

Report of the

FOURTEENTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE NEAR EAST

Damascus, 9-16 September 1978



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

FAO Member Nations in the Near East region (as at 16 September 1978)

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

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

First	—	Cairo, Egypt, 2-14 February 1948
Second	—	Damascus, Syria, 28 August — 6 September 1951
Third	—	Cairo, Egypt, 1-9 September 1953
Fourth	—	Damascus, Syria, 10-20 December 1958
Fifth	—	Teheran, Iran, 21 September — 1 October 1960
Sixth	—	Tel Amara, Lebanon, 30 July — 8 August 1962
Seventh	—	Cairo, Egypt, 19-31 October 1964
Eighth	—	Khartoum, Sudan, 24 January — 2 February 1967
Ninth	—	Baghdad, Iraq, 21 September — 1 October 1968
Tenth	—	Islamabad, Pakistan, 12-22 September 1970
Eleventh	—	Kuwait, Kuwait, 9-19 September 1972
Twelfth	—	Amman, Jordan, 31 August — 9 September 1974
Thirteenth	—	Tunis, Tunisia, 4-11 October 1976
Fourteenth	—	Damascus, Syria, 9-16 September 1978

NERC/78/REP

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ROME 1978

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>
<u>Summary of the Resolutions and the Recommendations of the Conference</u>	
I. <u>INTRODUCTORY ITEMS</u>	
Opening of the Conference	3 - 9
Election of the Chairman, Vice-Chairmen and the Drafting Committee	10 - 12
Adoption of the Agenda and the Timetable	13
II. <u>STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL</u>	14 - 23
III. <u>SITUATION AND PROSPECTS OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE IN THE NEAR EAST</u>	
Statements by the Executive Secretary of ECWA, and the Representatives of the WFP and the IFAD	24
Statements by the Representatives of other UN Agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations	25
Country Statements	26 - 30
IV. <u>SELECTED PROBLEMS OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT</u>	
Agrarian Reform and Rural Development in the Region in the context of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (<u>Res. No. 1/78</u>)	31 - 44
State of Natural Resources and Human Environment for Food and Agriculture	45 - 50
Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries with particular emphasis on National and Regional Institutions (<u>Res. No. 2/78</u>)	51 - 62
V. <u>FAO PROGRAMME IN THE NEAR EAST</u>	
Review of Regional Projects in the Near East	63 - 74
Report on Meetings of Regional Commissions and Bodies held during the biennium	75 - 78
Implementation of FAO Priority Programme in the Region - A Report by the FAO Regional Representative for the Near East	79
- FAO/Near East Government Cooperative Programme	80
- Technical Cooperation Programme (<u>Res. No. 3/78</u>)	81 - 84
- Desert Locust (<u>Res. No. 4/78</u>)	85 - 89
- Food Security	90 - 94
- Decentralization	95 - 96
- Technical Activities	97 - 100
- Training on Investment Activities	101 - 103
- Strengthening the Use of Arabic Language	104 - 107

	<u>Paragraphs</u>
Any Other Business	
- Disbandment of the Advisory Group for Food Production and Investment	108
- Representation of the Region on the CGIAR	109 - 110
VI. <u>CONCLUDING ITEMS</u>	
- Date and Place of the Fifteenth FAO Regional Conference	111
- Adoption of the Report	112
- Closing of the Conference	113 - 115
<u>APPENDICES</u>	
A - Agenda	
B - Timetable	
C - List of Participants	
D - List of Documents	
E - Statement by the Director-General of the FAO	

Summary of the Resolutions and the Recommendations
of the FOURTEENTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE
FOR THE NEAR EAST

- I. RESOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE ATTENTION OF FAO :
1. The World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) should examine the problem of massive migration from rural areas to big towns and cities and the resultant heavy concentration of population in urban areas, as well as the policies suitable for reducing the growing gap in income and the quality of life between urban and rural areas (para. 44 - Res. 1/78).
 2. FAO should urge governments to participate in the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (para. 44 - Res. 1/78).
 3. Objectives of WCARRD should be geared towards the eradication of rural poverty, the promotion of effective rural participation, together with the increasing agricultural production and productivity and the promotion of remunerative employment to rural inhabitants (para. 44 - Res. 1/78).
 4. To establish cooperation and coordination between FAO and other international and regional organizations and institutions in the preparation and execution of projects with a view to avoiding duplication and evolving appropriate formulas for cooperation (para. 57).
 5. FAO should urge international, regional and national institutions to take urgent actions for controlling desertification and the degradation of natural resources (para. 49).
 6. The conference stressed the importance of strengthening the Cooperative Programme Unit (CPU) at the Regional Office and underlined the necessity of full coordination and clear division of responsibilities between the CPU and concerned divisions in FAO Headquarters, (para. 60) as well as strengthening the Regional Office and increasing its capabilities.

ties in serving and advising the countries of the Region in the various fields of development (para. 98).

7. FAO should take full responsibility for the formulation, implementation and evaluation of projects under the FAO/Near East Government Cooperative Programme (NECP). Donor countries should be provided with technical reports and financial statements on such projects and should participate in evaluating these projects upon their completion (para. 61).
8. FAO should continue to assume its major responsibilities in the area of activities of the Field Food Crops Project, and not relinquish these responsibilities to other regional or international institutions (para. 73).
9. The Conference requested the Director-General to implement the recommendations of Regional Commissions and bodies, upon formulating the Programme of Work and Budget for 1980-1981, within the available financial resources of the Organization (para. 76).
10. FAO should continue its efforts and assistance for the timely control operations in areas attacked by desert locust (para. 89 - Res. 4/78).
11. The concept of decentralization as regards the Regional Office and Country Offices should be clearly defined. Country Offices should make use of services and technical expertise available at the Regional Office (para. 96).
12. FAO should play an active role in promoting the efficiency of the national agriculture research documentation centres through organizing training courses and seminars (para. 100).
13. FAO should assist member countries in organizing workshops and training programmes on the identification, formulation, analysis, monitoring and evaluation of investment projects as well as rural development projects (paras. 101, 102 and 103).

14. RNEA should be responsible for the translation of the documents of Regional Commissions and the Regional Conference as well as regional projects in addition to terminology bulletins and glossaries in the different agricultural technical fields (para. 106).

II. RESOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE ATTENTION OF GOVERNMENTS :

15. Governments should allocate additional resources for rural development and should adopt remunerative pricing policies that would increase the incomes of farmers and provide them with production incentives (para. 38).
16. Governments should provide rural areas with services, particularly institutional credit, extension, farmers' training and the necessary infrastructure for the improvement of living conditions in these areas, and should give higher priority, in the allocation of their budgetary resources, to these requirements (para. 41).
17. Developing countries of the Region should cooperate in the technical fields related to plant and animal production, fisheries and forestry (para. 56).
18. Donor Governments to the NECP to settle the balance of pledged funds on schedule, in order to facilitate the timely execution of on-going projects (para. 62 - Res. 6/78).
19. The Conference expressed the hope that the generous pledges by donor countries to the NECP will continue to flow to match the needs of the countries of the Region and their development potentials and that funds allocated for regional projects in the Near East under the NECP should be over and above those allocated by international organizations, particularly by the UNDP, and not a substitute for the latter (para. 62 - Res. 2/78).
20. All available natural, financial, human and technological resources in the Region should be utilized in developing the agricultural sector in order to reach an advanced stage in food security. (para. 92).

21. Countries of the Region are called upon to cooperate among themselves in food security projects (para. 94).

22. The Conference expressed the hope that financial support of donor governments for strengthening the use of Arabic at the Near East Regional Office would continue and that other Arab countries would follow the example of these donor countries (para. 107).

III. RESOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE ATTENTION OF FAO AND GOVERNMENTS

23. FAO and the countries of the Region should provide adequate assistance for improving the deteriorated agricultural conditions in the occupied areas of Palestine (para. 30).

24. Member governments and FAO should give greater attention to eradicating illiteracy among rural inhabitants so as to enable them to actively participate in the development process (para. 40).

25. FAO and governments of the Region should reinforce cooperation among the member countries and should promote the exchange of benefits gained from the various experiences in the field of agrarian reform and rural development (para. 42).

26. Governments of the Region should give greater attention to the settlement of nomads and the provision of necessary services to them, conservation of the environment and the control of desertification, development of water resources and rainfed agriculture, consolidation or modification of agricultural holdings - where necessary - and the orientation of pricing policies of agricultural products and inputs towards meeting the interests of small farmers and the agricultural producers. FAO should continue its efforts in examining these issues and should increase its present assistance to the governments of the Region in these important areas (para. 43).

27. A system for employing associate experts from the countries of the Region so as to develop their capabilities and prepare them to work as experts in future should be adopted. Countries which are in a position to assist in this respect should provide the necessary financing (para. 53).

28. To establish cooperation among national and regional research institutions and centres through dissemination and exchange of information, experience and research results (para. 54).

29. The Conference requested the Director-General to support and strengthen the TCP in order to increase assistance available to the countries of the Region, and urged the member countries to ensure provision of the necessary funds to the TCP under FAO Budget for 1980 - 1981. (para. 84 - Res. 3/78).

30. The attention of the Near East countries should be drawn to the gravity of the problem caused by the desert locust. Concerned governments in the Region should take necessary actions and deploy all efforts required to its control (para. 89 - Res. 4/78).

31. Donor countries should join efforts with FAO and other donor institutions for the control of desert locust (para. 89 - Res. 4/78).

32. FAO should, in collaboration with all other international and regional organizations, increase their assistance for rebuilding the agricultural sector in Lebanon. Countries of the Region should also provide Lebanon with assistance and loans for this purpose (para. 28).

33. Financing by international and regional finance organizations should be directed towards assisting governments in agrarian reform and rural development (para. 39).

34. International and Regional financial institutions should provide adequate financial resources to the developing countries for promoting their food security programmes (para. 93).

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1. The Fourteenth FAO Regional Conference for the Near East was held in Damascus Syria, from 9 - 16 September 1978, at the invitation of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. The inaugural session and the other meetings were held at the Meridien Hotel, Damascus.

2. At the beginning of the inaugural session, the FAO Director-General, Mr. Edward Saouma, addressed the Conference and expressed his gratitude to H.E. President Hafez Al-Assad for extending his patronage to the Conference and for deputizing H.E. Mohammad Ali Al-Halaby, Prime Minister of Syria for inaugurating the Conference.

Item 1: Opening of the Conference

3. The Conference was inaugurated by the Prime Minister of Syria, H.E. Mohammad Ali Al-Halaby, on behalf of H.E. the President of the Republic. The opening ceremony was attended by the members of the National and Country Leadership of the Socialist Arab Baath Party, members of the National Progressive Front, Cabinet Members, high-ranking State officials, Heads of the Diplomatic Missions, and representatives of International Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations.

4. In his inaugural speech, the Prime Minister of Syria welcomed the Director-General of FAO as well as heads and members of delegations and all delegates present. He expressed satisfaction at the fact that the Fourteenth FAO Regional Conference was being held in Damascus and wished it every success in promoting agriculture in the Region. He then outlined the efforts made by the Government of Syria to increase agricultural production and pointed out the various steps taken by the Government for raising the levels of living of rural people as well as agricultural workers.

5. The Prime Minister called for promoting international and regional cooperation in the fields of agricultural and food production in order to achieve global food security. He emphasised the importance of achieving economic integration among the countries of the Region, particularly as the Region was suffering from a food deficit in spite of the fact that it possessed vast natural and human resources, large capital and technical capabilities which could enable it not only to achieve self-sufficiency but also to produce a surplus of food products for export.

6. He particularly emphasised the need for formulating an Arab agricultural and food strategy, in the implementation of which Arab capital and technical know-how as well as Arab organizations should participate, in order to eliminate the present food deficit in the Arab world and in the Region. A start could be made by the establishment of a specialized Arab bank for financing agricultural projects. He pointed out that his country would welcome the Arab capital as well as Arab organizations and institutions to participate in the various fields of development and to promote trade exchange among the countries of the Region.

7. He paid tribute to the efforts exerted by FAO and emphasised that the Syrian Government followed with deep interest the activities of the Organization, its conferences, training courses and seminars, particularly in the field of training in the formulation and analysis of agricultural development projects. He also commended the activities of FAO in inviting more investments for the development of the agricultural sector including livestock and fishery resources. He expressed

particular appreciation at the efforts of FAO in strengthening the use of the Arabic language.

8. He reviewed the efforts of the Government of Syria in the fields of agriculture and rural development, particularly in the intensification of agriculture, expanding the use of agricultural machinery, building irrigation and drainage systems, conducting studies for surface and underground water resources survey and utilization, plant protection, strengthening agricultural research centres and training institutes, the introduction of improved seed varieties, increasing fertilizers' production and the establishment of dams and reservoirs such as the Euphrates Dam and related integrated development projects.

9. The Prime Minister emphasised that any effort exerted in the field of agricultural development and the achievement of food security would, in fact, constitute a driving force towards political and social stability. Concluding his statement, the Prime Minister wished every success to the Conference and expressed the hope that delegates would spend a pleasant time in Damascus.

Item 2: Election of the Chairman, Vice-Chairmen and the Drafting Committee

10. The Conference unanimously elected the following officers:

Chairman of the Conference - H.E. Engineer Ahmed Kabalan
Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian
Reform of Syria.

Vice-Chairmen - Heads of Delegations.

11. The Chairman expressed his gratitude and appreciation for his election and extended his thanks to the FAO and its Director-General for the efforts exerted by the Organization in the field of agricultural development in the Region, as well as for its close cooperation with the Syrian Arab Republic, and wished the Conference success in its deliberations.

Drafting Committee

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

Lebanon	Iraq
Libyan Jamahiriya	Syrian Arab Republic
Kuwait	Pakistan
Arab Republic of Egypt	

Mr. Joseph Shami of the Lebanese Delegation was unanimously elected Chairman of the Drafting Committee, and Dr. Nazir Nahlawi of the Syrian Delegation, Vice-Chairman.

Item 3: Adoption of the Agenda and the Timetable

13. The Conference adopted the Provisional Agenda (Appendix A) and laid down its timetable (Appendix B).

II. STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

Item 4;

14. The Director-General of FAO addressed the Conference (Appendix E), and expressed his esteem and gratitude to His Excellency President Hafez Al-Assad, and his thanks to the Syrian Government for hosting the Regional Conference in Damascus for the third time.

15. The Director-General welcomed the Republic of Djibouti and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania as two new Members of the Near East Region.

16. The Director-General introduced Mr. Salah Jum'a, the new Regional Representative of FAO for the Near East, emphasising his confidence in him and expressed the hope that the Member Countries of the Region would give him every support and assistance.

17. The Director-General then reviewed agricultural and food situation in the world which remained a source of anxiety. He dealt with the agricultural production situation in the Near East Region which showed an annual increase of about 3.7% from 1970 to 1977. This led to an improvement in the availability of food supplies. However, the Region as a whole continued to be a net importer of many food commodities. Such imports would increase unless the Member Countries realised the gravity of such a situation and endeavoured to ensure a minimum of food security.

18. The Director-General underlined some of the main priorities in the Region, including the rational use of water resources in order to control desertification, conservation of soil and ecological balance, paying greater attention to grain production especially wheat, the development of fishery resources and increasing animal production. In addition, a systematic policy of integrated rural development should be followed, in order to raise the purchasing power of the farmers and mobilize their efforts and provide them with modern production techniques. He stressed the importance of involving rural women in the development process.

19. The Director-General pointed out that the solution to such problems lay in a considerable increase in investments. In this respect a greater share of the revenue from natural resources could be set aside for this purpose. He welcomed the establishment of financing agencies in the Region and hoped that they would increase their role in the development of the agricultural sector. FAO continued to expand its collaboration and close links with all organizations and institutions in the Region in the various fields of agricultural development.

20. The Director-General paid tribute to the initiative taken by the OPEC countries in the establishment of the International Fund of Agricultural Development, (IFAD) and their generous contribution to its capital. He emphasised the willingness of FAO to lend every support to the IFAD, and to continue to expand its working relations with it.

21. He noted with great satisfaction the success achieved by the FAO/Near East Government Cooperative Programme (NECP) which was initiated in 1976, and expressed his confidence that the interested countries would do everything possible to continue and consolidate this Programme, as it was considered a significant contribution to cooperation among the developing countries and may serve as an example in this respect.

22. The Director-General also expressed his satisfaction at the success achieved

by the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) in spite of the fact that it was newly initiated by the FAO. Developing countries of the Region benefited from the TCP and their share amounted to approximately one quarter of its allocations. The TCP enabled the Organization to respond, quickly and timely, to the needs of the developing countries particularly in emergency cases such as desert locust invasions which threatened many areas of the Region.

23. The Director-General stressed FAO's intention to continue the decentralization policy and its keen interest in strengthening countries' capabilities in the identification and analysis of agricultural investment projects. He also referred to the efforts made by FAO to promote the use of Arabic language, from its own budget and from the generous contributions made by several Arab countries.

III. SITUATION AND PROSPECTS OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE IN THE NEAR EAST

Items 5 & 6: Statements by the Executive Secretary of ECWA and the Representatives of WFP and IFAD

24. The Executive Secretary of ECWA reviewed, in his statement to the Conference, the activities undertaken by the Commission and expressed his willingness to continue the close cooperation with FAO. The representative of WFP reviewed the state of the Programme's resources and the assistance extended to member countries of the Region. He appealed for more pledges to WFP. The representative of the IFAD gave account of its main objective and the different types of loans granted. He paid tribute to the positive support given by FAO to IFAD in the course of its establishment. He expressed the hope for establishing closer cooperation between FAO and IFAD in future.

Statements by Representatives of other UN Agencies and Non-governmental Organizations

25. Representatives of the UNESCO, the EEC and the International Federation of Agricultural Producers expressed their support to FAO's objectives and activities in the Region and their interest in establishing closer cooperation with FAO.

Item 7: Statements by Heads of Delegations

26. The Heads of Delegations expressed their thanks and appreciation to the President, People and Government of the Syrian Arab Republic for hosting the Conference and for their warm and cordial welcome. They congratulated Mr. Ahmed Kabalan, Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform in the Syrian Arab Republic for his election as Chairman of the Conference. They also supported the new policy followed by the Director-General since he took office, and appreciated his efforts in assisting countries of the Region in implementing the agricultural development projects. Heads of Delegations welcomed the new Regional Representative and paid tribute to the efforts of his predecessor.

27. Heads of Delegations reviewed agricultural development plans in their countries and stressed the importance of giving the agricultural sector priority in development programmes and the need for capital flow to this sector in order to increase and improve production with a view to securing higher incomes for rural inhabitants in general and to small farmers in particular.

28. The Head of the Lebanese Delegation referred to the considerable losses suffered by the Lebanese economy in general, and the agricultural sector, in particular. He appealed to international and regional organizations as well as to the member countries to increase their assistance and loans to Lebanon for rebuilding its economy. In response to this, the Conference called upon FAO and all other international and regional organizations to increase their assistance and services provided to Lebanon so as to enable it to quickly overcome its crisis and rebuild its economy.

29. The Head of the Iraqi Delegation requested the Organization to reconsider the overhead charges (14% of project implementation costs) due to the Organization under "Project Servicing Costs", with a view to reducing these charges, thus securing greater benefits to recipient countries.

30. The Conference listened to a statement by the Head of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) delegation attending the Conference in the capacity of an observer. He reviewed the deteriorated agricultural conditions in occupied Palestine and appealed to FAO and the countries of the Region to provide adequate assistance in this connection.

IV. SELECTED PROBLEMS OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Item 8 (a) - Agrarian Reform and Rural Development in the Near East in the context of WCARRD

31. The Conference discussed Document NERC/78/2 which was prepared on the basis of the country review papers provided by some countries of the Region for the documentation of WCARRD, as well as contributions from UN Agencies and special case studies undertaken by FAO. The analysis had indicated that in spite of considerable effort by the countries to develop their rural areas, living conditions had not improved substantially. There are increasing differences in the economic and social conditions between the rural and urban populations. Agricultural production was still far from achieving food security and self-sufficiency in food production.

32. The trends in the Region indicate that agriculture production would not be able to keep pace with population increases and that the rural inhabitants were immigrating in greater numbers to urban centres, causing serious social and economic problems, while a large number of those who remained could hardly participate in development and hence they played only a marginal role in development. The document raised a number of important issues for consideration by the Conference, these included: whether the initial thrust for agrarian reform in the Region could be maintained; what actions were needed to prevent the fragmentation and reduction of the agriculture holdings; what were the alternative policies for the utilisation of newly reclaimed government land; how could pricing policies within the agricultural sector and in relation to other sectors be used as a tool for providing rural population with the required incentives for production and for raising their income; what were the priorities for investment and utilization of national resources between the traditional and the modernized commercial sector in agriculture; and what were the ways and means to promote Regional cooperation in the fields of rural development and trade in agricultural commodities within the framework of the new International Economic Order?.

33. Mr. Hernan Santa Cruz, Special Representative of the Director-General for WCARRD, reviewed the preparations for the World Conference. He explained that the World Conference would concentrate on fundamental issues of development particularly in regard to the structural changes necessary for ensuring the participation of the rural population in development so as to enable the developing countries to meet their urgent needs for food and other basic requirements.

34. He added that the World Conference would therefore provide the opportunity for governments to exchange their experiences, and work out a specific programme of action for the future so as to accelerate the development of their rural areas. It was therefore important that member governments participate actively in the preparatory and in the proceedings of the World Conference and that the participation should be at the highest level and should include representatives of farmers' organizations and non-governmental bodies, as would be necessary.

35. He made two important observations regarding the orientation of the World Conference: (1) that agrarian reform would be treated in its widest context, i.e. not only as meaning reform of land tenure but also as a measure to improve the living conditions of the rural populations through the provision of resources, credit, education and training, and the development of institutions and organizations which would promote rural development; (2) that that Conference was not meant to "sell" models or strategies for rural development, and that it was for the countries themselves to work out these strategies taking into consideration their social and economic and political conditions.

36. Upon discussing the document, the Conference commended the Regional Office for the Near East for the analysis of the problems of agrarian reform and rural development in the Region as brought out in the document. The delegates agreed that the document presented an up-to-date and in-depth study of the conditions in the rural areas of the Region as they evolved since mid-1960s. The Conference also concurred with the developmental issues raised in the document, which would face the Region in the 1980s. This analysis was considered a good basis for the Conference discussions and a valuable contribution to WCARRD particularly as the issues brought out in the paper had been of concern to governments of the Region. Delegates also recognised that large proportions of their rural populations had only a marginal role in development, and that the problems were not only national, but also regional and global, particularly considering the present international economic order. They supported the initiative of the Director-General of FAO to organise the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development and appreciated the steps taken for its preparation. They indicated their involvement in the preparatory work for the documentation through the preparation of country reviews and that they planned to participate actively in the discussions at the preparatory committee in March 1979 and in the World Conference itself in July 1979.

37. A number of countries indicated that agrarian reform should not be restricted to land tenure legislations but that it should include substantial follow-up action to determine its success or failure. The organization of the beneficiaries and the rural population in purposeful grouping, cooperatives and production structures was important to achieve the social and economic goals of such programmes. These production organizations would form a good basis for the participation of the rural inhabitants in development. Some delegates indicated that such grouping would promote the participation of the rural women in developmental activities.

38. A number of delegates indicated that their governments were following rural development and agrarian reform policies which were mainly oriented towards the improvement of the social and economic conditions of the rural poor, and that their governments considered pricing policies an incentive for production and for the improvement of the living conditions of the rural populations. In most cases, however, such policies favoured the urban consumers at the expense of agricultural producers in rural areas, thus causing harm to farmers, on the one hand, and dissuading rural inhabitants from working in the agricultural sector, on the other. Therefore, the Conference was of the opinion that member governments should adopt pricing policies suitable for increasing production and provide rural inhabitants with adequate services and the requirements of a decent life that would induce them to remain in rural areas and refrain from migration to urban areas.

39. Some delegations were of the opinion that overall rural development policies should basically rely on national resources and transforming the traditional agricultural sectors through a series of improvements that prove to be acceptable and adaptable to the local conditions. However, other delegations considered that local resources available for this purpose were not adequate. Therefore, financing by international and regional finance organizations should be directed to assist governments in agrarian reform and rural development. Such assistance should primarily be oriented to improve the social and economic conditions of the rural population. In this context, the Conference welcomed the declaration made by the representative of the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development who indicated that the Fund was preparing a programme of work for assisting five of the least developed countries of the Region in their rural development projects. This programme would serve as a general framework for a subsequent investment programme.

40. The Conference agreed that the human being in the rural areas should be the centre and objective of development plans and that rural development would be void should it remain unable to provide the majority of rural inhabitants with the means to a decent life. The Conference stressed the importance of paying greater attention to the human aspect of rural life and should actively involve rural population in the development process. The alarming prevalence of illiteracy among rural inhabitants constituted one of the main barriers to developing agriculture from traditional to modern agriculture. Governments should, therefore, take the necessary actions for the eradication of illiteracy. The Conference also underlined the necessity of expanding agricultural training and education including the training of rural youth and women. The positive role of FAO in this connection was appreciated by the Conference.

41. The provision of services, particularly institutional credit in order to avoid exploitation, extension and the necessary infrastructure such as housing facilities, roads, drinking water, electricity, transport, storage facilities, schools and clinics were considered essential for the improvement of living conditions in the rural areas. Governments should give higher priority, in the allocation of their budgetary resources, to these important requirements. This would help the people find alternative employment opportunities through rural industries and public works programmes and projects. Such measures would help arrest the present flow of migrants to the urban centres which was a cause of concern to many governments of the Region.

42. The Conference indicated that agrarian reform programmes varied from country to country depending on their social, economic and political conditions and on the political attitudes of the governments. The Conference was of the opinion that governments were solely responsible for the formulation of such policies and that foreign expertise might not fully understand the historical, social and economic conditions prevailing in the different countries. However, it considered that the countries of the Near East Region had a number of common features and could mutually benefit from exchanging their experiences. Regional cooperation should, therefore, be promoted and reinforced. The Conference expressed the hope that the resolutions of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development would allow for enough flexibility for their effective implementation under different conditions.

43. The Conference considered that certain vital issues needed to be given special attention by the countries of the Region and FAO. These included: the settlement of nomads and the provision of necessary services allowing them to increase production and improve their social and economic conditions; conservation of the environment and control of desertification; water resources development and the orientation of rainfed agriculture to increase production and to settle the rural poor on productive land; consolidation or modification of agricultural holdings, where necessary, to ensure their viability and to meet the requirements of modern agriculture. The Conference urged FAO to continue its present effort in assisting the governments of the Region in these important issues.

44. The Conference adopted the following resolution:

Resolution 1/78Agrarian Reform and Rural Development

The Conference,

Bearing in mind that the 19th Session of the FAO Conference decided to convene a World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development;

Concerned with the growing increase of the already massive migration from the rural areas to the big towns and other urban centres as a direct result of the deterioration of the physical and human environment in such areas;

Noting with satisfaction the analysis of the major development issues presented by FAO in the review of agrarian reform and rural development programmes and related development issues facing the Region in the 1980s;

Convinced that the solution of the abovementioned situation required, in addition to determined and continuous national efforts, the reinforcement of the regional cooperation and also the early implementation of a New International Economic Order capable to establish the economic and trade relations between industrialized and developing countries on a new basis;

Recognizing that the reforms in economic, social, cultural and technical conditions prevailing in the rural areas, including the changes in land tenure systems and organizations of production and in the use of natural resources, should be the result of the sovereign decisions of each nation utilizing the models and measures more suited to the political, economic and social conditions of each country;

Appreciating the steps taken by the Director-General of FAO in the preparation of the World Conference and especially his efforts for securing the cooperation of the United Nations, its subsidiary bodies and the main specialized agencies, in order to enrich the information needed for this multi-disciplinary world event and to facilitate a joint action by all UN systems to help the countries in implementing suitable programmes of integrated rural development;

- Urges governments to participate in the World Conference and its preparatory Committee;
- Considers that the objectives of the World Conference should be geared towards eradication of rural poverty, and effective rural participation, together with the increase of agricultural production and productivity and the promotion of remunerative employment and effective demand;
- And considers further that the World Conference, when dealing with the abovementioned issues, should examine the problem of massive migration from rural areas to urban areas and the over-concentration of population in big towns and consider the policies suitable to reduce the growing gap in income and quality of life between urban and rural areas.

Item 8(b): The State of Natural Resources and Human Environment for Food and Agriculture

45. Document NERC/78/2-Sup. 1 was reviewed by the Conference. This document was prepared at the request of the 17th Session of the FAO Conference (1973),

and submitted to the 19th Session of the FAO Conference (1977) for information, with the understanding that it would be presented later to the 14th FAO Regional Conference. The document aimed at developing and promoting specific activities in the Region with a view to simultaneously increasing agricultural production and improving the level of living of the rural poor without depleting or degrading the natural resources base in arid and semi-arid zones all over the Region.

46. The Regional Conference commended FAO for the effort exerted in the preparation of this document. For the first time, the important issues of natural resources and their management as related to agricultural production were assessed in a comprehensible manner.

47. The Conference stressed that the use of natural resources and limitations thereon, including problems associated with their management and conservation, should be at the core of any rural development programme aiming at increasing agricultural production and improving the quality of life of the rural population. Some delegates stressed the importance of solar energy as a source of cheap and abundant energy for future development.

48. The Conference pointed out that the assessment, rational management and conservation of natural resources, such as land, water, grasslands, forest, fish and genetic resources, were of prime importance to not only sustain increased agricultural production but also minimise the rapid degradation of the fragile arid and semi-arid land environment. This could be achieved by developing agricultural practices and rural institutions adapted to the ecological as well as to the socio-economic needs and conditions of the poorer sector of the rural population. Such an approach would include: appropriate land and water management and conservation measures under both dry and irrigated farming, recycling of organic materials in combination with the use of mineral fertilizers, wider use of nitrogen fixing organisms or plants, integrated pest management, agrisylviculture and better utilisation of genetic resources. The Conference also stressed the importance of aquaculture and warned against the dangers of marine pollution on fisheries resources.

49. The Conference noted that few activities were undertaken in the abovementioned direction in the Region. Therefore, the Conference urged international, regional and national institutions to take urgent actions to combat desertification and the loss of natural resources as manifested in the degradation of the vegetative cover, salinity, waterlogging and the loss of promising genetic resources.

50. The Conference, therefore, noted that the document laid down a suitable basis for promoting specific activities in the Region aiming at better utilisation of local natural resources in an integrated manner to help the small farmer increase agricultural production, improve the quality of his life and protect his fragile rural environment for his own benefit and for the benefit of future generations.

Item 9: Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries with particular emphasis on National and Regional Institutions

51. The Conference discussed document NERC/78/3 and considered it well prepared and informative.

52. The Conference supported the plan of work proposed in the document for improving technical cooperation among developing countries, particularly the use of national and regional institutions in the implementation of FAO action programmes in the Region and the use of national staff for undertaking studies and research as well as for project implementation.

53. The Conference called for adopting the system of employing associate experts from national staff of the countries of the Region, so as to develop their capabilities and prepare them to work as experts in future. Richer countries should provide the necessary financing. In this connection, the Conference noted with satisfaction the increasing employment of staff from the countries of the Region, and advocated the need to consolidate such a trend.
54. The Conference underlined the necessity of establishing cooperation among national and regional research institutions and centres, through dissemination and exchange of information, experiences and research results.
55. A number of delegates stated that it was important to transfer modern technology in the fields of agricultural and food industries, grain storage and reduction of pre-harvest and post-harvest agricultural and food crops losses.
56. The Conference stressed the importance of establishing cooperation among developing countries in the Region in the fields of range management, desertification control, economic use of irrigation water, production of field food crops, plant quarantine, animal health and other technical aspects related to plant and animal production, fisheries and forestry.
57. The Conference stressed the importance of establishing cooperation and coordination between FAO and other international and regional organizations and institutions in the preparation and execution of projects in the Near East countries in order to avoid duplication and evolve appropriate formulas for integrated activities.
58. The Conference commended the FAO/Near East Government Cooperative Programme (NECP) as a pioneering example in the field of technical cooperation among developing countries and as an example of reliance by the countries of the Region on their national resources to meet the needs of agricultural development in the Region.
59. In this connection, the Conference attached great importance to the continuation of the NECP and expressed the hope that donor countries would respond to the needs of the developing countries for financing projects that would increase food production and help in training technical cadres and manpower.
60. The Conference stressed the importance of strengthening the Unit concerned with NECP activities at the Regional Office (CPU) and providing it with the necessary staff. In this respect, the Conference underlined the necessity of full coordination and a clear division of responsibilities between the CPU and the concerned divisions in FAO Headquarters.
61. A number of delegations from donor countries requested that FAO should take full responsibility for the formulation, implementation and evaluation of projects financed under the NECP. Other delegations underlined the importance of receiving periodical reports on technical aspects and financial statements on such projects, and participating with FAO staff in the evaluation of these projects upon their completion.

62. The Conference then adopted the following resolution:

Resolution 2/78

FAO/Near East Government Cooperative Programme (NECP)

The Conference,

Pursuant to the recommendations of the 13th FAO Regional Conference for the Near East concerning NECP;

In accordance with the Kuwait Charter of 1977 on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC);

Emphasising that the NECP is a good example of cooperation among the developing countries of the Region;

Bearing in mind the increasing number of requests for both regional and country projects under the NECP;

- Extends its gratitude to donor governments to the NECP;
- Trusts that donor government will settle the balance of funds pledged for the NECP in order to facilitate the timely execution of projects;
- Hopes that generous pledges will continue to flow to the NECP to ensure its continuation in future in response to the wishes of the recipient countries of the Region;
- Expresses its appreciation for the efforts made by FAO, through its technical divisions at Headquarters and the unit concerned with managing and executing NECP projects at the Regional Office in Cairo (CPU) to ensure the success of the NECP;
- And Expresses the hope that funds allocated for regional projects in the Near East under the NECP shall be over and above those allocated by other international organizations, and in particular by UNDP, and not a substitute for the latter.

V. FAO PROGRAMME IN THE NEAR EAST

Item 12: Review of Regional Projects in the Near East

63. The Conference considered document NERC/78/5 prepared at the request of the 13th FAO Regional Conference.

64. The Conference noted that evaluating regional projects should be limited to those projects that have been in operation for some time. Notable among these projects were: the "Improvement of Field Food Crops Project" (and the other three regional projects associated with it), the "Regional Animal Production and Health Project" (including its three predecessor projects), the "Sub-Regional Fisheries Training Centre", the "Desert Locust Control Project", and the project on "Strengthening the Use of Arabic". The Conference noted with satisfaction that the "Field Food Crops Projects" has assisted in the training of over 300 scientists, the great majority of whom continued to work with their national agricultural scientific institutions. Similarly, the "Animal Production and Health Project" has given training to large numbers, at all levels ranging from short courses to year-long fellowships. Most of the training has covered a wide range of animal health problems and has received very active support both from governments and animal health scientists alike. In the field of fisheries, the first training course organized by the "Sub-Regional Fisheries Training Centre" in Kuwait has successfully been completed. Training courses last for two years and the first course started in 1976.

65. The Conference noted that these projects had also completed a substantial volume of experimental and research work. The "Field Food Crops Project" had assisted in carrying out a large number of variety trials throughout the Region, and provided seeds and equipment for this purpose. The "Animal Production and Health Project" had carried out substantial scientific work assisting in the detection and control of diseases important to the Region, including Foot and Mouth, Rinderpest, Bovine Pleuropneumonia and Newcastle diseases. A publication on handling procedures for imported animals, recently issued by the project, was in wide demand. The Regional "Fishery Survey and Development Project", although only halfway through its planned 3½-year duration, had already produced valuable data.

66. The Conference noted that an evaluation of the regional projects that had only just started, including such large projects as the: "Regional Olive Research Network", "Regional Centre for Palm and Dates", "Regional Project for Land and Water Use" and "Regional Agricultural Marketing Project" would not be helpful. However, it was evident that the projects mentioned in paragraphs 64 and 65 had carried out extensive and valuable programmes of training and research, and this had served the dual objective of strengthening the personal and institutional links between agricultural scientists and administrators in the countries of the Region as well as strengthening the scientific capabilities of national institutions.

67. It was noted that the "Field Food Crops Projects", the "Animal Production and Health Project", and the "Desert Locust Control Project" all follow on a series of previous projects, and because of this their preparation presented no particular difficulties. However, the four large new regional projects mentioned in para. 66, none of which followed closely on previous projects, had all shown delays in formulation. It was evident that the formulation of regional projects - many with 20 or more recipient countries and several donors - faced difficulties not experienced in the formulation of single-country national projects. Many of these difficulties would have been avoided if the objectives of such projects were defined more clearly and precisely.

68. As regards project implementation, this faced some problems. In addition to the fact that projects spread over some 20 countries or more, staff recruitment was in many cases, handicapped by the need to offer only one-year contracts, because of uncertainty regarding the future financial position. However, the volume and quality of scientific training given and work achieved suggested a satisfactory level of project performance.

69. One problem that remained serious in some projects was the continued shortage of counterpart staff to take over, in due course, the present work of the projects' expert staff. Partly off-setting this, however, was the increasing use of nationals from within the Region as project expert staff; these already constituted the majority, and on present trends the position would soon be reached where all but a very few specialized staff would be drawn from within the Region.

70. It was noted that project management committees had not been able to exercise full authority in planning the work programme of a project or assessing its management; this was due partly to frequent changes in committee membership and to insufficient working documents. Such problems should be definitely resolved so as to ensure the implementation of the work programmes and to meet training needs of all participating countries (within the resources of the project). However, it was noted that some progress had been achieved in this connection over the last year.

71. The Conference noted with satisfaction that new measures had already been taken to strengthen cooperation between regional projects, many of which had overlapping fields of responsibility. Such cooperation was also being strengthened with other regional organizations.

72. The Conference noted with satisfaction that the "Regional Food and Nutrition Training and Applied Research Centre" in Libya, had already started. This project was exceptional among the regional projects in that one country was funding the entire project.

73. The Conference was also informed that discussions were already underway for a three-year extension of the "Field Food Crops Project", after its termination due on 31 December 1979. The Conference agreed that FAO should continue to assume its major responsibilities in the area of activities of this project and not relinquish these responsibilities to other regional or international institutions.

74. As regards Desert Locust, a number of delegates proposed that consideration should be given to setting up a new regional project, on an emergency basis, to handle FAO's emergency programme of action dealing with the present dangerous threat of the locust plague.

Item 13: Report on meetings of Regional Commissions and Bodies held during the Biennium.

75. The Conference considered document NERC/78/6 and unanimously approved of the following:

1. The recommendations of the Eighth Session of the FAO Near East Forestry Commission, which was held in Khartoum, Sudan, 23-28 February 1978.
2. The recommendations of the Eighth Session of the Near East Commission on Agricultural Planning, which was held in Cairo, Egypt, 10-15 January 1977.

3. The recommendations of the Fifth Session of the Regional Commission on Land and Water Use in the Near East, which was held in Islamabad, Pakistan, 20-22 October 1976.
4. The recommendations of the Eighteenth Session of the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Near East, which was held in Doha, Qatar, 6-13 December 1977.

76. The Conference requested the Director-General of FAO to implement these recommendations, when formulating the Programme of Work and Budget for 1980-1981, within the available financial resources of the Organization.

77. The Conference also reviewed the Regional or Sub-Regional meetings organized or co-ordinated by FAO and supported their recommendations.

78. The Conference was informed that the Director-General had requested the concerned Divisions of FAO to carry out a detailed study on the position of the FAO Regional Commissions in all regions to identify the difficulties and obstacles which prevented some of them from successfully achieving the desired objectives. The results of this study might require a review of their terms of reference and activities. The survival of these Commissions might be examined in the future, if it became apparent that their continuance was not beneficial to member countries and that it constituted an undue burden on the budget of FAO.

Item 11: Implementation of FAO Priority Programme in the Region -
A Report by the FAO Regional Representative for the Near East

79. The Conference discussed document NERC/78/4 dealing with FAO activities in the Near East in the light of Regional priorities and the actions taken in implementation of the recommendations made by the 13th FAO Near East Regional Conference which was held in Tunis, 1976.

FAO/Near East Government Cooperative Programme (NECP)

80. The Regional Representative presented the NECP as one of the priority programmes in the Region, and pointed out that the Programme was a commendable achievement which proved its full success. He stressed that the NECP was a unique example of assistance provided by the richer countries to the poorer countries in the Region. He expressed the hope that such an example would be followed in other regions as well. The Conference had previously discussed this subject on dealing with document NERC/78/3, and made certain recommendations (see paras 58-61, and Resolution 2/78 of this Report).

Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP)

81. The Conference underlined the importance of this Programme, and praised the Director-General for his efforts and the immediate personal interest he took in the TCP.

82. The Conference welcomed the speed with which actions were taken by FAO for considering the requests received from the developing countries under the TCP. It stressed the importance of immediate actions particularly in cases of disaster and emergency situations.

83. The Conference called for strengthening the TCP and recommended that it should continue. It requested the Director-General to respond to the wishes of the developing countries in this respect, and to allocate the necessary funds in FAO budget for 1980/81.

84. The Conference adopted the following resolution:

Resolution 3/78
Technical Cooperation Programme

The Conference

Recalling Resolution 5/77 of the Nineteenth Session of the FAO Conference requesting the Director-General to strengthen the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP),

Noting with satisfaction that the TCP has enabled the Organization to respond promptly to the urgent needs of the developing countries (including a number of countries from the Near East Region) particularly in emergency cases, training at the grass-root level, mobilization of investment resources and meeting the limited requirements of the agricultural sector in these countries;

- Requests the Director-General to support and strengthen the TCP in order to increase assistance available to the countries of the Region in the aforementioned fields,
- And urges the member countries to continue giving their support to the TCP and to ensure that funds allocated for it in the Programme of Work and Budget for 1980-1981 would satisfy the needs of the developing countries under the TCP.

Desert Locust

85. The Conference discussed in detail the possible desert locust invasion on the Near East, East Africa, South West Asia and other areas, and requested FAO to be alert to this danger, and to keep it under close attention and to cooperate, in this connection, with interested countries in the Region.

86. The Conference welcomed the prompt and decisive steps taken by the Director-General to face this threat, particularly the provision of considerable amounts from the Technical Cooperation Programme funds as well as from FAO working capital.

87. The Conference commended donor countries and institutions which had promptly extended financial assistance to FAO for the control of the desert locust, most particularly Saudi Arabia which contributed US\$ 500 000 for this campaign.

88. The Conference expressed the hope that other countries would follow Saudi Arabia and other donor countries which made such donations to FAO for this purpose, particularly that the situation was still serious and that amounts allocated for this purpose as well as donor contributions would not be enough for eradicating this dangerous pest.

89. The Conference adopted the following resolution:

Resolution 4/78
Desert Locust Control

The Conference:

Aware of the serious situation created by the recent outbreaks of locust in some countries of the Near East, East Africa and South West Asia due to the favour-

able ecological breeding conditions prevailing in some parts of the Region and the inability to take timely control measures in some breeding areas, because of the unusual conditions in these areas;

Concerned with the serious damages caused by these outbreaks on agricultural and food production and their adverse consequences on the income of farmers;

Concerned further that this threat of locust attack may escalate if preventive and remedial measures were not promptly taken at the national and the regional levels;

Appreciating the efforts made by the Director-General of FAO and this prompt response to extend help to the distressed areas attacked by locust swarms, and appreciating the generous donation given by the Government of Saudi Arabia for this purpose;

Noting with appreciation that the financial contribution so far made by FAO amounted to US\$ 1.5 million including \$ 500 000 from the FAO working capital;

- Draws the attention of the countries of the Near East Region to the gravity of the problem caused by the desert locust,
- Appeals to the Governments concerned to strengthen their monitoring and early warning systems for the surveillance, detection and reporting of locust breeding areas and their movements, and deploy all efforts required to control locust, including the creation of an emergency reserve of locust control supplies, equipment and aircraft;
- Requests the Director-General of FAO to continue his successful efforts and assistance for the timely control operations in distressed areas attacked by locusts;
- And appeals to the donor countries to join efforts with FAO and other donor institutions in contributing for the control of desert locust in the Region.

Food Security

90. The Conference commended the role played by FAO in preparing the necessary documents for the seminars and training courses held in the Region during 1977 in collaboration with other regional organizations and institutions on the subject of food security and its importance to Arab economic integration.

91. The Conference commended also the country studies completed by FAO in some countries of the Region on the subject of food security, and called upon FAO to favourably respond to the requests of other countries of the Region should they want to carry out similar studies.

92. The Conference recommended that all available natural, financial, human and technological resources in the Region should be utilized in developing the agricultural sector in order to reach an advanced stage in food security.

93. The Conference recommended that international and regional financial institutions should provide adequate financial resources to the developing countries for promoting their food security programmes.

94. The Conference called upon the countries of the Region to cooperate among themselves in food security projects.

Decentralization

95. The Conference welcomed the policy of the Director-General on decentralization, particularly at the country level, and took note of his declared intention to consider any request received from the member countries for opening country offices.

96. The Conference further welcomed the comments made by the Director-General on the statements of the heads of delegations, regarding the relationship between country offices on the one hand and the Regional Office on the other, in the context of decentralization. The Director-General had declared that the establishment of country offices would promote closer relations among these offices and the Regional Office, and would allow for direct contacts among them as they belong to a single Organization. In this connection, the Conference called for a clearer definition of the concept of decentralization as regards regional and country offices, and that country offices should make use of the services and technical expertise available at the Regional Office.

Technical Activities

97. The Conference commended the efforts exerted by the Regional Office in the various technical fields relating to the development of agriculture, livestock, fishery and forestry resources, rangeland management, and agricultural credit and marketing, as well as in carrying out studies on agrarian reform and rural development, food and nutrition policies, agricultural industries and mechanization, etc..

98. The Conference stressed the need for strengthening the Regional Office and increasing its capacities in serving the agricultural sector in the Region and advising the governments of the Region in the various fields of agricultural development.

99. The Conference underlined the need for the Regional Office to play a major role in the coordination and exchange of information among research centres and institutions and in providing assistance in the documentation of research activities of those centres.

100. A number of delegates felt it necessary that practical steps should be taken regarding agricultural research information in the Region, pending the establishment of the proposed Regional Centre for Published and Current Research Information System. Among the proposed measures, in this respect, was the utilization of "AGRIS" and "CARIS" systems, in FAO Headquarters, improving the capabilities of the countries of the Region to participate in these systems and promoting the efficiency of the national agricultural research documentation centres through organizing training courses and seminars suitable for their national staff. The Conference requested the Regional Office to play an active role in this respect.

Training on Investment Activities

101. The Conference appreciated the efforts made by the Director-General for organizing a Workshop on Agricultural Investment Projects Preparation and Monitoring in the Near East Region. This Workshop was held in FAO Headquarters, in January/February 1978 and was attended by 57 participants from 22 countries in the Near East and North Africa, and covered all aspects related to training on project analysis.

102. As this type of training activities proved successful, many delegates expressed the desire that FAO should assist member governments in carrying out such activities at the national level.

103. In view of the importance attached by delegates to the implementation of national rural development projects, the Conference recommended that FAO should assist member countries in organizing the necessary programmes for training national staff on the identification, formulation, assessment, monitoring and evaluation of rural development projects.

Strengthening the Use of Arabic Language

104. The Conference noted with satisfaction the Resolution of 19th Session of the FAO Conference (1977) which gave the Arabic Language the same status as other official languages of FAO. In this connection the Conference commended the efforts made by the Director-General for achieving this objective.

105. The Conference welcomed the appointment of a Senior Advisor in the Near East Regional Office for promoting the use of the Arabic Language.

106. The Conference appreciated the recent achievements in this connection and welcomed with satisfaction the future programme of work including the translation of terminology bulletins and glossaries in different agricultural technical fields as well as the translation of selected FAO publications in collaboration with concerned divisions at FAO Headquarters. This was intended to satisfy the needs of agricultural technical staff and farmers at different levels, in addition to the translation of the documents and reports of the regional commissions and the regional conferences as well as the reports of regional projects.

107. The Conference expressed its appreciation and gratitude to the governments of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq and Qatar for their generous contributions to the Trust Fund for Strengthening the Use of Arabic at the Near East Regional Office. It expressed the hope that this financial support would continue and that other Arab countries would follow the example of these donor countries.

Item 14: Any other business

Disbandment of the Advisory Group for Food Production and Investment

108. The Conference was informed by the Regional Representative of the decision taken by FAO, World Bank and UNDP to disband the Advisory Group for Food Production and Investment. He gave the reasons for this decision taken by these organizations to disband the group and liquidate its activities. The Conference welcomed the intention of the three organizations to take over responsibility of this group in the service of developing countries.

Representation of the Region on the CGIAR

109. The Arab Republic of Egypt and the Syrian Arab Republic were elected by the Conference to represent the region on the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research for two years as of January 1979 upon the expiration of the term of office of Tunisia and Iraq.

110. The Conference took note that the election of the representatives of the Region was in accordance with the criteria and the responsibilities of representing the region on CGIAR, as indicated in Document NERC/78/7.

VI. CONCLUDING ITEMS

Item 15: Date and Place of the 15th FAO Regional Conference for the Near East

111. H.E. Abdul Rahman Abdul Aziz Al Sheikh, Minister of Agriculture and Water Resources in Saudi Arabia, informed the Conference of his Government's wish to host the next session of the Regional Conference. This invitation was unanimously welcomed by the Conference. The date of the meeting will be determined in consultation between the Director-General and the Government of Saudi Arabia.

Adoption of the Report

112. The Conference adopted the draft report after introducing some minor amendments to it. It also commended the efforts made by the Drafting Committee in preparing the report.

Closing of the Conference

113. The Conference addressed a cable of thanks to H.E. President Hafiz Al-Assad, of the Syrian Arab Republic, for extending his patronage to the Conference. It also addressed another cable of thanks to H.E. Mohammad Ali Al-Halaby, Prime Minister of Syria, for inaugurating the Conference on behalf of H.E. the President of the Republic. The Head of the Lebanese delegation spoke on behalf of the Arab delegates, and the Head of the Pakistani delegation spoke on behalf of other delegates participating in the Conference. Both thanked the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic for hosting the Conference and commended the efforts made by H.E. Engineer Ahmed Kabalan, Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, in preparing for the Conference and chairing its meetings. They also praised the efforts of the FAO Secretariat in preparing for the Conference and providing it with the services that made it a success.

114. Mr. Salah Jum'a, FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for the Near East, spoke on behalf of the Director-General. He thanked the President, Government and people of the Syrian Arab Republic, for the warm welcome and hospitality and expressed his best wishes for prosperity and progress of the Syrian Arab Republic. He also thanked the delegates of member countries and organizations for accepting the invitation of the Director-General and participating in the Conference.

115. In conclusion, H.E. Engineer Ahmed Kabalan, Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, thanked FAO for holding the 14th Regional Conference in Damascus and the participating delegates for accepting the invitation. He paid tribute to all those who took part in preparing for the Conference and servicing, it expressing the hope that delegates would continue their efforts in promoting cooperation among the countries of the Region for developing the agricultural sector, achieving food security and raising the level of living of their peoples. He then declared the Conference closed at 12:00 on 16 September 1978.

A G E N D A

- I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS
 1. Opening of the Conference
 2. Election of Chairman, Vice-Chairmen and Drafting Committee
 3. Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable
- II. STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL
- III. SITUATION AND PROSPECTS OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE IN THE NEAR EAST
 1. Statement by the Executive Secretary of ECWA
 2. Statement by the Representative of the Executive Director of the World Food Programme
 3. Country Statements
- IV. SELECTED PROBLEMS OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
 1. (a) Agrarian Reform and Rural Development in the Region in the context of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development
(b) The State of Natural Resources and Human Environment for Food and Agriculture
 2. Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries with particular Emphasis on National and Regional Institutions
- V. FAO PROGRAMME IN THE NEAR EAST
 1. Implementation of FAO Priority Programme in the Region - A Report by the FAO Regional Representative for the Near East
 2. Review of Regional Projects in the Near East
 3. Report on Meetings of Regional Commissions and Bodies held during the biennium
 4. Any other Business
- VI. CONCLUDING ITEMS
 1. Date and Place of the Fifteenth FAO Regional Conference
 2. Adoption of the Report
 3. Closure of the Conference

APPENDIX B

T I M E T A B L E

	<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Agenda Item No.</u>	<u>Document Number</u>
<u>Saturday,</u> <u>9 September 1978</u>			
	I. <u>Introductory Items</u>		
12:00 hrs.	- Opening of the Conference	1	No document
16:00 hrs.	- Election of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Drafting Committee	2	No document
	- Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable	3	NERC/78/1 NERC/78/1(a) NERC/78/INF/2
	II. <u>Statement by the Director- General</u>	4	NERC/78/CONF/1
<u>Sunday,</u> <u>10 September 1978</u>			
	III. <u>Situation and Prospects of Food and Agriculture in the Near East</u>		
09:00-14:00 hrs.	- Country Statements	7	No document
<u>Monday,</u> <u>11 September 1978</u>			
09:00-11:00 hrs.	- Country Statements	7	No document
11:30-14:00 hrs.	- Statement by the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Western Africa	5	No document
	- Statement by the Represen- tative of the Executive Director of the World Food Programme	6	No document
	- Statement by the Represen- tative of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)		

	<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Agenda Item No.</u>	<u>Document Number</u>
<u>Tuesday,</u> <u>12 September 1978</u>			
	<u>IV. Selected Problems of Agri- cultural Development</u>		
09:00-14:00 hrs.	- Agrarian Reform and Rural Development in the Region in the context of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development	8(a)	NERC/78/2
<u>Wednesday,</u> <u>13 September 1978</u>			
09:00-09:30 hrs.	- The State of Natural Resources and Human Environment for Food and Agriculture	8(b)	NERC/78/2 Supp. 1
09:30-11:00 hrs.	- Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries with Particular Emphasis on National and Regional Institutions	9	NERC/78/3
	<u>V. FAO Programme in the Near East</u>		
11:30-14:00 hrs.	- Review of Regional Projects in the Near East	12	NERC/78/5
<u>Thursday,</u> <u>14 September 1978</u>			
09:00-11:00 hrs.	- Report on Meetings of Regional Commissions and Bodies held during the biennium	13	NERC/78/6
	- Implementation of FAO Priority Programme in the Region - A Report by the FAO Regional Representative for the Near East	11	NERC/78/4
11:30-14:00 hrs.	- Any other business of interest to the Region	14	No document
	(a) Disbandment of the CGFPI		No document
	(b) Representation of Developing Regions on the Consultation Group on IAR		NERC/78/7

	<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Agenda Item No.</u>	<u>Document Number</u>
Friday, <u>15 September 1978</u>	- Field Trip organized by the Government of Syria		
Saturday, <u>16 September 1978</u>			
08:30-11:00 hrs.	- Date and Place of the 15th FAO Regional Con- ference	15	No document
	- Adoption of the Report	16	No document
11:30-12:00 hrs.	- Closure of the Conference	17	No document

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Deputy Minister of Land Reform
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Siddiq Al-Alawi

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George Tombazos

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APPENDIX D

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

NERC/78/1	Provisional Agenda
NERC/78/1(a)	Provisional Annotated Agenda
NERC/78/2	Agrarian Reform and Rural Development in the Region in the context of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development
NERC/78/2 Sup. 1	The State of Natural Resources and Human Environment for Food and Agriculture
NERC/78/3	Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries with particular Emphasis on National and Regional Institu- tions
NERC/78/4	Implementation of FAO Priority Programme in the Region. A report by the FAO Regional Representative for the Near East
NERC/78/5	Review of Regional Projects in the Near East
NERC/78/6	Report on Meetings of Regional Commissions and Bodies held during the biennium
NERC/78/7	Representation of Developing Regions on the Consultative Group on International Research (CGIAR)
<u>NERC/78/INF Series</u>	
NERC/78/INF/1	Information Note
NERC/78/INF/2	Provisional Timetable
NERC/78/INF/3	Provisional List of Documents

Statement by Mr. Edward Saouma
Director-General of the FAO

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Heads of Delegations,
Distinguished Delegates and Observers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I should like to express my deep satisfaction at the unanimous election of His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Kabalan, Minister of Agriculture of the Syrian Arab Republic, to the chairmanship of this Conference. His personal qualities and competence guarantee a firm and enlightened conduct of our deliberations.

Your Excellency, allow me to congratulate you on your election to this high office.

But above all, I should like to express my esteem and my gratitude to His Excellency General Hafez El-Assad, President of the Syrian Arab Republic, who has been so kind as to award this Conference his high patronage. I also thank the Syrian Government for the generous hospitality it lavishes, for the third time, on an FAO Regional Conference, thus giving proof of its country's confidence in our Organization and of its support for the role it plays in the world.

I also take the greatest pleasure in welcoming and thanking Their Excellencies the Ministers, Heads and Members of Delegations gathered here for this Fourteenth Regional Conference for the Near East.

I am sure that their contribution will be decisive for the success of this meeting.

I take this opportunity of welcoming two new members of the region, the Republic of Djibouti and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. Their cooperation will be a valuable contribution in the service of the peoples of this region.

Mr. Chairman,

In paying tribute to our host country, I should like to emphasize that agriculture - the *raison d'être* of FAO - has always occupied an important place here. From antiquity, Syria has had the vocation of being one of the richest granaries in the region. The present Government, too, gives an impressive priority to agriculture, as proved by the large-scale development work undertaken.

Mr. Chairman,

Before going into the substance of my statement, let me now officially introduce to you Mr. Salah Juma'a, the new Regional Representative of FAO for the Near East. A former Minister of Agriculture of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, he has been associated with FAO for a long time, as a member of his country's delegation to Conferences of the Organization and, recently in 1977, as a Vice-Chairman of the Conference. His qualities could be fully appreciated on those occasions.

I am certain that he enjoys the confidence of all.

Mr. Chairman,

As you are about to discuss the state and prospects of food and agriculture in the Near East, I consider it my duty to warn against the false sense of security which tends again to spread insidiously throughout the world, following the replenishment of grain reserves.

To be sure, after the acute food crisis of 1972-1974, the situation has improved somewhat thanks to two excellent harvests.

But it would be a mistake to anticipate a victory. The year 1977 has already been less favourable: per caput food production even declined in all developing regions, with the exception of Asia, where India recorded an excellent performance. In Africa, the food situation is again alarming in the Sahel and various other countries.

Shortage also threatens several areas of Asia.

For 1978, prospects are relatively good but not sufficient to relieve us of all anxiety.

What is the situation of the Near East in this context? With an increase of about 3.7 percent in food production from 1970 to 1977, its performance is certainly considerably better than the 2.6 percent recorded in the same period by the developing countries as a whole.

Likewise, per caput food supplies have clearly increased, in contrast with some other regions.

But this overall situation hides considerable disparities between one country and another and even within a country, especially among the most densely populated countries where large segments of the population still suffer from an inadequate diet.

On the other hand, despite their effort to boost agricultural production, most countries of the region are still net importers of food products and depend to a large extent on imports of such important commodities as grain, sugar and meat to feed their population. This trend is becoming even stronger because imports of food products in the Arab countries as a whole, have considerably increased in the past few years. Wheat purchases, in particular, rose from 4.8 million tons in 1970 to more than 9 million in 1977 and, according to FAO projections, may reach about 25 million tons in the year 2000 if the present rate of imports continues.

Some countries can undoubtedly afford to pay big bills for food imports, but others cannot do so without dangerously overburdening their balance of payments. One must, and can, counter this danger, for there exists the potential, especially in certain countries, to raise agricultural production substantially, thereby improving the rate at which the region supplies itself.

At all events, at present only a very small number of your countries are net exporters of food commodities.

This fact harshly illustrates the need to ensure a minimum of food security for the region, to protect it against the repercussions of a possible series of poor harvests. For present world stocks, though substantial, provide no guarantee

at all, in the absence of a mechanism which would ensure their continued availability and would govern their use. They may be exhausted very quickly if world food production declines in general. This was the case in 1972-1974; it may happen again.

You will understand our concern about the deadlock in the Geneva negotiations for the renewal of the International Grains Agreement, which should include provisions for ensuring greater food security in the world. At any rate, this is a major element of the New International Economic Order, which is the world's aspiration but which is so slow in becoming a reality.

Be that as it may, it is true that the countries of the region are making great efforts to develop their agriculture. I can assure you that FAO, for its part, will endeavour, within the limits of its resources, to give them the assistance and cooperation which may be requested, in this vast sector of agricultural, forestry and fishery development.

It is obviously up to your countries to determine priorities. Certainly salient needs, however, appear to be clearly dictated by the circumstances of your region. Thus, there is no doubt that the shortage of water makes it a precious and even vital commodity: it is therefore self-evident that the rational use of water resources is a condition sine qua non for a lasting increase of food production.

Your countries are dealing with it, as shown by the large-scale works under way or planned; in particular, it will be necessary to see to it that the water obtained in this way is made available to the greatest possible number of farmers. This effort should go hand in hand with the struggle against desertification, for better soil conservation and an appropriate ecological balance.

In this connection, I am particularly happy to point to the agricultural revival in many countries of the region, especially in Saudi Arabia and Iran. I should also like to mention that the largest cooperation programme launched by FAO is the programme being carried out in Sudan. Likewise, the largest technical cooperation programme financed directly from a trust fund is the programme between FAO and the Jamahiriya of Libya, for a total of 16 million dollars. A similar agreement is being negotiated with the Iraqi Republic. As I do not want to take up too much of your time, I am not going to list all the projects carried out in the other Arab countries. But I should like to stress that the fact that many projects are being financed by the countries themselves is a hopeful sign and deserves admiration.

It would also seem clear that it is necessary to give adequate priority to the cultivation of grains, especially wheat, to make better use of fishery resources, and develop animal husbandry considerably in the countries, whose aptitude in this field has already been demonstrated. The output of meat and dairy products should be markedly increased because it has not kept pace with demand. Self-sufficiency in this sector is unlikely in the foreseeable future. But some countries unquestionably have a potential which they could exploit to reduce import requirements of the region. I refer to Sudan and Somalia, in particular.

I am glad to see that progress has been made in many countries to increase egg and chicken production.

Lastly, it is important to combat poverty by a systematic policy of integrated rural development. Development models should be promoted which help improve the lot of the poor, raise their purchasing power, and motivate and mobilize the rural masses; small farmers should have much easier access to modern production techniques; women should be given a greater share in the development process.

These questions will be the focal point of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development to be convened by FAO in July 1979, in cooperation with the United Nations and numerous competent institutions. This will be an opportunity to take stock of the progress achieved and what remains to be done. The long experience of your region, I feel sure, will be an essential contribution to the success of the Conference.

Mr. Chairman,

The urgent needs of developing countries and the present precarious situation of food and agriculture call for greater effort by every country, every region and by the whole international community to step up the rate of agricultural production, especially in the poor countries, give higher priority to agriculture and allocate the required enormous investments from the resources of the countries concerned and through greater aid from the rich countries.

The key to the problem undoubtedly lies in a considerable increase of investments. In this respect, I am convinced that a growing share of oil revenue can gradually be set aside for the agricultural development of your region, and beyond it. I welcome the courageous steps taken by the Arab countries through the establishment of development agencies, such as the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, the Saudi Arabian Fund, the Abu Dhabi Fund, the Islamic Bank, the Arab Bank for the Economic Development of Africa, the Arab-African Bank, etc. I especially appreciate the interest of these institutions in actively participating in developing the agricultural sector and hope that the efforts made by them in that sector since the World Food Conference of 1974 will not slacken but will be intensified in future.

Another important contribution which should be welcomed, is the recent creation of the International Fund for Agricultural Development. We cannot forget that the members of OPEC were the initiators of the new Fund at the World Food Conference of 1974 and that they had a decisive share in its establishment by contributing 435.5 million dollars to an initial capital of 1 000 million. From the very first negotiations, FAO has wholeheartedly supported IFAD and is ready to continue and strengthen the excellent working relations that have been established since then in their mutual interest. FAO also wishes to continue to expand its collaboration with all organizations and institutions in your region - the League of Arab States, the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, etc.

To give you a concrete example of cooperation between FAO and those institutions, I should like to mention two agreements concluded last July between FAO and the Arab Bank for Development in Africa. An agreement on emergency aid, whereby FAO coordinates and implements certain projects financed by the Bank, is the first agreement under which the Bank has charged an international agency with supervising an aid programme of such scope. The second agreement requests FAO to prepare the ground for expanding the Bank's financial aid to African countries. This agreement, too, is a promising development because it gives

FAO a new means of serving its African Member Nations.

Also with regard to financing, I should like now to refer to an achievement I regard as particularly important - the Near East Cooperative Programme. I am highly satisfied with this Programme and should like to express my appreciation once again to the governments which have contributed to it. Launched in 1976 to boost aid provided for agricultural development by the donor governments of the region, it has so far received pledges amounting to about 32 million dollars. The projects operational at present are mainly designed to increase agricultural production or to provide support to investments, training, and to strengthening institutions. I am convinced that the interested countries are anxious to consolidate and carry on this Programme which has made a good start. In many respects, it is a significant contribution to cooperation among developing countries and may serve as an example at the World Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries which is being held in Buenos Aires at present.

It is generally acknowledged that, apart from inadequate financial resources, a shortage of well-prepared investment projects is one of the main obstacles to agricultural development. This is one of the reasons why FAO arranged a "Near East Workshop on agricultural investment projects" at the beginning of this year. It was the first of its kind to be organized by FAO in response to suggestions voiced at the Thirteenth Regional Conference for the Near East. The main objective of the seminar was to train personnel in the preparation of investment projects. Attended by 57 participants from about 20 countries, it mainly focussed on explaining the various stages of project preparation, from identification to evaluation. The participants were to become familiar with the complete project cycle. FAO is now considering the measures to be taken for a follow-up to the seminar, thus gradually reducing the shortage of the region's personnel specialized in drafting investment projects.

As for another highly important activity of FAO - the Technical Cooperation Programme, I shall confine myself, for lack of time, to reporting that 61 projects have thus far been approved for your region, for a total of 5.3 million dollars. This represents 24 percent of the value of projects approved throughout the world. In particular, the Programme has proved very effective in quickly responding to emergency requests, as was the case recently when about 900 000 dollars were granted to help some countries of the region to fight the desert locust.

In this connection, I want to emphasize my concern about the scourge of the desert locust which has now hit countries in the Horn of Africa. It threatens to spread like wildfire. Some countries of your region have already been stricken and may be affected even more unless adequate measures are taken. I am personally following the situation very closely. In the past few months, we held a meeting of experts to assess the situation and recommend solutions. A meeting of donor countries was arranged at FAO Headquarters. Moreover, the Intergovernmental Desert Locust Control Committee of FAO was convened in emergency session, at which Saudi Arabia announced a voluntary contribution of 500 000 dollars for locust control operations. I thank this country most sincerely for its generous action. The amount of aid supplied so far with FAO's own funds exceeds one and a half million dollars.

Mr. Chairman,

One of our constant concerns is to respond quickly to requests from our Member Nations. This is why our Organization wishes to be as close as possible to the regions and countries where it is working. In the past two years, it has begun to decentralize its services from its Rome Headquarters to the regions and from there to the countries. Such decentralization has been made in line with the decision on administrative restructuring, taken by the 69th Session of our Council. Four offices have so far been set up in as many countries of the Near East, and negotiations for the establishment of another four offices are in progress with the governments concerned. Subject to available funds, I am ready to set up other offices of our Organization in the countries which request it.

This decentralization effort reflects the determination of our Organization to be present in the field, to obtain a clearer view of the real needs of its members and, consequently, to offer them more effective services.

Mr. Chairman,

Now a few words about a subject that is dear to all our hearts - the use of Arabic in FAO. First of all, I should like to point out that Arabic is now on a strictly equal footing with the other languages of the Organization, since the 1977 Conference made the necessary amendments in the Constitution of FAO, following the recommendation of your 13th Regional Conference. The use of Arabic is gradually spreading as, within the limits of the budget, staff are being strengthened at Headquarters and in the Regional Office of Cairo where a high level officer an Adviser for Arabic, was recently appointed to promote the use of this language. Such reinforcement was possible largely as a result of voluntary contributions offered by numerous countries of the region: I sincerely thank them for this. It is largely thanks to their intervention that I can now submit such a positive report to you on this question.

Mr. Chairman,

I think I have said enough to show that FAO wants to serve its Member Nations and its regions. This is why I attach considerable importance to your work: it will point out to me the priority concerns and needs of your countries, individually and overall; your orientations and conclusions, I am certain, will be very useful for me in preparing the Programme of Work and Budget of the Organization for 1980-1981.

I consider such cooperation among countries, regions and Headquarters vital for FAO; it is in contact with your realities that it can renew its dynamism. A famous writer has said that the obstacle is the measure of a man. The same is true of peoples and organizations like ours. The obstacle in our case is underdevelopment, malnutrition, poverty. Your region has what is needed to overcome it - human, technical and financial resources. Let us therefore work together to ensure its well-being. Let us join our efforts in the service of this noblest of all causes.

I thank you for your kind attention.

