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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Orientation Course  
Study Tour for African  
Environmental Experts

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REPORT ON UNEP/ECA MISSION ON EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT  
OF AND ADVICE ON NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL MACHINERIES IN  
SELECTED AFRICAN COUNTRIES (PROJECT FP/0302/75/13)

EGYPT (1-5 MARCH 1976)

- 1. The first important contact outlined the nature of the environmental machinery in the country.

Résumé of discussions held:

- 2. The Egyptian concern for the environment is high;

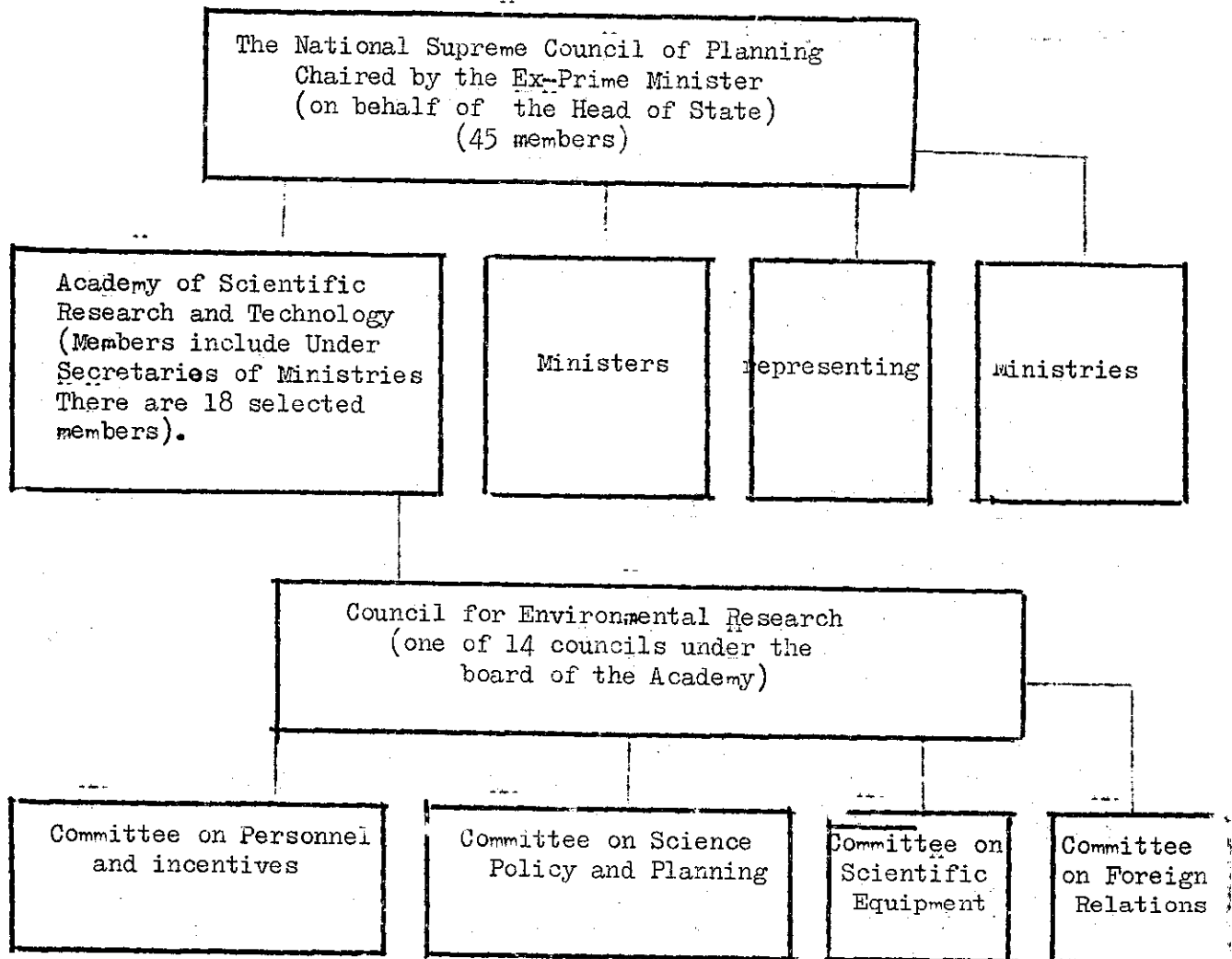
Research has been carried out for many years by various organs of the government but up to only about two years ago this effort was not co-ordinated;

It is felt that the best way to co-ordinate is through a non-political machinery which recognizes the role of specialized national agencies and departments. That body is the National Academy of Scientific Research and Technology (with its various councils). It is co-ordinated by the National Supreme Council and through the efforts of the different ministries.

Discussions with the President of the Academy of Scientific Research and Technology revealed the following:

- 3. Environmental concern in the Academy started since early 1972. But even before, there were water and air pollution laboratories in Egypt. There was also research on industrial and professional medicines for some industries. With the above as a basis for environmental concern, the concept of Habitat has now been included.
- 4. Many aspects of the environment are in different research institutes and are discussed and considered in 14 different Councils including the Council for Environmental Research under the National Academy of Scientific Research and Technology.
- 5. Recently, people have become aware of the environment i.e. pollution, housing both in urban and rural areas. In Cairo, for instance, the problems of traffic and housing are among the key problems.
- 6. The Council for Environmental Research is a focal point for internal and external matters on environment.
- 7. There is also a horizontal concept of the environment as conducted by the different specialized councils of the Academy. The President of the Academy feels the Egyptian experience will be a good example to other countries in Africa. There is serious concern on "human pollution" as a result of social-economic changes as well, particularly in relation to the post-war situation where there is a change of direction in the use and conservation of natural resources. The impact of this shift in government policy is quite big.
- 8. He also feels that since the establishment of the Council for Environment Research there is increased earnest awareness and will among the most "environmental ministries" e.g. the Ministries of Agriculture, Industry, and Irrigation. The intention is to have "environment" advisory sections in each Ministry to ensure implementation of standards etc. Personnel would not be a constraint.

9. The structure is as follows:



10. The functioning of this structure is best illustrated in examples. But conceptually and in practice, the Academy of Scientific Research brings to the attention of the Supreme Council, chaired by the Prime Minister, issues which have already been considered by the Councils (one or all fourteen of them). The text of the message of the Academy will be the results of a specialized research part of the most relevant Ministry; there is therefore little room for disagreement - the Academy is the coordinator and mouthpiece.

11. The National Academy lacks statutes, norms and standards and also lacks effective policing mandate and ability.

As has been felt for other countries, it is too soon (1976) to evaluate the effectiyeness of environmental machinerics. Egypt is also feeling her way towards coordinating the current enthusiasm and consideration for the environment. An evaluation mission, probably five years later will have a more objective revelation than now.

12. The Egyptian experience over 28 years favours committees as opposed to ministerial set up. The latter has impending rivalries. However, the current set up, which is unbiased, is strengthened by the involvement of the ministries. The people currently involved are top level scientists. The conceptualized environment is achieved by controlling the activities of man against himself and the target is to find means to control these activities. So the crucial concern is the "impact of human activities" and environmental parameters should be around those limits.

13. The environmentalists should be involved in providing "prevention more than cure". Be involved in the planning stage as was the case with the oil pipeline from the Suez. The Academy was involved in giving warning and caution in an advisory capacity to the Government. There are already signed statutes but not yet executed. However, there is still room for improvement; the focal centre in Nairobi - IRS - is a point of hope.

14. The Council for environment research is involved at the discussive stages e.g.:

- 1) On water pollution in Lake Mariut (main source of fresh water-fish) which is threatened by industrial waste.
- 2) Pollution of the sea shore off Alexandria.
- 3) On Air Pollution and Solid Wastes in Cairo.
- 4) Pollution in mines.

15. Expressed views of the National Supreme Council create a scientific protocol which leads to serious consideration by the relevant ministry. The solution is multi-disciplinary. The Academy Research Centre (with its established fame) is considered on merit when considering who should tackle an environmental problem.

There is a great deal that other countries can learn from the "Egyptian experience". For example, on irrigation, post high dam effects, desert research institute (underground water). air, and water pollution control, public hygiene and sanitary engineering. Ecology in the various departments on Agriculture, Mining etc.

17. The field of environment is receiving enthusiasm. Everybody is actively including environmental considerations in plans, a system which although vertical in structure does fulfil the objectives of UNEP. Egypt with the improvement that the National Research Council provides horizontal coordination and encourages communication from top to bottom

and vice versa. The intention being to capitalize on team spirit. Research Committees are multi-disciplinary and the people are not permanent thus avoiding the possibility of empire building and feeling of indispensability.

18. Members for Environmental Research and the Council in the Academy are of the eight universities and Under Secretaries of ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance etc. The President of the Academy is Chairman of the Council.

19. The Academy is Central Government financed and this finance is to provide incentives and support to other councils. There are, for example, 30 projects on the effects of the "high dam"; six of them are already financed by the Academy. The results are made known to the Academy and the Academy also co-ordinates inter-ministerial inter-disciplinary research problems.

#### The Main Problems

- 20.
- Action on the environment was delayed and problems were not stopped (prevented). Real action started two years ago whilst researches etc. had gone on for more than 50 years. The real problem was to get the researches oriented and co-ordinated towards one goal. Perhaps the war between Israel and Egypt also delayed meaningful response.
  - Lack of effective dissipation of information, transfer of information and application of research results.
  - The Academy does not have "institutional policing" ability but if advice to a ministry is not heeded the issue is brought to the National Council (chaired by the ex-Prime Minister although the Head of State is the head of the Council.)

LIST OF PEOPLE CONTACTED

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