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Report of the

**THIRTEENTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE
FOR THE NEAR EAST**

Tunis, Tunisia, 4-11 October 1976



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

FAO Member Nations in the Near East region (as at 11 October 1976)

Afghanistan	Lebanon	Somalia
Bahrain	Libyan Arab Republic	Sudan
Cyprus	Morocco	Syrian Arab Republic
Egypt	Oman	Tunisia
Iran	Pakistan	United Arab Emirates
Iraq	Qatar	Yemen Arab Republic
Jordan	Saudi Arabia	Yemen, People's Democratic Republic of
Kuwait		

Date and place of FAO Regional Conferences for the Near East:

First	—	Cairo, Egypt, 2-14 February 1948
Second	—	Damascus, Syria, 28 August - 6 September 1951
Third	—	Cairo, Egypt, 1-9 September 1953
Fourth	—	Damascus, Syria, 10-20 December 1958
Fifth	—	Teheran, Iran, 21 September - 1 October 1960
Sixth	—	Tel Amara, Lebanon, 30 July - 8 August 1962
Seventh	—	Cairo, Egypt, 19-31 October 1964
Eighth	—	Khartoum, Sudan, 24 January - 2 February 1967
Ninth	—	Baghdad, Iraq, 21 September - 1 October 1968
Tenth	—	Islamabad, Pakistan, 12-22 September 1970
Eleventh	—	Kuwait, Kuwait, 9-19 September 1972
Twelfth	—	Amman, Jordan, 31 August - 9 September 1974

R E P O R T

OF THE

THIRTEENTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE NEAR EAST

Tunis, Tunisia

4 - 11 October 1976

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 - i) H.E. The Prime Minister of Tunisia
 - ii) The Director-General of FAO
 - iii) The Assistant Director-General/Regional Representative for the Near East

N.B. Full text of Statements by Heads of Delegations will be provided in their original languages in a separate supplement to the Report.

I. PROCEDURAL MATTERS

1. The Thirteenth FAO Regional Conference was held in Tunis, Tunisia from 4 - 11 October 1976 at the kind invitation of the Government of Tunisia. The inaugural session and the other meetings were held at the Palais des Congres.

2. The FAO Director-General, Mr. Edouard Saouma, welcomed Tunisia and Morocco to the Near East Region. He expressed his appreciation of the initiative taken by Tunisia in holding the Conference in its capital, in assertion of its sense of belonging to the Region and of its determination to work alongside the other member countries.

Opening of the Conference

3. The Conference was inaugurated by the Prime Minister, H.E. el-Hady Noueira. The opening ceremony was attended by Cabinet Members, Members of the People's Assembly, Members of the Diplomatic Corps and high-ranking Government officials.

4. In his inaugural speech (App. No. D-1), the Prime Minister welcomed the Director-General and the delegates to the 13th FAO Regional Conference for the Near East. He expressed satisfaction that the Regional Conference was being held in Tunisia for the first time since it became a member of the Region, while retaining its membership in the African Region, and best wishes for the success of the Conference in promoting agriculture in the Region. He then outlined the efforts made by the Government of Tunisia to increase and improve agricultural production and productivity, to raise the standard of living of people employed in agriculture to create new employment opportunities, and to improve living conditions in the rural areas so as to make them more attractive, thus curbing rural migration. He added that Tunisia intends to become self-sufficient, at least in basic food items, by the end of the next five-year Plan, 1977 - 1981.

5. The Prime Minister underlined the importance of the several international conferences held recently to discuss the world food problem. He also emphasised the necessity of adopting an international plan of work in order to respond to the challenge now facing mankind. Such a plan, he added, should have two objectives: (a) absolute priority to increase food and agricultural production and to raise productivity in the developing countries; and (b) to maintain and even increase the present level of international, financial, physical and technological assistance.

6. The attainment of the second objective depends on the political will of the countries concerned. As to the first objective, its achievement would require the creation of a set of conditions conducive to production increases such as the introduction of improved technological methods, and the provision of inputs such as fertilizers, pesticides, agricultural machinery and credit, processing and storage facilities. Moreover, it is necessary to avoid imitating the production techniques of the developed countries and to adapt new production methods to the conditions of the developing countries.

7. Further, the products of developing countries should be guaranteed adequate access to markets. This requires specific measures to be taken to reduce trade barriers and to stabilize prices in order to ensure stable export earnings for the developing countries. In all these areas international cooperation is a pre-condition for the formulation of a coordinated food policy at world level and for increasing assistance to the agricultural sector from traditional as well as new donors.

8. Mr. Edouard Saouma, the Director-General of FAO, thanked the Government of Tunisia for the excellent arrangements made for holding the Conference and the Prime Minister for inaugurating it despite his heavy responsibilities. Expressing his appreciation for the sound ideas and valuable insights of the Prime Minister's statement, the Director-General said that these were of national and regional significance and that they would be taken into account by the Conference.

Message of the Conference to H.E. The President of the Republic of Tunisia:

9. The Conference, knowing of the indisposition of H.E. Habib Bourguiba, President of the Republic of Tunisia, sent him a cable expressing its best wishes for his speedy recovery, to continue the humanitarian task to which he has devoted his life, in the service of Tunisia, the Arab world and the Countries of the Region.

Election of the Chairman and Vice Chairmen of the Conference

10. The Conference unanimously elected the following officers:

Chairman of the Conference	- H.E. Hassan Belkhodja
	Minister of Agriculture of Tunisia
Vice Chairmen	- Heads of Delegations

11. The Chairman, expressing his gratitude and appreciation for his election, told the Conference that his country welcomed international cooperation and praised FAO for its efforts made in the field of agricultural development, and he considered the convention of the Conference in Tunisia as a great honour to his country as well as to the countries of the Mediterranean, to all the countries of the Region and to developing countries in general. On behalf of the Tunisian Government he expressed the hope that the deliberations of the Conference would lead to sound solutions to the agricultural problems of the Region.

Drafting Committee

12. The following countries were elected to the Drafting Committee:

Egypt	Lebanon	Pakistan
Iran	Tunisia	Iraq
Kuwait	Syria	

Dr. Salah el-Abd of the Egyptian Delegation was unanimously elected as Chairman of the Drafting Committee.

Adoption of the Agenda and the Timetable

13. The Chairman introduced the Provisional Agenda and Provisional Timetable, which were unanimously adopted by the Conference.

II. INTRODUCTORY STATEMENTS

Statement by the Director-General

14. The Director-General of FAO expressed his greetings to President Habib Bourguiba, and his thanks to the Tunisian Government for its warm and generous welcome. (App. No. D-2)

15. The Director-General then reviewed the new policy he intends to follow in his administration of the Organizations. He stated that he aims to give the Organization a new dimension to enable it to face the world state of food and agriculture and to work towards the achievement of a new international economic system based on justice and equality, rather than the lawless economy of the jungle.

16. The Director-General then stressed the following points that form the basis of his new policy:

Investment as the basis of agricultural development: the Director-General intends to reinforce the Investment Centre of the Organization, and to train its staff members in the preparation of projects viable from the investment point of view, which can be financed as required by the various funds. These officials would then undertake to train national staff at a later date, as FAO is considered the leading world organization in its field of specialization. The Director-General mentioned the steps taken to establish the International Fund for Agricultural Development and paid tribute to the major role played by the petroleum-exporting states of the Region in financing this Fund. He also praised the establishment of the FAO/Near East Government Cooperative Programme, the first of its kind. He announced his intention to mobilize the best of the Organization's experience for the Programme, to ensure proper selection and implementation of the projects involved. It gave him pleasure to see that the Programme had approved the financing of twelve country projects and four regional projects, with a total contribution of about fifteen million dollars.

17. The Director-General then explained his idea of establishing the Technical Cooperation Programme through which the Organization would be able to provide rapid and flexible assistance in response to short-term needs of the member countries, as well as providing the services of investment experts and reinforcing the capacity of national institutions for training at grass-roots level. This programme will have a significant multiplier effect, by mobilizing additional resources and investments that greatly exceed the value of aid provided by the Programme itself.

18. The Director-General referred to the third point of his reform of the Organization, namely decentralization and improvement of FAO representation. He said that the aim of decentralization is to limit the inflation of the central machinery in Rome, as the Organization's activities should take place directly in the field at country level. In addition to strengthening the representation of the Organization at country level and increasing its efficiency. Country Representatives are to be given additional responsibilities and will report directly to the Director-General.

19. The Director-General concluded his address by stating that it was his intention to correct the imbalance in the Organization's activities by reducing the academic aspect and bringing it closer to the member countries through concrete studies and practical work in order to achieve rapid and significant results. He asked the member countries to assist him and to collaborate with him, telling them that "FAO is you, for you, and by you".

Statement by the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Western Asia

20. In spite of the difficulties faced by the Commission last year due to the painful events in Lebanon, there had been significant achievements in collaboration with FAO. An example of this collaboration was the cooperation in investment studies with the Investment Centre at FAO Headquarters regarding the Centre's missions to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, in addition to cooperation with the Regional Office and the Arab Economic Unity Council on studies relating to the Arab agricultural integration projects.

21. Furthermore, ECWA will see to it that its activities are complementary to those of FAO, especially in agricultural adjustment and food security. ECWA will focus on closer cooperation between countries of the Region to avoid duplication and contradiction in agricultural development plans, and to face the food problems of the Region through concerted regional action. Undoubtedly its success in this field will depend on close cooperation with FAO, the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development and the Council for Arab Economic Unity.

Statement by the Executive Director of the World Food Programme

22. The representative of the Executive Director of the World Food Programme gave an account of the resources of the World Food Programme and its assistance to the Member Governments of this Region.

23. While expressing satisfaction as regards the resources pledged for 1975-1976 biennium, he expressed concern regarding the level of the pledges for 1977-1978. He stated that the pledging target of 750 million US dollars can be attained only if all member countries demonstrate the same political will and generous response as was shown by them after the World Food Conference.

24. The Representative of the World Food Programme urged Governments to take necessary action for the rectification of the existing imbalance between the bilateral and multilateral food aid by urging countries to channel a greater part of their food aid through the World Food Programme and other multilateral bodies. He also called for an early attainment of the international emergency food reserve.

Statement by the Executive Director of the World Food Council

25. The Representative of the World Food Council noted that the Region now faces food problems despite its potentials. The Council has tentatively identified 43 food priority countries, of which 7 are in the Near East Region. The Council called upon governments and the various agencies to assist these countries in solving their food problems. As regards food security, it is regretted that this issue, despite its importance, has been left as a matter for negotiations elsewhere.

26. The Representative of the World Food Council reported on the progress achieved in establishing the International Fund for Agricultural Development, (IFAD). He reviewed the work done by the Council in this respect, and reported that at the first meeting of the Preparatory Commission for the Fund (27 - 30 September 1976), thanks to an additional contribution by the Government of Iran, pledges reached approximately \$ 970 million. This amount should reach one billion US dollars before the Agreement can be open for signature in November. He emphasized that this Fund is the result of the initiative of countries that are members of the Near East Region, and underlined the political and economic significance of the Fund, as a firm step in the direction of a new international economic order.

Statement by the Assistant Director-General/Regional Representative for the Near East

27. The Conference considered document NERC/76/2 entitled Regional Representative's Report on FAO Activities in the Region including Actions taken on the Recommendations of the Twelfth FAO Regional Conference. The Assistant Director-General/Regional Representative for the Near East, Dr. Mohamed A. Nour, then addressed the Conference, welcoming Tunisia and Morocco as Members of the Near East Region, and expressing his gratitude to Tunisia for hosting the Thirteenth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East. He extended his best wishes for its prosperity and progress under the leadership of President Habib Bourguiba. (App. No. D-3)

28. Dr. Nour then told the Conference of the developments witnessed by FAO since Mr. Edouard Saouma assumed the post of Director-General, and referred to the support given by the FAO Council to all the proposals submitted by the Director-General with a view to enabling FAO to fulfil its duties in the worldwide challenge of overcoming food shortages and meeting the needs of the less-developed countries.

29. Dr. Nour underlined the importance of investment studies, considered by the Director-General as one of the major pillars of the new FAO policy, because investment is the gateway leading to agricultural development. He stressed the inevitability of urgently undertaking investment studies to attract funds and to limit the drain of the petro-dollar out of the Region and to channel it towards agricultural investment in the Region with guaranteed material returns and obvious social, political and economic benefits. He further said that one of the Developments closely related to this subject is the establishment of the FAO/Near East Government Cooperative Programme, five of the wealthy countries of the Region now being committed to contribute \$ 29 million for its implementation. This programme is not considered an alternative to the other technical assistance programmes such as UNDP, but rather is a new source of technical assistance concentrating on investment projects. He paid tribute to the donor countries to the Government Cooperative Programme, particularly as they continuously affirm that their contributions are but a first step in the continuous and incessant process of regional self-help.

30. The Assistant Director-General then reviewed the progress achieved by the ongoing regional projects, expressing his readiness as well as that of the Regional Office to exert every possible effort to shoulder the responsibilities which the Director-General had decided that he should gradually assume as regards the management, implementation and supervision of Regional projects, starting with the Regional Land and Water Use Project in the Near East and North Africa and the Regional Project on Animal Production and Health in the Middle and Near East, at the same time expressing his confidence that the countries of the Region would help him in fulfilling this task.

31. Finally, he stressed the necessity for developing fisheries as well as poultry production. FAO will undertake a comprehensive regional study in the field of poultry production, making use of the latest national and international experience in order to provide a phased plan for the use of planners, executives and businessmen in developing this industry.

Statements by Heads of Delegations

32. In their policy statements to the Conference, Heads of Delegations reviewed development activities in their respective countries, expressed their views on the various agenda items of the Conference and particularly on the Statement given by the Director-General concerning his new policy. (Country Statements will be published in a separate supplement to this report, in their original languages).

33. The Conference thanked the Government of Tunisia for hosting it, and expressed its appreciation of the efforts made by the Tunisian people and Government under the leadership of President Habib Bourguiba to bring about a modern renaissance in the country, as well as their remarkable achievements in various development activities, especially in the agricultural sector. The Conference then welcomed Tunisia and Morocco as Members of the Near East Region.

34. The Conference unanimously congratulated Mr. Edouard Saouma as the new Director-General of FAO, and expressed its pride in the fact that a son of the Region had assumed the leadership of FAO for the first time in its history.

35. The Conference called upon all the countries of the Region, as well as friendly countries, to cooperate with FAO and other international and regional organizations, to help with the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the agricultural sector in Lebanon, in order to enable this sister country to overcome its difficulties as soon as possible.

36. Member countries expressed their concern at the serious imbalance between population growth and food production in the Region. They pointed out that the Region was facing a serious food crisis that was likely to become more serious with time if growth rates of food production continued to lag behind population growth. Food import requirements of the Region were likely to increase during the next ten years, and this would constitute an impediment to development investments and a political weapon to exert pressure on the countries of the Region.

37. The Conference showed great interest in the use of technology in agriculture as a means of implementing vertical and horizontal agricultural development projects and rationalising water use, in view of the vast areas in the Region suitable for agricultural exploitation and of the low productivity per hectare in the Region in comparison with world productivity figures.

38. Delegations emphasised the importance of increasing agricultural productivity and implementing large-scale irrigation schemes, thus increasing the area under irrigation. They also underlined the role of farm management as a basic factor essential for the success of agricultural activities, and stressed the need to provide vocational and technical training for agricultural producers, to enable them to more positively contribute to increasing agricultural productivity. The Conference took note of the success achieved by Pakistan in introducing high-yielding varieties, thereby doubling production.

39. As regards training and related research and extension work, the Conference underlined the importance of human resources in achieving integrated development, and stressed the need for applied, rather than academic, agricultural research, and the necessity of relaying its results to the farmers in a simplified form through extension workers. In this connection, delegates emphasised the importance of increasing the training and equipment components, of improving efficiency of projects, and of increasing the present percentage of project budgets allocated to these components, as personnel costs at present account for the greater part of project budgets.

40. The Conference highlighted the importance of agricultural mechanization, particularly to replace work performed by animals and exhausting agricultural operations performed by manual labour, thereby using livestock solely for meat and milk production, and to enable manual labour to be used for agricultural operations requiring skilled labourers, in addition to increasing agricultural production through the efficient performance of agricultural operations.

41. The Conference also stressed the importance of agricultural cooperation as a popular movement aimed at achieving integrated rural development. Agricultural cooperatives should undertake productive activities in addition to their service activities. The Conference attached great importance to ensuring availability and easy access to credit by small farmers as two important elements in increasing production particularly by allocating to them a percentage of the total credit, commensurate with their share of the total cultivated areas. In this connection, the Conference took note of Pakistan's experience with the introduction of the pass-book system, and the use of sound storage and processing facilities in production areas, as well as marketing which constitutes an important component of the infrastructure of integrated agricultural development, and promoting intercountry trade in agricultural food commodities.

42. Delegates underlined the importance of undertaking a fundamental agrarian reform in order to develop rural areas, to increase production, raise the standard of living of the masses in the rural areas and achieve social justice and economic welfare.

43. The Conference was of the opinion that the efforts exerted by the member countries require greater investments from within and from outside these countries, so as to accelerate the pace of development. It welcomed international and regional efforts for providing investments, including the establishment of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and other regional development funds; and expressed its hope that these funds would receive adequate support and would allocate a greater part of their resources to horizontal and vertical agricultural development projects in the Region.

44. The Conference expressed the hope that the funds available in the Region would be invested within the Region itself rather than abroad, especially as agricultural investment yields high returns, and has obvious social, economic and political objectives. The complementary nature of the economies of the countries of the Region was emphasized and a strong hope was expressed that full use should be made of the potentialities of the countries comprising the Region.

45. The Conference recognized that the political context between developed and developing countries must be just and balanced for promoting economic growth of developing countries, as endorsed by the recent Mexico Conference. Against this background it noticed that the continuous increase in the prices of foodstuffs, manufactured goods and agricultural production inputs imported from the industrialized countries had impeded the implementation of development programmes in the countries of the Region, in addition to the high cost of the foodstuffs they import to balance their food shortages. The Conference also advocated that the increase in price of vital goods should be curbed. It reaffirmed, in this connection, the importance of providing easy access to exports from the developing countries to the markets of developed countries, that should be guaranteed stable earnings to avoid the repercussions of price fluctuations beyond their control. A balance should also be achieved between the prices of goods of the developing countries and those produced by the developed countries. The resolutions adopted by the recent international conferences and meetings should be put into effect, as they represent a minimum requirement for the attainment of justice in the new international economic order.

46. The Conference underlined the importance of exchanging experience, visits and research findings among the countries of the Region in order to obtain a better understanding of projects operational in the various countries, exchange advice and ensure coordination between experts from countries of the Region. The Conference stressed the need to continue the efforts made in the field of agricultural integration projects in the Region.

47. The Conference emphasised the importance of formulating a clear policy to coordinate the activities of the FAO, the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development and the other national and regional agricultural, financial and professional institutions in the Region.

48. The Conference expressed its gratitude and appreciation to the member States of OPEC for their strong support to IFAD, and thanked those countries of the Region that had made additional contributions, to the FAO/Near East Government Cooperative Programme within the context of regional cooperation.

49. The Conference stressed the importance of continued help by the WFP in the form of food commodities provided in emergencies, and as a stimulant to development. The Conference called for an increase in WFP aid at the regional level, and provision of the necessary resources to enable it to continue its constructive role in the Region.

50. The Conference supported FAO's trend to expand the use of the Arabic language at Headquarters and at RNEA, in order to increase the number of documents and publications published in Arabic and to facilitate the transfer of modern technology through the use of Arabic.

51. The Conference supported the request made by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) seeking membership of the Near East Region especially as the PLO is already an active member of the Arab League, the Non-Aligned and Islamic groups. The Conference also supported the request made by the Observer from the PLO for the study of the situation of Palestinian farmers in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip in order to provide them with necessary assistance. It further supported the request for additional emergency assistance to the Arab Palestinian people in Lebanon.

52. The Conference gave full support to the new policy announced by the Director-General, considering that such a policy would help FAO in playing a positive role in accelerating agricultural development in the Region. In particular, the Conference supported the four points mentioned in the statement of the Director-General, namely:

- Paying greater attention to increasing investments in agricultural projects so as to increase agricultural production and improve the nutrition and living standards of the peoples of the developing countries.
- The establishment of the Technical Cooperation Programme that gives FAO a new flexibility and an ability to rapidly respond to the urgent needs of the member countries.
- Strengthening the representation of FAO at the country level through carefully selected Country Representatives appointed upon the request of the member countries, and responsible directly to the Director-General. They should be capable of making valuable contributions for closer relations between Governments and FAO and should have a positive role in the agricultural development of the countries in which they represent FAO.
- Reviewing FAO programmes in order to improve the balance between them. Rather than theoretical and academic studies, there should be a focus on factual studies and practical programmes that yield quick results at the country level including the strengthening of training programmes for farmers in the fields of agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry and fisheries.

III. FAO/NEAR EAST GOVERNMENT COOPERATIVE PROGRAMME

53. The Conference examined document NERC/76/3 FAO/Near East Government Cooperative Programme: objectives, procedures undertaken and proposed plans for the future of the programme.
54. The Conference was informed of the progress achieved by the Programme up to the date of its convention, and of the projects approved for implementation by the donor countries and the related allocations which came to about 15 million dollars out of a total of 29 million dollars, of which about 7 million dollars are for regional projects and about 8 million dollars for country projects.
55. The recipient countries of the Region expressed their gratitude and appreciation to the Arab donor countries, and praised the important role played by the Programme in financing development projects in the Region. They recommended that the Programme should retain its momentum and that it should be further reinforced financially to enable it to play a greater and more comprehensive role in servicing development projects in the Region. They also expressed the wish to be informed of the future of unapproved projects.
56. The delegations of the donor countries affirmed the importance of the Programme and confirmed their intention to further reinforce it, in assertion of regional solidarity and in order to achieve the agricultural and economic development of the Region. They urged the prompt execution of properly studied projects and promised to follow up the progress of work of the Programme.
57. The delegations stressed the need to limit assistance provided by the Programme to countries of the Region alone, giving priority to the projects in the less developed and the most affected countries, particularly production and investment-oriented country projects. Some delegations requested that emphasis be placed on livestock projects.
58. The delegations also stressed the necessity for continued attention to regional projects which are operational and those listed in document NERC within the framework of the Programme. They called for the removal of any obstacles that may impede the execution of these projects, and for the prompt payment of contributions by the countries participating in these projects, to enable the Organization to execute them and to fully achieve their aims.
59. The Conference emphasised the need to utilise the experience and qualifications that exist in the countries of the Region for the administration and execution of the Programme's projects.
60. Recipient countries complained of the delay in the study of projects and stressed the need to speed-up these studies in order to implement projects as soon as possible.
61. The Conference strongly expressed its wish that funds allocated to countries of the Region, by international aid organizations and programmes, especially the UNDP, should not be affected by the Cooperative Programme and should not therefore be reduced.
62. The Conference welcomed FAO's trend to delegate authority to the Regional Office for the management and supervision of certain regional projects financed under the Cooperative Programme. It called upon the Organization to gradually reinforce its units, including the Regional Office for the Near East, to enable them to execute and follow up all regional and country projects financed by the Cooperative Programme.
63. Donor countries requested FAO to keep them informed of all approved and future regional and country programmes and projects, and to ensure coordination between donor and recipient countries and the FAO Regional Office.

IV. TOWARD REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT
ORIENTATION IN AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Item 7 (a & b) - Agricultural Investment Priorities, Experiences in Investment Projects

64. The Conference discussed Document NERC/76/4 which reviewed priorities for agricultural investment and aspects of financing agricultural investment projects in the Near East. The Conference fully endorsed the conclusions and recommendations presented in this Document.

65. The Conference agreed that higher priority should be given to increasing investment in agriculture to enable the countries of the Region to produce their food and agricultural requirements and to create productive employment in the agricultural sector for the rapidly growing population of the Region.

66. Priorities for investment in the various sectors within agriculture were reviewed, particularly in irrigation and drainage systems, rainfed agriculture development, livestock production, fisheries, forestry and range management, grain storage, seed production and other industries which supply the inputs required for agricultural intensification. Particular importance was given by the Conference to better utilization of extensive rainfed agricultural areas in the Near East and the utilization of the Region's human resources.

67. The Conference noted that external financing was limited in relation to internal investment efforts and to investment needs of the countries of the Region and that it was still insufficient to generate appropriate growth rates. More and more reliance will have to be placed on support from financing sources within the Near East Region itself, particularly as new prospects for investment in agriculture have arisen, due on one hand to the availability within some countries and financial institutions in the Region of ample resources for investment, while on the other the development of agricultural potential in other countries of the Region is beyond the means at their disposal.

68. The Conference underlined the great importance of facilitating the flow of investments to the Region through:

- Selection of projects for financing within the framework of national priorities and national development plans and identifying sectors to which priority should be given in the agricultural field;
- Coordination among the various financing agencies interested in agricultural development in the region and avoiding duplication and waste of effort in project preparation;
- Adopting special criteria in evaluation of agricultural investment projects in view of the extreme need for building up the physical, social and institutional infrastructure within the sector, which would require time before projects could produce the desired economic benefits, and
- Raising FAO's capacity to assist Member Countries in increasing the flow of investments to agriculture and supporting the Director-General's proposal to strengthen the FAO Investment Centre and promoting in-service training of FAO staff working in the Centre in order to allow a larger number of the Organization's staff to undertake project preparation.

69. The Conference noted that the preparation of agricultural projects for financing takes longer than necessary at present, due to the numerous and lengthy stages involved. It asserted the need to shorten this period and to reduce the number of stages in order to enable the recipient countries to prepare the largest possible number of projects and to attract the largest possible amount of investment.

70. The Conference emphasized the need for training of national staff in project preparation, particularly in field work and in preparing project proposals. It endorsed, with great satisfaction, the Director-General's proposal to hold a regional training course in project preparation for the Near East in 1977. At the same time it underlined the need for FAO to assist, to the fullest extent possible, in national and regional training courses for medium-level technicians, required to do most of the basic work of project preparation, whether for external financing or financing from domestic resources.

71. The Conference noted Tunisia's interesting experience in building up its capacity for project preparation through the establishment of a national institution to assist government departments in project preparation and to train selected personnel from these departments in project work. This experience has shown the benefit of training at the national level and other countries were welcome to benefit from this experience in training their own staff.

72. The Conference supported the Director-General's proposal to make the reinforced FAO Investment Centre responsible for project preparation, sectoral analysis and staff training in the preparation of these projects, considering the experience it acquired during the previous years.

73. The Conference called upon FAO and financial institutions in the Region to consider the possibility of financing specific studies necessary for preparing investment projects.

74. In view of the important problems encountered by Governments in project implementation, the possibility of FAO's assistance to member governments in investment project implementation, as well as project management was also raised.

7 (c) - Prospects for the Development and Exploitation of Fishery Resources in the Region

75. The Conference discussed with interest Document NERC/76/5 on the subject of Fishery Resources and delegates expressed their satisfaction at its inclusion in the Agenda as a separate item.

76. It was found desirable for FAO to adopt a more rapid and flexible approach in carrying out fishery projects, as some of these projects take a longer time to become operational.

77. Considerable interest was shown in the subject of pollution and its effects on fish production. The need for coordination among the countries of the Region to protect its fishery resources was stressed.

78. The Conference, recognizing the need for specialized personnel in fisheries in the countries of the Region, requested that a survey be made of existing national and regional training institutes to determine their levels and requirements. It proposed that the links between existing centres in the Region be strengthened. The Conference further expressed its appreciation of the role of the Regional Office in establishing the sub-regional Fisheries Training Centre in Kuwait, which became operational in October 1976.

79. The Conference felt that there was a need to develop the exploitation of the fishery resources of the Region in view of their growth potential as shown in the Document, by increasing fishery investments and giving priority to financing fishery projects from regional funds, as well as through marketing coordination among the countries of the Region.

80. The delegates stressed the need for coordinating the resources of the Region and for mounting regional joint ventures for the exploitation of fishery resources. They proposed, in this connection, that FAO should issue periodical publications providing information on the status of fish production of interest to the countries of the Region.

81. The Conference noted the important contribution made by artisanal fishermen of the Region, who are responsible for more than 80 percent of the total fish production. It therefore stressed the importance of strengthening this category of fishermen by providing loans, financial aid and assistance in kind, to create stable conditions offering them adequate guarantees.

82. The Conference underlined the importance of conducting and intensifying research related to fisheries to generate the necessary information for fishery development in the Region.

83. One delegate whose country participates in the activities of both the Near East and Far East Regions, expressed the wish of his country to increase its cooperation with the Regional Office for the Near East, as the present situation affected the level of technical assistance provided by the Regional Office for the Near East to that country.

84. The Conference recognized the great importance of aquaculture as a means of increasing the fishery resources of the Region. It accordingly recommended that the development of fish farms should be intensified, particularly in the countries which have the potential for the development of this new type of fishery resource.

85. The Conference requested that attention should be given to the utilization of man-made lakes created by the construction of dams, and of reservoirs and waterlogged areas for fish production. It was demonstrated that these vast water surfaces could effectively contribute to increasing the fishery resources of the Region. The delegates expressed the wish that FAO should survey these resources of the Region and study their growth potential, so as to facilitate the preparation of suitable investment projects.

86. The Conference proposed that a Fisheries Commission for the Near East be established, the functions of which should include: exchange of information and experience; coordination among the countries of the Region, and in particular among the national research institutes and universities in the field of fisheries; formulation of plans for research, training and fellowships in the field of fisheries; coordination among the countries of the Region, promotion of collective action to protect fishery resources from pollution; provision of the necessary measures for a comprehensive survey of fishery resources to determine fish stocks; coordination of fishing operations among the countries of the Region, especially in water surfaces exploited by several countries; formulation of appropriate legislation to organize fishing activity to avoid depletion of stocks; establishment of a clear policy for investment projects and marketing coordination among the countries of the Region; and finally establishment of a training policy for the training of research workers and technicians in the Region in fishery resources. The Commission could form standing committees representing the countries whose fishing fleets work in the same fishery areas, for consultation and for finding the best methods for the exploitation of common fishery resources.

87. In view of the considerable importance of inland fisheries in increasing the fisheries resources of the Region, it was proposed that the Inland Fisheries Institute in Pakistan, which was established with the assistance of FAO, should be fully utilized for the benefit of the whole Region.

7 (d) - Developing Agro-Industries Including Food Industries and Prospects for Regional Cooperation in Marketing Processed Products.

88. The Conference recognized the importance of agro-industries as an effective means for achieving socio-economic progress in countries of the Near East Region. The Conference appreciated the initiative taken by FAO in studying agro-industries in some countries of the Near East Region and proposed that such studies should cover the other industries of the Region.

89. The Conference discussed the problems of constraints facing agro-industries development, especially with regard to the inadequate sectoral coordination and the lack of proper planning between agricultural production and industrial capacity. It took note of other problems such as: price fixing for raw materials and final products, the poor allocation of resources for manpower training and management in some countries of the Region, and the absence or the inefficiency of the infrastructure.

90. The Conference considered the importance of marketing and investment for the development of this field; and the constraints facing marketing, especially the lack of market studies and surveys, unavailability of quality control and systems of grades and standards.

91. The Conference recognized the need for regional cooperation and integration among the countries of the Region, especially with regard to production, marketing and distribution of processed products.

92. The Conference was of the opinion that full cooperation should be achieved by the countries of the Region as regards technologies for the development of the food industries. To overcome the difficulties in trained manpower and technical know-how, the proposal of Pakistan to establish a Regional Institute/Centre, for providing training in management, marketing and applied research in agro-industries, and to make optimum use of the experience of all countries, including those of the Region with advanced agro-industries, was recognized.

Item 7 (e) - Development of Marginal Lands Through Forestry Development, Range Management, Rainfed Agriculture and Socio-Economic Measures.

93. The Conference considered document NERC/76/7 which reviewed the role of forestry, range management and rainfed agriculture in the development of marginal lands of the Region, in the context of an integrated system, and in the light of a number of socio-economic considerations. The Conference agreed that the term "marginal lands" implies lands of low productivity with a small capacity and low efficiency to utilize production inputs.

94. The Conference noted that as yet there has been no detailed inventory of the marginal lands in the Region. As these lands are exposed to the problems of desertification and declining productivity at an alarming rate, the Conference proposed that a comprehensive survey of these lands be urgently made and the necessary action to stop their degradation be taken. It also recommended that the organization and the Regional Office conduct additional studies in more countries of the Region and that FAO should provide the necessary funds for this in the forthcoming Programme and Budget.

95. The Head of the Sudan Delegation informed the Conference that in spite of the vast unexploited arable areas in his country, present efforts for the development of marginal lands are limited to forestry development - especially the production of gum arabica - and range management. He told the Conference that the Sudan is particularly concerned with the problems of "Desert Creep", and that his country would soon host an international conference organized by the National Research Council in collaboration with UNEP and other international agencies. He invited FAO to participate in and contribute to this Conference.

96. The Conference asserted that the obstacles facing the development of marginal lands are often the result of economic policies based on the quick maximization of returns, and that the successful development of marginal lands can be achieved by integrated and comprehensive programmes which include agriculture, forestry and range management and which promote overall production, while taking into consideration the various social, economic and administrative factors.

97. The Conference recommended that the development of marginal lands should not be the subject of competition between various land users but should be the subject of cooperative and integrated efforts to use the land wisely and try to overcome environmental and socio-economic difficulties. This entails arresting the deterioration of these lands and their rehabilitation.

98. As regards the recommendation of the 12th FAO Regional Conference to establish a "Regional Desert Creep and Range Management Institute" with the object of providing the technological inputs to solve the problems of desertification in the Region, the Conference was informed that the Regional Office had launched a preparatory mission, generously financed by the Libyan Arab Republic, to six countries of the Region for this purpose. The final report, including the Mission's findings, conclusions and the recommendations for the establishment of this Institute in the Libyan Arab Republic would soon be distributed to the Member Countries and the institutions concerned. In view of the importance of the creation of such an Institute in the Near East, the Conference recommended

the urgent establishment of the Institute and linking it with similar institutes and centres in the countries of the Region, as regards scientific cooperation and technical training in the field of de-desertification and land reclamation, and stressed the need to establish sub-centres in some of the affected countries.

99. The Conference expressed the need for regional cooperation in all fields of research related to the development of marginal lands, and for training and an exchange of experience and information. The facilities of the Forestry Institute at Peshawar in Pakistan and the Marginal Lands Development Institute in Tunisia were most welcome. The Conference expressed the hope that these centres and other centres in the Member Countries would complement the proposed national and regional research programmes to be undertaken by the Desert Creep and Range Management Institute which the Libyan Arab Republic offered to host. The Conference also expressed the need to collect and publish the results of all research and field experiments related to the development of marginal lands undertaken within and outside the Region.

100. The Conference stressed the role of forestry in the development of marginal lands in the Region by providing energy (fuelwood and charcoal) and other timber supplies such as poles and sawnwood. Another important contribution of forestry to the development of marginal lands is the protection given by plantations of windbreaks and shelterbelts, which help to increase crop yields and livestock production and control desertification. The Conference proposed that Member Countries conserve their natural forests and establish fuel plantations in the marginal areas to meet the energy and other timber needs of local people, and conserve soil fertility and productivity, preserve watersheds and regulate water flow.

101. The Conference praised the significant progress achieved in the fixation of moving sand dunes in the countries of the Region, considering it the most outstanding contribution of forestry to marginal lands reclamation, protection of arable lands, oases, communications and human habitations.

102. The delegates stressed the importance of rainwater control in marginal areas for its optimum utilization for crops and fodder production and for afforestation. The Conference considered of importance the distribution of surface and groundwater in the marginal lands to avoid the problem of overstocking and the resultant overgrazing leading to range deterioration and decline in animal production. In this connection the Conference acclaimed the rangeland cooperatives in Syria (hema) and the cooperatives established in Tunisia.

103. The Conference expressed the need to establish national policies and legislations to control rainfed agriculture in the marginal lands, as has been the case in some countries of the Region. The Conference recommended that Member Countries enact legislation prohibiting the ploughing of land in areas with less than 200 mm of annual rainfall.

104. The Conference welcomed the outstanding results achieved by some countries of the Region which have replaced the fallow with nitrogen-fixing and soil-building forage legumes that increase soil fertility and reduce runoff and erosion, in addition to providing forage. The Conference felt the necessity of increasing the application of cereal-legume rotation practice for increased livestock production and the rationalization of rangeland use.

Item 7 (f) - Development of Human Resources through Agrarian Reform and Rural Development

105. The Conference discussed document NERC/76/8 and expressed its appreciation for the inclusion of this item on the Agenda. It noted that this subject had great relevance to the acceleration of the development process of the countries of the Region in view of the fact that 75 percent of their population live in rural areas despite the recently increased importance of the other sectors during the last few years. The Conference expressed concern over the existing wide gap between rural and urban social and economic conditions that had led to the continuous migration, particularly of trained young people, to urban centres and deprived rural areas of their human resources.

106. The Conference discussions concentrated on four major issues:

- (a) Disparities in land tenure systems and the fragmentation of holdings;
- (b) The low capacity of the rural population to efficiently utilize modern resources;
- (c) The importance of the effective participation of the rural population in development programmes;
- (d) The problems of the transhumant pastoral population.

107. The Conference reviewed agrarian reform programmes of the countries of the Region. It noted that since the initiation of these programmes, many governments had introduced modifications to adapt these programmes to their particular circumstances and to render them capable of meeting the requirements of increasing agricultural production, of responding to demographic growth, and of facilitating links between the agricultural and industrial sectors. In addition, this adaptation should facilitate the participation of beneficiaries in the process of development through cooperatives. The Conference stressed the importance of organizing and diversifying production patterns in the agrarian reform areas, particularly by promoting agro-industries and animal production.

108. The Conference reviewed the various types of cooperatives set up by the countries of the Region and took note of their achievements. It recommended the Regional Office to assemble studies and collect data on the various types of agricultural cooperatives and on their role in providing inputs to farmers, marketing, and organizing agricultural production. It also requested that the findings of these studies and data be distributed to the countries of the Region.

109. The Conference reviewed the aspects, causes and consequences of the problem of the small holdings and fragmentation. It took note of the measures taken by some countries to solve this problem, such as consolidated crop rotation, pooling of fragmented holdings and establishment of production cooperatives. It also noted that the consolidation of fragmented holdings into larger production units was a costly and slow process in spite of its effectiveness in improving agricultural production, reducing production costs, creating employment and encouraging adoption of modern techniques including agricultural machinery. Recognizing the importance of the problem of land fragmentation and noting the measures taken to solve it, the Conference felt that FAO should assist member countries to solve this problem, mobilize the expertise available in countries of the Region, in order to correct the negative aspects of fragmentation and to avoid this problem in the future, analyse studies and legislation, and distribute this information to the countries of the Region, with a view to identifying alternative approaches to this vital problem. The Conference noted that there was a relationship between the problem of small holdings and their fragmentation, and the demographic pressure on agricultural land and the inheritance system.

110. The Conference stressed the importance of training men, women and youth in farming communities through strengthening programmes of agricultural extension as well as programmes to promote the role of rural women in agricultural production. It took note of the wide gap between scientific research and university level education in the field of agricultural sciences, on one hand, and the majority of rural inhabitants and small farmers in their agricultural practices, on the other. It stressed the importance of training in farm management and production economics. The Conference expressed concern over the relative neglect of the training of youth and school leavers in the rural areas, a fact that does not encourage men to remain in agricultural work and continue to live in rural areas. The Conference welcomed the initiative of the Director-General regarding the establishment of the Technical Cooperation Programme that would give priority to training at the village level. The Conference further felt that FAO should assist the countries of the Region in training those working in the field of rural development as well as training rural youth in the use of available technical resources, including agricultural mechanization and agro-industries. This would include communication with farmers as an integral part of agricultural extension. The Conference proposed that FAO, through the experience gained over many years, should assist the Member Countries in exchanging their experience in the fields of training workers and farmers in agrarian reform areas and other rural areas and in developing agricultural extension programmes.

111. The Conference reviewed the programmes aimed at involving farmers and other groups of rural inhabitants in decision-making in matters of interest to them as well as in operations related to the development of rural communities. The Conference stressed the importance of encouraging farmers and agricultural producers organizations from the village level up to the country level. It was of the opinion that the promotion of these organizations and agencies would help government officials concerned with planning and farming in defining problem priorities and programmes of interest to rural inhabitants as well as in identifying their wishes and views through debate with their local leaders.

112. As many rural inhabitants in the Region are engaged in pastoral activities based on seasonal movements and have a traditional approach to the use of vast areas of land, the Conference highlighted the importance of developing the pastoral system as an integral part of the agricultural sector in order to increase meat, wool and hide production. It took note of the study which is being undertaken by FAO on the structural changes affecting pastoral areas in the Sudan, Somalia, and the Syrian Arab Republic, and called for the continuation of these studies, involving the promotion of the economic and social life of pastoral and bedouin communities as well as ways and means of securing them against the dangers of aridity, including their partial settlement and securing water resources and credit services for them.

V. REVIEW OF REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

Item 8 : Conclusions of Regional Commissions, Committees and Other Meetings.

and

Item 9 : Reporting on Progress in Regional Projects and Setting Priorities for Future Projects and the Use of National Institutions.

113. The Conference discussed Document NERC/76/10, covering the outcome of meetings of regional committees and commissions, the progress of regional projects and the use of national institutions. It expressed appreciation for the progress made in the regional projects which are being executed and for the results they have achieved.

114. The Conference reviewed a number of questions related to the execution of regional projects, with emphasis on the following :

- a) The need for prompt action on the part of FAO as regards the execution of projects which have been approved but are not yet operational,
- b) the need for prompt payment of contributions by the Governments concerned to finance approved regional projects,
- c) the need for a comprehensive evaluation of all existing projects and submission of a report thereon during 1977 for discussion during the next FAO Conference in Rome, at a special session for member countries of the region,
- d) the necessity for the independence of projects financed by the Cooperative Programme from any other source of financing and restricting these financed projects to the countries of the Region.

115. Great interest was expressed in the Regional Land and Water Use Project. It was hoped that execution of this project would begin immediately following the Islamabad meeting held from 18 to 20 October.

116. The Conference praised the contribution made by the project for Improvement and Production of Field Food Crops, particularly as regards the provision of expertise, the collection and dissemination of information, distribution of improved seeds and experiments on various food crops in all the countries of the Region. In recognition of these significant achievements, the Conference unanimously called for continued financing of this project for a further phase, and called upon FAO to take the necessary measures to put this into effect.

117. The Conference was informed of the progress made in the Animal Production and Health Project. It urged the prompt payment of contributions to reaffirm regional cooperation, and praised Iraq for hosting this project and the efforts it has exerted in this connection. The Conference called upon FAO to include the subject of livestock development in the Agenda of the 14th Regional Conference.

118. The Conference expressed its appreciation of the efforts for the establishment of the Sub-regional Fisheries Training Centre in Kuwait. The remarkable success of this project was made possible through the self-help of the countries involved. Kuwait was also praised for hosting the project and for all its efforts to provide the necessary facilities for its successful launching during October 1976.

119. The other regional projects contained in document NERC/76/10 were also discussed, as were new proposals put forward by a number of delegations during discussions on strengthening national institutions with the aim of bringing them up to the level of regional centres.

120. When discussing Document NERC/76/9, the Conference stressed the need for reestablishing the post of Regional Plant Protection Officer, enumerating the important technical problems faced by the countries of the Region in this field. It also emphasised the need for the establishment of a regional farm management institute and the finalisation of the arrangements for the execution of the regional Agricultural Marketing Project.

121. The major problems facing the meetings of the regional commissions were brought to the attention of the Conference, particularly the low rate of attendance at these meetings. The Conference recommended that these problems should be avoided in future.

Item 10 : International Activities of Interest to the Region

122. The Conference noted with satisfaction the progress shown in Document NERC/76/11 on the Consultative Group on Food Production and Investment (CGFPI), the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA), Rural Communication: Role and Contribution of Women in Development and the Follow-up Action on the World Food Conference.

123. The Conference expressed its deep appreciation for the important contributions made by Syria and the Sudan as representatives of the Near East Region in CGFPI. The Conference unanimously elected Jordan as a new member of CGFPI and reconfirmed the Sudan to continue in this Group for the period 1977 and 1978.

124. The Conference expressed its appreciation of the dedicated work undertaken by Pakistan and Egypt as representatives of the Near East Region in the CGIAR, and unanimously elected Iraq and Tunisia as the new representatives of the Near East Region in the CGIAR for the two years period commencing January 1977.

VI. ORGANIZATION AND STATUTORY MATTERS

Item 11 : Strengthening the Use of Arabic at FAO Headquarters and the Regional Office

125. The Conference reviewed the major stages of the development of the use of Arabic language in FAO since 1967 1/: interpretation into and from Arabic at the Ninth Near East Regional Conference (Baghdad, September 1968) and subsequent Regional Conferences, in the Council and in its Committee-of-the-Whole and in technical meetings held within the Near East Region : full Arabic interpretation services at the biennial sessions of the FAO Conferences; translation programmes of 1.8 million words for each of the biennia from 1970 to 1975, which were considerably exceeded for each of these three periods; strengthening of the translation programme, which was increased to 2.5 million words for the current biennium (1976-1977); translation and interpretation services supplied since 1974 to the World Food Conference, the World Food Programme, the World Food Council and the Preparatory Committee of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); and lastly, the steady growth of the use of the Arabic language at the Cairo Regional Office, which has been considerably aided by the voluntary contributions generously made for this purpose by Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

126. Since 1969, the text of the FAO Constitution and other FAO Basic Texts are equally authentic and authoritative in the Arabic version, in the same way as the English, French and Spanish versions. Arabic became an official language of the Organization, under Resolution 16/61 of the FAO Conference at its Sixteenth Session (1971), and Rule XLI of the General Rules of the Organization now reads as follows :

Rule XLI

LANGUAGES

Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish shall be the official languages of the Organisation. English, French and Spanish shall be the working languages, and Arabic shall be a working language for limited purposes.

127. The Conference expressed its appreciation to the Director-General for his decision to meet the wish expressed by the African Regional Conference 2/ by supplying the whole documentation in Arabic for the next Conference that will be held in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in November 1976, together with Arabic interpretation and translation services during that Conference. The Near East Regional Conference recognizes that this decision is further evidence of the Director-General's determination to meet the legitimate aspirations of the Arab world, within the means and resources available. The Conference noted the personal interest shown by the Director-General in the realization of an expanded programme for the use of the Arabic language, taking into account the necessary budgetary balance among the various priorities approved by the Council and fully supported by the Regional Conference itself.

128. During the debate that took place on this important question, the Conference emphasized that the extended use of a national language, in itself constitutes an essential factor of development. The use of a national language permits improved expression, communication and thought and facilitates the transfer of technology to agricultural workers of all levels.

129. The Conference unanimously considers that the present wording of Rule XLI (GRO) should be amended so as to eliminate any distinction among the five languages of the Organization. In the United Nations as well as in FAO it has long been recognized that former distinctions among so-called "official" and "working" languages have become blurred and have lost all practical significance. Unquestionably, the use of any language is subject to certain limitations of a practical nature, which need not be spelt out in a regulation or a rule of general scope.

1/ Recommendation of the 8th Near East FAO Regional Conference, (Khartoum, January 1967)
2/ Rose Hill, Mauritius 1974

130. The Near East Regional Conference accordingly recommended that Rule XLI should be amended to read : ‘‘Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish are the languages of the Organization’’. The time has come to submit this amendment for the consideration and approval of the competent bodies of the Organization, with a view to its adoption by the Conference at its Nineteenth Session in 1977. The Conference requested the Director-General to take the necessary action to this end.

VII. CONCLUDING ITEMS

Item 12: Orientations for the Future Work of FAO in the Region.

131. The Assistant Director-General/Regional Representative for the Near East spoke briefly to the Conference on the orientations for the future work of FAO in the Region, taking as basis the new general policy of FAO as proclaimed by its Director-General and the highlights of the statements of the delegates.

132. The Conference expressed its support to the policy of the new Director-General as a general framework for orienting future FAO work in the Region. The salient aspects of this three-pronged policy are: First, investment as a basis of agricultural development - with the concomitant activity of reinforcing the FAO Investment Centre. Second, establishing the Technical Cooperation Programme which could enable FAO to respond to the needs of the member countries in emergencies as well as providing the services of investment experts and reinforcing the capacity of national institutions for training at the grass-roots level. Thirdly, decentralizing the activities of FAO through paying greater attention to strengthening country offices and allowing FAO activities to take place directly in the field.

133. The Conference underlined the importance of paying greater attention to investment studies and to the training of staff responsible for the preparation, implementation, evaluation, follow-up of investment projects in FAO and the member countries.

134. The Conference expressed its unanimous support to the FAO/Near East Government Cooperative Programme and called upon the FAO to mobilize all its capabilities to expedite the implementation of projects to be executed under this programme.

135. The Conference took note of the steps which have been taken since 1967 for the introduction of the Arabic language in FAO work at FAO Headquarters and at the Regional level. The Conference recommended that Rule 41 of the General Rules of the Organization be amended so as to eliminate any restriction of the use of Arabic and give it equal status with the other languages.

136. Confirming the issues dealt with during this session, the Conference adopted the following declaration:

Tunis Declaration

Mindful of the urgent needs of the peoples of the Region, particularly in achieving improvements in their nutritional standards and socio-economic environment;

Concerned With the lack of progress since the World Food Conference to take effective international action to increase food production, and in particular since the governments of the region look forward to the completion of the necessary arrangements for the establishment of the International Fund for Agricultural Development;

Affirming the need for appropriate action to be taken by the international community, including organizations of the United Nations system, to establish a new international economic order based on equality, self-reliance and mutual cooperation;

Stressing in this connection the primary importance, in the achievement of these goals, of the food and agricultural sector, through its critical contribution to economies of countries of the Region and the economic, nutritional, and social betterment of its peoples;

Recalling the leading role of the Food and Agriculture Organization in promoting national, regional and international action for the achievement of these goals and in assisting Member Nations to overcome the technical, economic and institutional constraints which hold back the necessary progress in economic and social development in the rural areas:

Calls upon Member Nations of the Region to give the highest priority to food and agricultural development, particularly to increasing food production, and to take all necessary measures to this end,

Stresses the paramount importance in this connection of an adequate and continuing flow of investment in food and agriculture, and in this regard takes full note of the vital contribution which Member Nations of the Region have themselves generously made through the Near East Cooperative Programme, the Arab Fund for Economic Development, the Kuwait Fund, the Islamic Development Fund, the Saudi Fund, and the Abu Dhabi Economic Development Fund,

Urges Member Nations and financing institutions to continue and to expand investment in food and agriculture and to help to bring about the early establishment of the International Fund for Agricultural Development,

Invites all financing institutions of the Region as well as the International Fund for Agricultural Development to work closely with FAO in the identification, preparation and when called for in the implementation of agricultural schemes,

Supports fully the approval given by the Sixty-Ninth Session of the FAO Council to the Director-General's initiative in strengthening and broadening the scope of the investment work of the Organization and in endeavouring to establish appropriate links and working arrangements with the above-mentioned financing institutions of the Region as well as the World Bank and other financial institutions, in order to serve the requirements of Member Nations more effectively;

Reaffirms the urgent necessity to overcome by national effort and international cooperation, in particular through FAO, the internal and external constraints on the efforts of Member Nations for food and agricultural development, world food security, food aid and emergency requirements;

Welcomes in this connection the decision of the Sixty-Ninth Session of the FAO Council to support the Director-General's bold and decisive proposals to assist Member Governments more speedily and effectively for these purposes, by giving the programmes of the Organization more relevance to and impact upon the real needs of developing countries, through greater emphasis on practical, action-oriented activities at the country level, in particular by establishing the Technical Cooperation Programme and decentralization to the country level.

Declares its full support for the Director-General in his efforts to continue to reshape the Organization so as better to serve the needs of its Member Nations,

Pledges renewed effort by the Member Nations of the Region to mobilize to the full the human and natural resources of the Region in the struggle to eliminate hunger and poverty from among its peoples.

Item 13: Any other Business

137. No subjects were submitted for discussion under this item.

Item 14: Date and Place of the Fourteenth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East

138. The Conference agreed to hold the Fourteenth Session of the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East during the second half of 1978. As regards the place of the Conference, both the Republic of Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic extended invitations to host it, and the Republic of Cyprus renewed its earlier invitation. The Conference took note of this, leaving the final selection to the Director-General, in consultation with the countries concerned.

Adoption of the Report

139. The Conference adopted the Draft Report after the introduction of some minor amendments.

Closing of the Conference

140. The Conference addressed a message of thanks to H.E. el-Hady Noueira, the Prime Minister of Tunisia, for having graciously inaugurated the Conference and followed its deliberations. The Head of the Syrian Delegation, speaking on behalf of the Delegates of the member countries, thanked the Government of the host country and praised the efforts made by H.E. Hassan Belkhodja, the Tunisian Minister of Agriculture and his colleagues to organize the Conference. He also thanked the Conference Secretariat for the preparation of the Conference and for the provision of the services that contributed to its success.

141. Dr. M.A. Nour, Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for the Near East, then addressed the Conference on behalf of the Director-General. He thanked the Government and people of Tunisia for their warm welcome and generous hospitality and expressed best wishes for Tunisia's continued welfare and progress, and for the speedy recovery of its leader H.E. President Habib Bourguiba. He also thanked the member countries for having accepted the invitation of the Director-General to attend the 13th Regional Conference.

142. H.E. Hassan Belkhodja, the Tunisian Minister of Agriculture and Chairman of the Conference, then thanked FAO and the member countries for having accepted the invitation to attend the Thirteenth Regional Conference in Tunisia, and declared the Session closed.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

Statements by Heads of Delegations

1. All the countries of the Region to cooperate with FAO and other International and regional organizations for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the agricultural sector in Lebanon (para. 35).
2. To coordinate between FAO and the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development and the other national and regional agricultural, financial and professional institutions in the Region, for the achievement of agricultural development (para. 47).

FAO/Near East Government Cooperative Programme

3. The Programme should be further reinforced financially, to enable it to play a greater role in servicing development projects in the Region. Recipient countries should be informed of the future of unapproved projects (para. 55).
4. Assistance provided by the Cooperative Programme should be limited to countries of the Region alone, giving priority to projects of the less developed and most affected countries, particularly country production and investment - oriented projects. Financing of Cooperative Programme Projects should be independent of other sources (para. 57 and 114'd').
5. FAO to devote continued attention to the operational regional projects under the Cooperative Programme, and to remove any obstacles impeding their execution. Concerned countries to expedite payment of contributions (paras. 58, 114'a' and 114'b').
6. To utilise the experience and qualifications available in the countries of the Region for administration and execution of the Cooperative Programme's projects (para. 59).
7. Funds allocated to the countries of the Region by international organizations, especially UNDP, should not be affected by the Cooperative Programme and should not be reduced. (para 61).
8. FAO should gradually reinforce its various units, including RNEA, to enable them to execute and follow up all regional and country projects financed by the Cooperative Programme. (para. 62).

Toward Regional Development and Investment Orientation in Agricultural and Rural Development

9. To give higher priority to increasing investment in agriculture in order to enable countries of the Region to increase their food and agricultural production, and to create productive employment in the agricultural sector for the rapidly growing population of the Region. (para. 65).
10. National staff should be trained in project preparation. The Director-General's plan to hold a regional training course in project preparation for the Near East in 1977 was endorsed with great appreciation. (para. 70).
11. FAO and financial institutions in the Region to consider the possibility of financing specific studies necessary for preparing investment projects. (para. 73).
12. To undertake a survey of existing national and regional training institutes on fishery in order to determine their levels and their requirements. (para. 78).
13. To mount regional joint ventures for the exploitation of fishery resources, with FAO providing relevant information on fishery production of interest to countries of the Region through periodical publications (para. 80).

14. To assist artisanal fishermen in the Region through loans, financial aid and credit in kind. (para. 81).
15. To promote fish culture and the use of man-made lakes as well as reservoirs and water-logged areas for fish production. FAO to conduct a comprehensive survey of fishery resources in the Region, to facilitate preparation of suitable investment projects, making use of the Inland Fisheries Institute in Pakistan. (paras. 84 & 85).
16. The establishment of a regional fisheries commission for the Near East. (para. 86).
17. To expand the scope of the study undertaken by the Regional Office of agro-industries in some countries of the Region to cover the other countries. (para. 88).
18. To establish a regional institute or centre for training in applied research, management and marketing in agro-industries, benefiting from the experiences of all countries, especially those of the Region with advanced agro-industries (para. 92).
19. FAO to conduct a comprehensive survey of marginal lands in the Region and to take action to curb their degradation, as well as to conduct additional studies in other countries of the Region. (para. 94).
20. FAO to respond favourably to the invitation of the Government of the Sudan to participate in and contribute to the international conference on the problem of desertification, organized in collaboration with the UNEP and other international agencies next year (para. 95).
21. To speedily establish the Regional Desert Creep and Range Management Institute and link it with similar institutes and centres in the Region, for scientific cooperation and technical training in the fields of de-desertification and land reclamation. Sub-centres should be established in certain affected countries. (para. 98).
22. Member countries to cooperate in all the fields of research related to the development of marginal lands and for training and exchange of experience and information, making use of relevant institutes in Pakistan and Tunisia. FAO to collect and publish the results of all research and field experiments related to the development of marginal lands undertaken within and outside the Region. (para. 99).
23. Member countries to establish man-made forests for the production of fuel wood in marginal lands so as to provide the energy and timber requirements of local populations, to conserve soil fertility and productivity and to preserve watersheds and regulate water flow. (para. 100).
24. Member countries to lay down policies and enact legislations prohibiting the ploughing of marginal land in areas with less than 200 mm. of annual rainfall, and to increase the application of grain-legume rotation in lieu of fallow, integrated with increasing animal production and rationalisation of rangeland use (paras. 103 and 104).
25. FAO to conduct studies and collect data on the various types of agricultural cooperatives and their role in providing inputs. Findings of these studies should be distributed to member countries of the Region (para. 108).
26. FAO to mobilize available expertise in the member countries in order to correct the negative aspects of land fragmentation and to avoid this problem in the future. FAO to analyse studies and legislation, and distribute this information to the countries of the Region with a view to identifying alternative approaches to this vital problem. (para. 109).
27. FAO to assist the countries of the Region in training persons working in the field of rural development as well as training rural youth in the use of available technical resources, including agricultural mechanisation and agro-industries. FAO to assist in exchanging experience in the field of training national staff and farmers in agrarian reform areas and in the orientation of agricultural extension programmes for men and women. (para. 110).

28. FAO to continue undertaking studies on the structural changes affecting pastoral areas in certain countries of the Region, for the promotion of the economic and social life of the pastoral and bedouin communities to secure them against the dangers of aridity. (para. 112).

Review of Regional Activities

29. FAO to evaluate all existing projects and submit a report for discussion during the next FAO Conference in Rome (Nov. 1977) at a special session for the members of the Region (para. 114'c').

30. FAO to begin the execution of the Regional Land and Water Use Project immediately following the Islamabad meeting held from 18-20 October, 1976. (para. 115).

31. FAO to take necessary actions for continuing financing the Regional Project on the Improvement and Production of Field Food Crops for a further phase (para. 116).

32. Member countries to speedily pay their contributions to the Regional Project on Animal Production and Health, this reaffirming regional cooperation (para. 117).

33. FAO to include the subject of livestock development on the Agenda of the 14th Regional Conference (para. 117).

34. FAO to restore the post of Regional Plant Protection Officer, due to the important technical problems faced by the countries of the Region in this field. (para. 120).

35. Establishing a Regional Farm Management Institute and finalizing the arrangements for the execution of the Regional Agricultural Marketing Project (para. 120).

36. Member countries to help in avoiding the major problems facing the meetings of the Regional Commissions, particularly the low rate of attendance at these meetings (para. 121).

37. Amending Rule XLI of the General Rules of the Organization to read: "Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish are the languages of the Organization". The Conference requested the Director-General to take the necessary action to submit this amendment for the consideration and approval of the competent bodies of the Organization with a view to its adoption by the 19th Session of FAO Conference in 1977. (para. 130).

38. The Conference adopted "Tunis Declaration", for details, please see para 136.

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A. AL JAFF	SAA/FAO Country Representative in Egypt
M.D. EL KHALIFA	SAA/FAO Country Representative in Iraq
M. SHAFI NIAZ	SAA/FAO Country Representative in Iran

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

NERC/76/1	Provisional Agenda
NERC/76/1(a)	Provisional Annotated Agenda
NERC/76/2	Regional Representative's Report on FAO Activities in the Region Including Actions Taken on the Recommendations of the Twelfth FAO Regional Conference
NERC/76/3	FAO/Near East Government Cooperative Programme Objectives, Procedures Undertaken and Proposed Plans for the Future of the Programme
NERC/76/4	Experiences in Investment Projects
NERC/76/5	Prospects for the Development and Exploitation of Fisheries Resources in the Region
NERC/76/6	Developing Agro-industries Including Food Industries and Prospects for Regional Cooperation in Marketing Processed Products
NERC/76/7	Development of Marginal Lands Through Forestry Development, Range Management, Rainfed Agriculture and Socioeconomic Measures
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NERC/76/9	Conclusions of Regional Commissions, Committees and other Meetings
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Statement by Mr. el Hadi Noueira
Prime Minister of Tunisia

Mr. Director-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is the first time, since the creation of FAO, that the Near East Regional Conference has been convened in Tunisia, a country that adhered to the committee and commissions of the Region little over one year ago.

Until then, Tunisia was a Member of the African Region, but being at the same time part of the large Near East community, it was always fully aware of the events and developments influencing the Region.

What could have been more normal for a country that is a geographical crossroad, steeped in centuries of Arab and Muslim heritage, predisposed by its profound nature to catalyse the currents governing human societies, thereby being a bridge and link bringing them closer and binding them together.

To be more precise, Tunisia has always cooperated to the greatest possible extent with the countries of the Near East, with a view to expanding exchanges, reinforcing relations, counselling interests and satisfying common needs.

This is a multi-faceted cooperation, including financing agreements, various forms of participation, opening financial markets, technical assistance, exchanges of experiences and increasing trade exchanges.

By joining your Region, Tunisia once again demonstrates its desire to participate alongside its sister countries in the struggle for economic and social development, and to contribute, in all sincerity, to solving the difficulties facing our economies, especially in the agricultural sector.

It therefore gives me pleasure to welcome you, in the name of the Tunisian Government, and to express our feeling of honour and pleasure as we welcome your Conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Only one out of every five of the inhabitants of the poor countries receives sufficient nourishment, and three hundred million children suffer from malnutrition. The grain requirements of the importing countries have risen from fifteen million tons in 1969-70 to twenty-nine million tons in 1973-74. World grain reserves are sufficient for only 30 days consumption, while the minimum margin of safety is put at 45 days. During the Sixties, demographic growth in 45 developing countries exceeded the growth of food production.

These facts are ample evidence of the magnitude of the problems facing the agricultural sector, although the difficulties with which we are confronted are not peculiar to our Region alone. Despite some improvement following the crisis of the last three years, the world food situation is still basically uncertain. The future does not appear to be very promising for the developing countries, where food production continues to be most insufficient to meet growing needs.

This is by no means a pessimistic exaggeration, it is a harsh fact and a pitiless reality.

Our concern with this situation must not however discourage us. The data before us at present should stimulate a realisation of the gravity of the situation, urge us to work together against the scourges of hunger and malnutrition, and to decide on truly collective and international efforts to meet this challenge to mankind in both the short- and the long-term.

This common concern and general awareness were demonstrated at the World Food Conference, at the United Nations, within our own Organization and in many other institutions, in all of which the international community heard a series of appeals for solidarity to solve the world food crisis, and a number of ideas were developed, leading to a consensus on the solutions for a number of complex and difficult questions.

There was agreement on two objectives towards which the nations of the world must work in order to eradicate hunger;

- To give the highest priority to increasing agricultural and food production, and to increasing productivity in the developing countries.
- To maintain and even to increase financial and technical aid and assistance in kind to the needy countries so as to develop their economies and to raise the standard of living of their population.

I do not pretend, in this brief address, to describe the varied and numerous means whereby agriculture can undertake its basic task, that of feeding mankind. I shall restrict myself to several remarks concerning our awareness of these objectives and their implementation.

While the second objective is mainly a question of political will, the first depends specifically on a number of preconditions or subsequent ones, essential to an overall increase of the rate of growth of food and agricultural productivity.

The pressing needs of development and the intensification of production potentials require the adoption of present day techniques, and the use of modern inputs such as improved seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, machinery and equipment, as well as the establishment and efficient utilisation of the various supporting services, particularly as regards product conversion, storage, marketing, credit, extension, training and the creation of a favourable rural environment. The judicious application of these means will undoubtedly encourage rural masses, favourably influence productivity and increase the volume of national products.

In our developing countries, we must avoid blindly transplanting production methods which have been tried and adopted in countries that are already post-industrial. We must adapt these methods and perhaps conceive others that are better suited to the level of our production mechanism and to its development.

In a world so diverse and compartmented, the concept of production naturally leads to that of markets. The problems raised by international exchanges have always been and continue to be one of the constant preoccupations of the community of nations. Providing agriculture with the conditions necessary to stimulate production is insufficient if it is not provided simultaneously with an outlet for this production.

Hence the need to establish concrete measures, at the international level, to nullify or at least to significantly reduce the effects of protectionist policies, that impede the access of the food and agricultural products of the developing countries to world markets, so as to ensure stable, profitable and fair prices to the producers.

We believe, however, that the reinforcement of the agricultural economy, that must adapt itself to the progress of science and technology and to the exigencies of markets where competition is often fierce, depends primarily on the national policies of the countries themselves. It is therefore incumbent upon the governments of these countries first and foremost to shoulder the responsibility of developing their rural sector.

Tunisia, by nature an agricultural country, is aware of this responsibility, and is therefore devoting great effort to the establishment and application of a proper and efficient agricultural policy.

The aim of this policy is to attain an agriculture capable of providing food, employment, and industrialisation opportunities.

The major objective is to improve agricultural production, quantitatively and qualitatively, and to enable the farmer to carry out his activities in the best possible manner, while constantly seeking to improve.

Agriculture is the cornerstone of development so far as our economy is concerned. It provides one fifth of the gross domestic product, employs half of the active population and utilizes 15 percent of the overall investments, totalling 4 200 million Dinars for the coming Five-Year Plan (1977-1981).

At the end of this period, which should consolidate our past efforts and provide the conditions of economic ascent, Tunisia should be self-supporting in food, at least as regards essential products.

The strategy of the Government aims at creating optimum conditions for increasing food and agricultural production in a constantly evolving rural environment, through a number of measures to improve the exploitation of our agricultural institutions improve rural sanitation, mobilize the farmers, transform mentalities and create a favourable environment for the rural populations.

A number of examples will serve as an illustration of these efforts.

Plans have been worked out to increase the country's hydraulic potential and to assure its rational exploitation. Modern irrigation networks have made possible the expansion of irrigated land. Activities to control erosion and desert creep have been initiated, in addition to a number of programmes to increase areas under pasture.

The State has adopted a large number of varied methods to urge farmers to increase production and improve productivity, such as the establishment of the infrastructure for production and marketing, provision of subsidized inputs, equipment and credit, and the implementation of a price policy equitable to both producer and consumer.

Large training programmes at all levels are operated, to provide the country with the required competent agricultural personnel in view of the evolution of methods and the intensive and accelerated introduction of an appropriate technology, aimed at rationalizing agriculture.

The intensification of agricultural research and extension has always been one of the major concerns of the authorities.

Continuing efforts are being made to transform the rural environment and to improve living conditions in the countryside, by constructing roads, installing water and electricity networks, the creation of a social and cultural infrastructure conducive to a flourishing rural population, and the introduction of light industries, so as to create employment and encourage rural youth to remain in their native areas.

This rural development programme will absorb 100 million Dinars in investments during the Five-Year Plan, and will cover the entire Republic, down to the local level.

We are therefore bound to put into effect one of the fundamental principles of our development policy, namely that of regional equilibrium. We firmly believe that true development must be comprehensive and that the existence of prosperous enclaves alongside backward areas must be avoided.

This is why the development of the rural sector is conducted in a dynamic association with that of the urban areas, in such a way as to spread welfare progressively through all the strata of the population.

However, Government efforts to develop the rural areas through the creation of employment - a major objective of our development policy - by providing professional training and by improving living conditions, are insufficient by themselves. Producers must follow the initiative of the Government to improve their situation, by taking their share of the responsibility of improving their sector, by organizing themselves in such a way as to exploit the immense potential of the rural sector, thus responding to the requirements of the economy and the plan.

The combined efforts of the State and the people will create the proper climate for better returns on State investments.

It is obvious, however, that the national effort is no easy task for the authorities, who are often faced with a number of equally important alternatives, and are therefore compelled, against their will, to sacrifice certain programmes, even if only temporarily, owing to the limited size of investments made possible by the national income.

These constraints that weigh so heavily on the developing countries in general, bring us inevitably to the second priority deemed essential by the international community for solving the world food problem in the years to come.

The process of development imposes great burdens on us, and it has now been established that strictly national approaches are insufficient to solve agricultural problems.

All mankind is involved, and it is therefore the duty of all developed and developing countries to establish a world food policy and to collaborate in putting it into effect.

Here lies the urgency of mobilising the additional international resources necessary to support the efforts of the developing countries and to help them attain an appreciable rate of growth in food production. This means tripling the present amount of aid provided for agricultural development, estimated at 1.5 billion dollars, by calling upon the traditional donors and on new ones as well.

The idea appears to be materializing, with the creation of the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the resources of which will be used exclusively for financing agricultural projects in the developing countries, with favourable terms, with the aim of substantially increasing their food and agricultural production.

In this respect, I take pleasure in pointing out that Tunisia was a co-author of Resolution VIII of the World Food Conference. In addition, she has participated, within the limitations of her means but with continuous interest, in the work and meetings connected with the establishment of this fund. It is unnecessary to recall the circumstances that surrounded its birth.

We must admit that on several occasions many people have wondered whether the concept of 'human solidarity' is truly viable. Have we not heard of a form of hegemony by hunger? Is it not distressing to hear the echoes surrounding the discussions on the provision of one billion Dollars for IFAD when we know that the world spends annually about 300 billion dollars on military equipment, that is to say 6 percent of the GNP of all the countries of the world?

This is why the developing countries must congratulate themselves on the progress which has finally been achieved by the establishment of this important financial institution. Moreover, they should take particular pride in it, as it is thanks to the political will and the determination of a group of developing countries, most of which are among us here in this hall, that its creation was made possible. I refer to the OPEC countries, whose special fund is to contribute 400 million dollars of the 970 million dollars pledged.

This new specialized institution of the United Nations represents for the developing countries a political and social event of the highest significance. It is the first time that developing countries have so closely collaborated with developed countries on a multi-lateral enterprise of this magnitude. Furthermore, its basic structure representing three categories of membership, namely donor developing countries, developed countries and recipient countries, makes this institution all the more important, especially when we take into consideration that a two-thirds majority will be held by the developing countries.

This initiative also found a response at the regional level, and led to the creation of the FAO/Near East Government Cooperative Programme, which I consider to be a far-reaching development signifying a form of cooperation which is both desirable and possible.

We have to admit that our Near East Region has lost the race between production and consumption as regards a number of agricultural products, namely cereals, meat, dairy products and sugar, all of which are imported at great cost.

Nevertheless, all the physical and economic factors available in our Region are sufficient to outstrip the demographic increase. The land is fertile and water resources are abundant. The many dams which have already been identified and await construction in Iraq, Syria, Egypt and the Arab Maghreb could irrigate close to two million hectares. By developing cattle production, the Sudan could become the leading supplier of meat, dairy products and hides in the Region. Large-scale application of new drainage and dry-farming techniques could also substantially increase the yield of land which is at present under-exploited.

In order to perform its functions and to justify the reason for its existence, namely investment to continuously increase agricultural production, IFAD must address itself to regional and international bodies.

Can it therefore have any better example than that of our Organization, the FAO, that by its nature is the foremost agency dealing with the problems of food and agriculture?

During the thirty years of its existence, FAO has acquired an undeniable technical competence in the field of agriculture. The developing countries often call upon it for advice, expertise and training programmes, and a large number of projects have benefited from its support.

It is to be hoped at present that this efficiency will be even more manifest, direct and intensive, thanks to the new orientations arising from the dynamism of Mr. Saouma.

The new FAO policy with a more open and daring perspective coupled with greater flexibility and more practicality, will permit the Organization to meet the urgent needs of the developing countries and the requirements of their development programmes. In this context, we expect of FAO decisive action as regards encouragement of investment, the mobilisation of capital needed for project financing, and greater technical cooperation. It would be to the advantage of FAO, in order to penetrate the farming world, to promote a decentralization at the country level, by giving priority to operational activities.

Finally, it is needless to mention the worthy efforts exerted by other international bodies for the benefit of the agricultural sector, such as UNDP and WFP, that have so efficiently contributed to considerable achievements for promoting development, combatting malnutrition and providing emergency aid.

Mr. Director-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the coming days you will be discussing agricultural problems concerning the Near East Region, and I am confident that your work will proceed smoothly, as I am equally confident of the value of its outcome.

These problems assuredly surpass the frontiers of our Region and are as critical elsewhere, if not more so.

The conclusions of your debates will undoubtedly be positive and beneficial to our countries. They will have great repercussions in the other Member Countries, through your recommendations as well as the proposals which you will bring to the attention of the Director-General, who, as a son of the Region, has a better understanding of its problems and will certainly devote himself to finding solutions to them.

Your proposals will make a valuable contribution to solving the world food problem, the responsibility for which falls on the entire international community, developed and developing countries alike. The progress sought by the Third World through agricultural development in no way runs counter to the interests of the developed countries. On the contrary, it is an indispensable contribution to the implementation of urgent and coordinated measures to improve the overall prospects of the world food situation and to establish a sort of code of justice for the exploitation and distribution of the wealth of the earth.

In a world in which foodstuffs could be used as a means of political pressure, or as what has euphemistically been termed a "peace weapon", it is our duty to do our utmost to accelerate progress, so as to help bring about, through patient but determined action, the establishment of a new economic order, sole guarantee of a better balanced world, both viable and livable.

Statement by Mr. Edouard Saouma
Director-General of the
Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies the ministers and heads of delegations,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to express gratitude and appreciation to the Tunisian Government for kindly hosting the 13th FAO Near East Conference and for the warmth and hospitality we are encountering in this country.

On this occasion, I am pleased to express my admiration and respect to His Excellency, President Habib Bourguiba, the great militant who has given all his life to his country and to his people, and to praise this outstanding leader who has led the Tunisian people in its long struggle for independence and national integrity and who is rightly considered a pioneer in his endeavours toward establishing peace and dialogue between nations.

I am also honoured to mention the great interest His Excellency has shown in the agricultural sector, and in rural development programmes designed to increase production, to improve economic and social conditions, and thus to provide for the welfare and happiness of the great people of Tunisia.

I express my thanks to their Excellencies the ministers, ambassadors, heads and members of delegations who are here with us today to participate in this gathering. Their personal contribution will no doubt have a great effect on the success of the Conference, and will lend it the necessary dimensions commensurate with the aspiration of the peoples of the Region.

Mr. Chairman,

I am glad to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of this Conference, which only confirms my confidence in its success, given your great qualifications, wisdom and ability to direct its deliberations.

I am also glad to welcome Dr. Mohammed Said El Attar, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Western Asia, to thank him for joining this gathering, and to pay tribute to the Commission for the valuable work it is undertaking under his wise leadership and guidance, in the hope that true cooperation, which has governed relationships between the Commission and FAO, will continue for the benefit of the Near East Countries.

I wish also to mention the great efforts which the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development is undertaking and to congratulate its Director-General, Dr. Kamal Ramzi Stino, on the valuable accomplishments which this Organization has already realized, considering how little time has passed since its inception. I wish, too, to underline the policy of cooperation and coordination pursued by both Organizations in their agricultural development work.

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The feeling I have today is of confidence and pride for the presence of outstanding statesmen, dear friends, and people with whom I have excellent relations and with whom I share a common goal and a long history of common struggle towards agricultural development.

I had the same feeling a year ago in Baghdad when I met with their Excellencies the Ministers of Agriculture attending the Council of the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, and again during the meetings of the FAO Conference in Rome.

This feeling stems from the confidence you have vested in me, a confidence which will always guide me in the service of agriculture and the rural population in all member countries, particularly those in need of FAO assistance.

On this occasion, I wish to express to you again my appreciation and gratitude for your brotherly attitudes towards me as manifested on many occasions.

This Conference, Gentlemen, has a special importance since it is being held at the level of ministers and high officials, responsible for agricultural policies in countries of the Region. It will offer a good opportunity to exchange ideas and points of view, and to get acquainted with development plans, accomplishments and future prospects. This should lead to clarifying the agricultural situation and identifying the problems of the agricultural sector in each of the countries concerned, and thus to facilitating the proposal of appropriate solutions and to establishing satisfactory conditions for integrated rural development at the regional level.

Further, this being the first Regional Conference since I assumed my responsibilities as Director-General, I will have an opportunity to submit to you the new reform programme I have drawn up, which was unanimously approved by the Council of the Organization during its session in July of this year.

The ideas contained in this new programme have emanated from my profound conviction that a continuous reform approach should be pursued, and that basic changes should be introduced to the strategy and conduct of the Organization in order to free it from the traditional red tape which leads to paralysis, stagnation and indulgence in fruitless catchwords.

The line I am planning to follow now is based on a creative development of the Organization, aiming at actual constructive accomplishments for the benefit of member countries. I am intent on giving the Organization a new dimension, to make it more dynamic and thus able to face the food and agricultural problems of the world, and satisfy the requirements of a new economic order based on justice, equal sovereignty, solidarity and cooperation in matters of common interest between nations, so that a new framework for economic cooperation can be established among all nations, especially between the developed and developing countries, on the basis of integrity and equality to replace the lawless economy of the jungle. In so doing, we reestablish the justification for the existence of FAO and confirm its continuation.

Gentlemen,

The urgent needs of the developing countries and the seriousness of the world food crisis call for urgent and effective measures to increase agricultural production and improve the state of nutrition, in order to ensure higher standards of living for all the peoples of the world.

To realize this it is imperative to concentrate on increasing investment for the development of agricultural production and on securing more capital for such investments, encouraging its flow and improving its channelling into suitable projects.

Sources of finance will direct their capital toward investment in agriculture only if sound projects are prepared for appraisal and a determination of the extent of their effectiveness and economic viability.

Since FAO is the major UN agency dealing with food and agriculture, and since it has detailed information about the state of agriculture in developing countries and vast experience in the preparation of agricultural projects that are capable of attracting investment, through years of dealing with the World Bank, Regional Banks and National Banks as well as other sources of finance, it is being called upon today, more than at any other time in the past, to extend

and develop to the utmost the flow of technical investment know-how to developing countries.

On this basis, I am determined to give priority to reinforcing FAO's capabilities, qualifications and expertise in this field, and to strengthening the Investment Centre by additional elements in order to help governments to prepare more agricultural projects suitable for investment, so that they may secure the necessary credit from existing and future financing agencies.

Undoubtedly the creation of IFAD will be a new and positive factor in securing more investments in food and agricultural development. FAO warmly welcomes its establishment and is perfectly prepared to play a vital role in assisting member governments to obtain all benefits envisaged from that Fund.

I would like to recall proudly that the oil-producing countries of the Region have played a major role in the creation of IFAD and are to be credited with the initiative for its establishment. They are also making an important contribution towards its resources.

While I am still on the subject of financing, I am glad to stress my optimism and confidence that capital is obtainable from oil revenues in the Region. Bold initiatives have been taken in establishing various financing funds, such as the Islamic Fund for Development, the Kuwaiti Fund, the Saudi Fund, the Abu Dhabi Fund, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the Arab-African Bank, the Arab Fund for Economic Development in Africa and others.

I should point out on this occasion that close cooperation exists between FAO and these funds. In fact, the first letters I signed on taking up office were addressed to my friends Mr. Abdul Latif Hamad, Director-General of the Kuwaiti Fund, and Dr. Saib Garoudi, Chairman of the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development.

I would also like to report to the Conference that I held a meeting in Rome at the end of August with Dr. Said Garoudi, who was leading a delegation to FAO to study possible cooperation between the Fund and FAO. I expect the fruits of this cooperation to be seen shortly. I also talked with a delegation from the Kuwait Fund which visited the FAO recently to discuss possibilities and prospects of cooperation between the two Organizations. As for the Islamic Development Fund and other funds, I am already in contact with them in order to work out appropriate formulas for close and fruitful cooperation.

I hope that these funds will allocate an important part of their investment resources in agricultural development, but this requires that the projects submitted be well prepared and suitable for investment.

Conscious of this fact, I have decided to strengthen the capability of FAO in the field of investment, to increase the number of qualified staff and to mobilize all our potential in this area. I have also decided to organize a training course for FAO staff on the preparation of agricultural projects in accordance with the requirements of financing agencies. These staff members will form the basic cadres for the training of national staff. Indeed, in pursuance of this objective, it is intended that in 1977, in cooperation with the Arab financing agencies, a special training course will be held for national officials responsible for the preparation of agricultural projects in their respective countries. I hope that the course will be attended by numerous officials sent by their governments.

Again in the matter of financing, I must mention one significant event which took place in the Region: the establishment of the FAO/Near East Cooperative Programme. I am highly pleased with this programme and express my appreciation for the initiative of various governments who have wisely contributed to its budget, both for humanitarian reasons and for the sake of the noble objective of agricultural development in the countries of the Region. To this appreciation I join my thanks to all contributing governments.

Decentralization is a complex matter that has often been at the centre of discussions in Regional Conferences and a recurrent subject in the FAO Conference. In the light of my knowledge of FAO and my long experience with its activities, the two following principles have been adopted:

1. to limit the inflation of the central machinery in Rome, in the belief that the most effective field action should be taken at the country level;
2. to strengthen FAO's presence in member countries through improved and more effective representation.

Our Organization has, as you know, been inadequately represented in member countries, with only one staff member, acting as Senior Agricultural Adviser to the UNDP Resident Representative who was responsible for his activities both administratively and operationally. The costs of this representative were shared between FAO, which contributed one third, and UNDP, which contributed two thirds of the costs, in addition to providing office space and other support.

This situation was far from being one of full representation. FAO was far from following the system of other international organizations, such as WHO, which has more than 80 representatives in its member countries.

The situation satisfied no one, since it concealed the real image of FAO. Member Governments have frequently requested a change in the situation and the establishment of fuller and wider representation.

I believe that the presence of an efficient FAO representative will serve as a sort of rehabilitation of the Organization, enabling it to restore its prestige and effectiveness in member countries. The representative, through his presence, will have information on the state of the agricultural sector of the country, its problems and needs, will be informed on development plans and agricultural projects, and will be able to participate in their preparation if so requested by the government. On the other hand, his knowledge of FAO's possibilities will enable him to determine, in consultation with the government, the ways and means of obtaining an effective contribution from FAO for the proper implementation of development programmes.

I believe that these FAO Country Representatives will be able to establish a new relationship between countries and Regional Offices, in a manner conducive to increasing the effectiveness of these offices as regards coordination and follow-up.

To my mind the application of this new system will have no negative effects on the functions and responsibilities of the Regional Offices, since these have in no way been altered, and the offices will continue their normal functions and monitoring of all regional projects. I am now working on the arrangements to govern the relationships between Regional Offices and Country Representatives, and would like to mention here that this system is currently followed in several agencies such as WHO, ILO and Unesco.

Within the new course I am trying to trace for FAO I have proceeded to review its programmes in order to improve their balance. Rather than theoretical and academic studies of long-term interest, concentration should be placed on concrete studies and short-term action which yields quick results at the country level, and on increased training for farmers in rural areas.

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

These ideas and proposals reflect my sincere wish to see FAO respond to the requests and needs of its Member Governments. All I want is to rehabilitate FAO and to give it new dimensions in its functions, so that it does not become an agricultural academy or proliferate into new subsidiary organs, as was the case during the World Food Conference where it was decided to create a new organ rather than rely on FAO.

I should like on this occasion to pay a special tribute to the effective role and generous initiative of the late King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, who sponsored the programme and contributed \$ 10 million to it.

I myself have given this programme my careful attention and am taking all action to establish it on a solid basis, and making appropriate arrangements for a successful breakthrough.

For this purpose I held a meeting in Rome in April with representatives of governments participating in the programme. The highest priority in my action and in that of my staff was given to that meeting.

I would like here to repeat what I said in my opening statement to that meeting, concerning my readiness to mobilize the best minds in FAO in support of the programme and to cooperate fully with it in order to ensure the best choice and the successful implementation of projects. We all know that selection and implementation of projects is a very delicate operation and requires close cooperation between FAO and both donor and recipient countries.

It is my pleasure to inform you that the programme is already operative, and that to date donor countries have approved the financing of 12 country projects at a total cost of about \$ 8 million, in addition to four regional projects to which the programme will contribute some \$ 6 million.

I have decided that responsibility for the management and implementation of regional projects under this programme will be gradually turned over to the FAO Regional Office in Cairo. It has already assumed its responsibility with respect to land and water projects.

Another concern of mine on the role of FAO is the necessity of giving it new dimensions. I found it necessary to provide the Organization with means of responding quickly, practically and flexibly within its Regular Programme, to the short-term needs of developing countries. I therefore decided to establish a Technical Cooperation Programme, to restore to FAO the possibility of providing assistance requested by governments as provided for in the FAO Constitution. Unfortunately, the Organization had not previously been exercising this authority and had, through the years, departed from this concept to become wholly dependent on UNDP and other resources for providing assistance to governments. To remedy that situation, I therefore decided to establish for the first time in the history of FAO a Technical Cooperation Programme, to which \$ 18.5 million have been initially earmarked from the approved Programme of Work and Budget.

The Programme, unique in international organizations, is specially characterized by its flexibility. It aims at simplifying procedures and increasing the effectiveness of FAO activities by making it possible to move and work flexibly.

The Programme, by providing quick, albeit relatively modest, assistance to governments, will eventually yield for them a far greater benefit in the way of increasing agricultural production and improving living conditions. Since it will in fact play the role of a catalyst and produce a multiplier effect, it will increase efficiency in the implementation of ongoing projects and will help in securing greater investments and additional resources.

The Programme provides for assistance in case of emergencies following the outbreak of pests, diseases and disasters, for expert services in the field of investment, and for increasing the capacity of national institutions in the training of farmers in rural areas.

In initiating it, I have laid down criteria for its operation. These include the amount of and condition for assistance, the duration of projects - which normally should not exceed one year - the necessity of maintaining a balance between all recipient countries, bearing in mind the needs of the least developed and most seriously affected countries.

Another important element in my policy, together with investment and the Technical Cooperation Programme, is decentralization to the national level in order to create closer and more fruitful relations between FAO and its governments.

To achieve all this I first need efficient colleagues and staff, and I hope to be able to find them in the near future so that vacant posts can be filled and all the capacities of the Organization can be brought into full action and effectiveness.

Secondly, I ask for the support and assistance of member countries in this desired reform. Your response and your support are for me prerequisites for any constructive and successful work. FAO is you, for you and by you.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is time agricultural development found its way to this Region, which is in great need of a real breakthrough in agriculture.

I believe that the future and welfare of the Region are dependent to a great extent on the agricultural sector and its progress. Capacities are there, natural resources are immense, human resources are unlimited and technical capabilities are increasing year by year in terms of number and experience. As for financial resources, they have now become available.

Let us then work together and face the challenging battle against underdevelopment, poverty and malnutrition. Let us join efforts and collaborate sincerely toward the most noble and cherished objective both for our countries and for humanity in general: welfare and happiness for all peoples.

APPENDIX D-III

Statement by Dr. M.A. Nour
FAO Assistant Director-General
Regional Representative for the Near East

Mr. Chairman, Your Excellencies,

Our meeting here in your country, Mr. Chairman, is of profound significance, taking place as it is in the Region that saw the birth of civilisation. We are gathered here today in Tunisia, a land that greatly contributed to the magnificent heritage of human civilisation in the face of tremendous external challenges. This is the homeland of such historical figures as 'Oqba Ibn Nafi', the founder of the city of Qairouan and of its ancient mosque and the conqueror of all the Maghreb as far as the Atlantic. Tunisia gave us Ibn Khaldun, the renowned politician, thinker and philosopher. Tunisia is also the home of one of the giants of modern times, President Habib Bourguiba, the great Tunisian leader who defied the vicious forces of colonialism, liberated his country and now guides it with his inspired leadership along the path of progress and prosperity.

I have the honour, Mr. Chairman, to pay tribute to the people, government and President of Tunisia, to express my gratitude for their hospitality, and to welcome Tunisia to the Near East Region family of nations. Tunisia was the first Arab North African state to join our Region, and the convention of the FAO Regional Conference here for the first time in this part of the Region is an important historical event and a true symbol of the unity and fraternity that mark our endeavour to achieve the objectives of economic and social development, in the service of this Region and of its rural communities.

The Kingdom of Morocco has since followed suit and has also joined our Region, so a warm welcome to the Kingdom of Morocco and to its delegation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is our duty, as we are gathered here on the green land of Tunisia, to hail the efforts which have been made here to develop agriculture and for the welfare of its farmers and rural areas. Agriculture is the mainstay of Tunisia's economy, employing the majority of its manpower. The pioneering work undertaken by Tunisia in the construction of reservoirs and dams, digging wells, developing olive and date-palm agriculture, improving animal production, controlling desert encroachment, and above all in raising the standards of the rural communities undoubtedly constitutes a wealth of pilot field experiments and experience that will be of great benefit to the Near East Region now that Tunisia has become a member.

Mr. Chairman, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since our last meeting in Amman in 1974, FAO has witnessed most important changes as regards its leadership. Mr. Edouard Saouma, who has honoured us here with his presence, has taken over the helm of our Organization as its new Director-General. This is an indication that today differs from yesterday, as our present phase of development requires innovation as well as a vision differing from that of the past. We of this Region wholeheartedly appreciate this important event and the significance of his election by a majority of votes unprecedented in the history of the Organization. We do so because, apart from his experience within the Organization, his faith in its mission, his enthusiasm in guiding and orienting it so as to serve the needs of the rural areas of the Third World and the poorer countries that are lagging behind in the fields of agricultural and food production, as I say, apart from all this, and far more important, he is a son of this Region. We are most gratified by the absolute confidence which has been placed in Mr. Saouma. The huge responsibilities which have been entrusted to him inspire us with a feeling of solidarity with him and we are ready and willing to shoulder our share of this burden whenever he calls upon us to do so. We wish

him all success in his task, especially following the unanimous approval given by the FAO Council at its last session in July to all the proposals put forward by the Director-General to enable the Organization to fulfill its duties as regards the fearsome worldwide challenge constituted by the chronic and endemic food crisis, and to meet the requirements of the less developed countries.

Mr. Chairman,

I should now like to move on to the state of food and agriculture in our Region, that now includes 22 states. I can state briefly and concisely that the long-term forecast indicates that the food crisis will continue to loom over the economies of our countries and to impede our development policies. Climatic changes threaten us, even in the short term, in a way reminiscent of the drought years we have already experienced, such as in 1972 and 1973.

In spite of this, we are cautiously pleased to note an increase in food production in many countries, such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Egypt, Somalia, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, and the Yemen Arab Republic. There has been a 7 percent increase in the total production of the Region over the high yield of 1974. However production has dropped in some other countries of the region.

Early estimates indicate that production this year was generally satisfactory, owing to favourable climatic conditions and thanks to the greater attention paid by the governments of the Region to factors contributing to increasing production.

Mr. Chairman,

The threatening food situation has stimulated a flood of new activities. An international conference was held to discuss the world food crisis, and recommended, inter alia, the establishment of an international fund for agricultural development. At the regional level the Arab development funds have shown greater, though insufficient interest in the agricultural sector, particularly in view of the fact that there are more than ten financing agencies, organizations and funds in the Region, with a combined capital of over ten billion dollars. In collaboration with the Council of Arab Economic Unity and UNDP, the Organization has established a unit to undertake a comprehensive study of agricultural production and integration. This unit is at present functioning at the Near East Regional Office in Cairo, and preliminary information provided by it indicates the following:

First: The Region will experience a severe cereal shortage, estimated at a total of about 4.5 million tons in 1985, despite large exports of certain cereals, such as rice.

Secondly and more specifically, we expect a wheat shortage in 1985 estimated at about 8.5 million tons. As production is also estimated at about 8.5 million tons, this means that there will be a need to import the equivalent of 100 percent of the total production.

We must therefore concentrate on the investment studies called for by the Director-General, as one of the major bases of the new policy of the Organization, and we must support this activity with all the force of our profound appreciation of the dangers and urgency of the situation.

In the field of livestock the same study indicates a similar pattern: a widening gap between slowly increasing production and a constant increase in demand. We have even noted that meat production decreased in 1975 to about 1.3 million tons, close to the 1973 level, which is evidence of the instability of pastures production.

Projections for 1985 show a shortage that will compel the Arab states alone to import about 2.9 million tons of meat, or about 65 percent of their needs. A third and last example is egg production: estimates for 1978 forecast a shortage of over 40 percent of production.

All this is a certain indication that the region will continue to depend increasingly on importing its basic foodstuffs, unless its leaders, planners and policy-makers establish a concerted strategy to achieve self-sufficiency. All this points to the inevitability of urgently undertaking investment studies to attract regional funds and to limit the drain of the petro-dollar to attractive investments in Europe, America and Japan, and rather to channel it towards agricultural investment in the region, with guaranteed material returns, and obvious social, political and economic benefits.

With your permission, Mr. Chairman, to be more specific, I should like to submit to you for debate and discussion the need to give priority to poultry production in the Region, without neglecting the other sectors of agricultural production. There is also a need to develop fisheries production, including aquaculture. It is our opinion that both these fields are less complex as regards increasing production, as they have both benefitted from modern technology that has made them easily acquired industries, needing very little adaptation and adjustment. The countries of our Region have made commendable and significant advances in the field of poultry production, with increased interest on the part of both the private and public sectors in this vital component of agricultural production. This calls upon us, in FAO, to give it greater attention through in-depth studies. An encouraging note is provided by the fact that the net value of poultry and egg imports in the region in 1974, including inter-country trade, was approximately 69.2 million dollars. The feasibility of developing poultry production in our Region was demonstrated clearly by the ability of the private sector alone in a small country, Lebanon, not only to satisfy local demand, but also to flood neighbouring markets with its huge production. Were it not for the recent tragic and alarming events in Lebanon that have caused such wide-spread destruction, including the poultry industry, we could have seen before us today a most successful example of the poultry and egg industry in this Region. In the light of these facts, the Organization will immediately undertake a comprehensive regional study in the field of poultry production, bringing to bear all the latest modern national and international experience, with the hope of being able to provide the planners, executives and capitalists of the Region with a phased plan for greatly accelerating advances in this domain.

We believe that similar efforts should be made in the field of aquaculture, including shrimp culture.

Mr. Chairman,

We should consider the activities of the Organization and of the Regional Office, especially as regards the recommendations of the Twelfth Regional Conference, which was held in Amman in 1974.

Our present Conference will no doubt recall that the priorities established by the Twelfth Conference centred on the following:

- (1) Land and water development,
- (2) Livestock and fisheries production development,
- (3) Integrated rural development, and
- (4) Crop productivity.

Other areas, the importance of which was stressed in connection with these priorities, were:

- (1) Investment-oriented activities,
- (2) Training,
- (3) Application of science and technology, and
- (4) Agricultural planning and statistics.

These priorities and important areas have formed the basis of the programme of work of the Regional Office since the Amman Conference.

It is indeed an honour to see that the Director-General, Mr. Edouard Saouma, has based his strategy on the lines of two major areas that were among the recommendations of our previous Conference, namely investment activities and training. This is ample indication that the Director-General, with his objective and precise appreciation, and from his position of supreme responsibility, has felt the needs of the developing countries in general and of this Region in particular. He has focused on your aspirations and has integrated them in the very heart of the FAO programme, an action certainly deserving of gratitude and appreciation.

Mr. Chairman,

A working paper, Document NERC 76/2, which will be discussed in due course, describes the activities of the Organization in various fields during the past two years. I wish to avoid repetition, but I should nevertheless like to draw the attention of the Conference to the following points:

First, as you are now aware, the Director-General has decided to gradually turn over the responsibility of the management, implementation and supervision of the regional projects to the Regional Representative for the Near East, starting with the Regional Land and Water Use project in the Near East and North Africa, and the Middle and Near East Animal Production and Health Project.

Second, you will doubtless agree with me that this task entrusted to me by the Director-General is most complex and difficult, as it requires adapting and reconciling the wishes of various countries that may have differing aspirations. I am, however, confident that the governments of all the countries of the Region will assist me in overcoming these difficulties, that we may proceed together towards the achievement of the objectives of these projects.

Third, we thank all the countries that have graciously provided support for the regional conferences, with particular reference to the projects that are actually operational, and those which are in the course of preparation, such as:

- The Regional Land and Water Use Project in the Near East and North Africa,
- The Regional Project on Improvement and Production of Field Food Crops for the Near East and North Africa,
- The Middle and Near East Animal Production and Health Project,
- The Sub-Regional Fisheries Training Centre, and the Cooperative Fisheries Survey Project in the Gulf Area,
- The Regional Date and Palm Centre, and
- The Regional Agricultural Marketing Research and Information Project in the Near East and North Africa.

In this domain as well I must commend the contributions made by various countries of the Region to the cost of expanding the use of the Arabic language at the Regional Office, in addition to the funds allocated in the regular budget of the Organization. This generous and valuable contribution has been instrumental in promoting the use of Arabic, and has also enabled us to translate and publish several books and papers, some of which are displayed in this Hall. You will find sample copies among your documents.

You will also deal with this matter in the course of your discussion of Working Paper NERC 76/12. While reiterating my thanks to the states that have contributed to the implementation of this project, I have no doubt whatsoever that all the Arab States will not fail to be generous in their contributions to it, so that the publications and reports of the Organization can be presented to the Arab readers in Arabic, for the maximum benefit of all concerned.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are most interested in the question of agricultural investment, as we consider investment to be the gateway to agricultural development. I am therefore of the opinion that one of the developments closely related to this subject is the establishment of the FAO/Near East Government Cooperative Programme. It is my opinion that this can be considered one of the vastly important developments that have taken place in the Region since our last Conference, if not the most important of all. You will no doubt recall that the Eleventh and Twelfth Regional Conferences had recommended the establishment of a standing ministerial committee to promote the foundation of a programme for cooperation between the Organization and the governments of all countries of the Middle East, with the Regional Office in Cairo being the focal point. These recommendations have borne fruit to an extent far exceeding our estimates and our hopes during the early phases of our discussion of this programme. I should like from here to hail the Chairman of that Committee, H.E. Sheikh Abdullah Ibn Khalid al-Khalifa, the former Minister of Agriculture of Bahrain, in appreciation of the great efforts he made in a spirit of complete faith and conviction, and also his colleague on the Committee, H.E. Said Abdullah Salman, the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries of the United Arab Emirates, to both of whom we owe the superb launching of this programme.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With the emergence of the concept of self-help, at the beginning of 1975, signalling a new approach, the Region witnessed a new activity unprecedented in the annals of the entire United Nations system. The continuing functions stemming from the revised activity are based on the following:

First: The earnest desire of the donor countries to provide aid through FAO, as an efficient executing agency; Second, the genuine readiness of the recipient countries to receive aid without any restrictions or sensitivities; Third, FAO has taken up this great challenge, and has in fact begun to carry out this mission.

The contributions made by the donor countries came to 29 million dollars, contributed by five wealthy countries of the Region. This Programme is not considered an alternate to the other technical assistance programmes such as UNDP; rather it is a new source of technical assistance in the domain of agriculture, concentrating on investment programmes.

Mr. Chairman,

All the donor countries affirm that their contributions are not emergency transfusions, nor are they gifts nor charity, but are a continuous flow from the very heart of the Arab world to the other parts of the Region, through FAO. We all know that our needs are great and are increasing, as I have already mentioned, and as proof of this it suffices to point out that our studies of the small projects, the priorities of which were designated by the recipient countries, have shown that the estimated total required for their implementation is far in excess of your expectations when you discussed the matter at our last Conference in Amman.

There is no cause for wonder, Mr. Chairman, for goodwill is boundless and knows no limits.

As we put before you today this superb achievement in its most significant form, we do so in gratitude for the confidence placed in FAO, by both donor and recipient countries. We are proud of this confidence, and determined to continue to be worthy of it and to continue to work towards our aspired goals, that we may remain in your confidence. We also put it before you to study together the steps we must take for the improvement of the rural areas of this Region, to increase the productivity of its soil, and to achieve self-sufficiency as well as social and economic welfare.

Mr. Chairman,

With this I come to the conclusion of my address, and I wish to thank you, the Heads and Members of delegations and the Observers for your patience and kindness in listening to me. I have one last word to say, and that is to repeat my thanks and my gratitude to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the people, Government and President of Tunisia for their most generous welcome, while asking the Almighty to bring success to our Thirteenth Conference.

