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The International Year of Disabled Persons

(Note by the Executive Secretary)

The contributions of the members of the Economic Commission for Western Asia to the preparations for the International Year of Disabled Persons, 1981, were considerable during the first months of the year. Everything indicates that these efforts will be pursued with the same intensity throughout the rest of the year in the planning and implementation of programmes at the national and regional levels for the care, rehabilitation, training, employment and social integration of disabled persons.

All the States of the region have established national committees for the International Year of Disabled Persons. Presided over in some cases by the highest public officials, these committees are composed of representatives of government ministries and other official bodies, civic and community associations, and other groups of the private sector. Programmes of action have been adopted that range from the design of projects and field studies for the purpose of identifying the

size and scope of disability needs to the dissemination of awareness of the problem and its different dimensions through public relations campaigns and the mass media.

The ECWA secretariat participated in the Regional Seminar on the Vocational and Social Integration of Disabled Persons, which was held at Tunis between 14 and 18 October 1980. The seminar was organized by the secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs (the Social Development Section of the Department of Social and Cultural Affairs of the League of Arab States). The ECWA secretariat also provided Kuwait, at its request, with technical assistance in the organization of the Kuwait Regional Conference for the International Year of Disabled Persons, which was organized by the National Committee of Kuwait and scheduled for 2-4 April 1981. In compliance with the guidelines established by the organizing committee, the secretariat prepared a number of conference documents, including a draft Arab Declaration on Action Programmes for the Disabled.

Owing to certain levels in the region, the secretariat was unable to carry out the part of ECWA resolution 87 (VII) that called for the organization of a regional seminar for policy-making officials in the field of disabled persons, at Baghdad in the autumn of 1980. The purpose of that seminar was "to exchange experience and consider the most effective ways to implement and follow up the objectives of the Year at the regional level". The secretariat, however, prepared a paper on ways to implement these objectives. That paper, which is entitled, "Features and Dimensions of the problem of disabled persons and a plan of action for the region", has been placed before the present session for discussion and adoption. Its purpose is to lay down the general guidelines of a plan of action for the ECWA region and it constitutes a regional contribution to the International Year of Disabled Persons. This paper is one of the documents that are to be submitted to the international symposium that will be held in Argentina in July 1981 on technical co-operation among developing countries and technical assistance for disabled persons.

The secretariat of the Commission, in co-operation and co-ordination with the specialized agencies of the United Nations and Arab regional organizations, will pursue its efforts at the national and the regional level to carry out the regional plan of action for disabled persons and to enhance technical co-operation among the developing countries in general and among the members of the Commission in particular.