These developments have resulted in sizeable communities of foreigners or "new" ethnic minorities that are at times exposed to intolerance, xenophobic and racist behaviour, and conflicts with majority populations.

The integration of these minority and foreigner groups into society is a major challenge to governments and international community.

In response to these demographic developments and emergence of population groups in need of full integration, the ECE secretariat, with financial support of the United Nations Population Fund, is carrying out policy-relevant research projects in the fields of population ageing and elderly, fertility and family behaviour, and international migration and migrant integration.

The ECE's statistical activities in this area include recommendations for national population and housing censuses (the primary source of demographic data), the development of health statistics (with WHO), education statistics (with UNESCO), labour statistics (with ILO) and demographic projections (with the Commission of the European Union). Plans also include the publication of international migration statistics and statistics which illustrate the relative status of men and women.

C. ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (ECLAC)

I. THE GLOBAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

The world's people are living in a period of intensive change marked by seemingly unprecedented opportunities for progress, but also by numerous conflicts and trends that run counter to the high ideals enshrined in the United Nations Charter: peace, security, respect for individual political, civil, economic and social rights and international cooperation and solidarity.

The virtual collapse of a number of utopian systems has given rise to a context in which democratic ideals predominate in the political sphere, and market-based strategies in the economic sphere. This has facilitated the formation of broad-based consensuses on national agendas. However, it has also led to the open questioning of political élites in many countries, an erosion of the principle of representative government and a widening gulf between society and public authority.

The economic sphere has been dominated by the globalization of the world economy, supported by the communications revolution and the consolidation of the transnational corporation as an actor of growing importance. However, in recent years, these developments have been accompanied by recession in the main industrialized economies, with a consequent intensification of protectionist pressures and difficulties in concluding multilateral negotiations under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). The technological sophistication that characterizes the current moment in history, and the pre-eminence of the market as the primary determinant of resource allocation, have been unable to correct deep-rooted inequalities, even in the major developed economies. Thus, two thirds of the world's people are still living in poverty, and the contrasts between different regions, countries and social strata in terms of relative well-being or backwardness are increasing. These phenomena are reflected, *inter alia*, in the prevailing frustration and despair among youth, together with delinquency and growing urban violence.

The countries of the region have been making the necessary adjustments to adapt to the new global situation. Within a short time, and not without high social costs, the region has reoriented its development strategy, re-establishing strict fiscal discipline and inflation control, in a context of drastic trade reforms that have reduced the levels of effective protection.

Today, promising signs can be detected in the region. Noteworthy in the political sphere are the establishment of pluralistic political systems and the gradual consolidation of a culture of democracy and tolerance in most countries. In the economic sphere, better macroeconomic management, broad-based consensus on the need to maintain macroeconomic balances, an incipient rebound in rates of savings and investment and a gradual process of changing production patterns have been observed. In addition, countries have renewed their commitment to intraregional cooperation, as shown by numerous formal economic integration agreements.

Notwithstanding these advances in the political and economic arenas, serious problems persist in Latin America and the Caribbean. Among the most important are the highly regressive effects of

economic adjustment, the consequent increase in poverty, the widespread worsening of income distribution, and social inequalities that appear to have widened.¹ The perception that large segments of the population are worse off than before while a minority has enjoyed visible improvements, as well as the widening gap between expectations and reality, have become serious sources of political and social tension.²

In sum, as the world stands on the threshold of a new millennium, many problems—including marginalization, exclusion, extreme poverty, inequality and intolerance—persist and have even worsened, although in a context of change. At the same time, a great many lessons can be learned from the experiences of this period, particularly those concerning the sweeping changes of recent times. Some of those experiences light the way towards greater well-being for all mankind; others at least provide clues to which paths have proved erroneous. Although the World Summit for Social Development cannot claim to offer a holistic, universally valid formula for achieving sustainable development with social equity in a democratic context, it should provide an opportunity to re-examine ways of progressing towards the fulfilment of those objectives. In that effort, the region of Latin America and the Caribbean not only stands to benefit, but also has much to contribute.

II. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AS PART OF AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

The macroeconomic trends observed both world-wide and in Latin America and the Caribbean are, on balance, ambivalent. At the global level, progress has been made in respect for individual freedoms, the allocation of resources and the modernization of production. However, these developments have been accompanied by growing social disparities in both developed and developing countries, reflected in increased unemployment (both open and hidden), swelling contingents of people who are excluded or marginalized from enjoyment of the fruits of economic expansion, and a pronounced upsurge in poverty and indigence.

The problems are so widespread and, in most countries, so severe, that it will be difficult to solve them through a multiplicity of sectoral policies, relief measures or social security systems. What is needed is a broad view of the concept of social development through which the above-mentioned problems can be addressed. In other words, from the Latin American and Caribbean perspective, meeting the three broad objectives of the World Summit for Social Development (enhancement of social integration, alleviation and reduction of poverty, and expansion of productive employment) requires an **integrated approach** that simultaneously seeks the mutually complementary goals of changing production patterns and enhancing social equity.

¹ See ECLAC, Panorama social de América Latina, Edición 1993 (LC/G.1768), Santiago, Chile, 1993.

² ECLAC, Changing Production Patterns with Social Equity: The Prime Task of Latin American and Caribbean Development in the 1990s (LC/G.1601-P), Santiago, Chile, March 1990. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.90.II.G.6.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has maintained that this approach is both necessary and feasible.³ It reasons that a change in production patterns, in order to be sustainable over time, calls for social cohesion, which cannot be achieved without higher levels of social equity. At the same time, greater social equity cannot be achieved without economic growth, which, in turn, cannot be attained without changing production patterns. It therefore seems clear that the two objectives reinforce each other and that social policy cannot be isolated from economic policy.

The integrated approach involves devising economic policies that foster not only growth but also equity, and social policies that emphasize their effects on production and efficiency, not only equity. In fact, growth and equity are products of both economic and social policy. This is why the aforementioned **integrated approach** must be taken, to ensure that public policy as a whole supports both changing production patterns and social equity.

In academic circles, attention is usually focused on the trade-offs between policies seeking growth, on the one hand, and those seeking greater well-being and better income distribution, on the other. However, many actions meet both objectives at the same time. Among these are the transfer of technology, especially in agriculture and in small- and medium-scale enterprises; increased savings; investment in human resources; and decentralization. Thus, emphasis should be placed on the **complementarities** between policies intended to meet these two objectives.

In any case, the region's high poverty levels will require the maintenance of compensatory and transfer policies for a long time to come. The right mix of access-giving and compensatory policies will vary by country according to demographic characteristics, the initial distribution of resources and the degree of advancement and consolidation of economic reforms.

"Changing production patterns" means economic expansion rooted in the deliberate, systematic absorption of technical progress; i.e., in steadily rising productivity. The goal is to promote growth that is also increasingly competitive in international markets, thus ensuring the sustainability of the process and facilitating the distribution of growth among various social strata. This growth must also be environmentally sustainable, to safeguard and enrich the supply of natural resources, in the interest of preserving the level and quality of life of present and future generations.

The changing of production patterns has many prerequisites, multiple requirements, and progress in meeting them must be made simultaneously. In other words, the effort must be **systemic**. For example, one crucial element is the enterprise, which is integrated into a network of linkages with other elements both within and outside the process, such as the educational system; technological, energy and transportation infrastructure; labour relations; the public and private institutional framework; and the financial system. The failure of any part of the system affects the rest, thus hindering the achievement of the desired international competitiveness.

³ ECLAC, Changing Production..., op. cit.; Sustainable Development: Changing Production Patterns, Social Equity and the Environment (LC/G.1648/Rev.2-P), Santiago, Chile, May 1991. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.91.II.G.5; Social Equity and Changing Production Patterns: An Integrated Approach (LC/G.1701/Rev.1-P), Santiago, Chile, 1992. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.92.II.G.5; and ECLAC/UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, Education and Knowledge: Basic Pillars of Changing Production Patterns with Social Equity (LC/G.1702/Rev.1-P), Santiago, Chile, 1992. United Nations publication, Sales No. E.92.II.G.6.

In order to change production patterns with social equity, coherent and sustained macroeconomic management is fundamental, but insufficient: it must be combined with sectoral policies that provide incentives for incorporating technical progress into the production process. Also required are institutional changes, especially to improve managerial capacity in public and private activities, including large-, medium- and small-scale enterprises.

Just as the region has reached consensus on the need for macroeconomic management to ensure stability and control inflation, so must it progress towards a consensus on social management to link stable, sustained growth to higher levels of social equity. Only through a broad-based consensus, in which all social actors share the conviction that the achievement of greater social equity and the consequent reduction of poverty are in the interest not only of the most disadvantaged, but also of society as a whole, can conflict be minimized and agreements be reached to link economic dynamism to social equity.

Consensus, then, is the preferred method of this approach to social development. While it presupposes the existence of diverse interests, it offers the logistics for reconciling them through negotiation and compromise, thus breaking the vicious circle of exclusion and relying on the generation of a sense of belonging as the foundation for building shared objectives and goals.

The exercise of effective citizenship in the region to strengthen the social fabric is related to the decentralization of decision-making and the promotion of social organization. The integrated approach to development emphasizes actions that empower individuals, groups and communities to progress through their own efforts by participating, in solidarity, in the search for solutions. Special efforts should be made to provide opportunities for real participation to individuals and groups of people who, owing to their ethnic or social background, place of residence, age or gender, are denied access to the benefits of development.

In sum, an analytical framework that integrates technical progress, international competitiveness, social equity and democracy can serve as the basis of a Latin American and Caribbean position at the World Summit for Social Development. Essentially, the integrated approach underscores three elements—technical progress, productive employment at fair wages and investment in human resources—, but also comprises a number of redistributive measures geared towards the most disadvantaged groups whose incorporation into higher-productivity sectors will take a long time. In this regard, social backwardness must be treated as an integral part of the problem of development, not as a phenomenon that can be alleviated or eliminated through isolated approaches.

III. SOCIAL INTEGRATION

The effort towards economic and social progress is an excellent area in which to enhance social cohesion. A "virtuous circle" can thus be set up between development and social integration. Of course, different interests and cultures are present in all societies, and their expression is an essential element of democracy. But the "virtuous" potential of the above-mentioned link can be tapped by creating basic consensuses on the values and objectives pursued, and by building an institutional framework in which conflicts can be resolved and controlled.

This means that social integration must be conceived as a process in which all the individuals and social groups that make up the societies of Latin America and the Caribbean participate in development

and enjoy its benefits. From this standpoint, social integration is a pending but attainable goal in the region.

Economic expansion is a prerequisite for reducing poverty and opening up new opportunities for the population. Economic stagnation and rising inflation tend to go hand in hand with the resurgence of conflicts related to the distribution of resources. These recurrent cycles tend to cause setbacks in the areas of social equity and the fight against poverty. Thus, the consolidation of macroeconomic stability and sustained growth are absolutely necessary for enhancing social integration.

It is clear, however, that if the fruits of growth are not distributed fairly, and if the gap between rich and poor widens and deepens as a result of behaviours such as conspicuous consumption, adherence to the system weakens. The current extreme disparities of income in Latin America and the Caribbean and the fact that vast sectors of the population are mired in poverty pose a challenge to the region which not only is an ethical imperative, but also has potentially serious repercussions on social and political stability.

In many cases, poverty and exclusion are concentrated in groups which, because of their ethnic background, age, social status, place of residence or gender, are marginalized or discriminated against with regard to access to the benefits of development. Although targeted programmes for their benefit and mechanisms for positive discrimination in their favour are undoubtedly necessary, paternalistic attitudes should be avoided. Such attitudes could accentuate their cultural and social marginality by according them special treatment, and may encourage an opportunism that increases their dependence on the State.

In view of the foregoing, the main concern is to generate effective equality of opportunity for all social groups. This means not only avoiding discrimination, but also providing those whose opportunities have been deferred with the tools and assets they need to integrate themselves effectively into the system. Since each group's individual features must be respected in this process, the organized participation of the beneficiaries, through the clear expression of their demands and the definition and implementation of programmes, is a precondition for success. Evidently, this reinforces the need to decentralize public action and authority, to move such actions closer to the people whom they benefit.

Beyond these general considerations, the situation of women calls for special attention. While the region can boast of significant progress in some areas, such as women's access to education and legal equality, expressed by the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, it is clear that the effective integration of this half of the population is an unfinished task.

An obvious sphere of action in this regard is the correction of the judicial, legal and rights-related inequalities that have prevailed to date, which affect women by impeding the development of their potential and validating the cultural images underlying discrimination. There is also an emerging consensus that the situation of women will not improve substantially unless they are empowered to exercise all the rights of citizenship. This means that men and women must have equal freedom of choice in their relations with each other and with society, including equality in political participation, decision-making and the exercise of power.

Young people constitute another population group requiring special attention. It is well known that one of the problems currently shared by many countries in the region is young people's difficulty in entering the labour market. This largely reflects the educational system's structural inability to give

students the abilities and skills demanded by modern enterprises. While the implementation of training programmes specially designed to equip young people to enter the job market may represent one solution to the current manifestation of the problem, it is clear that the region's educational systems must be thoroughly revamped.

It should be noted, however, that the adaptation of schools to the immediate requirements of the production structure, without regard to the comprehensive education of students, is not in itself a solution. Young people's aspirations are not (and should not be) limited to getting a job. The school system, and society as a whole, must be able to offer young people opportunities to express their various concerns. Experiments in this regard have shown that when such opportunities are provided, the prevailing stereotyped view of youth as being apathetic and anomic is dramatically contradicted.

Social integration and the building of a broad-based consensus on shared objectives and values should not be confused with social and cultural homogenization, nor can they be hegemonically imposed. The attainment of successive levels of social integration requires that democracy, in its broadest sense, be ensured and consolidated. This means enabling and encouraging citizens to participate at various levels of decision-making. However, it also means promoting a culture of concerted effort among different social actors, stimulating the process by strengthening those social actors and generating opportunities for participation.

IV. POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND REDUCTION

ECLAC studies show that in the early 1990s, nearly 200 million Latin Americans —46% of the total population— could not meet their basic needs, while 94 million —22% of the population— were living in extreme poverty. This upsurge in poverty has even affected population groups employed in the public sector and in medium- and large-scale enterprises; i.e., groups outside the low-productivity sectors of the labour market.

The main causes of the increase and persistence of poverty are (i) the rise in unemployment and in the number of people employed in very low-productivity jobs; (ii) the significant increase in the economically inactive population, whose pensions suffered a steep drop in purchasing power; and (iii) the massive decline in real wages in the region during the 1980s.

As noted earlier, the main requirement for gradually overcoming poverty is economic expansion. However, even high-quality growth cannot, in itself, eliminate all forms of poverty; what it can do, basically, is incorporate those who are able to integrate themselves by generating productive employment and higher wages, thus allowing workers to raise their standard of living as productivity increases and the unemployed join the labour force.

To rise above poverty, the poor must accumulate capital. While poor workers require less capital to raise their productivity than workers in the formal sector, they have much greater needs in terms of skills development. This points to the need for policies to increase the productivity of the poor by providing training for the present and future workforce, and credit and technical assistance for small businesses and micro-enterprises. The various social investment funds in the region are playing an important role in putting these policies into practice, often with encouraging results.

The State also has an indispensable role to play in poverty reduction: ensuring equality of opportunity so that everyone can become involved in development, especially through policies to provide short- and medium-term assistance to sectors living in extreme poverty and groups that cannot be assisted through the job market. The maintenance of these compensatory or welfare policies is justified not only by ethical reasons, but also by the need to forestall a further increase in poverty that will make it even harder to alleviate in the future. Even in the context of a growth process that brings about greater social equity, the persistence of agricultural vicissitudes and the periodic adjustments faced by economies increasingly vulnerable to changes in the international economy require the maintenance of a permanent social safety net, to ensure that situations of temporary poverty do not become chronic for want of timely assistance.

In fulfilling this function, the State must guarantee, first, a balanced level of spending through which resources can be effectively allocated to universal social welfare and public service programmes, which, even when they are provided by the private sector, should ensure that the poorest groups have access to their benefits. Second, the State must develop mechanisms to enhance the efficiency of social spending by evaluating and monitoring the impact of programmes and promoting more active participation by the beneficiary community as a counterpart of the State. Third, it must make use of baseline studies of sectoral deficiencies and vulnerable groups, in order to determine the severity and characteristics of poverty and establish an appropriate balance between universal and targeted programmes, according to the needs and stages of the fight against poverty. Children in especially difficult circumstances, female heads of household, unemployed and poorly educated youth and the economically inactive poor not covered by social security should be primary targets.

V. GENERATION OF PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT

The increased globalization of the world economy, as well as the greater integration of Latin American economies into international markets, have strengthened the link between growth and competitiveness. Since job creation depends on the level and structure of growth, only two options are available for meeting the challenge of competitiveness, from a labour standpoint: reduction of the costs of manpower, or enhancement of labour productivity.

Although some may see international integration based on cheap labour as an attractive alternative, this type of specialization is neither desirable nor viable for the countries of the region. The task, then, is to generate increasingly productive jobs.

This requires that challenges in a number of areas be met. The first and most obvious is that of investment: any attempt to improve productivity levels is destined to fail unless sustained efforts are made to maintain high levels of capital formation.

Closely related to the topic of investment is the question of policies to promote production and technology in open economies, a pending issue in the region. For the most part, such policies have simply been abandoned in closed economies, without the development of an effective substitute for promoting competitiveness. Behind the argument for non-discriminatory policies is a naïve and unsubstantiated belief that the mere functioning of the market is a necessary and sufficient tool for resolving issues related to technology, business, human resources, competitiveness and international standing.

Investment in people is another topic that is taking on greater significance and new characteristics. On the one hand, the process of changing production patterns is affecting the demand for qualified manpower, requiring greater versatility and creativity and less specialization than in the past. On the other hand, an institutional change has arisen from the larger role being played by enterprises in the training process, although this certainly does not obviate the need for public policies in this field. Such policies are necessary to provide incentives for training and to take advantage of available resources, and to assist those who need training in order to gain access to productive jobs but cannot afford it, such as young people from poor families.

In an economy that competes internationally, wages cannot continually rise faster than productivity, since that would erode competitiveness. However, methods of determining wages can affect results in terms of productivity. Thus, there is growing concern about exploring new ways of linking these variables. It should be borne in mind, however, that many of the initiatives taken by employers in this area have emphasized only one dimension of the arrangement —the link between wages and output— without regard to elements such as job stability or worker participation, which are not only an integral part of the original purpose of participatory wages, but are also a key factor in stimulating commitment on the part of workers.

Lastly, the new challenges of globalization have triggered major changes in enterprises' operating methods. The decrease in hierarchical structures and the promotion of self-monitoring and worker participation are some trends associated with the most successful experiences in raising productivity. These experiences are beginning to emerge slowly in the countries of Latin America, but their effective and comprehensive implementation will require significant changes in the cultural models of workers and employers. This incipient trend also involves a greater emphasis on bipartisanship and on the mechanism of collective bargaining, which take into account the idiosyncrasies of the enterprise or sector.

The considerations mentioned thus far illustrate some of the issues raised by the need to stimulate the creation of more productive jobs. In the new context, however, the problem of job stability is equally pressing. The rapid changes taking place internationally in the various production sectors, as well as the cycles of the world economy, have called into question ideas such as job stability or professional careers. Production sectors, enterprises and workers themselves must be prepared to adapt quickly to the changing requirements of competitiveness today. This means giving more weight to policies to retrain manpower or support the reconversion of production sectors, as well as those that help offset the costs of instability, such as unemployment insurance.

Some comments should be made on the problem of heterogeneity in the job market, which has historically been a concern in the region. Because of the magnitude of the problem and the challenges faced by Latin American economies in maintaining and enhancing competitiveness, it is unrealistic to expect that the problem is only temporary and will naturally resolve itself through the expansion of modern activities. While support for the informal sector helps to alleviate social problems, it should be oriented towards enhancing productivity.

The region's experiences with programmes of access to credit, training and other direct interventions in support of production in the informal sector indicate much progress. However, more progress is needed, in both reproducing such experiences and evaluating the real impact of the programmes, to improve their efficiency. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the overall development strategy must also take this sector into account, bearing its needs in mind —particularly in rural areas— in plans to develop infrastructure and to reform and improve education and the system of labour relations. From

this standpoint, the strengthening of this sector's capacity for autonomous representation is an important way of better integrating it into the overall development process.

Lastly, the subject of the quality of informal jobs, which are generally not regulated or protected, cannot be ignored. The problem is especially complex because the units of the sector have difficulty absorbing the costs associated with better jobs. The alternative of introducing exceptions through special regimes means establishing dual systems that could impede social integration, and runs the risk of concentrating the benefits derived from government support programmes in the hands of employers. A better solution is to extend support programmes to areas that have not yet been covered, such as health and safety conditions in the workplace.

VI. THE WORLD SUMMIT AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The ECLAC proposal stresses the impossibility of finding solutions to social problems without taking an approach that links economic and social policies in innovative ways, while strengthening democracy and environmental sustainability. At the same time, the globalization of the economy and of communications and the transnational nature of social phenomena such as migration and environmental problems show that "social issues" cannot be isolated as internal problems, and indicate promising opportunities for international and regional cooperation on social development.

Thus, the World Summit for Social Development should, first of all, help lay to rest the illusion that in the post-cold-war era, economic growth alone will create new social balances, narrow the gap between developed and developing countries and engender a world of peace and prosperity. Experience has demonstrated the fallacy of this idea; on the contrary, new imbalances, inequities and conflicts have emerged, which require global solutions based on the recognition, on the part of all nations of the world, that each of them has a common interest in the social progress and social stability of the others. In other words, social problems are also transboundary in nature.

Based on that recognition, the Summit can help to generate a shared awareness of the new conceptual framework that takes an integrated approach to social development. This means that while the essential issues to be considered at the Summit are the enhancement of social integration, poverty alleviation and the expansion of productive employment, they cannot be addressed separately from the need for sustained growth in the world economy.

Without prejudice to the foregoing, it is clear that some specific topics are related to what is considered, in more conventional terms, social policy. A topic of particular relevance in this regard is the link between trade development and labour policies. The debate on the attraction of investments or the unfair trade competition that could result from keeping working conditions or wages at very low levels in different countries is fraught with controversy. Some feel that proposals in favour of harmonizing standards are no more than a form of disguised protectionism that could amount to an encroachment on each country's sovereignty. Without denying that such standards could be used as a pretext for protectionism, others point out that differences between countries could be an obstacle to progress towards better labour standards, since the countries that made the most progress would be at a disadvantage in world markets. In this latter view, the expansion of trade does not automatically entail the convergence of standards, meaning that the conclusion of international agreements is a necessity.

Trade policy and labour conditions are also linked by the phenomenon of migration, which will also be a central theme of both the World Summit for Social Development and the International Conference on Population and Development. Trade in goods may, under certain conditions, replace migratory flows, which is one more reason to move towards the removal of barriers to trade.

Other social sectors that have traditionally been targets of international cooperation are education and health, as witnessed by the long-standing and fruitful operations of both the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization (and the Pan American Health Organization) in the region. In the field of education, regional and international cooperation have focused on various topics in Latin America and the Caribbean, including the achievement of more efficient use, in human resources training, of the installed capacity of the region's universities and academic centres, improvement of quality, institutional reform and local administration.

The health field also offers a broad spectrum of cooperation opportunities. More exchanges of information are needed on innovations in the treatment of disease, advances in preventive action and primary care, and efficient formulas for controlling epidemics. One important area of international cooperation that links aspects of health and the training of human capital is child nutrition and education; the World Summit for Children established goals in that regard, which the countries of the region have pledged to meet.⁴

A series of specific topics for international cooperation relate to the exchange of experiences with social integration, poverty alleviation and the expansion of productive employment. In this regard, the preparation and convening of the Summit offer an excellent opportunity for building a network for exchanging information and advice on successful experiences and policies in these areas.

⁴ United Nations, World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s and Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s, New York, September 1990.

D. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (ESCAP)*

* Text submitted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

THE SOCIAL SITUATION IN THE ESCAP REGION

INTRODUCTION

During the past four decades, the Asian and Pacific region had been undergoing a historic economic and social transformation. The economic performance of the newly industrializing economies of the region, along with that of the region's leading developed economy, Japan, has been most impressive. A number of other countries in the region have also recorded favourable economic growth trends, based on consistently high investment rates, increased productivity levels and structural transformation, while maintaining financial stability, competitiveness in the global markets and balance-of-payments equilibrium. In the 1980s, while economic recession was being experienced in many parts of the world, the average economic growth rate in the region was 6.8%, exceeding that of any other region. Even during the global recession in 1991, the average growth rate for the developing countries of the ESCAP region exceeded 6%. A 7% rate was projected for 1993 and there was every likelihood that the process would continue and possibly intensify during the current decade and into the next century.

Despite the region's generally buoyant economic performance, however, a number of economies still showed slow growth, especially in South Asia and the Pacific. Among these were 13 of the world's 43 least developed countries. Still, except for the smaller and more remote land-locked and developing island countries, there was every possibility that the region's slower-growing economies would be able to improve their performance in the coming decade.

Positive changes have been experienced in the ESCAP region in recent decades in major demographic patterns, health conditions and levels of educational attainment. Increasingly apparent are long-term improvements in human rights and social integration, particularly the gradual opening up of opportunities for economic, social and political participation among the traditionally less advantaged sections of society, including women, youth, disabled persons, the elderly, and ethnic, religious and other minority groups. In many countries of the region, too, there has been a tendency to enter into more favourable relations with non-governmental organizations dealing with social issues.

Yet, the economic growth that has been achieved in the ESCAP region in recent decades has not been accompanied by equivalent social progress. Many countries in the region continue to be characterized by widespread poverty, particularly absolute poverty; high levels of unemployment and underemployment; high rates of population increase and demographic recomposition; uncontrolled environmental degradation and natural resource depletion; inadequate social infrastructure, including the facilities necessary for universal access to potable water, essential sanitation, basic public health, elementary education, housing, transport and the like; and inadequate provision for basic human rights and political freedoms. These and related social development deficiencies throughout much of the region have resulted in chronic social discontent, which has all too often been symptomized by sporadic outbursts of civil unrest, on the one hand, and repressive public policy responses, on the other.

Rather than narrowing during the past decade, the economic gap between the region's rich and poor, as measured in terms of the distribution of incomes, occupations, and assets such as land, business ownership and movable wealth, has widened. This is as true of the dispersion of well-being within countries as it is between countries in the region.

Social tension —between economic classes, regional minorities, racial, religious and linguistic groups, and others— continues to contribute to political instability in many countries in the region. Repeatedly, this tension has been expressed through collective refusal to abide by public rules and regulations, particularly through mass protests, work stoppage and acts of organized violence. Poverty, high levels of unemployment and underemployment, disparities in the distribution of income and wealth, inadequate access to basic social services, and a general sense of pessimism concerning the prospects for improvement in the situation have added to dissension and civil strife in various countries in the region.

A key indicator of the intensity of social tension and perceived lack of opportunity to rise out of conditions of chronic poverty is the remarkably high number of refugees in the region today. As of 1991, some 13 of the region's countries offered havens to over 7 million political refugees from countries in the region that have been afflicted by war. The number of "economic" refugees in Asia and the Pacific who have in recent years entered more affluent and politically stable neighbouring countries illegally is unknown, but it is estimated to be in the tens of millions. To those tens of millions of international migrants within the region must be added the further millions migrating from Asia and the Pacific to other regions, either on a permanent basis or for temporary employment purposes.

Even more striking than the massive flows of international migrants is the magnitude of internal population migration, primarily from the rural areas to the region's urban centres. It is estimated that by 2010 about one of every two persons in the region, or about 2.1 billion people, will live in urban areas. Today, more than 100 cities in the region have populations exceeding one million, and about 20 of those cities, eight in China and four in India, have more than five million inhabitants each. The increasing metropolitan concentration of populations in many countries of the region has generated new social problems. Aside from the well-known problems of slum proliferation, chronic unemployment among the unskilled, housing shortages, social service constraints and environmental degradation in the burgeoning metropolitan areas, rural-urban migration has spawned, more generally, the social evils associated with the disintegration of families and communities as individuals leave their ancestral homes to seek their fortune in the cities. Thus, joblessness, homelessness, abandonment of dependants, family violence, street crime, prostitution, drug abuse (including alcoholism), sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS, and mental illness and suicide, among other symptoms of social dysfunction, are on the rise in many parts of the region, in both urban and rural areas.

In moving to the cities, many migrants have sacrificed the safety to be found in the traditional social institutions, and this has made them more susceptible to unexpected set-backs, such as fluctuations in earning power or in health. Nor has rural-urban migration led to prosperity for all, dire poverty coexists with affluence in the region's cities. Many of the region's urban poor, especially the newly arrived, have been forced to take up residence in shanty towns, squatter settlements and other types of "temporary" communities where subsistence costs can be kept to a minimum. The absence of adequate housing, sanitation, potable water and other basic social requisites only adds to the misery that many of those families already suffer. High rates of debilitating disease, disabling injuries and untimely death are commonplace in such communities and deprive families of the human resources that propelled their migration to the urban centres in the first place.

In sum, while much of the ESCAP region faces the prospect of continued buoyant economic growth, with the spill-over effects of the past several decades of rapid economic progress in the region's growth centres providing opportunities for the lagging countries to increase their growth rates, the regional social situation displays a different image. A two-sided picture of economic optimism and social concern characterizes the state of development in the region during the closing decade of the twentieth century.

As the governments of Asia and the Pacific plan for their countries development to the year 2000 and beyond, the social agenda is heavily laden with issues for which effective regional solutions are needed. In its adoption of a regional Social Development Strategy in 1991, ESCAP defined the major regional themes in terms of which those issues should be addressed: poverty alleviation, distributive justice and popular participation. To accommodate the requirements of the preparatory process for the World summit for Social Development, the following discussion recasts the ESCAP themes in terms of the three similar themes to be highlighted at the Summit: poverty alleviation, productive employment and social integration.

I. POVERTY ALLEVIATION

One of the main objectives of the regional social development strategy is the eradication of "absolute" poverty —generally defined in Asia and the Pacific as the state of poverty of individuals or households whose income fall below a certain minimum threshold. Minimum threshold levels of such other "non-economic" indicators as caloric intake, life expectancy and literacy are also sometimes included.

The conquest of absolute poverty should not, however, be considered the sum and substance of the regional struggle against poverty. Even where absolute poverty has been eradicated, widespread "relative" poverty remains. People need not live under starvation conditions to be severely deprived or to consider themselves as severely deprived. The sharply skewed distributions of income and wealth and the differential opportunities for access to public services and other social goods and services are major contributing factors in the endemic social discontent and instability that prevails in some parts of the region. At a higher plane, poverty could be taken to afflict specific social groups who are deprived of opportunities to take charge of their own lives due to exclusion from the decision-making processes that control their social situation.

While the specific criteria vary, there is a clear consensus that the ESCAP region contains the largest concentration of poverty in the world. Poverty and other forms of deprivation afflict an estimated 800 million people in the region, representing about three quarters of the world's poor. Due in part to rapid economic growth achieved by countries of the region in the last few decades —a great part of which were obtained through the employment of cheap labour— many countries of the region have accorded special consideration to social policy, planning and programming approaches aimed at intensifying their effort towards the reduction and alleviation of poverty in general and the eradication of absolute poverty in particular.

A knowledge and understanding of some of the main characteristics of the poor in the ESCAP region are a necessary basis for effective poverty alleviation planning and policy-making. The following are some of the characteristics of the poor in the ESCAP region in terms of demographic features, location, assets and sources of income.

A. Demographic characteristics

Caught in vicious circles of circumstances, poor people tend not only to stay poor but to have more children as well. In Pakistan, for example, in contrast to the national average of two children, the poorest 10% of households had an average of 3.3 children under age nine in 1984. However, although poverty is positively correlated with size of household opinion differs as to whether poverty is engendered by large family size or whether the reverse is true. Poor families generally tend to have more children so as to increase the number of income earners in the family. Since most of these children are required to work from an early age they have to forego further schooling, which in effect reduces family expenditures. Lack of education and the relative lack of skills, such as functional literacy, needed in most of the job markets, in turn, contribute to perpetuate poverty. High fertility rates among the poor combine with poor nutrition, hazardous occupations, and thus, high morbidity and mortality rates. Still, although large families of the poor have been considered one of the principal factors keeping them poor, there is little evidence to support the idea that slower population growth has led to faster economic growth or the view that faster population growth has led to faster economic growth.

B. Locational characteristics

In most countries of the ESCAP region, the poor are predominantly rural-based. During the 1980s at least 80% of the total population defined as poor in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Thailand lived in rural areas. The poverty situation in some areas in many countries is exacerbated by such rural conditions as scarcity of arable land, low agricultural productivity, drought, floods and environmental degradation as well as physical distance from social services and infrastructure. It is generally argued that the poverty situation is more serious in rural areas than in urban areas since the urban population has readier access to health, education, water and sanitation facilities in almost every country. However, it has also been argued that the urban poor are generally the least able to benefit from those facilities and that their living and environmental conditions are usually far worse than those facing the rural poor. To make matters worse, urbanization and rural-urban migration have further increased the number of poor people in the urban areas, who are forced to live in densely populated settlements and slums where they suffer the most from urban environment problems.

C. Assets characteristics

In addition to having low incomes, the poor lack land and financial capital assets and lack easy access to credit. Thus, the rural poor are typically landless workers or subsistence farmers generally cultivating small plots which compared to the holdings of the non-poor, are less fertile, less productive and are not irrigated. In Bangladesh, the incidence of poverty was 93% for landless households or for those with less than half an acre of land, and 10% for households with at least 7.4 acres of land. Furthermore, poor farmers tend to be slower than the non-poor in adopting modern agricultural techniques, largely due to lack of access to the necessary equipment. Land settlement schemes and agrarian reform in many countries have been implemented to redress the skewed distribution of land ownership, change outmoded land tenure practices, provide access to credit and other supportive measures for rural development. However, the beneficial impact of these measures on the rural poor still left much to be desired.

Land ownership is basically out of the question for the urban poor—their basic need being shelter. Many of them, particularly those newly-arrived migrants from the rural areas, take up residence in slum areas or "squatter" settlements where housing costs are minimal. The lack of housing and of access to credit to obtain it is exacerbated by the lack of the necessary employment and income for securing suitable housing.

Human resources are the principal assets that are available to the poor in their efforts to improve the quality of their life. Unfortunately, the vicious circle of circumstances surrounding poverty lay heavily against the poor. Relative to the non-poor, the intellectual and physical resources or assets of the poor are generally undeveloped due to lower levels of education and greater constraints in achieving and maintaining good health. In the Philippines, for example, the level of education has been found to be the most important factor distinguishing the poor from the non-poor, while in India, 70% of heads of rural poor households are illiterate. While primary education is generally available, the practice of many poor families to send school-aged children to the workplace is still prevalent. Furthermore, while suffering frequently from malnutrition and related illnesses, most of the poor have less access to health services and are further hindered from attaining their human resource development potentials.

D. Source of income

Most of the rural poor in the region are either landless workers or marginal farmers. Workers find employment either as wage labourers in the farms or as non-agricultural workers in cottage industries, services and commerce. Wages from non-agricultural workers are generally lower than those from agricultural employment. In most countries of the region, self-employment is more prevalent than wage work in the rural sector. However, marginal farmers have been forced to work as labourers in order to supplement their earnings.

In urban areas, the informal sector is the main source of income for the poor, providing jobs for the unskilled which generally offer lower wages and low opportunities for advancement than are prevalent in the formal sector. Despite the inadequate incomes and opportunities for improvement, the poor workers generally take the only viable employment alternatives available to them in very highly-competitive labour-surplus job markets. A large number of the urban poor in this sector are self-employed. As mentioned elsewhere in this paper, owing to severe competition for limited jobs and grinding poverty, some entrants into this sector are induced to engage in disreputable or illegal service activities as black marketing, smuggling, prostitution and drug trafficking, thereby contributing to the growing problems posed by deteriorating social values, social deviance and criminality.

Income transfer is an important source of income for the unemployed and underemployed. In the absence of public social security programmes, those income transfers are made in most cases by relatives and friends or through community support systems.

In connection with community support systems, it should be noted that one of the very important characteristics of the poor which relate to all of the above features is their particular vulnerability to any major shock, economic or otherwise, that will occur. Major setbacks will be suffered by the poor during economic recessions, natural disasters and outbreaks of epidemics. Such occurrences will destroy life, property and the fruits of a lifetime's work for many of the poor who had been unable neither to literally "weather the storm" nor to establish their respective social safety nets for economic and natural disasters.

In sum, the multitude of poor people in the ESCAP region will be the main target group of government programmes and policies designed to narrow the gap between economic and social development in their respective countries. In a two-pronged, integrated approach, governments will ensure that the poor will receive an equitable share of the fruits of economic progress taking place in the region while enhancing their participation in the process of development itself.

II. SOCIAL INTEGRATION

The ESCAP region is marked by a striking division between the "haves" and the "have nots" both among and within countries. The broad distribution of levels of social welfare can be gauged in terms of the variations in the quality of life among different social groups.

The theme of social integration can be associated with the plight of specific disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, including the poor, women, youth, disabled persons, the elderly, and ethnic, linguistic, religious and other minorities. The constraints preventing members of those social groups from gaining access to opportunities for improving their quality of life relate directly to the problem of social integration. The inability of the great majority of the people in many countries in the region to take charge of their own lives in order to raise their quality of life to acceptable levels is directly related to their exclusion from the decision-making processes that control their social situation. The family, the community, non-governmental organizations, the business sector and the State, among other basic social institutions, play critical roles in this regard. The manner in which those basic social institutions can be adapted to fulfil essential social functions and provide essential social services may differ in its particular form from one country to another, but certain common characteristics are evident.

A. The individual, the society and the State

Freedom, security and peace are prerequisites for economic and social development and are essential elements of well-being for both the individual and society at large. The countries of the ESCAP region have generally achieved considerable progress with respect to each of these concerns in recent decades. Yet, further advance is required to ensure that all the people of the region may be assured of popularly acceptable levels of freedom, security and peace.

Among the measures taken in this regard in the past few decades are the adoption, in a number of countries in Asia and the Pacific, of popularly approved constitutions extending internationally-accepted civil liberties and political freedoms to all citizens. Similarly, positive steps have been taken in most of those countries to extend civil and legal protection to women, children and youth, disabled persons, the destitute and other disadvantaged and vulnerable sections of society. Increasingly, access to basic education, health care, housing and other generally accepted necessities of life are being viewed by the majority of the region's governments as social rights to which all citizens are entitled.

Furthermore, progress has been made in the region in reducing the extent of armed conflict, martial law, State-condoned terrorism, press censorship and the like. Multiple political parties, including opposition parties, have been introduced in countries where they had previously been banned. In others, greater popular participation has emerged in the selection of civilian leaders at both local and national levels. In still others, the long-standing imposition of martial law has given way to constitutionally-based parliamentary systems of representative government.

In addition, many of the region's governments have initiated action to frame new alliances with non-government organizations, including institutions giving vent to the values and aspirations of major sections of society, such as those representing religious, labour, minority and sectional interests, as well as such specific social concerns as law and order, gender equality, social security, delivery of basic social services, environmental protection and so forth.

Despite some gains, large sections of society in the region continue to lack acceptable conditions of freedom, security and peace. Particularly reflective of that situation is the fact that, by and large, the region continues to lag in the adoption of internationally established standards on human rights. Thus, many governments in Asia and the Pacific continue to view with considerable caution the various historic international agreements, conventions, declarations and other instruments supportive of human rights that have been promulgated by the United Nations in recent decades.

B. The family

The great cultural diversity that characterizes Asia and the Pacific is reflected in the region's wide variety of family forms. National development policies, plans and programmes in the region have nearly universally ignored the family as a fundamental social institution. This reflects a serious flaw in perceptions at the policy-making level of the forces shaping development. It calls for a careful reassessment by Asian and Pacific governments of the impact of their policy decisions on the role of the family in development and of the manner in which they might redirect their policies, plans and programmes to strengthen the situation of that social institution in the context of development.

While traditional family systems remain the norm in much of the region, changing social and economic realities have imposed increasing pressure upon them in recent decades. These changes are likely to accelerate as development proceeds towards the year 2000 and beyond, and they will pose new and often difficult challenges not only for the family itself but also for national policy makers concerned with maintaining social stability and enhancing social progress in the context of continued economic expansion. These challenges include: increased social and spatial mobility and, with it, the erosion of traditional family ties; the emerging prevalence of smaller, more flexible family forms; increasing emphasis on individual rather than communitarian social values; rising dependency ratios due to the rapid ageing of the population; and fundamental redefinitions of traditional family-member role expectations particularly those assigned to women as family "care givers". Owing to the rising incidence of divorce, separation, widowhood and unmarried parenthood, the percentage of single-person household is also on the rise throughout the region. The role of governments in providing a broad range of social and economic services to help families continue to fulfil their traditional functions can thus be expected to increase over the coming decades.

C. Social conflict and the State

Despite the region's recent progress towards greater freedom, security and peace, a number of countries of the region suffer from serious social unrest. Political tension and even military confrontation between certain neighbouring states, based at least partly on aspects of culture conflict and attributable in many cases to the culturally arbitrary pre-national boundaries drawn during the colonial era, continue despite persistent international efforts to resolve them. Following the recent resolution of some of these conflicts, the various parties would now have to go through the slow process of socio-economic recovery, and stabilization, including the reintegration of refugees from war-torn countries, the majority of whom are women, children and elderly persons.

In 1980, approximately 1.2 million persons in the Asian and Pacific region had been officially designated as refugees. By 1985, the number had increased to 4.9 million. As of 1990, the number had risen to 6.7 million. Migration as an escape from political oppression or upheaval has created critical

problems of social and economic dependency not only for the families involved but also for the refugee-receiving countries and the international community in their attempts to meet the basic needs of those refugees. So long as conditions of warfare, insurgency and other severe forms of social and political unrest persist in some parts of the region, refugees will continue to spill across national boundaries. The countries of the region will for that reason—not to mention the fundamental humanitarian motive—need to concentrate their attention on finding means of resolving these conditions collectively.

Even more serious than the conflicts between countries in the region are the long-standing conflict situations within a number of countries of the region. Those situations have plagued relations between majority cultures and various ethnic, religious, linguistic and other minorities, often requiring State intervention to stem political insurgency, or the perceived threat of insurgency.

Increasingly in recent years, the region's governments have sought to accommodate the special interest of minority groups rather than repress them. Even so, minority-majority group tensions remain high in many parts of the region; in several countries, such tension poses a threat to national unity. Centuries-old patterns of discrimination based on ethnic, linguistic, religious, caste, class and other affiliations—despite constitutional guarantees to the contrary—continue to fuel those politically disruptive situations. Poverty, illiteracy, homelessness and violence are typically more widespread and severe among the region's minority groups than among its majority populations. De facto as well as *de jure* inequalities persist between majority and minority group access to employment, including public sector employment, education, social services and other entitlements. The resulting social tensions in some countries have made it difficult for governments to institute preferential public policies and programmes directed at reducing minority-majority group inequalities.

D. New social values and the changing role of the State

The rise of "modern" lifestyles throughout Asia and the Pacific in recent decades—as represented by such "isms" as individualism, materialism and consumerism—reflects a radical transformation in the region's value systems. This revolution in social values has been responsible for far-reaching realignments in the region's traditional patterns of social, economic and political organization. Considered in conjunction with the closely related rise of democratic ideals, these value changes can be expected to have a profound impact on the region's further development to the year 2000 and beyond.

The role of the State throughout Asia and the Pacific traditionally focused on "law and order". Under the influence of the new social values, that role has been considerably elaborated in recent decades to include such new functions as the following: ensuring to all citizens the equitable provision of basic human rights, as defined by the people themselves; contributing to the improvement of the quality of life of all citizens; mediating the inevitable conflicts of interest between individuals and social collectivities; promoting consensus among all the people on their common national development goals and priorities; and allocating resources towards initiatives that further the achievement of national goals and priorities.

Despite the growing range of supportive functions taken on by the State, and perhaps even partly because of those growing responsibilities, the search for an acceptable accommodation between the popular demand for individual freedom, on the one hand, and the felt need by the State to exert authority in the interest of national development, on the other, has figured increasingly in the regional political arena in recent years. This tension has arisen directly out of the partial acceptance of modern social values in the region's heretofore stable social situations. It has led, in some cases, to repressive reaction

by the State against individual freedoms; in other exceptional cases it has resulted in popular insurgencies against State authority. Through a process of continuing negotiation and mutual accommodation, with emphasis on the Asian and Pacific tradition of decision-by-consensus, that tension has been held within manageable limits within most countries in the region.

In response to the new social values, the region's mosaic of social institutions —the family, community, religious establishment, workers' organizations, business firms and non-governmental organizations, the State in all its guises— is gradually evolving more pluralistic, consumer-driven patterns of social, economic and political organization. A new middle class of comparatively affluent individuals is emerging in many countries of the region; in others, where that class had already gained a foothold, it is growing rapidly. Workers are becoming better organized, with the result that wage rates are rising and working conditions are improving, at least in the formal sector.

At the same time, however, those positive trends have reinforced and propagated the further dissemination of the new social values. As such trends continue, the interests of individuals, households and special-interest groups will inevitably compete increasingly with those of larger social collectivities. They will also compete increasingly with perceived national interests as governments seek to propel their countries towards more competitive positions in the international market-place. A climate of mutual conciliation between the region's governments and other institutions purporting to represent the people will need to be fostered if the culmination of these processes into socially destabilizing situations is to be avoided as the new century approaches.

III. PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT

Work not only provides individuals and families with access to the goods and services they require but, just as fundamentally, involves them as integral components of the larger community of which they are a part. Even more fundamentally, employment is a requisite of human dignity, and, as such, is a social objective in itself. The obverse is equally true. Lack of work, either through unemployment or underemployment, deprives individuals of their most dependable, and in most cases their sole, source of income. It thus bars them from the opportunity to contribute to their own well-being and to that of their dependents and their community. Under unemployment conditions, individuals are dispossessed of their sense of self-worth, and the community at large reaps the consequent social problems.

For several decades, the Asian and Pacific region has, by and large, achieved considerable success in generating employment for its rapidly expanding workforce, despite the increasingly labour-saving impact of the new technologies. During this period, the dominant labour-force pattern of past generations has continued to prevail, with agriculture serving as the employment sector of last resort for the majority of the region's population, particularly the unskilled. With that sector as a labour-absorbing cushion, wage employment in the manufacturing and services sectors has grown steadily in importance.

Early in the next century, wage-based employment in non-agricultural activities will become the dominant mode of work for a majority of the region's labour force. Rapid industrialization, increased international trade, technological innovation, urbanization, rising educational and skills levels, as well as the quest for a higher standard of living, are among the forces generating this shift in the region's employment structure. All indications are that these dynamics will continue to accelerate to the year 2000 and beyond particularly as the region's newly industrializing economies mature into fully developed economies and are replaced in their former position by an even larger number of the region's current low- and middle-income countries.

In planning to the year 2000 and beyond, a number of discernible trends can be expected to dominate the attention of economic and social development policy makers in Asia and the Pacific in their consideration of the regional employment situation. These trends include:

A. Changing work values

While recognizing that the dignity of labour, either on a self-employed basis or in working for others, will remain a core social value throughout the region, the nature and conditions of work and the values associated with it are currently changing. Major developments in this regard include: acceptance of wage-based employment as a dominant life style as industrialization proceeds; changing social norms concerning female labour participation, age of labour-force entry and age of retirement, along with legal enforcement of those changing norms; a more mobile workforce; the growing acceptance of social welfare programmes and services in place of the security provided by family and kinship systems as the primary labour-force social security option; increasing acceptance of unemployment and underemployment as institutional realities rather than as transitory problems; and acceptance of trade unions and other types of labour organizations as normal means whereby workers may represent their collective interest to secure higher wages, improved benefits and entitlements, as well as safer and healthier working conditions.

B. New labour-force entrants

Young people, women, disabled persons and members of traditionally stigmatized minority groups are joining the labour force in increasing numbers. These new labour-force entrants expect to be provided with employment opportunities, and with wages and benefits, that approximate those received by the established workforce. A significant proportion of these new labour-force entrants are, however, unable to find work commensurate with their skills or, even worse, are unable to find any employment at all. Many of those who are fortunate enough to find remunerative work are being relegated to low-paying positions with little job security or chance for advancement. The distress, discontent and, ultimately, social instability fomented by those conditions, particularly among the growing army of chronically unemployed and underemployed youth, are being increasingly felt in many parts of the region.

At the same time, it should be observed, an increasing number of countries of the ESCAP region are placing restrictions on age of labour-force entry as a means of combating the problem of child labour, which is increasingly seen as a form of child abuse although it remains a major constituent of family income among low-income households, especially in rural communities, in some countries of the region.

C. Service sector employment

The service sector is the most rapidly expanding component of the economy in most of the ESCAP countries. The trend has been influenced by two factors: the recent emergence and sudden take-off of the so-called "high-tech" service industries and the continuing growth of the informal sector. In many countries of the region, the service sector is gradually expanding to replace the industrial sector as the dominant employer of skilled workers. In addition, however, it is increasingly serving as employer of last resort for large numbers of unskilled and semi-skilled workers.

A particularly significant area of service sector growth in many countries of the region today is the high-tech service industries, which include: informatics; low- and mid-technology utilization and management; banking and finance; social services, especially the provision of "hands on" care and other services to replace those previously performed by the family and community (e.g., day-care services for children of working mothers, day-care and nursing services for the elderly, expanded and improved primary and secondary health care services, etc.); education, especially at the secondary, post-secondary and adult informal and continuing education levels; travel, leisure-time and recreational services; hotel, restaurant, tourism and related services; and the administrative personnel to manage all of the above. There is every indication that the rapid expansion of these industries will continue for the remainder of the present century and into the next.

In response to the realities of reduced opportunities for formal-sector employment, the region's already large informal sector has been expanding rapidly in recent years. While a part of the informal sector is in manufacturing (e.g., "cottage industry" subcontracting by manufacturing firms, entrepreneurial, handicraft production, food processing for local markets), the largest part is concentrated in the service sector. Whether manufacturing or service-related, the informal sector is generally of a low-productivity order, translating into low wage and low opportunity. Many workers in the informal sector are unskilled rural-urban migrants who have taken on the only viable employment alternatives available to them, despite the inadequate incomes and opportunities for improvement. Owing to its unorganized, highly fragmented structure, and as a result of the fierce competition among job seekers in a chronic

labour-surplus situation in the informal sector, workers in that sector are especially vulnerable to abuse, deplorable working conditions, irregular working hours and underemployment.

Furthermore, workers in the informal sector are likely to remain unorganized and hence unable to secure the higher-income levels, job security and related benefits to which workers in the formal sector are increasingly becoming entitled. Under the stress of severe competition for limited jobs and in the presence of grinding poverty, entrants into the informal sector are relatively easily induced into such disreputable or illegal service activities as black marketing, smuggling, prostitution and drug trafficking, thereby expanding the region's already large "underground" or "black" economy and contributing to the growing problems posed by deteriorating social values, social deviance and criminality.

D. International contract labour

In response to growing demand for labour in other countries both within or outside the region, skilled and semi-skilled workers from developing countries in the region increasingly have the option to seek employment abroad. In 1989, well over a million citizens of Asia and the Pacific were working as contract labourers in other countries both inside and outside the region. The majority of those workers were married men and single women from Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Viet Nam and the small island developing countries. Many were employed as contract labourers in other countries of the region. Many more were engaged as contract workers by industrial firms in the Mid-East.

The officially recorded remittances from those overseas workers to the home countries have in recent years exceeded US\$ 8 billion per year; the actual figure may be several times that amount. International contract labour has helped to ease the high levels of unemployment, and the social instability resulting from that unemployment, in some labour-surplus countries. However, the impact of foreign contract work on the families left behind has been mixed. Many families have gained access to productive resources as a result of remittances received from their overseas workers. Moreover, the temporary dissolution of the family unit for the sake of overseas contract labour has resulted in a variety of reported ills, including severe psychological distress, high divorce rates, delinquent behaviour among children temporarily left fatherless, the establishment of second families abroad, prostitution, crime and drug abuse.

The social problems arising out of migrant labour have been particularly pronounced in some rural areas and small island developing countries which have been decimated by the exodus of young persons in search of overseas employment. Comparatively few of these young people return to their local communities upon return to their country. Many also fail to remit anticipated funds back to their families, who would otherwise have benefited from their labour had they remained home. The situation has been compounded by the uneven social security and other welfare-related arrangements available to the contract labourers and their families.

CONCLUSION

Poverty, unemployment, inequality, oppression, inadequate social infrastructure and related circumstances making for social distress continue to exist throughout much of the ESCAP region despite economic development. The persistence of these long-standing social problems is being exacerbated under the impact of undirected economic growth as a result of family and community disintegration, weakening of traditional social values, and the failure of policy makers to recognize that such problems, if left unresolved, will foster only to break out eventually in more dramatic and irremediable form.

The lack of close coincidence between economic and social development performance of the region may be ascribed primarily to the lack of a clearly conceived common perception among national development policy makers of the specific social development objectives which they should be seeking to achieve, as well as a lack of appreciation of the specific policy measures whereby those objectives can be attained. In response to the realization that past development approaches have been inadequate, the governments of the ESCAP region have, with the adoption in 1991 of the Social Development Strategy for the ESCAP Region towards the Year 2000 and Beyond, determined to organize a frontal attack on the social issues that have plagued development in the region.

E. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA (ESCWA)*

* Text submitted by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.

I. THE CHANGING CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT

The world is increasingly emerging into a global community of conflict and cooperation sharing common concerns, fears and aspirations while also competing for advantage and preoccupied with vested interests and relative gains. In this changing context, recent political, economic and social developments offer an opportunity to realize the objectives of the Charter to maintain international peace and security, foster justice and human rights and promote the economic and social advancement of all peoples. In fact, there is a growing awareness and conviction among nations that peace, economic growth, social equity and sound environment are linked in a cause-effect relationship. Hence development is to be conceived in a holistic integrated approach that takes into account the political, economic, social, cultural and environmental dimensions as they shape and structure societies and nations.

The opening paragraph of the Secretary-General report to the Economic and Social Council (E/1993/77 dated 10 June 1993) describes the world in transition in general, but the same words can best describe the region of ESCWA where there is "a sense of great opportunity and hope that a new world can be built —a world of peace and stability, where the goal of social progress and better standards of living in larger freedom can be realized through genuine international cooperation". ESCWA proposal for the Agenda for Development stressed the importance of stability and peace in the region whose human and material resources would then be freed to achieve economic growth accompanied by social equity.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE SOCIAL SITUATION IN THE ESCWA REGION

The countries of the ESCWA region are still trying to adjust to the significant social changes that emerged in the wake of the Gulf crisis. The crisis further aggravated already existing problems, including unemployment, disparities in living standards, poverty, drug abuse, disability, refugees and returnees.

High population growth, the massive influx of returnees and reduced aid flows have worsened the poverty problem in several member countries. The situation has been further exacerbated by inadequate employment opportunities and the lack of health, education, and other social facilities, particularly in the rural areas. Deteriorating rural conditions continued to prompt massive displacement of people and worsening urban poverty.

The spread and deepening of education continues unabated in the region and is reflected in improved adult literacy rates and gross enrolment ratios in primary education, and the setting up of new and specialized higher education institutions responding to emerging specializations with increasing private-sector participation.

Health conditions in the region continue to improve, with an increasing number of systematic health plans and programmes being implemented by almost all ESCWA member countries—in the process prolonging average life expectancy, reducing infant mortality, and raising labour productivity. In contrast to the general improvement in health services, the health situation in Iraq continued to deteriorate, reflecting inadequate medical supplies and services. The infant mortality rate has quadrupled, and cholera and typhoid, which had previously been eradicated, have returned.

A. Poverty eradication

Mass poverty is characterized by inadequate nutrition, poor health and lack of access to social services.

In some countries of the region, particularly labour-sending countries with relatively low GDP per capita, an inequitable distribution network of social services continued to be a problem. Access to basic services is often very limited for some segments of the population, particularly those living in rural areas. For instance, during the period 1988-1990, 70% of the rural population in Yemen had no access to water services and 62% had no access to medical services. The reported portion of the rural population living below the absolute poverty line for the period 1980-1989 was 34% for Egypt and 30% for Jordan. For the period 1987-1990, 46% and 40% of the total rural population of the Syrian Arab Republic had no access to water services and medical services, respectively.¹ In Egypt, for the same period, 66% of the rural population had no access to sanitary services. Even in Oman, with its high per capita income, only 42% of the rural population had access to water services and 34% to sanitary services. More egalitarian policies by which Governments could mobilize considerable resources for service delivery to all segments of the populations, may be effective in improving the position of the poor groups.²

¹ UNICEF, The State of the World's Children 1992, New York, Oxford University Press, 1992.

² UNDP, Human Development Report 1992, New York, Oxford University Press, 1992.

In rural areas, the population has been living in socially, culturally and economically disadvantageous conditions. The lack of adequate employment opportunities, health services, and education, social and recreation facilities has resulted in continuing massive rural-urban migration and increased urban poverty. To contain rural-urban migration, appropriate measures mobilizing community participation and local resources need to be developed to improve living standards in rural communities, responding to vital needs in the field of food, clothing, housing, education, health, recreation and, most important of all, employment. Special emphasis needs to be put also on urban slum areas and uncontrolled settlements.

Under prevailing economic conditions, there is need for adopting economic adjustment programmes that take the social dimension into consideration, to avoid increasing poverty and marginalization of the vulnerable groups in the ESCWA region.

B. Family

The family structure in the ESCWA region has been undergoing radical transformation. Rapid urbanization, industrialization, migration, new technologies, armed conflicts and political disturbances have led to a gradual erosion of traditional social values. Socio-economic factors including growing participation of women in the labour force are having an impact on the fabric of the family in the ESCWA region. Such factors contributed to the rise of the nuclear family and are changing attitudes and values that affect relations among family members. However, despite the change in the functional structure of society, the individual still finds no alternative to the family as a source of cohesion and support, despite the emergence of new entities undertaking diverse family functions.

The extended family structure has been giving way to the nuclear family form. The population census of Bahrain shows that nuclear families constitute 90% of all families. In Kuwait, the nuclear family accounted for 59% of the total families surveyed, while extended families did not exceed 17%. Several studies agree with these findings and that the nuclear family is the dominant pattern not only in cities but also in rural areas.³ The importance of the extended family has even declined in Egypt's rural areas on account of the migration of peasants, whether internally to the cities or externally to other countries in the region. However, family ties still remain strong as blood relations between independent nuclear units and other ties are still maintained; the network of family ties is still strong.

The composition of a typical family in the region is still dominated by children and youth (over 61.7% in 1990), with very high economic dependency ratios.

The birth rate in traditional families in the region is high as children are considered assets. An average family size appears as 6.5 for Bahrain, 4.9 for Egypt, 7.7 for Iraq, 6.9 for Jordan, 9.0 for Kuwait (nationals), 6.3 for Qatar, 5.1 for the Syrian Arab Republic, 4.2 for the United Arab Emirates, 6.4 for the West Bank and Gaza Strip and 9.1 for Saudi Arabia (nationals).⁴ The large family size in the

³ ESCWA (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia), Impact of Social and Economic Changes on the Arab Family: An Exploratory Study, 1992.

⁴ Compiled from ESCWA, Demographic and Related Socio-Economic Data-Sheets for Countries of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia as assessed in 1986 (E/ESCWA/SDP/1987/8/Rev.1), 1987.

Gulf may be explained in terms of a State policy that encourages high birth rates for a number of reasons. The standard of living is not threatened by growth in population, and these countries need to recruit indigenous labour to replace expatriates. Iraq encouraged population growth after the outbreak of the Iraq-Iran War and then the Gulf War; there had been a gradual reduction in family size since the 1950s parallel to the changing role of women through education and formal employment.

The change in the status of women is at the centre of family change in particular and of change in society in general. There is a steady growth in the number of women participating at all levels of education in the region. Egypt and Lebanon were the pioneers in establishing an educational system including females, and the turning point for the Gulf countries was the rapid economic development since the 1970s. Educated women are more conscious of their human rights and more courageous in demanding them. However, a large segment of outwardly educated and liberated women still have feelings of inferiority.

Women's participation in formal employment has been a key factor behind the change in the family structure. It has not only raised their status in the family but has also given them a role in decision-making. In addition, working women help raise the economic standard of the family through their participation, leading to a relatively more egalitarian, less authoritarian relationship between men and women in the family. On the negative side, the duality of the working woman's role creates problems. The difficult situation of a working wife/mother is aggravated by the absence of facilities that can help her in her dual performance. In general, day-care centres are not available. A few of these are gradually being established: yet in most cases, the exorbitant fees required are far beyond the average family's means.

Labour migration also has an impact on the family structure, relations within the family and behavioural aspects. Some argue that labour migration weakens traditional family ties, by increasing intra-family problems and weakening normal ties between man, wife and children. Such problems have forced many migrant workers to return to their countries of origin.

C. Youth

The ESCWA region has a large youth proportion. Young people within the age range of 15-24 account for 18.7% of its total population. The ratio is expected to increase to 20% by the year 2005. The highest proportion of youth in the region is found in Lebanon and Jordan (22%), followed by Yemen. The lowest percentage (13%), is reported in the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain (15%).⁵

Since the early 1970s most countries of the ESCWA region have undergone radical economic and social changes which have affected all aspects of their lives. One of the most important effects has been the mass flow of migrant workers, predominantly those aged 25-35, to the major oil-exporting countries. As a result, the expatriate youth proportion of the total youth population in some of these countries is significantly high —67% in Qatar, 56% in United Arab Emirates, and 22% in both Saudi Arabia and

⁵ United Nations, World Population Prospects 1990, Population Studies, No. 120 (ST/ESA/SER.A/120), New York, 1991, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.91.XIII.4.

Oman.⁶ The dominance of expatriate youth has had a significant socio-cultural impact on the indigenous youth population and the host communities as a whole.

Wide disparities in standards of living have increased social tension and crime rates in some areas of the region. The lack of employment and the erosion of traditional social values are among the main causes of increasing crime rates in low-income neighborhoods, including rates of illicit drug dealing. Increasing poverty combined with changes in the nature and structure of the family have helped to spread juvenile delinquency and a sense of rootlessness among the younger generation. Young people in rural areas, faced with unemployment and depravity, are lured by the promise of cities. The absence of social support systems and inexperience in coping with problems in a big city combine to form an ominous threat. Either success or failure may result in deviant behaviour and/or juvenile delinquency. The Gulf crisis and subsequent political disturbances in the social structure in several countries, not only in terms of aggravating unemployment, but also in terms of integrating the returnees into society.

However, economic necessity is not the only cause of the growing crime wave. Armed conflicts, including the Gulf crisis, have contributed in some countries. There is a general decline in standards of behaviour in the war-affected countries. Studies in Lebanon and other Middle countries⁷ indicate that children and young people have become obsessed with war. Indeed, defiance and violence appear to be a part of the psychological coping mechanism that enables them to compensate for the sense of being powerless, and for their diminished self-esteem. Another major factor is the bleak future faced by a growing number of men in their 20s and early 30s in the countries with long-time war involvement, discharged from the military, where many have spent several years, with no qualifications, money or prospects of work.

The most pressing issues to be included in national development policies in the region are education, vocational training, skills upgrading, drug-abuse control, juvenile delinquency prevention and rehabilitation of young war-disabled persons. The role of youth in national development should be addressed within the framework of overall human resources development; the scope of policies and strategies should be flexible to allow for individual differences and for diversified youth-oriented programmes.

D. Ageing

Although the age structure of the ESCWA region is young, some countries have already entered the stage of demographic transformation resulting from a number of socio-economic changes such as oil wealth, subsequent changes of values and lifestyle and exodus of young emigrant workers, in addition to lower levels of mortality and fertility. In 1990, the percentage of the region's population over 60 years of age was 5.1%, and that over 65 years was 3.2% —a number much lower than the world average. However, it is estimated that by the year 2025 these percentages will reach 8.4% and 5.6%, respectively.⁸ The

⁶ ESCWA, Population Situation in the ESCWA Region, 1990 (E/ESCWA/POP/1992/6), Bagdad, 1992.

⁷ UNICEF Source Book on Children and Development in the 1990s: Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances, New York, 1992.

⁸ United Nations, World Population ..., op. cit.

dominance of the single female elderly population (widows) in most countries of the region may affect the pattern of family support, bread-winning and care, as they are most likely to be financially dependant.

In the past, countries of the region were heavily dependent on the role of the family, within the framework of the traditional extended family, for the care of the elderly. Although this is still a characteristic feature in the region, the complexities of life, industrialization and rapid urban growth and urbanization, together with the gradual entry of women into the workplace, increased prices and housing problems may adversely affect the position of the elderly within the family and reduce the family's capability to provide proper care in the future. Furthermore, the Gulf crisis and war contributed to the weakening of family ties and cohesion, and the family's capability to take care of the family in an affectionate manner was tremendously reduced both economically and socially. The needs for social services for the elderly have increased, and the coverage of these needs by both public and private social service networks should be urgently extended. New policies for the ageing, such as flexible retirement schemes, vocational re-training, or income security schemes are needed. The active participation of voluntary organizations in the care of the elderly should be promoted, together with efforts to conserve essential family services and strengthen family ties.

E. Disabled persons

The magnitude and scope of the disability problem in the ESCWA region has been increasing rapidly in recent years owing to armed conflicts such as the Gulf War and the suppression of the intifadah in the occupied Palestinian territories. In addition to 855 fatalities, 58,000 casualties were reported from the West Bank and Gaza Strip for the period 9 December 1987 to 1 October 1990. Of the casualties, 30% were children below the age of 15. It is also reported that 10% of all injuries have resulted in a permanent disability. In the period May 1988-July 1990 alone, UNRWA physiotherapists treated 3,885 cases, 3,068 of which were intifadah-related cases. A high percentage of intifadah-related patients were young adults and children (33.7 below the age of 16; 23.6% aged 17-20 years; and 22.6% 21-30 years). Some 5% of these cases will have sustained disabilities.⁹

Furthermore, physical disability caused by violence can have traumatic psychological effects on people. The Gulf crisis and war, and the continuing sanctions against Iraq, have increased the prevalence of disability in that country. Disease leading to permanent impairments (poliomyelitis, measles, tetanus, etc.) have been on the rise, owing to the lack of vaccines and poor sanitary conditions. According to the findings of the aforementioned UNICEF-funded expert team, psychological trauma was the most widespread disability effect of the Gulf crisis on Iraqi children and youth. It is reported that many Kuwaitis were permanently injured during the Iraqi occupation. There is an urgent need to develop integrated approaches to rehabilitation (medical, social, psychological and vocational programmes) of disabled war-victims.

⁹ UNRWA, Report submitted to the Eighth Inter-Agency Meeting on the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, Vienna, December 1990.

Available statistics on disability in the ESCWA region are not comprehensive,¹⁰ but they reflect a grim reality. While the importance of traditional causes of disability in the region has been declining in relative terms, the number and nature of new causes of impairments have risen. Several developments including universal child immunization, improved education, especially that of women, better access to health care, improved water and sanitation facilities, lower fertility rates in some countries and better care for women have contributed to lessen the influence of traditional causes. The new threat has come from such factors as economic recession and its severe burden on national services, armed conflicts and regional tension that cause demographic dislocation and economic waste, increasingly serious water shortages and pollution.

F. Labour issues

1. Labour migration

Regional migration in its various forms has perhaps been the major demographic characteristic of the ESCWA region since the 1970s. Rapid economic development in the GCC countries has attracted millions of expatriate workers from within the region and elsewhere. Thus contributing to reducing the unemployment problem in ESCWA labour sending countries. The aftermath of the Gulf War provided a good illustration of the volatility that often characterized migration. In the nine months that followed some two million people were displaced. The picture two years later looks drastically different from what would have been projected in 1990 if the war did not take place, not only in Kuwait but also in other GCC countries and Iraq. Compared to their national population, the GCC countries have been receiving a disproportionate number of migrants. In 1990, they received around 10% of the world's migrant workers, while their total population, including non-nationals, did not exceed 0.4% of that of the world.¹¹

In the mid-1970s, the non-national labour force constituted 45.6% of the entire labour force. It reached 70.2% by mid-1985. The number of economically active expatriates rose from 1,125 million in 1975 to 4,529 million in 1980 and further to 6,297 million in 1985. The number of dependents was around 1.7 million in 1975.¹²

Saudi Arabia attracted over 60% of expatriates in the mid-1980s, followed far behind by the United Arab Emirates (14%) and Kuwait (13%). The rest were distributed among Oman (8%), Qatar (4%) and Bahrain (2%).¹³

¹⁰ The present disability prevalence rate in the region can also be estimated based on WHO international disability estimates (7-10% of the total population) with an estimated regional population of about 142 million people in 1995, the estimates of disability could range from 9.94 million to 14.2 million.

¹¹ Assuming a total population of 20,2148 million for the GCC countries and 5.3 billion for the world, it is believed that the total number of migrant population was about 70 million in 1990, of which 7 million were in the GCC.

¹² ESCWA, Survey of Economic and Social Developments in the ESCWA Region 1992, October 1993.

¹³ Ibid.

Migration to the GCC countries decreased during the period 1983-1986 as a recession in most of these countries. With the improvement in economic conditions during the period 1987-1989, the number of migrants increased slightly.

Recent data, including preliminary results of the 1992 Saudi population census and the adjusted Kuwaiti population as of end-1988¹⁴ indicate that the total size of the expatriate labour force in the GCC countries reached 5,218 million in mid-1990, forming more than two thirds of the total labour force, and reflecting a growth rate of 3.3% during the period 1985-1990.¹⁵

Recent data on return migration from the GCC countries and Iraq reveals that the total number of Egyptian returnees was 390,000, instead of 700,000 as estimated earlier, and the total number of Jordanian/Palestinian returnees at the end of 1991 was around 225,000 instead of 300,000.

With economic recovery in Saudi Arabia, the biggest labour receiver, and reconstruction activity in Kuwait, the size of the expatriate labour force in 1993 could be expected to be no lower than it was in 1990. What will change is mainly the composition by nationality, in favour of south-east Asia. However, this trend could be reversed with the revival of regional cooperation.

Partial data show that the decreasing trend of Arab labour in the GCC countries observed during the first half of the 1980s continued during the rest of the decade. In Saudi Arabia, the Arab labour share in private sector establishments employing 100 employees or more did not exceed 7% during the period 1987-1989, while the Asian labour share reached 57% during the same period. Similarly in Kuwait, data from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour show that the non-national labour force in the private sector grew from 139,839 in 1985 to 457,616 in 1989. At the same time, the Arab labour share decreased from 48% to 46%, while the Asian share increased from 51% to 53%.

Based on the above, a reasonable estimation put the Arab share in 1990 between 30% and 35% of the total non-national labour force in the GCC countries.

The main reason for the decreasing Arab share is the difference in wages paid to Arab and Asian workers. Available data covering the period 1987-1989 show that an Arab worker in Saudi Arabia was paid, on average, twice as much as an Asian worker in 1987, and three times more in 1989. Another major factor behind the decreasing Arab share is that non-Arab labour generally leaves their families behind and thus poses no threat to long-term settlement in the country of service. The GCC countries have increasingly become sensitive to the growth of foreign communities that threaten the culture and identity of smaller states in addition to the increasing cost of providing the infrastructural and social services to meet their demand.

Furthermore, Asian labour migration is characterized by a high degree of organization in contrast to the informal Arab response. The migration of south-east Asians, for example, is in many cases a project-tied migration, whereby private and State-employed agencies identify and meet employer needs

¹⁴ As of this date, the Kuwaiti population was decreased by 247,000 representing the "Bedoun" population (persons with uncertified formal Kuwaiti nationality), which was shifted to the non-Kuwaiti group.

¹⁵ ESCWA, Survey of Economic and ..., op. cit.

efficiently. In addition, the Governments of countries like Pakistan and the Philippines are involved in mass labour training in order to provide the GCC states with the required skills.

In order to reduce dependency on expatriate labour, the GCC states have been trying to encourage their nationals to participate more actively in the labour force. The substitution of expatriate for indigenous labour mainly affect Arabs, since they occupy posts mostly desired by nationals, such as administrative, managerial, teaching and other activities, in contrast to Asians who are usually employed as labourers in production and maintenance.

Migrant workers who had been forced to leave the GCC countries as a consequence of the Gulf crisis and war and who cannot return are mostly Arabs: Yemenis, Jordanians, Palestinians and Sudanese. Their number may be estimated at slightly over one million. The current state of inter-Arab political relations does not indicate that the trend is likely to be reversed soon.

A direct consequence of the Gulf War on the non-national labour force is a sharp decrease in the Arab share, which may not exceed 20% of the expected non-national labour force in coming years.¹⁶

2. Unemployment

Most Arab countries are already suffering from high unemployment rates due to economic problems caused mainly by political instability and, in some countries, decades of State control of the economy. The problem of unemployment in the ESCWA region was further aggravated by the Gulf crisis which resulted in return labour migration particularly from Kuwait, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. As a result about two million Arab workers lost their jobs.

Besides the Gulf crisis and its aftermath, other reasons may be cited for the deteriorating unemployment problem, including a rapid population growth, a slowdown in the Gulf economy after the end of the oil boom and the return of a large number of workers from Europe, due mainly to strict immigration policies. While unemployment is high among non-skilled labour who dominate the Arab workforce, the high increase in university graduates, in most countries (as in the case of Egypt and Jordan) is contributing to a high unemployment and underemployment among the educated. The educational system is still not peared to meet development needs.

It is very difficult to assess the problem of unemployment in the region due to the scarcity of data and research in the field. However, estimates indicate that in labour sending countries of the region unemployment stands at about 17% of the labour force. In Syria, for example, many government employees have two jobs, working perhaps as a clerk in the morning and a taxi driver for the rest of the day. In addition there is considerable seasonal migration of rural workers seeking casual construction work in urban areas. There is, in fact, considerable underemployment and seasonal employment in the countryside. The service sector employs nearly a third, agriculture 25% and manufacturing 15% of the total labour force respectively. Due to lack of employment opportunities, emigration for economic reasons is on the rise. In the mid-1990s the number of Syrian nationals living abroad was put at two million. The Gulf crisis further aggravated matters causing the return of some 100,000 Syrians.

¹⁶ J. Addleton, "The impact of the Gulf crisis and war on migration and remittances in Asia and the Middle East", International Migration, Vol. XXIX, No. 4, December 1991, p. 518.

In Egypt, recent government estimates put the number of Egyptians employed within the country at 14 million with another 2-3 million working abroad. Around 500,000 Egyptians returned home as a result of the Gulf crisis. However, many have since then repatriated to Saudi Arabia and Libya. Government estimates of unemployment range from 10-15% of the total workforce (two thirds of which are engaged in non-productive labour). Independent estimates, nevertheless, tend to be higher stretching unemployment to around 20%. With 400,000-500,000 people joining the labour market every year, finding jobs is a major problem for the government. A longstanding government guarantee to provide work for all university graduates has produced an eight-year waiting list for state jobs and a large surplus of underemployed badly paid civil servants, many of whom have to take another job in order to make ends meet.

III. PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES FACING THE ESCWA REGION

The ESCWA region is in a state of rapid political, economical, and social transition, in which its people are striving to assert their identity, to rebuild their internal structures and to redefine their external relations so as to safeguard the region from internal instability and external threats. Internally, the region is experiencing a process of democratization which allowed the emergence to the surface of different expressions of extremism, the latter being the social and political responses to the rapid socio-cultural changes and the deteriorating economic conditions. Externally, the region is striving to meet the challenge of ending the 50-year old Arab-Israeli conflict, establishing regional peace and realizing the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

The region has been for decades the stage for many wars and armed conflicts, internal and external. Besides the four Arab-Israeli wars, the region is presently confronted by the results of the Iraq-Iran War, the Gulf crisis and War and the many internal strife in some countries of the region, such as the conflict in Lebanon. This instability has hampered regional cooperation and prevented the countries from taking advantage of the complementarities in financial, natural and human resources.

The international economic environment during the 1980s has further adversely affected development in the ESCWA region. Reduced availability of international finance, rising protectionism and bottlenecks in technology transfer have accentuated structural imbalances in many member countries.

The people of the region have been living in a continuous state of crises which is aggravated by structural imbalances, including among other things income disparities between countries, urban and rural, and among the people, unequitable distribution of energy resources at the regional level, inadequate energy supply, water shortages, desertification and lack of food security, and external indebtedness in some countries of the region. In the social area, the people have been suffering from inequitable distribution of benefits and services, illiteracy, unemployment, marginalization and vulnerability and increasing poverty.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

1. As can be gathered from the reports of the regional commissions, the core issues established by General Assembly resolution 47/92 are highly relevant for all the commissions.
2. It is also clear that social problems have a transnational dimension, and that a prime task of the Summit will be to create widespread awareness that there are many possibilities for international cooperation in dealing with these problems.
3. Another basic theme that emerges from the regional reports is the need to approach social development from an integrated perspective that simultaneously pursues economic growth and social equity.
4. A striking coincidence may be observed between these conclusions and the statement by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, when he observed that "The World Summit for Social Development should likewise set the objectives and the framework for social policies in the post-cold war world; but social policy has to be thought of in terms not just of social protection and safety nets but also of a development policy that integrates poverty alleviation, employment generation and social integration into the mainstream of economic and political decision-making".¹
5. The areas of international cooperation and the initiatives proposed in each of the core issues in section 2 of this document are understood to be complementary to decisions already adopted by various international forums, such as the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s, held in New York, the commitments made at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, held in Rio de Janeiro, and those that will be adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development, to be held in Cairo in 1994 and the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, Beijing, September 1995.
6. These proposed areas of cooperation and initiatives are also presented in the context of regional strategies such as Social Equity and Changing Production Patterns: An Integrated Approach (1992) and "The social summit: a view from Latin America and the Caribbean" (1993) for Latin America and the Caribbean, "Social Development Strategy for the ESCAP Region Towards the Year 2000 and Beyond" (1992) for Asia and the Pacific, and strategies of other regions.

¹ United Nations, World Summit for Social Development, including the role of the United Nations system in promoting social development. Report of the Secretary-General (E/1993/77), New York, 10 June 1993, p. 23.