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Report of the

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

Aden, People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, 11 - 15 March 1984



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

FAO Member Nations in the Near East region (as at 15 March 1984)

Afghanistan	Kuwait	Somalia
Algeria	Lebanon	Sudan
Bahrain	Libya	Syria
Cyprus	Mauritania	Tunisia
Djibouti	Morocco	Turkey
Egypt	Oman	United Arab Emirates
Iran	Pakistan	Yemen Arab Republic
Iraq	Qatar	Yemen, People's Democratic
Jordan	Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of	Republic of

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
Thirteenth	—	Tunis, Tunisia, 4-11 October 1976
Fourteenth	—	Damascus, Syria, 9-16 September 1978
Fifteenth	—	Rome, Italy, 21-25 April 1981
Sixteenth	—	Nicosia, Cyprus, 25-29 October 1982
Seventeenth	—	Aden, People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, 11-15 March 1984

REPORT
OF THE SEVENTEENTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE
FOR THE NEAR EAST
Aden, People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, 11 - 15 March 1984

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Rome, 1984

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SEVENTEENTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE NEAR EAST

Aden, PDR Yemen, 11 - 15 March 1984

SUMMARY OF MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

A. FOR THE ATTENTION OF MEMBER COUNTRIES

1. FAO Programme in the Region

1.1 The Conference requested member countries to consider implementing the follow-up action recommended in the consultant's report on the impact of the UNDP/FAO Regional Project on Field Food Crops (para. 44).

1.2 The Conference urged member countries to improve their veterinary services, strengthen inter-country cooperation in disease control and establish a regional disease intelligence and early warning system (para. 50).

1.3 The Conference urged member countries to ratify the Agreement for the Establishment of the Regional Centre on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development adopted at the Conference of Plenipotentiaries, Rome, 26-28 September 1983 (para. 53).

1.4 The Conference urged agricultural credit institutions in the Region to continue their support to the Near East and North Africa Regional Agricultural Credit Association (NENARACA), (para. 55).

1.5 The Conference urged Member Governments to respond favourably to the Director-General's invitation to join the two new Regional Commissions, namely the Near East Regional Commission on Agriculture and the Near East Economic and Social Policy Commission, which were established in response to Resolution 2/82 of the Sixteenth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East (para. 59).

2. Education and Training for Agricultural and Rural Development

2.1 The Conference recommended that member countries take the necessary steps to improve the quality of agricultural education and programmes through practical training, the provision of demonstrations and training plots, and the creation of opportunities for the students to carry out practical work in the field (para. 63).

2.2 The Conference recommended that agricultural faculties and institutions be encouraged to become more field-oriented through their participation in agricultural and rural development activities and in-service training of field staff (para. 64).

2.3 The Conference recommended that member countries also strengthen their agricultural education institutions at the intermediate level through improvement of the standard of teaching staff, better selection of student intake and more emphasis on practical training (para. 65).

2.4 The Conference recommended to member countries that agricultural extension services in the Region be strengthened and given high priority in view of their great relevance to agricultural development (para. 66).

2.5 The Conference emphasized to Member Governments that extension workers should be provided with sufficient material incentives, that their working and living conditions should be improved and that they should be given opportunities to acquire higher academic qualifications to ensure satisfactory performance of their duties (para. 67).

2.6 The Conference recommended that Governments also provide education and training at all levels for women workers in agriculture, and that women be encouraged to join intermediate level education in order to qualify as extension agents (para. 68).

2.7 The Conference emphasized to Member Governments the need to strengthen cooperation among countries of the Region in the fields of agricultural education, training and extension (para. 69).

2.8 The Conference recommended that Member Governments organize special assistance and training programmes for young farmers to help them to achieve an adequate standard of living and remain in agriculture (para. 70).

2.9 The Conference recommended that countries of the Region undertake measures to maintain close coordination between education, research and extension services, as well as between extension services, cooperatives and farmers' associations (para. 71).

2.10 The Conference urged member countries to improve planning for agricultural education and training at the national level, taking into account projected national manpower needs and possibilities (para. 72).

3. Agricultural Price Policies in the Near East: Lessons and Experience

3.1 The Conference recommended to Member Governments that (i) effective policy formulation take full account of the limitations and side-effects of agricultural price policies, the linkages with the economy as a whole, and the need to reconcile conflicting objectives; (ii) subsidy programmes be carefully designed and well administered to produce the desired results; (iii) effective agricultural price policies have a strong element of consistency and continuity and be supported by greater institutional coordination, adequate cadres of trained technical and administrative manpower as well as adequate information and data; (iv) food subsidies be more selectively applied to specific target groups, and (v) farm support prices be announced early enough for farmers to make timely decisions and to optimize their allocation of resources (para. 79).

3.2 The Conference recommended to Member Governments the establishment in each country of high-level coordinating bodies representing all concerned parties to formulate, monitor, review and evaluate the impact of agricultural price policies (para. 82).

3.3 The Conference requested Member Governments to cooperate fully with FAO in the assembling, analysis and dissemination of information on agricultural commodities, inputs and markets as well as in its periodic reviews of national price policies (para. 84).

4. Strategies for Agricultural Investment in the Near East

4.1 The Conference urged Member Governments to assign high priority to agricultural investment, taking into consideration (i) the adoption of criteria for the selection of investments which would achieve the most rapid increase in production and be cost-effective, e.g. investment to increase the ratio of the fully-equipped irrigated areas, and in the rehabilitation of present irrigation systems rather than in new large-scale irrigation projects, and in the intensification of production on presently cultivated areas rather than in the reclamation of new lands; (ii) the intensification of efforts in the preparation of bankable investment projects for mobilizing external resources, and (iii) the adoption of incentive policies that would keep qualified and competent personnel in their jobs to increase the implementation capacity for agricultural development (para. 87).

4.2 The Conference recommended that agricultural investment projects be selected within the overall investment programme based on national priorities, availability of financial resources and implementation capacity (para. 88).

4.3 The Conference recommended that for countries with serious problems in their balances of payments, more consideration be given to programme and sector loans to maintain or rehabilitate existing production capacity (para. 90).

5. Development of Agro-Industries and Prospects for Regional Cooperation

5.1 Due to the complex inter-disciplinary nature of agro-industry, the Conference recommended to Member Governments the establishment of a high-level administrative board or council of representatives from the concerned agencies which would define policies, formulate concrete programmes, establish priorities, ensure project implementation, coordinate activities for production, processing and marketing, coordinate research and training activities, and allocate financial resources (para. 97).

5.2 The Conference agreed that member countries could achieve their maximum development potential only if agricultural development and agriculture-dependent industrial development were fully integrated (para. 98).

6. Representation of the Region on the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

6.1 The Conference decided to extend the term of office of the Representative of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya for a third period of two years (1985/86) and elected Egypt for four years (1985/88) to represent the Region at the CGIAR (para. 103).

6.2 The Conference stressed that the representatives of the Region should participate fully in the meetings of the Group to convey the views of the member countries of the Region and ensure proper feedback. The regional representatives were requested to take full advantage of the facilities and assistance provided by the Regional Office for the Near East and/or FAO Headquarters (para. 104).

B. FOR THE ATTENTION OF FAO

1. FAO Programme in the Region

1.1 The Conference requested FAO to further strengthen its activities in the field of land and water development (para. 43).

1.2 The Conference requested FAO to provide guidance and assistance to member countries in implementing the follow-up action recommended in the consultant's report on the impact of the UNDP/FAO Regional Project on Field Food Crops (para. 44).

1.3 The Conference called upon FAO to assign priority to the establishment of regional cooperative research networks in certain strategic crops (para. 45).

1.4 The Conference requested FAO to assist member countries in improving their range management efforts through training, provision of new plant material, introduction of biological nitrogen fixation in pasture and fodder crops, and conservation and improvement of the productivity of marginal lands (para. 47).

1.5 FAO was requested to expand and intensify its efforts to establish cooperative networks for the production of disease-free material of citrus, grapes and some stone fruits so as to include other fruit and vegetable crops, provide training in the techniques used and facilitate the exchange of material and information (para. 48).

1.6 The Conference urged FAO to provide assistance to member countries of the Region through expansion of the activities under FAO's International Scheme for the Coordination of Dairy Development (ISCDD), the International Meat Development Scheme (IMDS) and the Artificial Insemination and Breeding Development Programme (AIBDP) (para. 49).

1.7 FAO was requested to assist member countries to improve their veterinary services, strengthen inter-country cooperation in disease control and establish a regional disease intelligence and early warning system (para. 50).

1.8. The Conference urged FAO to continue its support to the Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa during its formative stage (para. 51).

1.9 The Conference requested FAO to continue its assistance to member countries of the Region in the field of agrarian reform and rural development as a follow-up to WCARRD (para. 52).

1.10 The Conference requested FAO to continue its efforts for the recognition and promotion of women's role in food production (para. 54).

1.11 The Conference expressed the hope that FAO would continue to provide technical and financial support to the Near East and North Africa Regional Agricultural Credit Association (NENARACA) (para. 55).

1.12 The Conference requested the Director-General to take into consideration the recommendations of the Seventh Session of the Regional Commission on Land and Water Use in the Near East, the Ninth Session of the Near East Forestry Commission and the Thirteenth Session of the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Near East when formulating future programmes for the Region.

1.13 The Conference requested FAO to continue the present practice of reporting on action taken on previous sessions' recommendations (para. 58).

1.14 The Conference urged FAO to exert further efforts toward reviving the Near East Cooperative Programme (NECP) which rendered invaluable services to the Region (para. 60).

2. Education and Training for Agricultural and Rural Development

2.1 The Conference recommended that FAO further strengthen and intensify its efforts to assist member countries in the field of agricultural extension, training and education (para. 73).

3. Agricultural Price Policies in the Near East: Lessons and Experience

3.1 The Conference recommended to FAO that a follow-up to the global study of agricultural price policies should be pursued at the country level, especially in the preparation of country price policy profiles (para. 80).

3.2 The Conference recommended to FAO that, in view of the complexity and the technical nature of agricultural price policies, the subject should be discussed in depth at the first meeting of the Near East Economic and Social Policy Commission to be held in 1985 (para. 81).

3.3 The Conference requested FAO to continue its efforts in the assembling, analysis and dissemination of information on agricultural commodities, inputs and markets as well as in its periodic reviews of national price policies (para. 84).

4. Strategies for Agricultural Investment in the Near East

4.1 The Conference requested FAO to further strengthen its assistance to Member Governments in the identification and preparation of investment projects and in training in project analysis (para. 92).

4.2 The Conference also requested the FAO Investment Centre to strengthen its assistance in sector studies with a view to helping Member Governments to establish investment priorities and identify an investment programme within the sector (para. 93).

5. Development of Agro-Industries and Prospects for Regional Cooperation

5.1 The Conference requested FAO to update and complete available surveys of national capabilities for agro-industrial development in order to determine the need for change in existing facilities and programmes and the establishment of new ones (para. 99).

5.2 The Conference requested FAO to consider, in consultation with Member Governments, the feasibility of establishing a regional network of selected national institutions to coordinate activities in research and development, training and exchange of information (para. 100).

5.3 The Conference requested FAO to assist member countries in the development of small-scale industries in rural areas and the upgrading of traditional technologies (para. 101).

6. Representation of the Region on the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

6.1 FAO was requested to circulate to Member Governments the report presented to it by the Libyan Regional Representative on his participation in the CGIAR meetings (para. 102).

6.2 The Conference decided to extend the term of office of the Representative of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya for a third period of two years (1985/86) and elected Egypt for four years (1985/88) to represent the Region at the CGIAR (para. 103).

7. Date and Place of the Eighteenth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East

7.1 The Director-General of FAO was requested to determine the date and place of the Eighteenth Regional Conference after consultation with the Government of Turkey and other Member Governments of the Region (para. 106).

INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

Inauguration of the Conference

1. The Seventeenth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East was held in the Aden Frantel Hotel, Aden, People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, (PDR Yemen), from 11 to 15 March 1984 at the kind invitation of the Government.
2. The Conference was inaugurated by H.E. President Ali Nasser Mohammed, Secretary-General of the Socialist Party's Central Committee, Chairman of the Supreme People's Council and Prime Minister of PDR Yemen. The inaugural ceremony was attended by Heads of Delegations and representatives of FAO Member Nations in the Region, as well as by observers from a number of other member countries and from regional and international governmental and non-governmental organizations and bodies (Appendix B). Also present were members of the PDR Yemen Socialist Party leadership, Cabinet members, high-ranking state officials and heads of diplomatic missions.
3. In his inaugural speech, H.E. President Ali Nasser Mohammed welcomed the Heads and members of delegations and observers to the Seventeenth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East, and commended the Director-General for his untiring efforts in formulating the programmes of FAO, especially in the area of food security, and for strengthening FAO's capacity to meet the needs of its member countries, especially in the Near East Region. The President appreciated the efforts made by the FAO Secretariat in the preparations for the Conference and in doing everything possible to make the Conference a success. The President referred to the achievements made by his country in the field of food and agriculture, especially in fisheries, which constituted a significant part of the agricultural sector of PDR Yemen, and in the area of agrarian reform, land consolidation and state farms. The President also referred to achievements made in irrigation, poultry production, agricultural research, cooperatives and extension since independence in 1967. The President noted that special efforts were being made to ensure the availability of agricultural inputs to farmers at reasonable prices and that prices of agricultural products were remunerative to the producers and fair to the consumers. In conclusion, the President stated that there was a need for more investment in agriculture in PDR Yemen, particularly in the fields of land and water conservation and farm mechanization.
4. Mr Edouard Saouma, Director-General of FAO, addressed the Conference at the beginning of the inaugural session, expressing his gratitude to H.E. President Ali Nasser Mohammed for extending his patronage to the Conference and accepting the invitation to inaugurate it.
5. The Director-General highlighted the main achievements made by PDR Yemen in the field of food and agriculture and also in the area of economic and social development, under the wise leadership of H.E. President Ali Nasser Mohammed. Mr Saouma paid special tribute to H.E. Mohammed Suleiman Nasser, Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, for his efforts in developing the agricultural sector in PDR Yemen.
6. H.E. Mohammed Suleiman Nasser, Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform of PDR Yemen, welcomed all participants at the Seventeenth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East, and thanked the Director-General of FAO and the Secretariat for their efforts in the preparations for this Conference. H.E. the Minister noted that the inclusion of important issues such as price policy, investment, training and education in the Agenda of the Conference should be of great interest to member countries of the Region. Speaking about agriculture in his country, the Minister informed the Conference that 1984 was proclaimed as the Year of Agriculture in PDR Yemen and that efforts were being made to accelerate agricultural and rural development. Achievement of food security was considered a great challenge to be met by all the member countries.

Election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen and Appointment of the Rapporteur

7. H.E. Mohammed Suleiman Nasser, Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform of PDR Yemen, was unanimously elected Chairman by the Conference, and the Heads of Delegations were elected Vice-Chairmen.

8. H.E. Mohammed Suleiman Nasser expressed his thanks and appreciation for his election as Chairman of the Conference. He also thanked the Director-General of FAO for the efforts exerted by the Organization in the field of agricultural and rural development in the Region and for the close collaboration it maintained with the member countries. He pledged that the Ministry staff and he himself would cooperate fully with the Conference Secretariat to facilitate its work, and wished the Conference every success.

9. The Conference appointed Mr Avramm Louca, Director, Department of Agriculture of Cyprus and member of its delegation, Rapporteur.

Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

10. The Conference adopted the Agenda (Appendix A) and the Timetable as presented by the Secretariat.

Statement by the Director-General

11. In his opening statement (Appendix D), the Director-General expressed his thanks and gratitude to H.E. President Ali Nasser Mohammed, Secretary-General of the Party's Central Committee, Chairman of the Supreme People's Council and Prime Minister of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, for inaugurating the Conference, which was being held in PDR Yemen at the kind invitation of its Government. He commended the achievements made by PDR Yemen in the field of agriculture and fisheries in spite of scarce natural resources and other constraints.

12. The Director-General congratulated H.E. Mohammed Suleiman Nasser, Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform of PDR Yemen, on his unanimous election as Chairman of the Conference, and wished him and the Vice-Chairmen every success in conducting its sessions. The Director-General also welcomed Heads and members of all Delegations, and observers. He assured the Chairman that the FAO Secretariat would spare no effort to assist him in conducting the work of the Conference.

13. The Director-General referred briefly to the major resolutions adopted at the Twenty-second Session of the FAO Conference, and in particular to the resolution which endorsed the Programme of Work and Budget for 1984-85, with a real increase of 3.6 per cent in the allocations for the technical and economic programmes achieved through reductions in administrative and support costs. He also referred to other resolutions concerning the revised concept of world food security, the International Undertaking for the Establishment of an International Information System for Plant Genetic Resources, and progress in the implementation of the WCARRD Programme of Action.

14. The Director-General drew attention to the deteriorating world political and economic situation. Mistrust between conflicting world powers continued and global expenditure on armaments amounted to almost US\$ 800 billion annually. Although recognizing the critical world economic situation, recent economic summit conferences and north-south dialogues had not made any significant progress.

15. The Director-General indicated that the impact of the global economic crisis had been most severe on the developing countries, resulting in falling national incomes, growing indebtedness and deteriorating balances of payments. The Director-General also noted that the developed countries were experiencing economic recession, inflation, unemployment and budgetary deficits. He expressed his concern about the effect on agricultural inputs, particularly the decline in fertilizer production and consumption, which could ultimately threaten the increase in food supplies required to meet population growth.

16. In 1982, the impact on trade resulted in a decrease of 8 percent in the value of world agricultural trade. Disadvantaged by persistent trade protection and lack of access to markets in the developed countries, agricultural trade in the developing countries fell by 10 percent in 1982.

17. The world economic crisis had also led to reduced assistance to developing countries due to difficulties in replenishing the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the International Development Association (IDA), with no sign of bilateral assistance being able to offset the decrease. Moreover, technical assistance was also affected, due to the decrease in the resources of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

18. The Director-General expressed the hope that the signs of global economic recovery evident in 1983 would continue. However, such recovery might not necessarily benefit the developing countries.

19. Turning to the food and agriculture situation in the Near East, the Director-General pointed out that although continued political unrest and conflicts in the Region resulted in a waste of resources and capabilities and in some cases brought development to a standstill, some countries had made vast strides in the development of food and agriculture. However, in spite of increased allocations to food and agriculture in the development plans of Near East countries, the Region as a whole did not achieve an appreciable increase in food production - which continued to lag behind population growth, resulting in an ever-widening food deficit.

20. The Director-General indicated that FAO maintained close cooperation with several regional organizations and had concluded bilateral agreements with most of them.

21. Referring to the importance of technical cooperation among developing countries in agriculture and rural development, the Director-General mentioned that FAO had published a bulletin explaining the Organization's potential contribution in this area.

22. In order to extend the use of Arabic as one of the official languages of FAO, the Director-General informed the Conference that the first Arabic version of "Ceres" magazine was issued during the FAO Conference in November 1983 and would continue to be published in the future. A telex system using Arabic letters had also been installed for the first time to provide mass media and news agencies in the Arab world with information about FAO programmes and activities.

23. Referring to the agenda item entitled "Education and Training for Agricultural and Rural Development", the Director-General pointed out that training of efficient farmers must be the preoccupation of the planners and executors of agricultural policies. Extension training should be considered the first step in the process of agricultural development and accorded due attention by policy-makers. Although some countries in the Region had relatively good extension services, there remained a need for further support and development.

24. Referring to the agenda item on agricultural price policies, the Director-General indicated that FAO was presently preparing studies on agricultural price policies for all regional conferences in 1984 as part of a global study on this topic. He suggested that recent political disturbances experienced in some parts of the Region were mainly due to inequitable agricultural price policies. The main purpose of the document was to draw lessons and experience from such price policies, and to suggest areas in which FAO can be of assistance.

25. The Director-General indicated that the agenda item on agricultural investment highlighted the fact that, although the Region was a net importer of food while blessed with an abundance of physical and financial resources, investments earmarked for agriculture remained limited. The document on this item pointed to the shortage of qualified personnel capable of preparing agricultural projects, the role that could be played by the private sector in financing and implementing agricultural projects, and areas in which the FAO Investment Centre could assist in the presentation and formulation of agricultural investment projects.

26. The Director-General also noted that the agenda item on agro-industries underlined their importance in stimulating, inter alia, agricultural production, food security and increased exports. Development plan targets for agro-industries were not often attained, due to lack of planning and insufficient coordination. The document on this item

suggested that some agro-industrial problems could only be solved at the regional level. It also indicated areas in which FAO can assist countries to plan and implement their programmes for agro-industrial development.

27. In conclusion, the Director-General reiterated that the countries of the Region should have the political will and determination to increase agricultural investments, to raise food production and to reduce imports. He explained that FAO was willing to assist and cooperate in these endeavours as far as its resources permit.

COUNTRY STATEMENTS AND GENERAL DEBATE

28. All Heads of Delegations expressed their thanks and appreciation to the President of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen for inaugurating the Conference. They also expressed appreciation to the government for hosting the meeting and for the generous hospitality offered to all participants.

29. The Director-General of FAO was commended for the excellent organization of the Conference and for his comprehensive opening statement highlighting global difficulties and the problems and opportunities facing countries of the Region in the food and agricultural sector. Delegates also praised FAO for the relevant choice of items on the agenda of the Conference.

30. Many delegations briefly outlined the progress achieved in the food and agricultural sector of their countries. It was generally accepted that in spite of achievements in some countries, further progress was required to reach higher levels of self-sufficiency with a view to decreasing dependence on external food supplies.

31. In spite of the abundance of untapped agricultural resources available in the Region, many delegations drew attention to the considerable physical, financial and economic constraints facing agricultural development in the Region. Agricultural growth in many countries of the Region had been adversely affected by several consecutive years of drought and the recurrence of floods and earthquakes, as well as the financial burdens of hosting large refugee populations.

32. Some delegations spoke of the adverse effects of the control of commodity markets by the developed countries and the consequent need to actively promote greater self-reliance in order to reduce dependence on food imports, which were increasingly seen as a political weapon.

33. Many delegations reiterated their endorsement of the revised concept of food security recently proposed by the Director-General to ensure that all people should have, at all times, both physical and economic access to basic foods.

34. Delegations also expressed the view that a search for solutions to regional problems would help to pave the way to resolving international food crises. In this connection, some delegates referred to the need for a strategy of economic integration in the Region based on closer political, economic, social and technical cooperation.

35. Many delegations welcomed FAO's initiative to undertake a global study on agricultural price policies and emphasized the crucial role they played in promoting agricultural production and stimulating the flow of investments.

36. The delegates also welcomed the inclusion in the agenda of an item on agricultural education and training. They emphasized that FAO had a major role to play in these areas and should strengthen and intensify efforts to assist countries in this field.

37. Many delegations highlighted the importance of fisheries in the Region and the efforts made by FAO through its regional projects in the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. The delegates welcomed FAO's initiative in organizing the FAO World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development to be held in Rome in June/July 1984.

38. The delegates expressed concern over the difficulties facing the replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), which provided concessional loans for agricultural development in developing countries. This decline in multilateral aid was not expected to be sufficiently offset by the increases in bilateral assistance. Moreover, technical assistance was affected due to the decrease in the resources of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The delegates urged donor countries to lend further support and increase their contributions to these institutions.

39. The delegates praised the achievements of the FAO Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) and welcomed the increase in its resources in the FAO Programme of Work and Budget for 1984/85.

40. The efforts of the World Food Programme were praised by the delegates, who called upon donor countries to increase their pledges to the Programme in order that it might respond more effectively to the needs of developing countries in their strive to accelerate agricultural development.

41. Observers from the World Food Programme, the World Bank, the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Near East/North Africa Regional Agricultural Credit Association and the World Federation of Trade Unions expressed their endorsement of the objectives of FAO and its activities in the Region. They also expressed their goodwill for cooperation with FAO, and the readiness of their organizations to assist Member Governments in their development programmes.

FAO PROGRAMME IN THE REGION

Report on FAO Activities in the Region Including Action Taken on the Main Recommendations Made by the Sixteenth Regional Conference and Programme of Work for 1984-85 (Document NERC/84/2)

42. The Conference noted that the FAO Programme of Work and Budget for the biennium 1982/83 in the Near East Region was implemented through active collaboration and co-ordination between the Regional Office for the Near East (RNEA) and the technical units of FAO. Nevertheless, some delegates indicated that the role of RNEA in implementing the FAO Programme in the Region would be more effective if RNEA were operating from within the Region.

43. The Conference commended FAO for its varied activities in the field of land and water development and requested further strengthening of activities in this respect. The Conference expressed its appreciation of the cooperation between RNEA and other regional and international institutions in the Region in this important field.

44. The Conference took note of the comprehensive report prepared by an independent consultant on the impact of the UNDP/FAO Regional Project on Field Food Crops. The Conference requested member countries to consider implementing the follow-up action recommended in the report, and requested FAO to provide guidance and assistance in this respect.

45. The Conference took note of FAO's intention to assist member countries of the Region to establish cooperative research networks in certain strategic crops, and called upon FAO to assign this subject the priority it deserves.

46. The Conference welcomed the technical assistance provided to some countries in the Region by the International Board for Plant Genetic Resources and requested the expansion of such assistance to respond to the needs of the member countries. The Conference also welcomed the creation of the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources endorsed by the Twenty-second FAO Conference, (Rome, November 1983).

47. The Conference took note of range management activities in the Region and requested FAO to assist the member countries in improving their range management efforts through

training, provision of new plant material, introduction of biological nitrogen fixation in pasture and fodder crops, and conservation and improvement of the productivity of marginal lands.

48. The Conference welcomed FAO's intention to establish a cooperative network to ensure that disease-free material of citrus, grape and some stone fruits is available for propagation within the countries of the Region. The Conference requested FAO to expand and intensify these activities to include other fruit and vegetable crops, provide training in the techniques used and facilitate the exchange of material and information.

49. The Conference urged FAO to provide assistance to member countries of the Region through the expansion of the activities under FAO's International Scheme for the Coordination of Dairy Development (ISCDD), the International Meat Development Scheme (IMDS) and the Artificial Insemination and Breeding Development Programme (ABDP).

50. The Conference took note of FAO's assistance to member countries of the Region in their efforts to combat the outbreak of major epizootics in the past two years. The Conference urged the member countries to improve their veterinary services, strengthen inter-country cooperation in disease control and establish a regional disease intelligence and early warning system, being the basic requirements for the control and eventual eradication of epizootics in the Region, and requested FAO to provide technical assistance in this field.

51. The Conference noted with satisfaction the efforts and progress made by FAO in establishing the Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa. It urged FAO to continue its support to this Association during its formative stage.

52. The Conference appreciated FAO's technical assistance to member countries of the Region in the field of agrarian reform and rural development as a follow-up to WCARRD, and the role played by RNEA in organizing inter-agency meetings for the coordination of UN activities in the Region in rural development. It requested FAO to continue its assistance to member countries in this field.

53. The Conference urged member countries to ratify the Agreement for the Establishment of the Regional Centre on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development which was adopted at the Conference of Plenipotentiaries held at FAO Headquarters in Rome from 26 to 28 September 1983. The Conference was informed that Jordan (host government of the Centre) had already ratified the Agreement and that the Centre could become operational only after ratification of the said Agreement by at least five additional member countries.

54. The Conference commended FAO for the increased attention given to the recognition and promotion of women's role in food production and requested FAO to continue its efforts in this field.

55. The Conference commended the activities of the Near East/North Africa Regional Agricultural Credit Association (NENARACA) during the previous biennium 1982/83, and urged agricultural credit institutions in the Region to continue their support to NENARACA. The Conference expressed its appreciation of the technical and financial assistance provided by FAO to NENARACA since its establishment and expressed the hope that FAO would continue to provide support in the future.

56. The Conference noted that the activities of the ECWA/FAO Joint Agriculture Division had been carried out in full cooperation and coordination with technical units of FAO and RNEA.

57. The Conference endorsed the recommendations of the Seventh Session of the Regional Commission on Land and Water Use in the Near East (Rome, 16-18 March 1983), the Ninth Session of the Near East Forestry Commission (Nicosia, Cyprus, 6-10 June 1983) and the Thirteenth Session of the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Near East (Rome, 16-18 May 1983). It requested the Director-General to take these recommendations into consideration when formulating future programmes for the Region.

58. The Conference took note of the action taken by FAO to implement the recommendations of the Sixteenth Regional Conference for the Near East (Nicosia, Cyprus, October 1982). It requested FAO to continue reporting on action taken on the recommendations of previous sessions.

59. The Conference urged Member Governments to respond positively to the Director-General's invitation to become members of the two new Regional Commissions, namely the Near East Regional Commission on Agriculture and the Near East Regional Economic and Social Policy Commission which were established in response to Resolution 2/82 of the Sixteenth Regional Conference for the Near East.

60. The Conference expressed its satisfaction with the outcome of contacts between FAO and donor governments concerning the balance of the funds of the Near East Cooperative Programme (NECP). It thanked these governments for authorizing the Director-General to utilize this balance to finance new country projects or to extend ongoing uncompleted ones. The Conference urged FAO to exert further efforts towards reviving this Programme, which rendered invaluable services to the Region.

61. The Conference reiterated its support for the FAO Programme of Work and Budget for the Region in the 1984-85 biennium.

SELECTED ISSUES OF AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Education and Training for Agricultural and Rural Development

62. The Conference considered document NERC/84/3 on "Education and Training for Agricultural and Rural Development in the Near East". The Conference noted the close relationship between the adoption of modern agricultural practices, for which qualified technical personnel and trained farmers are required, and the increase in food production in the Region, as well as the improvement in its quality.

63. The Conference noted that most countries of the Region had a sufficient number of institutions for higher agricultural education to satisfy their needs. However, the quality of education provided by some institutes, especially in practical fields, was not considered satisfactory. The Conference recommended that member countries of the Region take the necessary steps to improve the quality of education and programmes through practical training, the provision of demonstration and training plots, and the creation of opportunities for the students to carry out practical work in the field.

64. The Conference emphasized the important role of Faculties of Agriculture in rural development, and the need to strengthen teaching programmes through the introduction of relevant courses on economics and rural sociology. The Conference recommended that agricultural faculties and institutions be encouraged to become more field-oriented through their participation in agricultural and rural development activities and in-service training of field staff.

65. The Conference recommended that member countries should also strengthen their agricultural education institutions at intermediate level through improvement of the standard of teaching staff, better selection of students and more emphasis on practical training. The Conference stressed the importance of selecting candidates to such institutions as far as possible from agricultural or rural backgrounds.

66. The Conference recommended to member countries the strengthening of agricultural extension services in view of their great relevance to agricultural development. Provision should be made for technical and pedagogical training at agricultural institutions for extension workers, with particular emphasis on practical and in-service training.

67. The Conference emphasized to Member Governments the need to provide sufficient material incentives to extension workers and to improve their working and living conditions to ensure satisfactory performance of their tasks. It also recommended that they be given opportunities to acquire higher academic qualifications for their career development.

68. The Conference recommended that member countries also provide education and training at all levels for women workers in agriculture. It underlined the need to encourage young women to join agricultural education institutions at the intermediate level in order to qualify as extension agents.

69. The Conference emphasized the need to strengthen cooperation among member countries of the Region in the fields of agricultural education, training and extension to make fuller use of the existing institutions and benefit from the experience available in some countries in these fields.

70. The Conference drew the attention of member countries to the problem of rural youth migration to urban areas. It recommended that special assistance and training programmes be organized for young farmers to help them to achieve an adequate standard of living and remain in agriculture.

71. The Conference recommended that countries of the Region undertake measures to maintain close coordination between education, research and extension services, as well as between extension services, cooperatives and farmers' associations.

72. The Conference urged member countries to recognize the need for better planning for agricultural education and training at the national level, taking into account projected national manpower requirements and possibilities.

73. The Conference recommended that FAO further strengthen and intensify its efforts to assist countries in the field of agricultural extension, training and education.

Agricultural Price Policies in the Near East: Lessons and Experience

74. The Conference considered document NERC/84/4 entitled "Agricultural Price Policies in the Near East: Lessons and Experience", which reviewed the policy experience in the Region in relation to the formulation, implementation and impact of agricultural price policies.

75. The Conference recognized the key role which agricultural price policies played in both agricultural and national development, particularly in the medium- and low-income countries where other sources of government revenue and foreign exchange were limited.

76. The Conference considered that agricultural price policies must be formulated within the broad context of the prevailing economic, social and political conditions within individual countries.

77. The Conference noted with concern the negative consequences of inadequate agricultural price policies in terms of shortfalls in reaching production and consumption targets and budgetary and foreign exchange problems.

78. The Conference noted that experience in the Region indicated:

- i) that the lack of remunerative agricultural policies often led to inadequate production growth;
- ii) that input subsidies did not offset low producer prices and that larger farmers tended to benefit most;
- iii) that consumer programmes had had positive consumption and nutritional impact, but that middle-income population groups benefitted most while their effectiveness in stabilizing the overall level of consumer prices was uncertain;
- iv) that the absence of integration in domestic markets resulted from inadequacies in market information and analysis, transportation, feeder roads, storage and investment; and
- v) that marketing agencies which operated alongside private and cooperative traders tended to be more efficient than those which enjoyed monopoly powers.

79. The Conference recommended to Member Governments:

- i) that effective policy formulation take full account of the limitations and side-effects of agricultural price policies, linkages with the economy as a whole, and of the need to reconcile conflicting objectives;
- ii) that subsidy programmes be carefully designed and well-administered to produce the desired results;
- iii) that effective agricultural price policies have a strong element of consistency and continuity and be supported by greater institutional coordination, adequate cadres of trained technical and administrative manpower as well as adequate information and data;
- iv) that food subsidies be more selectively applied to specific target groups; and
- v) that farm support prices be announced early enough for farmers to make timely decisions and to optimize their allocation of resources.

80. The Conference welcomed the initiative of the Director-General of FAO in undertaking a global study of agricultural price policies. It recommended to FAO that a follow-up be pursued at the country level, especially in the preparation of country price policy profiles.

81. In view of the complexity and the technical nature of agricultural price policies, the Conference recommended to FAO that this subject be discussed in depth at the first meeting of the Near East Regional Economic and Social Policy Commission to be held in 1985.

82. The Conference recommended to Member Governments the establishment of high-level national coordinating bodies representing all concerned parties to formulate, monitor, review and evaluate the impact of agricultural price policies.

83. The Conference appreciated the willingness of the Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA) and the World Bank to collaborate in the FAO country studies on agricultural price policies and to assist governments of the Region in devising agricultural price policy adjustments.

84. The Conference appreciated the role which FAO played in the assembling, analysis and dissemination of information on agricultural commodities, inputs and markets, as well as its periodic reviews of national price policies. It requested FAO to continue its efforts and Member Governments to cooperate fully in this exercise.

Strategies for Agricultural Investment in the Near East

85. The Conference considered document NERC/84/5 entitled "Strategies for Agricultural Investment in the Near East". It expressed satisfaction with FAO's assistance in the identification and preparation of investment projects and its training activities in project analysis. It noted that in the ten-year period 1974-83, the FAO Investment Centre assisted Member Governments in the Region in the identification and/or preparation of 87 agricultural investment projects at a total cost of about US\$ 6.200 million, including US\$ 2.500 million in external loans.

86. The Conference noted with concern that the availability of financial resources for investment in agriculture was at present much less than in the seventies, owing to the relative decrease in domestic resources due to rising demand, lower export earnings and deteriorating terms of trade. The Conference also noted that reduced financial resources in the oil exporting countries of the Region would imply lower earning transfers to non-oil countries of the Region. Unfortunately, transfer of resources from multilateral institutions such as the IDA and IFAD would also be affected by the lesser availability of resources and the need to assist other regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa.

87. The Conference urged Member Governments to assign high priority to agricultural investment, taking into consideration the following:

- i) the adoption of criteria for the selection of investments which would achieve the most rapid increase in production and be cost-effective in the utilization of scarce financial resources, e.g. in increasing the fully-equipped irrigated areas and in rehabilitating present irrigation systems, rather than in new large-scale irrigation projects, and in the intensification of production on presently cultivated areas rather than in the reclamation of new lands;
- ii) the intensification of efforts in the preparation of bankable investment projects for mobilizing external resources;
- iii) the adoption of incentive policies to keep qualified and competent personnel in their jobs in order to increase the implementation capacity for agricultural development.

88. The Conference recognized the need for more innovative approaches to investment, which would gradually devolve the burden of detailed preparation and actual implementation from the existing government services. It recommended that agricultural investment projects be selected within the overall investment programme based on national priorities, availability of financial resources and implementation capacity.

89. The Conference noted with concern the decline in external financing in the Region, in particular the lesser availability of resources for the International Development Association of the World Bank and the uncertainty about the replenishment of IFAD. It expressed the wish that, as far as possible, financing agencies should continue to extend loans on concessional conditions to the countries of the Region.

90. The Conference recommended that, for countries with serious problems in their balances of payments, more consideration be given to programme and sector loans to maintain or rehabilitate production capacity. It urged financing agencies to cover all foreign exchange costs in their lending and, to the extent possible, part of the local costs.

91. For the promotion of private financing, both domestic and external, the Conference recognized the need to provide the basic physical infrastructure and services which would allow commercial-type investments to be devoted to directly productive activities and be sufficiently profitable to attract private financing. In this connection, it welcomed the efforts made in various countries of the Region to establish a suitable legal framework and incentives to attract external investment.

92. The Conference emphasized that adequate project preparation was essential for rapid and effective implementation of investment projects. It requested FAO to further strengthen its assistance to Member Governments in the identification and preparation of investment projects and in training in project analysis.

93. The Conference also requested the FAO Investment Centre to strengthen its assistance in sector studies with a view to helping Member Governments to establish investment priorities and identify an investment programme within the sector.

Development of Agro-Industries and Prospects for Regional Cooperation

94. The Conference considered document NERC/84/6 which reviewed the status of past and current FAO-assisted agro-industrial projects and activities in the Near East Region, their accomplishments, and their impact at the national and regional levels.

95. The Conference reviewed the importance of agro-industries and the significant role of agro-industrialization in integrated rural development and in achieving socio-economic development objectives.

96. The Conference discussed the factors affecting the pace of agro-industrial development in the Region and the possible means by which it might be accelerated. It recognized that, because of the multiple disciplines involved in agricultural production and agro-industrial development, responsibility for the various facets of the activities and structures involved in development and expansion was spread over numerous government agencies at various levels, and that little had been done to provide for inter-sectorial coordination.

97. The Conference recognized that an understanding of the complex interdisciplinary nature of agro-industry and how it interacted with agriculture and other aspects of socio-economic development was essential. Development plans should include an effective mechanism to coordinate the activities of these two sectors. It recommended that such coordination be provided through the establishment of a high-level administrative board or council of representatives from the concerned agencies which would define policies, formulate concrete programmes, establish priorities, ensure project implementation, coordinate activities for production, processing and marketing, coordinate research and training activities, and allocate financial resources.

98. The Conference agreed that member countries could achieve their maximum development potential only if there was full integration of agricultural development and agriculture-dependent industrial development, and explored some preliminary steps needed to initiate a more positive integrated agro-industrial development programme.

99. The Conference requested FAO to update and complete available surveys of national capabilities for agro-industrial development in order to determine the need for changes in existing facilities and programmes and the establishment of new ones. The following surveys were viewed as being particularly essential:

- i) survey of existing agro-industrial plants;
- ii) survey of national research and development institutions related to agro-industries;
- iii) survey of national institutions involved in manpower training.

100. The Conference considered the prospects for regional cooperation in accelerating the pace of agro-industrial development in the Region and requested FAO to consider, in consultation with Member Governments, the feasibility of establishing a regional network of selected national institutions to coordinate activities in research and development, training and exchange of information.

101. The Conference recognized the importance of small-scale industries in rural areas and traditional technologies, and requested FAO to assist member countries in the development of the former and the upgrading of the latter.

Representation of the Region on the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

102. The Conference considered document NERC/84/7 entitled "Representation of the Region on the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)". Dr A. Maddur, one of the two Representatives of the Region to the CGIAR and member of the Libyan delegation to the Conference, presented a report on his participation in the CGIAR meetings. The report was well received by the Conference, and the Secretariat was requested to circulate it to all Member Governments.

103. The Conference decided to extend the term of office of the Representative of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya for a third period of two years (1985/86) and elected Egypt for four years (1985/88) to represent the Region at the Consultative Group.

104. The Conference stressed that the Representative of the Region should participate fully in the meetings of the Group to convey the views of the member countries of the Region and ensure proper feedback. The Representatives were requested to take full advantage of the facilities and assistance provided by the Regional Office for the Near East and/or FAO Headquarters.

CONCLUDING ITEMS

Date and Place of the Eighteenth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East

105. The Head of the Delegation of Turkey invited the Eighteenth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East to meet in Istanbul, subject to confirmation by the Government.

106. The Director-General of FAO was requested to determine the date and place of the Eighteenth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East after consultation with the Government of Turkey and other Member Governments of the Region.

Adoption of the Report

107. The Conference adopted the present report after introducing some minor amendments.

Closure of the Conference

108. In his closing statement, H.E. Mohammed Suleiman Nasser, Chairman of the Conference, thanked the Director-General and the Regional Representative for the Near East. He paid tribute to all those who took part in preparing and servicing the Conference. He also thanked all participating delegations and expressed the hope that they would continue their efforts to promote cooperation among countries of the Region towards developing the agricultural sector, strengthening regional self-reliance and improving the lives of rural people.

109. The FAO Regional Representative for the Near East spoke on behalf of the Director-General. He thanked the President, the Government and the people of PDR Yemen for the warm welcome, the facilities provided for the Conference, and the generous hospitality. He expressed his best wishes for the prosperity and progress of PDR Yemen. He thanked H.E. Mohammed Suleiman Nasser, Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, and the Conference National Committee for their efforts and excellent arrangements which contributed substantially to the success of the Conference.

110. The Conference unanimously adopted a proposal to address a cable of thanks to H.E. President Ali Nasser Mohammed, Secretary-General of the Party's Central Committee, Chairman of the Supreme People's Council and Prime Minister of PDR Yemen, for extending his patronage to the Conference and for the interest he showed in its deliberations.

111. The Conference Chairman announced the Conference terminated at 17.00 hours on Thursday, 15 March 1984.

AGENDA

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1. Opening of the Conference
2. Election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen, and appointment of the Rapporteur
3. Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

II. STATEMENTS

4. Statement by the Director-General
5. Country Statements and General Debate on the Food and Agriculture Situation in the Near East
6. Report by the FAO Regional Representative on FAO Activities in the Region, Including Action Taken on the Main Recommendations Made by the Sixteenth Regional Conference, and Programme of Work for 1984-85

III. SELECTED ISSUES OF AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

7. Education and Training for Agricultural and Rural Development
8. Agricultural Price Policies in the Near East: Lessons and Experience
9. Strategies for Agricultural Investment in the Near East
10. Development of Agro-Industries and Prospects for Regional Cooperation
11. Representation of the Region on the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

IV. CONCLUDING ITEMS

12. Any other business
13. Date and place of the Eighteenth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East
14. Adoption of the Report
15. Closure of the Conference

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Conference Secretary	K.A. Sabet
Conference Officer	M. Gaieb
Reports Officer	A.N. Cortas
Press Officer	G. de Sabatino

APPENDIX C

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

NERC/84/1	Provisional Annotated Agenda
NERC/84/2	Report on the FAO Activities in the Region, Including Action Taken on the Main Recommendations Made by the Sixteenth Regional Conference, and Programme of Work for 1984-85
NERC/84/3	Education and Training for Agricultural and Rural Development in the Near East
NERC/84/4	Agricultural Price Policies in the Near East: Lessons and Experience
NERC/84/4-Corr.1 NERC/84/5	Strategies for Agricultural Investment in the Near East
NERC/84/6	Development of Agro-Industries and Prospects for Regional Cooperation
NERC/84/7	Representation of the Region on the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)
<u>NERC/84/INF Series</u>	
NERC/84/INF/1	Information Note
NERC/84/INF/2	Provisional Timetable
NERC/84/INF/3	Provisional List of Documents
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<u>NERC/84/CONF Series</u>	
NERC/84/CONF/1	Statement by the Director-General
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STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

Mr Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to express, on behalf of FAO, and on your behalf as well as in my name, our deepest gratitude and appreciation to His Excellency, President Ali Nasser Mohamad, Secretary-General of the Central Committee, Chairman of the Supreme People's Council and Prime Minister of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, and to his esteemed Government, for so generously playing host to the Seventeenth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East, in this brave city of Aden, with its long and glorious history.

I take this opportunity to commend the great efforts made in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen for the development of agriculture and fisheries.

When I visited the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen about two years ago, I was able to see the activities under way both in the sector as a whole and in specific project sites. Despite scarce natural resources, harsh climatic conditions, limited potential and wide-ranging difficulties, these efforts have culminated in gratifying achievements. The credit goes to the wise leadership of this great country.

The Conference has unanimously elected His Excellency Soliman Nassar Mohammad, Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, as Chairman of the present Session. I sincerely congratulate His Excellency on his unanimous election, and my colleagues in FAO and I look forward to cooperating with him, during the coming few days, to make this Session a fruitful one, so that it may reach resolutions and recommendations that will strengthen the joint efforts of the governments of the Near East countries in the various fields of agricultural and rural development. I wish His Excellency and the distinguished Vice-Chairmen every success.

On this occasion, I also wish to welcome Their Excellencies the Ministers and the Heads of Delegations, as well as the delegates and observers, and I look forward to their effective participation in the deliberations of this Conference.

Resolutions of the 22nd Session of the FAO Conference

Mr Chairman,

Last November, the 22nd Session of the FAO Conference was held in Rome, and it adopted several far-reaching resolutions, among the most important of which was the resolution endorsing the Programme of Work and Budget for 1984-85, which responds positively to the highest priorities and urgent needs of the member nations. The budget involved a real increase of 3.6 percent in the resources for the technical and economic programmes over the allocations for 1982-83. This increase was made possible through reducing expenses, as well as administrative and support costs, while maintaining the efficient performance of the Organization and its services.

The Conference also endorsed the revised concept of world food security, with the ultimate objective of ensuring that all people have, at all times, both physical and economic access to basic foods they need. This is to be achieved through producing adequate food supplies; ensuring maximum stability in their flow; and securing to all people both physical and economic access to the food supplies they need.

It should be recalled that the revised concept was first presented to the Committee on World Food Security in April 1983. After it had been adopted by the Committee, it was endorsed by the FAO Council. It was also welcomed by the World Food Council, as well as by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, which called for the widest possible implementation of the broader concept of world food security.

The Conference also endorsed the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources which should be considered a common heritage of mankind, and should be conserved and made available without restrictions for the benefit of present and future generations. The Conference entrusted the Organization with the task of studying the feasibilities of establishing an International Information System for Plant Genetic Resources. It also decided to establish an Intergovernmental Committee for this purpose, whose membership would be open to all member states of FAO.

There were various other important resolutions which cannot be detailed here. It may, however, be appropriate to mention but a few examples; such as the resolution on monitoring progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action of WCARRD, where the Conference stressed the need for further action at country, regional and international levels. The Conference also commended the progress so far achieved in orienting the Organization's policies and technical programmes towards the objectives of the WCARRD Programme of Action.

In connection with the follow-up to the WCARRD Conference, I wish to invite all member countries of the region to ratify the agreement establishing in Amman, Jordan, the Centre on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development for the Near East. The ratification of this agreement by your respective governments is needed so that the Centre becomes operational as soon as possible.

Implications of the Political and Economic Situation on World Agriculture

Mr Chairman,

Allow me to begin with a review of the world political and economic situation and its impact on world agriculture. Politically, the whole world stands on the brink of an abyss, as a result of mistrust between conflicting powers. Negotiations on nuclear arms limitations have been suspended, while the arms race between states continues to be as intense as ever, and the development and production of weapons of annihilation and destruction continue unabated. Expenditure on arms and armament has reached astronomical figures, amounting to almost 800 billion dollars annually, which exceeds the total external debts of all developing countries together.

On the world economic front, the situation remains disturbing, and offers little prospect of relief for the most vulnerable nations. I have witnessed how the summit conferences held during the past few years failed to produce any positive results, despite the fact that they recognized the critical nature of the world economic situation, experienced a belief in equitable sharing of burdens among the nations, and emphasized the need for strengthening world economic cooperation.

Likewise, the North-South dialogue has failed to achieve any substantial progress, either through Global Negotiations, or under any other of the various names that are now in frequent use.

Naturally, the impact of the economic crisis has been most severe on the developing countries, which are engulfed by the multiple burdens of servicing external debts of unprecedented dimensions, the deterioration of their terms of trade, and consequent control policies. Meanwhile, the rich and developed nations have been experiencing industrial and economic recession, as well as high inflation, widespread unemployment and budgetary deficits.

In spite of this bleak picture, we were able to discern in 1983 the possibility that the world economic crisis might be coming to an end. We hope the situation will continue to improve this year, as well. However, economic recovery has so far had no tangible effects on the situation in the developing countries.

Another cause for concern is the grave effect the world economic crisis has had on the economics of agricultural inputs. There has occurred, for example, a decline in global fertilizer production, and a sharp drop in consumption has been recorded by some of the major production areas in the world. It is feared that with the persistence of

such a situation, it might prove impossible to maintain the growth of necessary food supplies to meet the continued population growth.

A major part of international assistance to agriculture is channelled through multilateral agencies. However, the difficulties facing the replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) cast bleak shadows over the flow of multilateral investment, on concessionary terms, in the future. There is little evidence that bilateral assistance will increase sufficiently to offset a major decline in multilateral aid. Moreover, technical assistance was also affected, due to the decrease in the resources of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The problems of agriculture in the world should be considered not merely in terms of production, and of multilateral or bilateral aid, but they should be considered particularly from the viewpoint of trade in agricultural products.

Therefore, the decrease in the value of world agricultural trade which amounted to 8 percent in 1982, is not encouraging. However, the situation is still worse for developing countries. In 1982, the decline in their agricultural export earnings reached 10 percent. Prospects for a sustained recovery are still uncertain.

The situation is made worse by the growth of protectionism. Such a policy has negative effects on the access of agricultural products of the developing countries to major world markets.

All these factors have led, individually and collectively, to a decrease in the per caput income of many developing countries, a reduction in the export prices of their agricultural products, and an increase in the unemployment rate to over 20 percent, in addition to higher prices for manufactured goods imported from the developed countries. On the other hand, UNCTAD estimates that the developed countries would not increase their imports from developing countries until 1990, which will have adverse effects on the balance of payments of the developing countries for several years to come.

Mr Chairman,

FAO has not been indifferent to all these developments. It has repeatedly warned against the adverse consequences of such unfavourable world economic trends. Within its technical and financial capabilities, and through international conferences, meetings and gatherings, it has called upon the international community to collaborate in all sincerity to remedy such conditions.

The Situation in the Near East Region

This important area of the world has, for years, been the scene of many political upheavals, conflict, instability and civil wars. This has obviously had serious effects on the economic development of those countries which were most directly involved.

Regretfully, such countries were compelled, for one reason or another, to mobilize most of their capabilities and resources for armaments, either to ward off actual dangers or to guard against potential ones.

These civil wars, conflicts and instability have resulted in widespread damage and destruction, and in thousands of people being killed or wounded. Victims of war were not only soldiers on the battlefield, but also unarmed civilians in cities, villages and farms.

Despite this gloomy picture, some countries in the Region have made vast strides in the development of food and agriculture. We are pleased to note that some countries in the Region which have abundant natural resources, are increasingly allocating, in their national development plans, large sums for the promotion of the vital sector of food and agriculture. However, most Near East countries have not achieved an adequate increase in food production, and the annual growth rates of agricultural production remain below the annual population increase. The Region continues to remain a net importer of staple

foods. FAO data and statistics indicate that the Region's food imports are increasing in quantity and value year after year, and that the poorer countries in the Region are the hardest hit on account of this.

FAO Programme of Action in the Region

My colleague, the Regional Representative for the Near East will present to your Conference a review of FAO activities in the Region during the last two years. His review will cover the action taken by FAO to implement the recommendations and resolutions of the last Regional Conference. He will also brief the Conference on the Programme of Work for the current biennium. Such a programme was approved by the 22nd Session of the FAO Conference, held at FAO Headquarters in Rome at the end of last year, and to which I referred rather in detail at the beginning of my statement.

Cooperation with Regional Organizations

FAO has maintained close cooperation with a good number of regional organizations and bodies. We have already concluded bilateral agreements with the General Secretariat of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States, the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD), the Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development (AAAID), the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD), the Council of Arab Economic Unity (CAEU), the Arab Centre for the Study of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD) and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB).

There is also close cooperation between FAO and the General Secretariat of the Conference of Arab Ministers of Agriculture for the Gulf States and Arab Peninsula, the Cooperation Council of the Arab Gulf (CCG), in addition to the existing cooperation among the FAO Near East Regional Office, and the Economic Commission for Western Asia (United Nations), the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), the Arab Federation for Food Industries, the Near East-North Africa Regional Agricultural Credit Association (NENARACA) and Federation of Arab Agronomists, etc.

Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC)

Realizing the importance of technical cooperation among developing countries particularly in the various fields of agricultural and rural development, FAO has published a bulletin entitled: "Sharing Experiences for Progress", which sheds light on FAO's potential contribution to the development of cooperation among developing countries. This bulletin is now available, and I believe it will be of value to governments of this Region.

Information and the Use of the Arabic Language

Since Arabic is one of the official languages of FAO, I gave instructions that an Arabic version of "CERES" magazine should be published by FAO in addition to the publication of this magazine in the English, French and Spanish languages. The first Arabic version was published on an experimental basis during the FAO Conference in November 1983. We hope that next issues will improve. Furthermore, FAO has introduced an Arabic alphabet telex system in order to provide mass media and news agencies in the Arab world with information about FAO, its activities and programmes, particularly in the countries of the Region. A communication link between FAO information organs and the Arab world has thus been established. Such a system will serve all interested parties, and provide Arab public opinion with information about the food problem, world food security, and the role which FAO assumes in its relentless war against hunger and poverty at all times and all places.

Items of the Agenda

Mr Chairman,

You are aware that the selection of topics to be brought before the regional conferences is normally carried out through numerous consultations, involving FAO's technical divisions and the staff of the Regional Offices. Such topics are usually related to issues of agricultural and rural development which are of primary concern to the countries of the Region.

However, some of these topics are general in character, and receive almost equal attention in the various regions. Among them, for example, is the topic of training and that of agricultural price policies. Allow me therefore, to make brief comments on the topics to be brought before your Conference, and I am confident that they will be duly considered by you, when they are introduced by my colleagues, members of the Secretariat who have come especially for this purpose.

Education and Training for Agricultural and Rural Development

I stated at a previous session of your Conference, that Man should be the basis as well as the target of the development process; that developed agriculture cannot exist without efficient farmers, and that the training of these efficient farmers must be the preoccupation of the planners and executors of agricultural and rural policies.

On this basis, emphasis has been and is still being laid on the importance of education, training and extension for development. Agricultural research and improved technology are useless unless they can be made available to farmers who are able to adopt them; this usually requires extension workers who are able to convey the right information.

Therefore, the task of training extension workers is considered one of the first steps in the process of agricultural development, and must be accorded due attention by officials in the countries of the Region. In fact, education, training and extension services in general still require more support and attention, even in those countries of the Region which have relatively good services in operation.

Needless to say, the relationship between the agricultural research services and the extension, training and education services must be increasingly close, for their respective tasks are mutually related and indispensable.

Agricultural Price Policies

FAO is currently working on a global study of agricultural price policies, to be submitted to the forthcoming FAO Conference of 1985. As a preparatory step, we have conducted studies on the same topic, at regional level, to be submitted to the Regional Conferences convened this year. The first of these is your Conference.

There is no doubt that agricultural price policies have begun to receive increasing attention from the governments facing the problem of how to develop the agricultural sector by offering incentive prices on the one hand, while providing food and agricultural commodities for consumers at accessible prices on the other hand.

I would not be exaggerating if I say that the difficulties recently experienced by some countries of the Region were mainly attributed to the adoption, by these countries, of "agricultural price policies" which are neither remunerative to the producers, nor reasonable from the viewpoint of the consumer and his purchasing power.

Realizing that the formulation of agricultural price policies is the sole responsibility of governments, FAO does not intend, by raising this issue, to direct your attention towards specific agricultural policies. As well as permitting useful lessons to be drawn from the illustrations contained in the document, we wish to draw the attention of

member countries to FAO's willingness to extend assistance in the conduct of socio-economic studies, which would enable governments to work out suitable norms for their agricultural price policies.

Agricultural Investment

The topic of agricultural investment in the Near East Region constituted the core of my statement, at the last session of this Conference. In the light of our belief in the importance of this topic, we are again allocating it a separate item of the agenda at the current session of your Conference.

The relevant document shows that, in spite of the considerable physical resources available in the Region and the many development funds, banks and institutions operating here, the investments earmarked for agriculture are still very limited, although the Region continues to be, as I have already said, a net importer of basic foodstuffs, on which it spends billions of dollars.

The document also points out that the Region has a shortage of highly qualified personnel capable of preparing agricultural projects including the related technical and economic feasibility studies. It deals also with the potential role that could be played by the private sector in financing and implementing agricultural investment projects, and the necessary incentives to be provided in order to attract private investments to the agricultural and food sector.

I would like to draw your attention to the Investment Centre in FAO, with its unique experience in the preparation and formulation of agricultural investment projects, which could play a major and effective role in this respect.

The FAO perspective study "Agriculture: Toward 2000" stresses the need for more investment in various fields of agriculture in the Near East Region. With this end in view, FAO is, as it has always been, willing to assist in the preparation of studies related to investment in agriculture, and to cooperate in this with all development funds in the Region, and in particular with the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, the Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development, and the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development.

Development of Agro-Industries

Agricultural industrialization undoubtedly plays a vital role in social and economic development. It stimulates agricultural production, reduces food losses, enhances food security, and creates additional investment and employment opportunities. It also improves living standards in the rural areas, reduces migration to the cities, increases export potential, and cuts food imports.

For all these reasons, the subject of agricultural industrialization figures again as an item in the agenda of your Conference.

It should be mentioned that a number of countries in the Region have not been able to attain the goals of agro-industrial development set in their development plans, either due to lack of effective preparation, or to insufficient coordination between institutions engaged in raw material production, processing and marketing.

It is true that some agro-industrial problems can be solved at national level. Others, however, can only be dealt with at the regional level and through cooperation among countries.

FAO can play an important role, within the limits of its mandate, in assisting countries of the Region in their efforts to plan and implement their programmes for agro-industrial development, through carrying out studies related to the production of raw materials; viability of industrialization; selection of the appropriate technologies; and market indicators; in addition to strengthening technical capabilities, and promoting research and training in this field.

Conclusion

Mr Chairman,
Distinguished Heads and Members of Delegations,

As leaders of the Agricultural sector in this Region, responsible for a vital aspect of its economic and social development, you will appreciate the importance of the topics included in the agenda of your Conference.

As I pointed out at the last session of your Conference, agricultural investment should be doubled if we want to avoid a further deterioration of the problems of the Region.

The peoples of this Region were the first peasants in history, and the first producers of wheat. They are now increasingly dependent on others for their food. The social, economic and political implications are far-reaching.

This Region has the means to make the necessary increase in agricultural investment. All it needs is the political will, and the determination to produce its own food from its own land.

In this, as in many other fields of rural and agricultural development, FAO is ready to place its technical resources at your disposal, and to cooperate with your governments up to the limit of its capacity.

Mr Chairman,

Allow me, as I conclude, to wish your Conference every success.

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