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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

REPORT OF THE TWENTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE INTERAGENCY
TASK FORCE ON WATER FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

BANGKOK, 15 MAY 1992

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I. ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

1. The twenty-ninth session of the Interagency Task Force on Water for Asia and the Pacific was held at Bangkok on 15 May 1992.

1. Attendance

2. Representatives of the following attended the session: United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and Interim Committee for Coordination of Investigations of the Lower Mekong Basin. The list of participants is annexed to the present report.

2. Opening of the session

3. The Chief of the Natural Resources Division of ESCAP opened the session and welcomed the participants on behalf of the Executive Secretary of ESCAP. He pointed out that the issue of the inter-agency cooperation and coordination of activities in the field of water resources had received due attention at the International Conference on Water and the Environment held at Dublin, in January 1992, at which the Conference had recommended that the existing United Nations institutions concerned with water resources should be strengthened and inter-agency coordination at the global and regional levels enhanced. At the forty-eighth session of the Commission held at Beijing in April 1992, it had been decided that the ESCAP Committee on Natural Resources and Energy should be abolished and a Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development established. Consequently, the ESCAP programme of work would be modified to reflect properly a thematic approach linking the environment and sustainable development. Due emphasis would be given to water resources issues in the revised programme.

4. In the light of the recommendations adopted at the Dublin Conference and programme approach changes in ESCAP, the role played by the Task Force would be essential in the coming years, since the formulation and realization of an action-oriented strategy addressing water problems within the broader context of environment and development would certainly require the further strengthening of the linkage between the various international bodies concerned with water resources development and management in Asia and the Pacific.

3. Election of the Chairman

5. The Task Force elected Mr. Cengiz Ertuna, Chief of the Water Resources Section, Natural Resources Division, ESCAP, Chairman.

4. Adoption of the agenda

6. The following agenda was adopted:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of the chairman.
3. Adoption of the agenda.

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4. Review of the current status of the inter-agency regional projects.
5. Issues arising from the meetings of legislative and other bodies and exchange of information on activities undertaken by the participating agencies in the water sector.
6. Identification of new inter-agency regional projects.
7. Consultations on the regional work programme, 1992-1993.
8. Date, venue and agenda for the thirtieth session of the Task Force.
9. Other matters.

II. DISCUSSION

A. *Review of the current status of the inter-agency regional projects*

(Item 4 of the agenda)

7. The Chairman, on behalf of ESCAP, informed the Task Force of the current status of the following projects selected for joint implementation by the member agencies: (a) water quality monitoring, (b) environmental aspects of water resources development, (c) natural disaster reduction and (d) urban water management.

8. He indicated, in particular, that the proceedings of a number of the meetings organized under the first three projects would be published soon for wide dissemination in the region among the national agencies concerned.

9. With regard to the project on urban water management, the regional seminar on water management in urban areas would probably be held early in 1993; it was expected that financial assistance would be provided by Japan. He urged the member agencies to collaborate with ESCAP in the implementation of the project.

10. The regional seminar would constitute a major event leading to the ESCAP Ministerial Conference on Urbanization, scheduled to be held at Bangkok some time in the first half of 1993.

11. The representative of the United Nations Environment Programme expressed the interest of UNEP in collaborating with ESCAP in the project on urban water management, and stated that UNEP would consider the possibility of sponsoring two participants to the regional seminar, one each from China and the Philippines.

12. The representative of the Interim Mekong Committee informed the Task Force of the progress in the implementation of a Committee project on groundwater quality monitoring carried out in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand and Viet Nam.

B. *Issues arising from the meetings of legislative and other bodies and exchange of information on activities undertaken by the participating agencies in the water sector*

(Item 5 of the agenda)

13. The representative of the ESCAP secretariat reported on the discussions held and decisions taken by the Commission at its forty-eighth session, held

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at Beijing in April 1992, which had relevance to water resources issues. In particular, the members of the Task Force were informed that the Commission had expressed agreement with the current emphasis on the assessment, efficient management and utilization of water resources, and promotion of the environmentally sound and sustainable development of water resources. The Commission had also directed the ESCAP secretariat to continue to accord high priority to its activities in natural disaster reduction and to formulate project activities in cooperation with other concerned United Nations agencies and regional organizations to achieve the goals of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction.

14. On behalf of ESCAP, the Chairman briefed the Task Force on the results of the International Conference on Water and the Environment, held at Dublin from 26 to 31 January 1992. He mentioned that the report of ESCAP Workshop on Sustainable and Environmentally Sound Development of Water Resources, held at Bangkok in October-November 1991, had been distributed among the participant in the Conference as a background document. The Conference had culminated in the Dublin Statement on Water and Sustainable Development and the Conference report, containing guiding principles and recommendations for action at the local, national and international levels. The Dublin Statement was made available to the participants in the session.

15. The Task Force was also informed of the results of the joint session of the Typhoon Committee and the Panel on Tropical Cyclones, held at Pattaya, Thailand, from 18 to 27 February 1992. That first joint session of two intergovernmental bodies concerned with water-related disasters had been sponsored jointly by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and ESCAP. At the session, WMO and ESCAP had been urged to continue their cooperation in that field and take appropriate action with UNDP with a view to seeking its financial support for a number of proposed projects on water-related natural disaster reduction.

order? 16. The representative of the World Health Organization distributed among the participants its document A45/15, entitled "Evaluation of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade, 1981-1992".

C. Identification of new inter-agency regional projects

(Item 6 of the agenda)

17. There were no proposals from the participants for the initiation of new inter-agency regional projects in the field of water resources.

18. The Chairman appealed to the member agencies to cooperate closely at the initial stage of project formulation. He urged the agencies concerned to take part in the formulation of a project on natural disaster reduction in Asia and the Pacific for submission to UNDP, to seek its financial support for the project.

D. Consultations on the regional work programme, 1992-1993

(Item 7 of the agenda)

19. The Task Force was informed by ESCAP that a workshop on testing of training modules on women, water supply and sanitation, organized by ESCAP jointly with the Department of Economic and Social Development, United Nations Secretariat, and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), would be held at Bangkok from 25 to 29 May 1992.*

20. The Chairman, on behalf of ESCAP, informed the Task Force that ESCAP was planning to organize, jointly with the Department of Economic and Social Development, a workshop on computer applications for groundwater assessment and management, tentatively scheduled to be held at Bangkok in February 1993.

21. The representative of the Interim Mekong Committee expressed interest in the workshop, and pointed out that the Committee was likely to sponsor several participants to that workshop from the Lower Mekong Basin countries.

22. He also informed the meeting that the international workshop on flood mitigation, emergency preparedness and flood disaster management in Viet Nam, organized jointly by UNDP, the Department of Economic and Social Development and the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO), would be held at Hanoi from 22 to 24 June 1992; the Interim Mekong Committee and ESCAP would be represented at the workshop.

23. The representative of the United Nations Environment Programme briefed the Task Force on a project on assessment and promotion of human resources for river water quality management being carried out by UNEP in Asia and the Pacific, and invited the member agencies concerned to collaborate with UNEP in the implementation of the project.

24. The representative of the United Nations Children's Fund provided brief information on UNICEF activities, mostly at the country level, related to the provision of safe water supply to rural and urban areas.

E. Date, venue and agenda of the thirtieth session
of the Task Force

(Item 8 of the agenda)

25. The member agencies would be informed by ESCAP in due course of the date and venue of the thirtieth session of the Task Force.

26. The Task Force agreed that at its thirtieth session the discussion on the identification of new inter-agency projects would be preceded by a discussion under an agenda item on the regional work programme.

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* The workshop was subsequently postponed to September 1992.

Annex

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	Guangchang Shi Cengiz Ertuna Y.N. Steklov M. Brewster M.A. Khan
United Nations Children's Fund	Lay Maung
United Nations Environment Programme	Anthony Kolb
World Health Organization	Han Tun
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	N. Ramm-Ericson
Interim Committee for Coordination of Investigations of the Lower Mekong Basin	Thaipuck Thammongkol

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