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**THE ROLE OF ESCWA IN COORDINATING REGIONAL  
ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM****Summary**

1. The United Nations Regional Coordination Group, which includes all the United Nations organizations working in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) region, is considered as the forum and appropriate mechanism for the strengthening of regional cooperation between those organizations.

2. On 28 June 2002, the Group held its sixth meeting, which was attended by 19 regional organizations, at ESCWA headquarters in Beirut. It is expected that a further meeting will be held in April 2003, in preparation for an important gathering in October 2003 that will be attended by Ms. Louise Frechette, the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations. At their last meeting, the members of the Group agreed as to the following:

(a) The need to highlight United Nations achievements in the region in the economic and social fields;

(b) The need to identify a vision and draw up a regional strategy specifying the priorities of the region on which the activities of all the United Nations organizations should focus.

**A. THE MOST IMPORTANT CONCLUSIONS OF THE REGIONAL  
COORDINATION GROUP MEETING  
(28 June 2002)**

3. The United Nations Regional Coordination Group began its meeting with a general debate, in the course of which participants reached the following conclusions:

(a) There is a need for a mechanism to prepare and distribute joint reports on the activities of all the United Nations regional organizations in the economic and social fields. The economic and social role of the United Nations in promoting development is not given the same attention as its political role;

(b) There is a need to coordinate the basic information available in the whole ESCWA region and, in particular, that which relates to prevailing trends in various spheres;

(c) Notwithstanding perceptible progress in cooperation at national and international levels, the powers granted for the strengthening of regional cooperation are insufficient;

(d) Agreement must be reached as to priorities, in order to coordinate United Nations activities at regional level and identify a strategy for implementation. It would be useful if other international organizations were to participate in that regard.

B. THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ISSUES CONSIDERED AT THE MEETING

4. The members of the Group exchanged information concerning the regional activities undertaken jointly by two or more organizations that may be considered as models of successful experiments in shared undertakings.

5. The most prominent features of the Web page introduced by ESCWA as part of its Internet site were reviewed as a possible mechanism for presenting the regional activities undertaken by the members of the United Nations Regional Coordination Group.

6. Work is currently being undertaken with a view to developing the technical specifications for launching that Web page, which will initially be available in English, and later in Arabic.

7. One characteristic of the new site is that it includes the activities of United Nations organizations working in all the Arab countries, rather than just the member countries of ESCWA. It is expected that the activities undertaken by those organizations in each country will be introduced by the publication on the site of their programmes of work and projects. The organizations will therefore be able to coordinate their work, thereby avoiding duplication and waste, and to prepare and implement joint projects in which the specialized organizations will play a pioneering role.

8. An exhaustive discussion was held on the need to focus on the role of the United Nations in the region at the economic and social levels; and to exert endeavours to ensure that the image of United Nations achievements should not be negatively affected by the political developments in the region.

9. Meeting participants were unanimous with respect to the need to draw up a regional vision and strategy that would represent the basis for activities undertaken jointly by United Nations organizations and for the distribution of their respective roles.

10. Participants also agreed on the need for cooperation between organizations in respect of information and communication technologies and for preparation at regional level for the World Summit on the Information Society, given the importance of that issue in the context of globalization and because of the challenges it poses with respect to the new skills that are required for entry to the labour market. Details of cooperation in that regard are given in document E/ESCWA/22/4/(Part IV), entitled *Follow-up Activities at Regional Level to United Nations International Conferences*.

11. Participants further agreed to exchange information on the achievements of each member organization of the Group with respect to meeting the Millennium Development Objectives, which constitute the basis for the activity of the whole United Nations.

12. The meeting concluded that there was a need to take the requisite practical steps to strengthen regional coordination.

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