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## MEMORANDUM ON THE WORLD PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE APPLICATION OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

### Introduction

1. The idea of the World Plan of Action arose as a consequence of the General Assembly resolution 1944(XVIII) in which the Assembly requested the United Nations Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development (UNACAST) to examine the possibility of establishing a programme of international co-operation in science and technology for the economic and social development of the developing countries. The Advisory Committee in its third report (E/4178) presented the view that such a programme of international co-operation in science and technology would be more suitably undertaken within the framework of a World Plan of Action which would be primarily directed towards building up, in developing countries, the infrastructure necessary for the application of science and technology and would include programmes of concerted attack to solve certain problems of particular importance to these countries.

2. Following the submission of the third report, ECOSOC in its resolution 1155(XLI) approved the proposals of the Advisory Committee that a World Plan of Action should be prepared and the General Assembly by its resolution 2318(XXII) adopted the resolution of ECOSOC and confirmed the objectives of the World Plan of Action as contained in the ECOSOC resolution. In the same resolution, the General Assembly requested that in the preparation of the Plan the regional aspects should be properly taken into consideration and that the World Plan of Action itself should be prepared as a closely co-ordinated portion of the Second Development Decade.

3. In the preparation of the Plan, the Advisory Committee has been guided by a number of general principles as follows:

- (a) The World Plan of Action should be considered as a part of the Second Development Decade Plan which should benefit specially from the initiative and from the action of the United Nations system of organizations in its preparation and implementation;
- (b) That the World Plan of Action should be a Plan of Action as distinct from an indicative plan. This implies that the WPA should be elaborated by the United Nations system right down to the level of programmes and individual projects in specified countries;
- (c) That the World Plan of Action should receive special financial support from United Nations development aid funds in terms of getting action started on its implementation. It is not expected that the United Nations can provide all the funds necessary for the implementation of the plan, but United Nations funds can act as seed-money for getting action started and therefore consideration should be given for providing such financial support.

4. In fulfilment of General Assembly resolution 2318(XXII) and earlier resolutions of the United Nations, the Advisory Committee has now prepared the plan document for the World Plan of Action. The World Plan of Action document is in two volumes which deal primarily with the areas for special action and with sectoral priorities in nine sectors. It will be presented to the fifty-first session of ECOSOC for consideration and approval and for transmission to the General Assembly.

#### Objectives

5. The principal objectives of the World Plan of Action are:

- (a) To assist the developing countries in building the necessary infrastructure of institutions, national or regional, and training the necessary skilled personnel on which their capability to apply science and technology to development in their countries will depend;
- (b) To promote a more effective application of existing scientific knowledge and technology in the development of the less developed countries, and, with that in view, to improve the arrangements for the transfer and adoption of knowledge and technology already available in more developed countries; at the same time to develop a climate in developing countries more favourable to the adoption of innovations in the techniques of production;

- (c) Increasingly to focus the attention and to mobilize the efforts of scientists and research organizations, in highly developed countries as well as in the developing countries, on problems the solution of which will be of special benefit to the developing countries and to encourage co-operation of developed and developing countries to this end;
- (d) To promote a greater knowledge among Governments, the scientific and technological community, the general public and especially young people in developed as well as developing countries, of the need of the developing countries for science and technology.

6. The World Plan when fully elaborated will be in terms of action to be implemented by the United Nations system with targets for national policies and for action by developing and advanced countries. It will consist of two five-year plans which will be co-ordinated with the Second Development Decade and will take account of the possibilities of multinational co-operation.

#### Plan Structure

7. The global PLAN REPORT which is now ready is in two parts. The first part deals with the general subject of national institutional infrastructure on which a self-sustaining effort for the utilization of science and technology can be based. This part also selects the priority areas for research to obtain new knowledge and for the application of existing knowledge to the solution of development problems. The first part includes proposals for further elaboration of the Plan into programmes and projects. It also deals with the all-important question of implementation and the need for funding, particularly with a proposal to earmark a minimum level of financial assistance towards implementation to be provided from United Nations resources during the Second Development Decade.

8. The second part of the global PLAN REPORT contains sectoral proposals. This part deals with the problems, the needs and typical programmes suggested under the nine sectors into which the PLAN has been subdivided. The nine sectors are:

- (a) Science development: policies and institutions;
- (b) Science and technology education;
- (c) Natural resources;
- (d) Food and agriculture;
- (e) Industry;
- (f) Transport and telecommunications;
- (g) Housing, building and urban development;
- (h) Health;
- (i) Population.

9. A chapter has been devoted to each sector. The tenth chapter of the second part of the PLAN REPORT draws attention to the potential benefits to be derived from a number of new technologies properly applied in a number of problem-areas where they are particularly relevant and can provide quicker results, sometimes with improved economy. The new technologies discussed are nuclear technology, space technology and computer technology.

#### World Plan of Action

10. Within the framework provided by the global report, the WPA is to be further elaborated into regional plans of action. There will be three separate regional plans for Africa, Asia and Latin America and these are to be prepared by the regional economic commissions. The regional plans will set targets and define programmes in each sector of the World Plan of Action for the region concerned. These regional plans will then form the framework for the preparation of country plans and for the identification of regional and country projects.

#### Funding and Implementation of the World Plan of Action

11. A plan of the scope and magnitude of the World Plan of Action will require considerable resources in terms of funds and specialized expertise to implement it, more than can be provided by any individual developing country, or by the United Nations alone. It is envisaged that resources will be sought from developed countries and from United Nations agencies which provide technical and financial assistance for development, in addition to resources to be provided by each country.

12. However, it has been emphasized by the Advisory Committee that the United Nations should provide initiating action to start off implementation and this is the import of the last two chapters of Part I of the global World Plan of Action Report. The most notable proposal of the Advisory Committee in these last two chapters is that the United Nations set apart a fund, for support of implementation, of the order of US\$125 million annually during the years of the Second Development Decade. This proposal is to be placed before ECOSOC at its fifty-first meeting in July for approval and onward transmission to the General Assembly session this year.

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