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PROPOSED MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1992-1997*

MAJOR PROGRAMME VI. REGIONAL CO-OPERATION FOR ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTProgramme 32. Regional co-operation for development in Europe

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* The present document contains programme 32 of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997. The complete medium-term plan will subsequently be issued in final printed form as Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/45/6/Rev.1).

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PROGRAMME 32. REGIONAL CO-OPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPE

A. Programme

1. General orientation

32.1 The legislative authority of the present programme derives from Chapters IX and X of the Charter of the United Nations and from Economic and Social Council resolution 36 (IV) of 28 March 1947, whereby the Council established the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and assigned to it responsibilities for co-ordination and promotion of international economic co-operation in Europe. The mandate of the programme is further elaborated in a number of Assembly and Council resolutions, as well as in Commission resolutions and decisions, the most recent and pertinent of which are Assembly resolutions 40/178, 43/219 and 44/211, Council resolution 1989/114, and Commission resolution 1 (44). In view of the changes currently taking place in the region, the content of the programme will need to be revised; such changes will be proposed to the Council and the Assembly at the earliest possible time.

32.2 The programme is aimed at:

(a) Strengthening regional, subregional and interregional co-operation and co-ordination of economic policies;

(b) Making full use of potential economic growth opportunities through the implementation of appropriate economic and social policies, and focusing on the relationship of the environment to economic activity, in particular the application of the principles of sustainable development;

(c) Promoting the process of economic reforms in Eastern Europe and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and integrating the economies in transition into the European and global economy.

32.3 The programmes of the regional commissions, including ECE, have evolved in response to the needs of member countries and changing economic and social conditions in the regions and the world. Since many of the issues in the economic, social and environmental fields calling for concerted international action are essentially regional in nature, they can be dealt with most effectively at the regional level. In that context, ECE will be called upon to play an increasingly active role in promoting regional and subregional initiatives, including the promotion of the process of economic reform and the integration of the economies in transition into the global economy.

32.4 Over the years, the promotion of dialogue and co-operation between countries of the region with different economic systems was a major task of the Commission, which is the only permanent intergovernmental multilateral body in the region for promotion of East-West economic co-operation. In keeping with that function, ECE has played an important role in the implementation of pertinent provisions of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, signed in 1975, and subsequent relating documents. The concluding documents of the Madrid and Vienna follow-up meetings specifically acknowledged the work of ECE - both accomplished or in progress - and outlined new activities for the Commission.

32.5 Major economic processes in the ECE region will give rise to a re-orientation and strengthening of co-operation in the region and certain subregions during the period 1992-1997 of the medium-term plan. Those include economic reforms in the centrally-planned economies, as well as integration processes in (a) the European Community, (b) the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, (c) the European Free Trade Association, and (d) the United States-Canada Free Trade Agreement. Further emphasis will be added at the subregional level to co-operation among the Balkan countries, countries in central Europe and in the Baltic and the Arctic regions, as well as in the Mediterranean.

32.6 The positive developments in co-operation within Europe and North America at both the regional and subregional levels indicate more vibrant economic relations in the 1990s. However, the share of ECE in global production and trade places a marked responsibility on the member countries and on ECE as an organization, particularly in the areas of environment and promotion of sustainable development. In that context, much more has to be done to promote co-operation between States and groups of States in the areas vital not only to the region but beyond. The interaction of economic activity and the environment will be one of the critical issues throughout the 1990s. Other problems, which are more than of regional importance, in particular topical issues with transboundary environmental impacts in the fields of air, water, flora and fauna, environmental impact assessment, handling of potentially dangerous chemicals, hazardous waste management and transport of dangerous goods, as well as climatic change and global warming, will be the main challenges in the ECE region over the period 1992-1997 of the medium-term plan.

32.7 On the basis of its comprehensive and multi-sectoral programme of work, ECE, like the other regional commissions, has a particular potential for interdisciplinary or cross-sectoral approaches to complex problems, a potential that will prove to be of increasing significance given the growing number and urgency of problems that demand solutions involving more than one approach. The experience gained in the preparation of the Overall Economic Perspective to the Year 2000 and the interdisciplinary approach developed by ECE on sustainable economic development as a follow-up to the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development will serve as models for a wider application of such methods of work.

32.8 In terms of the sectoral approach, the Commission will work on trade facilitation, particularly on electronic data interchange, trade in services, further expansion of tourism, innovative forms of industrial co-operation, including joint ventures and management training, promotion of foreign direct investment and other forms of financing, as well as on standardization and certification. Other major issues confronting ECE in the 1990s will be changes in population structures, particularly aging populations, economic and social changes and problems in rural areas; management of natural resources and environmental protection, including the interaction of economic growth, social development and environmental impacts; new challenges for transport and communications; and problems of structural changes in industry and major developments in the energy sector, such as the rational use of energy and new energy sources. In the area of information, ECE will continue to serve as a forum for dialogue among its member countries on many critical issues and also as a centre for data collection and for the dissemination of specific information in the region to all its members, as and when required.

2. Overall strategy

32.9 The programme will be implemented by the secretariat of ECE. It will undertake economic research and analysis of specific issues, provide substantive servicing of the Commission, as and when required, and organize seminars and other events in member countries, and for groups of countries, with a view to helping them cope with specific problems affecting them. In the framework of a global data policy, the secretariat will maintain links with national statistical offices and provide access to its databanks for various media, as well as disseminate information on specific issues to all interested parties.

32.10 More specifically, the economic research undertaken by the secretariat on its own responsibility will aim at a better assessment of economic activity and development in the region and beyond. In addition to its analytical and technical work, ECE will also continue to serve as a forum for the elaboration of medium- and long-term strategies and policy recommendations. Examples such as the Overall Economic Perspective to the Year 2000, a regional strategy for environmental protection and the rational use of natural resources, energy balances to the year 2000, a charter on groundwater management, long-term perspectives for human settlements development, and timber trends and prospects to the year 2000 and beyond could serve as a stimulus for ECE to take up similar activities in other areas, including an all-European concept of transport and new ecosystem approaches to the environment.

32.11 Since ECE has already proved to be an appropriate framework for the elaboration and adoption of regional legal instruments, some of which are increasingly applied beyond the ECE region, the experience gained in the fields of transport and environment will be applied to other areas where such regulations are in the interests of all ECE member countries. In addition, ECE will strengthen its efforts to translate its work into concrete and practical measures. More efficient ways of communicating with and involving end users, and, in particular, the business community, will be devised through common efforts by the member countries and the secretariat to derive the largest possible benefit from ECE activities.

32.12 In the course of the implementation of the programme, the secretariat of ECE will co-operate with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and other subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, as well as with other regional commissions. It will also co-ordinate its activities with a number of specialized agencies, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization, the International Labour Organisation and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

3. Subprogramme structure and priorities

32.13 In the light of the above orientation, the programme will consist of the following subprogrammes:

Subprogramme 1. Development issues and policies

Subprogramme 2. Food and agriculture (including forestry products)

- Subprogramme 3. Environment
- Subprogramme 4. Human settlements
- Subprogramme 5. Industrial development
- Subprogramme 6. International trade and development finance
- Subprogramme 7. Energy
- Subprogramme 8. Science and technology
- Subprogramme 9. Transport, communications and tourism
- Subprogramme 10. Statistics

32.14 Owing to the diversity in the level of economic, social and technological conditions among the members of ECE, priority concern within the programme is placed on the concerted efforts to accelerate development of those countries whose potential should be strengthened and to enhance the process of co-operation and economic integration in the region. In that context, subprogrammes 3, 6, 9 and 10 are designated high priority.

B. Subprogrammes

SUBPROGRAMME 1. DEVELOPMENT ISSUES AND POLICIES

(a) Objectives

32.15 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolutions 39/228, 40/178, 42/186, 44/77, 44/169, 44/210 and 44/211; Economic and Social Council resolutions 1989/91, 1989/93, 1989/105 and 1989/114; and Economic Commission for Europe resolution 1 (44) and decisions H (44) and Q (44).

32.16 The subprogramme addresses problems of socio-economic development with long gestation periods, requiring a coherent macro-economic framework for the region. During the period 1992-1997 of the medium-term plan, several countries will have to continue the adjustments necessary to overcome the economic and social problems that emerged during the 1980s. Other countries will have to proceed with extensive and far-reaching economic reforms dealing with the economic and social problems during the transition period. Practically all the countries of the region will be involved in, or affected by, the integration processes that are already taking place. The complexity of national problems and the growing interdependence of the countries of the region make international co-operation in designing and implementing national economic policies essential.

32.17 In matters concerning population (including its social aspects), the problems include, inter alia, aging and the changing age structure of the population, the implications for governmental pension schemes and health insurance programmes of labour force growth, internal and international migration, as well as problems related to the advancement of women, such as the economic role of women in the region, the use of time by women, and the development of improved statistics and indicators on the role and situation of women.

32.18 In the light of the above, the main objectives of the subprogramme are:

(a) To provide member Governments with international perspectives on current economic and demographic issues so that they have a broader framework in which to approach national and international problems;

(b) To gain a perspective of the economic situation of the member countries of the region over the medium- and long-term periods in order to enable Governments to develop appropriate policies and to identify issues of common interest for international co-operation;

(c) To provide the Commission and its subsidiary bodies with background analysis of economic developments in the region;

(d) To promote an integrated approach by members of the Commission to population planning within the overall social and economic development planning process;

(e) To exchange experience on problems and issues in various fields of relevance to countries in the ECE region, for example, aging, fertility and family surveys, and the economic role of women;

(f) To develop an integrated approach by the ECE members towards demographic policies and programmes of national and international relevance and concern.

(b) Course of action of the Secretariat

32.19 In order to achieve those objectives, the Secretariat will systematically monitor the process of economic integration in the region and the economic reforms in the centrally planned economies as forces for extended co-operation between member countries. It will also focus its work on the problems facing the countries in southern Europe and the developing countries of the region. Special attention will be paid to developments and international co-operation in the service sector, structural adjustment, efficiency in the use of resources, and issues relating to population activities. Further analysis will be required of problems raised with regard to environmental issues and natural resources as a result of the process of the economic and technological integration in the region. More detailed subjects in that respect will be determined at a later stage, depending on actual developments and the preferences expressed in the annual sessions of ECE, the Senior Economic Advisers and the Committee on the Development of Trade.

32.20 The Secretariat will continue work on studies on the interrelationships between population, resources, environment and development, with particular attention to the integration of population factors into development planning; the interrelationships between population and the status and role of women; comparative analysis of population policies; periodic revisions of estimates and projections of population and its structure and of urbanization; analysis of mortality, in particular infant and child mortality; reproductive behaviour, family planning and its demographic impact; internal and international migration, and comparative patterns of urbanization and population distribution; as well as continued and strengthened interdisciplinary technical co-operation activities in the field of population, in the following areas:

(a) Training in demography and matters related to population and development, including courses to upgrade knowledge and skills, particularly in the use of microcomputer software;

(b) Evaluation and analyses of basic population data, particularly from the 1990 round of population censuses, dissemination and utilization of the results, and use of computer technology, ensuring technical co-ordination at the national level in the process;

(c) Formulation and implementation of population policies and programmes in the context of national development plans, with special attention to cultural and socio-economic conditions at the subnational level;

(d) Evaluation and analyses of experience regarding technical co-operation activities in matters concerning population and the publication of studies thereon.

32.21 The Secretariat will attach particular importance to the dissemination of the results of its findings in those areas by means of conferences, seminars and other events, and also through its publications. In addition, a comprehensive database will be developed, with increasing access for member countries and other international organizations.

SUBPROGRAMME 2. FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (INCLUDING FORESTRY PRODUCTS)

(a) Objectives

32.22 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolutions 42/186 and 44/212; Economic and Social Council resolution 1987/90; and Economic Commission for Europe resolution 1 (44) and decisions C (43) and H (43).

32.23 With their increasing integration into the national economy, the agricultural and timber sectors, traditionally labour-intensive, are in constant need of adaptation so as to remain competitive with other sectors in attracting investment and other resources. The introduction of new technologies and the adjustment of existing ones are to be viewed against a complex background of internal and external impacts, interrelationships and consequences. The 1990s are likely to witness an intensification of the pace of change affecting agriculture and forestry, which will arise from developments in regional integration, international trade, social conditions, technology and the environment.

32.24 In that context, the Committee on Agricultural Problems of ECE has defined in its programme of work the key areas of activity, which will allow for an optimal contribution to the general objectives; and the Timber Committee has adopted a programme of work for 1989-1993.

32.25 The objectives of the subprogramme are:

(a) In the field of agriculture: the continuous adaptation of existing technologies and economic concepts applicable to the sector in a changing economic and social environment, taking into account the need to integrate agriculture into the food economy (both nationally and internationally), changing market conditions and trade facilitation and standardization of perishable foodstuffs and other agricultural products, as well as environmental, resource and rural income aspects;

(b) In the field of timber: strengthening the competitive base for forestry and forest industries through continuous improvements in methods and technologies, better industrial structure and more transparency in the markets. At the same time, the subprogramme will focus on protection of the natural resource, the forest, from damaging agents, including air pollution and fire, and on raising productivity and production of wood and non-wood goods and services, while ensuring that it is achieved with due regard to environmental protection and on a sustainable basis.

(b) Course of action of the Secretariat

32.26 In the light of those objectives, member Governments of ECE will be provided with detailed and comparable information on the agricultural sector, together with appropriate analyses, with its exchange in selected key areas on technological and economic advances and experience in order to provide a basis for policy formulation, international co-operation and facilitation of trade. For timber, given the lengthy growing cycle of forest stands, emphasis will continue to be placed on the analysis of long-term trends in the sector.

32.27 In that context, the secretariat of ECE will continue to assist:

(a) The Committee on Agricultural Problems in studying priorities to keep abreast of the accelerating changes in the agriculture sector including, inter alia, the relationship between agriculture and environment, the role of agriculture within the overall land-use policy and problems related to rural population and employment;

(b) The Timber Committee in carrying out, in co-operation with FAO, activities aimed at better conservation and protection of forests and the rational use of forest resources within the ECE region; and the secretariat will prepare specific studies for the Timber Committee, as required.

32.28 In line with those responsibilities, the ECE secretariat will also organize working parties and symposia for the members of the Commission and continue to produce publications and disseminate information on the subject among the ECE members.

SUBPROGRAMME 3. ENVIRONMENT

(a) Objectives

32.29 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolutions 42/186, 44/207 and 44/226; Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/87; and Economic Commission for Europe resolution 1 (44) and decisions B (44), I (44) and J (44).

32.30 The emission, transmission and deposition of sulphur compounds, nitrogen oxides and other major air pollutants and their effects on human health and the environment - including agriculture, forestry, materials, aquatic and other natural ecosystems - pose major problems for the countries of the region. International co-operation is essential in the formulation and implementation of strategies and policies for air pollution abatement, in the monitoring and evaluation of the long-range transmission and the environmental effects of air pollutants and in the promotion of technologies and economic instruments for emission control.

32.31 Experience has shown that there is a strong interrelationship between the quality of the environment and economic activities and that there is a strong need to define the natural resource base for sustainable development. In that respect, environmental impact assessment is an important planning tool. In the light of the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, it is necessary to elaborate a regional approach to sustainable development.

32.32 The recovery and reuse of residues from industrial production and consumption, including hazardous waste, is a policy option that offers an opportunity to economize resources as well as minimize environmental and human health impacts. There is an increasing need for the application of the cradle to grave approach to hazardous waste management, giving due attention to waste minimization at source through low- and non-waste technology. Mechanisms and procedures that provide for safe handling and transport of toxic or otherwise hazardous chemicals are growing in significance. The need to develop effective ways of conserving flora, fauna and their habitats transcends the limits of individual countries and will require further co-operation for the maintenance of an acceptable regional environment.

32.33 Water has become a key element in socio-economic development as a consequence of increased urban densities, rapid industrial expansion, changing methods of agricultural exploitation, rising living standards and the growth of tourism. In the coming years, member Governments will face a number of policy questions that call for joint international activities, in the form of co-operative programmes and agreement on action, such as: the elaboration of policies to deal with diffuse pollution; measures to prevent further contamination of waters; prevention of accidental pollution; and the design of strategies and instruments to maintain the role of the water resource in the natural ecosystem. Problems associated with the equitable utilization of transboundary waters, as well as prevention and control of transboundary pollution, including accidental pollution, will assume special importance.

32.34 In the light of that orientation, the objectives of the subprogramme are:

(a) In the field of policy and management problems: to promote the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of effective environmental policies and strategies, including the concept of sustainable development, the integration of environment and economics at both the national and international levels, and the incorporation of environmental considerations into planning and decision-making procedures, including the application of environmental impact assessment, particularly in a transboundary context, and the prevention and control of transboundary effects of industrial accidents;

(b) In the field of pollution problems: to strengthen co-operation in limiting, gradually reducing and preventing air pollution, including long-range transboundary air pollution, through the implementation of strategies and policies for air pollution abatement; to monitor and evaluate the long-range transmission of air pollutants and the effects of major air pollutants on human health and the environment; and to promote international co-operation in the field of emission control technologies and economic aspects of emission control;

(c) In the field of resource and waste problems: to strengthen co-operation in reducing environmental problems associated with production and consumption processes to promote the implementation of the Declaration on Low- and Non-waste Technology and Reutilization and Recycling of Wastes; to promote environmentally sound products as well as the recycling of industrial waste; to advance integrated waste management at both the national and international levels; to promote policies reducing the risks of industrial accidents, including the elaboration of appropriate legal instruments; and to encourage international co-operation in the field of nature conservation on the basis of the Declaration on Conservation of Flora, Fauna and their Habitats;

(d) In the field of water problems: to promote the coherent development, integrated management and rational utilization of water resources and their protection against pollution, including accidental pollution. This objective includes legal, administrative, socio-economic, environmental and technical aspects at the river-basin, national and international levels in the ECE region, with special emphasis on co-operation in the field of transboundary waters.

(b) Course of action of the Secretariat

32.35 The Secretariat will undertake research and analyses of issues of the regional environment, and will monitor and evaluate the promotion of regional co-operation in specific environmental fields. It will assist the Commission, in particular, to promote co-operation among its members regarding environmental protection and sustainable use of natural resources, to formulate integrated policies and strategies aimed at sustainable economic development, to select priority issues for policy discussion in promoting international co-operation in environmental impact assessment, industrial accident and transboundary waters, through specific legal instruments, and to monitor the progress made in the implementation of the Regional Strategy for Environmental Protection and Rational Use of Natural Resources, the application of the code of conduct on accidental pollution of transboundary waters and the Charter on Groundwater Management.

32.36 The Secretariat will service regular meetings of relevant subsidiary bodies, organize seminars and other meetings in different subregions on environmental issues aimed at disseminating the findings of the research and analyses and will examine ways of translating those findings into intergovernmental and governmental policies and measures.

SUBPROGRAMME 4. HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

(a) Objectives

32.37 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolutions 42/186 and 44/173; and Economic Commission for Europe resolution 1 (44).

32.38 Countries of the region face a continuing problem of adapting the built environment to changing needs of society and to new preferences and lifestyles of the people. There is a need to modernize existing buildings and settlements and to renew and revitalize city centres and neighbourhoods. Furthermore, there is a need to conserve energy in the construction and use of buildings, to ensure appropriate co-ordination and integration of physical, socio-economic and environmental planning, to make optimum use of the housing stock and to construct more housing, in particular to satisfy special housing needs. Social and demographic changes and

the aging of the population in most ECE countries will require special action to provide appropriate housing, social and service facilities.

32.39 In some countries, the output of the construction industry needs to be further expanded, while in other countries the main problem is to modify the structure and output of the building materials and construction industries, with a view to meeting the increasing demand for modernization and maintenance of existing buildings. All countries face the problem of rationalizing, improving and reformulating their building regulations on the basis of functional requirements and performance criteria.

32.40 International trade in construction products is of considerable importance as a means of improving quality and efficiency in construction and of reducing costs. Obstacles to such trade will need to be removed or reduced. There is also an increasing demand for facilities, in and outside towns, for leisure pursuits. International tourism can be expected to continue to expand in the 1990s. The land-use, environmental, transport and economic implications of increased activity in those areas will need to be studied as an intersectoral activity, with a view to formulating appropriate sectoral and intersectoral policies with regard to human settlements.

32.41 The objectives of the subprogramme are:

(a) To exchange information and experience on current and long-term developments in the field of human settlements, on urban and regional planning, on housing trends and policies, and on policies related to the development of the building materials and construction industries;

(b) To promote international co-operation in the field of urban and regional research, harmonize building regulations and standards, promote international trade in construction products, and collect, evaluate and publish internationally comparable statistics on housing, building and planning.

(b) Course of action of the Secretariat

32.42 The Secretariat will prepare and organize meetings and undertake studies on different aspects of urban and regional housing and building planning problems. The related findings will be published and disseminated among ECE members. Furthermore, country monographs containing information and experience on trends and policies concerning human settlements at the national level will be circulated with a view to exchanging such information, and seminars will be organized to elaborate recommendations for policies.

32.43 In the context of the preparation of the 1992 and 1996 conferences on urban and regional research, the Secretariat will assist in determining timely issues and preparing appropriate discussion papers.

SUBPROGRAMME 5. INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

(a) Objectives

32.44 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolution 42/186 and Economic Commission for Europe resolution 1 (44) and decision P (44).

32.45 Profound economic and technological changes have occurred in recent years in the steel, chemical and engineering industries, as well as in automation, which will continue to affect those industrial sectors - possibly even at an accelerated rate - during the next decade. Problems related to the supply of raw materials, technological developments, quality requirements, energy constraints, trade and competition will persist. The importance attached by Governments to making sustainable development the guiding principle in the interrelated objectives of economic growth, environmental protection and sound development within the region will have a significant impact on the way in which priorities are set in the study and solution of underlying problems affecting those industrial sectors. There will be a need for further structural adjustments as a result of intensified co-operation among countries at the subregional level and the emergence of increased production capacities in the newly-industrialized countries. Increased costs of undertaking fundamental and applied research will call for a strengthening of international co-operation.

32.46 The objectives of the subprogramme are:

(a) To facilitate co-operation in the ECE region in the industrial sectors pertaining to the steel, chemical and engineering industries and automation and to provide a framework wherein the member countries can exchange information and experience;

(b) To create conditions whereunder ECE members could develop a unified strategy for further diversification of the industry structure in order to enhance the economic and technological development of that sector in specific subregions.

(b) Course of action of the Secretariat

32.47 In line with those objectives, the Secretariat will undertake research and analyses of conditions and trends in the industrial sector of the region and will disseminate the findings among the members of ECE, with a view to elaborating the future industrial development strategy in the region. In that context, the Secretariat will prepare and publish (a) annual reviews on current developments and prospects, including international trade in the steel, chemical and engineering industries, as well as in automation; (b) biennial updates on steel scrap statistics; and (c) five-year periodic surveys of developments affecting the chemical industry and the engineering industries and automation, with special attention to the environmental and energy aspects of the production process in steel, chemicals and engineering, and statistics for sectors of the engineering industry that are of commercial importance. Studies will be undertaken on the importance of the quality of raw materials for the quality of finished steel products, on market trends and international trade in the above-mentioned sectors, and on selected economic, technological, environmental and resource issues. Work on the elaboration and dissemination of relevant statistics will continue, and seminars and study tours will be organized on selected issues of specific interest to countries of the region.

SUBPROGRAMME 6. INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT FINANCE

(a) Objectives

32.48 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolutions 44/205 and 44/218; Economic and Social Council resolutions 1988/61, 1988/68 and 1989/118; and Economic Commission for Europe resolution 1 (44) and decisions L (44) and O (44).

32.49 The economic interdependence of ECE countries, the recent economic and foreign trade reforms adopted in the countries with centrally-planned economies and the development of the subregional integration process make it necessary for member countries to undertake periodic exchanges of information on trade trends, policies and problems and on changing forms of economic co-operation (such as joint ventures) in the region. National economic policies and structures have to be adjusted to changing external trade and payments conditions as well as to developments on the domestic markets in partner countries, especially those where forms are being introduced. Difficulties encountered by several member countries in financing their economic and trade development, and fluctuations in the volume, composition and terms of intraregional trade may induce Governments to resort to import restrictions, thus reducing trade opportunities. Identification of obstacles of all kinds to the development of intraregional trade is the first step in evaluating their impact on trade flows. Member countries that are developing from the economic point of view encounter special trade difficulties and are not as well equipped as other countries of the region to solve them. There is no forum, other than ECE, which provides an East-West framework for the multilateral exchange of experience among all the countries in the region on those issues, as well as on problems arising in specific types of transactions, such as counter-trade, or for particular classes of traders, such as small and medium-sized enterprises.

32.50 Development and exchange of transparent market information and experience, in such areas as marketing, financing techniques and improved business contacts, constitute important means for promoting intraregional trade. Substantial possibilities exist for publication and dissemination of information compiled by the Secretariat to assist Governments and business circles in their commercial contacts. Industrial co-operation (including joint ventures) constitutes also one of the means to ensure a steady expansion and diversification of intraregional trade.

32.51 Information accompanying goods in international trade or related to their payment has to be transferred between a number of parties, traditionally on a number of different paper documents. Cumbersome formalities and procedures pose a major impediment to trade, which can be eliminated or greatly reduced through harmonization of standards. The United Nations rules for Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport (UN/EDIFACT), developed and maintained within the framework of the ECE Working Party on the Facilitation of International Trade Procedures, provide necessary standards to ensure world-wide harmonization in trade information interchange. Constant co-operation is needed with national and international institutions engaged in such activities. In the area of standardization, arrangements for the mutual acceptance of certificates of conformity are at present limited to bilateral agreements or arrangements between a limited group of countries. Testing and certification are major non-tariff barriers to international trade and they must be reduced by working out intergovernmental agreements that are as widely accepted as possible.

32.52 The objectives of the subprogramme are:

(a) In the area of trade policy: to expand and diversify intraregional trade; to identify obstacles to the development of that trade and to elaborate and apply measures aimed at creating favourable conditions for its expansion and structural diversification; and to expand the trade, in particular the exports, of ECE member countries that are developing from the economic point of view;

(b) In the area of trade promotion: to create favourable conditions for industrial co-operation between countries in the ECE region and to help in the development and formulation of policies regarding industrial co-operation (including joint ventures), other forms of industrial co-operation and tripartite co-operation; and to promote development, exchange and dissemination of economic, commercial and administrative information relevant to trade, including marketing;

(c) In the area of trade facilitation: to reach agreements on basic standards for the facilitation of interchange of trade data - principally by means of electronic data interchange - and on standardization policies conducive to the elimination of technical obstacles to trade.

(b) Course of action of the Secretariat

32.53 The Secretariat will undertake periodic reviews and analyses of regional and interregional trade trends and issues and continue to publish new studies on changes in trade policies, development finance, compensation trade and trade in services. Particular attention will be paid to specific problems encountered by small and medium-sized enterprises and by member countries that are developing from the economic point of view. An inventory of all kinds of obstacles to trade will be kept up to date on the basis of notifications from Governments. Implications for trade of the economic reforms in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Eastern Europe will be studied. Emphasis will be placed on developing and exchanging information and experience in the field of trade and industrial co-operation, including joint ventures and marketing, and on the conditions favourable for foreign direct investments.

32.54 The Secretariat will continue to disseminate materials of assistance to Governments and to business circles in their commercial contacts. Further seminars on the subject will be held. Surveys and studies will be undertaken on trends and modalities of joint ventures, other forms of industrial co-operation, tripartite co-operation and the problems of creation and functioning of free economic zones.

32.55 In the area of standardization, the harmonization of standards and technical regulations with a view to facilitating trade and transport within the region will receive particular attention. Recommendations aimed at the promotion of international agreements and other appropriate arrangements on the acceptance of certificates of conformity with standards and technical regulations will be adopted.

32.56 In the area of facilitation of international trade procedures, new recommendations will be adopted. Trade Facilitation News will continue to be issued and UN/EDIFACT directories will be updated and disseminated regularly. New guides relating to contracts for international commercial transactions will be elaborated.

SUBPROGRAMME 7. ENERGY

(a) Objectives

32.57 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolution 42/186; Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/6; and Economic Commission for Europe resolution 1 (44) and decision D (44).

32.58 The period 1992-1997 of the medium-term plan is expected to be dominated by conflicting short-term and long-term developments. While for most of the time span and for most member countries energy is expected to be in ample supply, longer-term problems of oil substitution, import dependence, rational use of energy and energy conservation, pollution and climate change would gain momentum. Benefiting from short-term market opportunities, while not mortgaging future generations, appears to be the main issue for the medium-term plan period. Those and other developments affect the competitiveness of indigenous energy production in the region, particularly oil, coal and new sources of energy. The profitability of production and trade, particularly East-West energy trade, will decline despite continued progress in labour productivity and energy efficiency. Capacity growth will slow, as will investments into exploration and research activities. Government and industrial response strategies will emphasize the need to reduce costs, develop new markets and introduce more flexible management structures and methods.

32.59 The objectives of the subprogramme are:

(a) To develop and implement regional programmes of co-operation in the energy sector, geared to policy needs and sufficiently flexible to respond to new issues and market developments;

(b) To establish and refine internationally acceptable definitions, classifications, statistics, balances and databases;

(c) To formulate general recommendations on policy issues, such as the rational use of coal, gas and electricity, environmental protection and co-operative research.

(b) Course of action of the Secretariat

32.60 Apart from servicing the meetings and seminars approved by the various principal subsidiary bodies dealing with energy, the Secretariat will analyse trends and developments in the energy sector in the region, with particular emphasis on demand, efficiency, acceptance and environmental impact of energy use. The related findings and recommendations will be disseminated to the members of the Commission and published, as appropriate.

SUBPROGRAMME 8. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

(a) Objectives

32.61 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolutions 44/14 and 44/236; Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/99; and Economic Commission for Europe resolution 1 (44) and decision F (44).

32.62 Science and technology are recognized as being increasingly important factors in economic development. The processes whereby research and innovation take place and their impact on economic development, industrial infrastructure, productivity and investment patterns call for further analysis based on an exchange of information and experience among national policy-makers. The escalating costs of research and development and the increasingly limited availability of resources, coupled with the rapid pace and complexity of technological innovations, make it desirable for Governments to co-operate more closely in identifying new forms and directions of international scientific and technological co-operation, and in analysing and exchanging experience on emerging science and technology issues having a multidisciplinary character. So far, considerable differences exist among ECE countries with respect to the developments taking place in science and technology and in their respective systems of economic management, approaches of planning and business practices.

32.63 The objectives of the subprogramme are:

(a) To provide a forum for the exchange of information and experience among national authorities and decision makers on developments and changes in national science and technology policies, priorities and institutions, including international science and technology agreements concluded among member countries with different economic and social systems, and on major scientific and technological trends and their implications; and a comparison of science and technology potential of the countries of the region;

(b) To provide conditions and avenues for the study of selected issues in science and technology, and to review changes in national science and technology policies and institutions.

(b) Course of action of the Secretariat

32.64 In the light of those objectives, the Secretariat will:

(a) Review major developments and changes in national science and technology policies, priorities and institutions, including quadrennial reviews of changes in overall national science and technology policies, priorities and institutions;

(b) Take inventory of current bilateral agreements concluded among member countries of different economic and social systems, and prepare reviews and studies on medium- and long-term perspectives, current developments and selected issues in science and technology, including those related to the transfer of technology and the promotion of contacts among young scientists;

(c) Maintain and update the manual on licensing procedures and keep the members of the Commission informed in that respect;

(d) Disseminate information on selected issues in science and technology, in particular by organizing annual seminars for member Governments;

(e) Maintain an inventory of existing safety guidelines in biotechnology.

SUBPROGRAMME 9. TRANSPORT, COMMUNICATIONS AND TOURISM

(a) Objectives

32.65 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from General Assembly resolution 42/186; Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/104; and Economic Commission for Europe resolutions 1 (44) and decisions F (43), K (44), M (44) and N (44).

32.66 Economic growth and wealth depend to an increasing extent on the exchange between countries and the establishment of an international division of labour. It is a fact that production growth, trade and transport are closely interrelated. It is, however, in many respects a complex relationship, since transport, while being an essential supporting element of trade, also contributes to the generation of economic activities and exchanges.

32.67 In view of the close relationship between transport and the overall socio-economic framework, it is evident that any modification in one of the two areas has an impact on the other. Some of the recent changes that influence considerably the transport sector relate to the completion of the single market within the European Economic Community, the economic reform processes under way in Eastern Europe, new logistics approaches, as well as an increasing concern about the environment.

32.68 The establishment of a single market within EEC will involve the abolition of frontier controls of goods, the freedom of movement and settlement of people, the harmonization of technical and administrative standards and the liberalization of capital movements.

32.69 Changes in both the countries that have centrally-planned economies and in countries that have market economies will inevitably affect transport. In Eastern Europe, the transition from directive management to economic management will encourage the use of economic incentives. Those incentives will also be applied to implement transport policies and to determine the division of labour in the transport sector.

32.70 The structure of trade in goods and services is also changing. In relative terms, goods in bulk are declining, while intermediate manufactures are on the increase. Consignments of goods to be transported are becoming smaller. The value of goods per unit of mass or volume is becoming increasingly high. Industrial organization is improving and becoming more demanding in terms of logistical improvements (for example, just-in-time transport), the tendency being to integrate transport into the process of production and distribution.

32.71 International concerted action at the regional level is required, on the one hand, to plan and develop the necessary inland transport infrastructure and international transport links and, on the other, to provide adequate administrative support to facilitate the movement of goods and passengers across frontiers. Particular emphasis must therefore be laid at the intergovernmental level on the preparation of harmonized standards and technical requirements for all types of transport infrastructure and equipment, especially for combined transport, and on the development and introduction of electronic data processing at the international level to facilitate transport management and administrative procedures.

32.72 Transport affects the environment because of noise, air and water pollution and the use of the land. In some countries, the impact of transport operations, in particular road transport, on the environment has reached levels that are no longer acceptable. Growing awareness of environmental concerns will increasingly influence national transport policies in the years ahead and will require that adequate measures be taken.

32.73 Information on transport flows and trends along important European transport corridors, together with reliable and internationally comparable data on the structure and performance of the transport sector, needs to be compiled, analysed and disseminated on a regular basis, as such information is an indispensable tool for policy decisions in that area. Region-wide regular consultations and exchange of information among Governments are indispensable factors of co-operation.

32.74 The development of new technologies, particularly in electronics and telecommunications, will open new possibilities for improving the efficiency of transport and communications and for further strengthening of tourism; it will, however, create new problems in relation to the standardization of equipment and the safety of transport and communications operations.

32.75 The objectives of the subprogramme are:

(a) To strengthen co-operation among Governments in formulating and implementing co-ordinated and homogenous transport, communications and tourism policies, particularly with regard to infrastructure planning;

(b) To monitor and analyse traffic flows on important European transport corridors;

(c) To promote the dissemination of data and information relevant for policy-makers and for transport, communications and tourism industries;

(d) To elaborate and promote harmonized technical regulations and standards in areas such as construction of motor vehicles, traffic regulations and transport of dangerous goods;

(e) To update existing international instruments and to prepare new ones in line with the rapid evolution of transport in the region. That objective includes public and private law aspects and covers technical as well as customs and other administrative documentation and procedures concerning road, rail and inland water transport;

(f) To promote international co-operation in limiting the negative environmental impact of transport in general and of road transport in particular.

(b) Course of action of the Secretariat

32.76 The secretariat of ECE will carry out research and analyses concerning the current and expected evolution of international traffic flows aimed at assessing the demand for transport services and the structure and performance of the transport industry. It will review and evaluate trends and developments in specific transport areas and prepare studies and promote activities aimed at improving transport safety and road traffic safety.

32.77 The secretariat will assist ECE and other intergovernmental bodies in formulating comprehensive strategies aimed at the development of coherent and efficient transport, communications and tourism systems in the region.

32.78 The secretariat will continue to administer a large number of legal instruments, regulations and recommendations, some of which are applied world wide, concerning the organization and management of international transport, communications and tourism and will, according to needs, contribute to the elaboration of new legal instruments in the light of identified needs and requirements.

32.79 It will maintain and strengthen contacts with other regional commissions to ensure consistency of transport policies and requirements on a world-wide basis and to make available existing expertise and experience in that sector to other regions and interested intergovernmental bodies.

32.80 The secretariat will continue to service regular meetings of relevant intergovernmental bodies, organize seminars and symposia, provide assistance to a number of administrative bodies established under various international instruments and disseminate the results achieved through those activities in order to encourage the implementation of common transport policies and measures. It will assist in the collection, compilation and distribution, in particular through meetings, seminars and symposia, of statistical and other information concerning international transport, communications and tourism.

SUBPROGRAMME 10. STATISTICS

(a) Objectives

32.81 The legislative authority for the subprogramme derives from Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/3 and Economic Commission for Europe resolution 1 (44) and decision C (44).

32.82 The subprogramme addresses the problem of conceptual and methodological development of statistical services of the region to meet better the needs for timely, consistent and comparable statistics for policy design and monitoring in economic, social and environmental fields, for analysis of policy implementation, for fostering international economic co-operation and for research purposes. During the medium-term plan period, the problems facing statistical offices of those member countries in transition from centrally-planned to market-economy-type management will also require attention, as will the problems emerging for statistical services in connection with integration processes and other processes of co-operation.

32.83 The objectives of the subprogramme are:

(a) To adapt internationally available statistical standard recommendations to the conditions of transition countries, focusing on national accounts, statistics of foreign trade, price statistics, financial statistics, labour force statistics and selected social and demographic statistics;

(b) To develop further the conceptual basis for the accelerated introduction of environment and natural resource statistics into national practices;

(c) To strengthen the co-ordination of all statistical activities of international institutions active in the region;

(d) To develop suitable instruments aiming at the reduction of response burden for member countries, while improving international comparability of statistics published in key areas;

(e) To provide a forum for the exchange of experiences on all matters relating to the organization and operation of statistical services.

(b) Course of action of the Secretariat

32.84 In view of those objectives, the Secretariat will: .

(a) Act as a "clearing house" for specific projects arising in the current transition processes;

(b) Organize and service the meetings convened by the Conference of European Statisticians;

(c) Contribute to the improvement of division of labour between intergovernmental institutions in utilizing intersecretariat working groups and other efficient forms of statistical co-operation;

(d) Continue the compilation and publication of internationally comparable, timely and consistent statistical data and further develop the ECE statistical database.
