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INTER-AGENCY MEETING FOR THE SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARAB COUNTRIES

Vienna, 26-28 February 1992

Report

4/14

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Explanatory notes

The following abbreviations of organizations are used in this document:

AFESD	Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development
AIDMO	Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization
AISU	Arab Iron and Steel Union
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
GOIC	Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting
KISR	Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research
LAS	League of Arab States
OAPEC	Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

INTRODUCTION

1. An Inter-Agency Meeting was held from 26 to 28 February 1992 to elaborate the components of the Special Programme for Industrial Development in the Arab Countries and to select priorities from among the technical cooperation projects proposed, while discussing a plan of action for 1992-1993 and the mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Special Programme. The Meeting had been convened in response to resolution GC.4/Res.5, which the General Conference adopted at its 11th plenary meeting on 22 November 1991, and in pursuance of the secretariat's activities to implement the Special Programme for Industrial Development in the Arab Countries.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The following conclusions and recommendations were made and agreed upon by all the participants at the final session of the Meeting:

(a) There is full agreement among all participants that, because of its importance in catalysing and augmenting other technical cooperation activities, the Special Programme for Industrial Development in the Arab Countries should be supported by all concerned and ways and means found of implementing its components in stages, taking into consideration new project ideas and priorities that match its concepts. Furthermore, the Special Programme should not be subjected to a time limit, and its major components (the regional cooperation projects and the subprogramme for least developed countries) should be of a continuous nature so that their project priorities and implementation status can be reviewed every two years, by those actively involved, during a meeting to be convened expressly for this task;

(b) In order to be practical, and taking into consideration the modest input and financial resources available, the priority technical cooperation projects proposed for implementation within the context of the Special Programme should be classified according to the following categories:

(i) Those projects that need immediate attention because they have a bearing on the economic or industrial restructuring or reform process under consideration by the Arab countries, and whose implementation ought to start during the current biennium (1992-1993):

a. Project 13. Technical assistance for existing industrial establishments in various Arab countries and the improvement of their efficiency. This project may be formulated as a continuous umbrella project, serving mainly the needs of important industries, especially those of food and textiles in the least developed Arab countries;

b. Project 3. Preparation of manuals on quality control in selected branches of industry in the Arab countries. This project, which has a direct impact on marketing and trade requirements, may be tailored to serve small (and even) medium-scale industries especially those related to food security and/or related agro-industries in the least developed subregions;

- c. Project 8. Programme on the status and development of the sugar industry in the Arab region. This project, which is directed to the problem of food security within the region, will benefit some least developed Arab countries and major sugar-producing countries like Lebanon;
- (ii) Those projects that may be classified as important and for which work ought to start soon although their full implementation may exceed the short-term period specified for those in 2 (b)(i) (1992-1993):
- a. Projects 5 and 6 (combined). Establishment of a computerized database for petrochemicals; and programme for the development and integration of the petrochemical industry in the Arab region;
 - b. Project 1. Preparatory assistance for the development of a regional network between national research and development institutions;
 - c. Project 14. Study on industrial policies and strategies in Arab States. This project is important for economic restructuring and it focuses on the problems of privatization, integration and coordination at the regional and/or subregional levels;
- (iii) Other projects that should be deferred to a later stage or to when other resources are made available, including:
- a. Those for which project profiles have been presented;
 - b. Those mentioned or listed in the report on the Special Programme for Industrial Development in the Arab Countries (especially those listed as priority projects for the least developed Arab countries);
 - c. Project ideas proposed by the Meeting including:
 - i. The manufacture of quality steel in selected Arab countries;
 - ii. The upgrading of existing rolling mills in the steel industry in Arab countries to improve its quality and productivity;
 - iii. Programmes in respect of privatization and improvement of private-sector capabilities to promote greater investment in, and better management of, industrial enterprises;
 - iv. Programmes for market studies with emphasis on trade aspects at the regional and international levels for selected industries where competitiveness and comparative advantages exist;

(c) Although AIDMO, ESCWA, LAS and UNIDO have made resource commitments, effective implementation necessitates more resources for and definite involvement in the Special Programme on the part of the relevant national and regional institutions. Hence other participating organizations, including funding institutions, are invited to make firm commitments at the earliest date possible in order to ensure the proper formulation of an adequate plan of action as soon as possible;

(d) The plan of action should be devoted to the implementation of the priority projects identified in 2 (b)(i) and (ii) above in accordance with the resources made available during the current biennium (1992-1993). Towards the end of the biennium, another inter-agency meeting should be convened to assess the performance of the Special Programme and to draw up a new plan of action, probably with new or recurrent projects and activities. In the meantime, the collaborating organizations should meet twice a year, preferably during a meeting of the Industrial Development Board of UNIDO at Vienna for effective monitoring and evaluation. The exact dates of these meetings should be communicated by UNIDO in ample time to all (including prospective) participants. Reports of the meetings should be sent to the permanent missions of countries of the region for their information;

(e) In order to secure support and adequate resources in the near future, UNIDO, in cooperation with AIDMO and ESCWA, should prepare within a period of three to five months the project documents for the priority projects listed under 2 (b)(i) and (ii) above, and send them to LAS and other potential donors, as well as to the other national and regional organizations concerned with those particular projects, for immediate attention and review;

(f) UNIDO and the collaborating organizations (AIDMO, ESCWA and LAS), as well as other participating organizations in the Meeting, should endeavour to promote the projects of the Special Programme with the Governments of Arab countries and possible donors from the developed countries (especially members of the European Community and OECD) as well as with national, regional and international development funding institutions (such as AFESD, the Islamic Development Bank, the OPEC Fund for International Development, UNDP and the World Bank) with a view to securing sufficient resources for implementing the components of the Special Programme.

I. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

A. Opening of the Meeting

3. In opening the Meeting, the Director-General of UNIDO referred to the importance of the Special Programme, affirming the commitment of UNIDO to its implementation, and urged all organizations and member States to cooperate in order to achieve better results.

4. He underlined the importance of adopting a new approach for integration and cooperation within the Arab region, as distinct from more conventional existing schemes, to meet the challenge of growing international interdependence and changes in industrial development. He also specifically referred to the Special Programme and the merits of its subprogrammes, especially the one directed to the least developed Arab countries. Regarding the importance of mobilizing adequate resources for the Special Programme, he informed participants of the financial constraints on UNIDO and its need to augment its resources to achieve the goals of the Special Programme.

5. The Associate Secretary-General of the League of Arab States (LAS) also addressed the Meeting. He voiced the deep interest of LAS in supporting the Special Programme and briefly described the work of its secretariat in specific areas that had a bearing on some components of the Special Programme.

6. He noted that the Arab countries, in their drive towards a wider diversification of their economies and sources of income, had to make speedy progress in developing their industrial sector, taking advantage of their resources especially those related to petrochemicals and textiles. He informed participants of the efforts of LAS in forming two teams of experts to study thoroughly those two subsectors, with a view to improving their status through the higher integration of their production units and improved marketing and trade, including the removal of structural barriers and government controls. He reiterated the declaration of LAS support for the technical cooperation projects proposed in respect of: integrating the petrochemical industry; rehabilitating, or improving the efficiency, of industrial enterprises; and promoting standardization and quality control.

7. At the close of the opening session, the Officer-in-Charge of the Arab Countries Programme, Area Programmes Division, Department for Programme and Project Development, UNIDO, made introductory remarks regarding the procedural aspects of the Meeting and the agenda (see annex I) for its sessions. He also referred to the activities and preparatory work previously carried out by UNIDO, including a report on the Special Programme for Industrial Development in the Arab Countries, which had been prepared by the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO) in its capacity as a subcontracting technical body and finalized by UNIDO. He also referred to the subsequent joint meetings between AIDMO and UNIDO as well as the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), and to the intense consultations with the delegates of some Governments of countries of the Arab region in preparing for the Meeting.

B. Attendance

8. The Meeting was attended by representatives of international organizations, regional agencies and national institutions, as well as representatives and observers of permanent missions and observer offices to UNIDO at Vienna of States of the Arab region. A complete list of participants is attached as annex II to the present report.

C. Officers and documentation

9. The Meeting was chaired by the Director of the Area Programmes Division, Department for Programme and Project Development, UNIDO. The rapporteur was the Assistant Secretary-General of AIDMO. A working paper on the Special Programme for Industrial Development in the Arab Countries, prepared by the UNIDO consultant for the Special Programme, was distributed at the Meeting.

II. REPORT OF THE DISCUSSIONS

A. Special Programme for Industrial Development in the Arab Countries

10. At the beginning of the first session, the UNIDO consultant for the Special Programme briefly presented the working paper that he had prepared, pointing out the various factors and issues that had led to the formulation of

the Special Programme before going on to elaborate its components. He referred to the major ailments and problems constraining the development of industry in the Arab countries, the magnitude of which were manifested in: low technological capacity, uncompetitiveness of products in regional and international markets, and low level of integration of core industries etc. In outlining important remedies to be applied at the enterprise and the national levels, he stressed the need for, and the importance of, cooperative arrangements to be undertaken at the regional level to augment and strengthen national development programmes while drawing on international resources. He identified priority areas that lent themselves to a higher degree of cooperation between the Arab countries where specific decentralized functions could be institutionalized at the regional level in support of national institutions in such areas as high-level training, informatics and databases, research and development and related activities (engineering and process design), computerized systems to manage production and maintenance, trade in manufactures, standards and quality control. He attached importance to specific activities in support of the development of core industries where integration was essential, and also to augmenting traditional technical cooperation programmes in the least developed Arab countries in order to arrive at a more equitable and acceptable level of development for effective collaboration in the areas specified above.

11. The second session was devoted mainly to the problems facing the industrial development process in the Arab countries and the specific elements of the Special Programme directed to tackling those problems.

12. During the ensuing discussion, most participants agreed that the coordination of investment and market policies was essential in developing core industries that had comparative advantages (for example, petrochemicals) particularly in view of the prevailing conditions of, and barriers to, international trade. They considered that trade barriers within the region should also be addressed because access to Arab markets was crucial to the development of certain industries (for example, agro-industries) especially when such industries were of importance to the least developed Arab countries.

13. They considered that the industrial policies of the 1950s and 1970s were still prevalent or applicable with minor alterations. In general, however, those policies neither allowed for current conditions and the level of development achieved nor responded to the new industrial technology trends at the international level. Furthermore, the impact of the new concepts of global interdependence and the emerging new economic blocs at the international, and even subregional levels, ought to induce a different approach to reorient industrial strategies towards a higher regional integration of core industries with the accent preferably on effective subregional coordination.

14. It was recognized that the weakness of the private sector in a number of Arab countries for different reasons (for example, limited national capacity and resources, prevailing socio-economic system) had diminished the potential for higher development. Furthermore, the abrupt changes in investment policies, including those related to privatization and the promotion of private investment, might not facilitate a higher level of investment without well-organized schemes and a better climate that could pave the way for improved management and a smooth transition to the introduction of privatization.

15. Many participants were of the opinion that the limited national absorptive capacity might not be a major issue in addressing the problem of marketing and the low productivity of manufacturing enterprises, especially in core

industries such as fertilizers, petrochemicals, and iron and steel, because the absorptive capacity of the region was large, and prospects for the exchange of products and subcontracting within the region existed. However, the lack of information and will to cooperate on a sound economic basis, rather than on that of social (nationalistic or pan-Arab) aspirations, had not led to a practical mechanism for efficient marketing or even effective technical cooperation.

16. Although the elements of coordination to improve product competitiveness and to open up wider markets required a number of measures (for example, in respect of reduced production costs, higher quality products, effective negotiations in respect of marketing and trade barriers), it was considered that a mechanism had to be found to deal with the different aspects involved. Reference was made to the mandates of a number of regional institutions, including: those concerned with technical assistance at the enterprise level (for example, AIDMO); those concerned with strategies and industrial policies (for example, AIDMO, GOIC and OAPEC); those concerned with marketing and investment policies (federations of producers); and financing institutions. The idea of specialization with a minimum overlapping of activities, as well as that of cooperation between those institutions, was stressed in every respect including the promotion of joint ventures.

17. Towards the end of the first two sessions, brief résumés of the work of the participating organizations, including UNIDO, were presented to give a clear impression of what each had been doing or was willing to do for industrial development in the Arab countries. In the case of UNIDO, examples were given of its technical cooperation programme in the Arab region, with special reference to activities related to iron and steel, petrochemicals, informatics, investment promotion and joint ventures, subcontracting in the trade of manufactures, privatization, standardization and quality control, training and industrial infrastructure etc. One activity supported by all the participants was that being pursued by the Arab Iron and Steel Union (AISU) in respect of coding, which had also been an important element of the subcontracting system pursued by UNIDO at the national and subregional levels in some Arab countries. The efforts of UNIDO to develop a database for the petrochemical industry were also supported by all the participants.

18. It was confirmed by most organizations, including national institutions like the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) and the Saudi Consulting House, that the two major issues that needed immediate attention were the lack of adequate cooperation and the lack of an appropriate mechanism for such cooperation to promote a more efficient utilization of regional resources.

B. Presentation of project profiles

19. The third session was devoted mainly to discussing the project profiles that had been prepared by AIDMO, ESCWA and UNIDO (a list of which is attached to the present report as annex III). The Assistant Secretary-General of AIDMO briefed participants on the work in progress and the nature of the cooperation between AIDMO, ESCWA and UNIDO to implement national and regional technical cooperation projects, and described how the Special Programme could augment those activities. New project ideas were discussed and the participants agreed on specific priority projects for implementation within the means available as a modest start. In presenting the project profiles, he referred to specific resolutions that had been adopted by the General Conference for Industrial

Development in the Arab Countries, held at Tunis in October 1989, and to the recommendations of a number of ministerial board meetings of AIDMO concerning the priorities in its plan of work, which were the basis for all the technical cooperation projects proposed for inclusion in the Special Programme.

20. During the ensuing discussion, many participants agreed that trade and the promotion of investment in industry were two important areas that ought to be addressed by the Special Programme. Although two of the projects proposed, namely, those addressing informatics and quality control, were directly related to those two areas, the participants considered that future components of the Special Programme ought to elaborate further new relevant aspects with innovative action-oriented elements. Furthermore, UNIDO might have to respond to national and also subregional requests for the formulation and implementation of a more effective investment programme on the basis and results of previously implemented programmes.

21. Since AIDMO and UNIDO had their own special programmes for industrial development in the occupied Palestinian territory, no particular project concerning future technical assistance to the Palestinian people had been proposed for inclusion in the Special Programme. However, it was considered that some elements of the priority projects proposed might augment the ongoing activities of those organizations' programmes in the occupied Palestinian territory.

22. On account of the importance of the component of the Special Programme that addressed the urgent problems facing the least developed Arab countries, especially those that had been outlined in the report on the Special Programme for Industrial Development in the Arab Countries prepared by AIDMO, many participants considered that efforts were needed to formulate more projects. Specific areas that might be addressed within the context of the Special Programme included: energy, food and textile industries, tanning and leather industries and the problems of technology transfer. However, because UNIDO national programmes for least developed countries consisted of technical cooperation projects at the request of Governments in respect of some of those areas, the priority projects of the Special Programme might address other areas of common interest to the whole region with special emphasis on those that encouraged the further development of the least developed Arab countries.

23. After discussing and confirming the merits and objectives of the proposed project profiles within the context of the Special Programme, which had been designed as a catalysing mechanism to augment specific elements of the ongoing technical cooperation projects of UNIDO in the Arab countries, a number of priority projects were selected. The importance of the least developed Arab countries' component was underlined by all the participants in view of the status of industrial development in those countries, and was reflected in the selection of the priority projects for the short-term (1992-1993) plan of action.

C. Cooperation arrangements and mobilization of resources

24. The fourth and last session of the Meeting was devoted to a discussion of the mobilization of resources and modalities of cooperation as well as of guidelines for a practical plan of action to launch the Special Programme. An assessment was made of the resources and important sources of financing of UNIDO technical cooperation activities. Representatives of UNIDO emphasized the financial constraints on UNIDO, and referred especially to the implications

of the latest policies of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for technical cooperation activities in general and for the Arab countries in particular. The need to mobilize adequate resources for the Special Programme was emphasized. General guidelines for the plan of action for the implementation of the Special Programme were introduced and a mechanism for its formulation was proposed by UNIDO.

25. During the discussion, reference was made to the information and issues contained in the report on the Special Programme for Industrial Development in the Arab Countries, the working paper and the project profiles presented to the Meeting. An in-depth discussion took place regarding cooperation arrangements and the immediate steps to be taken in the course of elaborating those arrangements and the plan of action to be developed.

26. A number of organizations expressed interest in participating in some projects, and some (including AIDMO, ESCWA, LAS and UNIDO) even declared their intention with a firm commitment of resources and technical support for the implementation of the Special Programme. Others, namely, AFESD and the OPEC Fund for International Development, while expressing their support, felt that further consultation with their decision-making authorities was needed before any commitment could be made; both organizations described their criteria for funding technical cooperation programmes, putting special emphasis on projects designed for the least developed Arab countries.

27. Although some participants indicated that those organizations who had made a firm commitment might co-sponsor the Special Programme, others thought that some of them might be interested only in some of the projects, while recognizing that UNIDO had a mandate from its Industrial Development Board and General Conference to be fully responsible for the Special Programme. However, organizations who had committed themselves might collaborate, and UNIDO would take the lead in coordinating all the activities.

28. In order to obtain more support for the Special Programme, especially from regional and international funding organizations interested in its technical cooperation activities, it was agreed that the procedures and activities of those organizations ought to be fully understood. A reference was made to the procedures and mechanisms of the World Bank and UNDP.

29. Finally, it was agreed that four organizations, namely, AIDMO, ESCWA, LAS and UNIDO, would formulate the plan of action on the basis of the discussion and through consultations to be held in the near future.

Annex I

AGENDA

1. Opening of the Meeting.
2. Discussion of the Working Paper on the Special Programme for Industrial Development in the Arab Countries.
3. Presentation of project profiles by UNIDO, AIDMO and ESCWA.
4. Cooperation arrangements and mobilization of resources.
5. Adoption of the report.
6. Closure of the meeting.

Annex II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

International organizations, regional agencies
and national institutions

Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development

Ahmed Najib Al-Saadi, Senior Engineer

Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization

Hatim Abdul Rasheed, Secretary-General
Mohamad Said Ali, Assistant Secretary-General

Arab Iron and Steel Union

Guedjati Aissa
Adel Hussein

General Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture for Arab
Countries

Elias Ghantous, Assistant Secretary-General

Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research

Mahmoud Bushehri, Techno-Economics Division

League of Arab States

Yusuf Nimatallah, Associate Secretary-General
Kamal Sanada, Director of Economic Relations Department
Mawaheb Khalilaf
Hassan Sheikh Hussein
Wael Khatib

OPEC Fund for International Development

M. S. Al-Mahdi, Assistant Director-General, Technical and Economic Services

Saudi Consulting House

Ali Al-Rabiah, Acting Director-General, Economic Industrial Consultancy

Permanent missions

Algeria

Noureddine Ayadi, Counsellor and Alternate Permanent Representative

Egypt

Abdelhamid Onsy, Ambassador and Permanent Representative
Khaled M. G. Abdel-Hamid, Third Secretary and Adviser to the Permanent
Representative

Iraq

Rahim Abid Al-Kital, Ambassador and Permanent Representative
Khalil I. Al-Hadithy, Third Secretary and Adviser to the Permanent Representative
Saad H. Majid, Minister Plenipotentiary
Matoq Al-Matoq, Scientific Counsellor

Kuwait

Ali Sulaiman R. Al-Saeid, Attaché and Alternate Permanent Representative

Lebanon

Fawzi Salloukh, Ambassador and Permanent Representative

Morocco

Mohamed Ait Hmid, Secretary and Alternate Permanent Representative

Oman

Mohammed bin Yousuf Al-Zarafy, Ambassador and Permanent Representative
Jamal bin Shames bin Saoud al-Hooty, Assistant to the Director-General of Industry
Abdullah bin Hamed Saif Al-Riyami, Second Secretary and Alternate Permanent Representative

Saudi Arabia

Essa Abdullah Al-Nowaiser, Ambassador and Permanent Representative
Fahad A. Al-Zeid, Alternate Permanent Representative
Ibrahim Al-Taifi, Alternate Permanent Representative

Sudan

Ali Khalid El Hussein, Ambassador and Permanent Representative
Abdalla Mohamed Ahmed Abdalla, Second Secretary and Alternate Permanent Representative

Tunisia

Habib Ammar, Ambassador and Permanent Representative
Khaled El Fendri, Secretary and Alternate Permanent Representative

Yemen

Said Sharaf Badr, Ambassador and Permanent Representative
Abdul Qawi Al-Eryani, Minister and Alternate Permanent Representative

Permanent observer office

Palestine

Feisal Aweida, Ambassador and Permanent Observer
Mohieddin Massoud, Counsellor and Alternate Permanent Observer

UNIDO

Domingo L. Siazon Director-General

Department of External Relations, Public Information, Language
and Documentation Services

Igor Filyukov External Relations Officer, Office of the Deputy
Director-General

Abdoulaye Bah Information Officer, Public Relations and
Information Section

Department of Administration

Charles S. Warner Deputy Director-General

Sebhat Hable-Selassie Director, Personnel Services Division

Department of Industrial Operations

Leonid N. Soumarokov Deputy Director-General

Milan Delos Head, Engineering Industries Branch

Musa Farah Senior Industrial Development Officer, Industrial
Management and Rehabilitation Branch

Mohamed El Gallaf Industrial Development Officer, Industrial Human
Resource Development Branch

Abdulkerim Karamanoglu Industrial Development Officer, Industrial Human
Resource Development Branch

Georgios Anestis Industrial Development Officer, Section for
Integrated Industrial Projects

Gilles Ledoux Associate Industrial Development Officer,
Institutional Infrastructure Branch

Department for Industrial Promotion, Consultations and Technology

Keiki Fujita Director, Industrial Technology Promotion Division

Mohamed Abdelmoneim Senior Programme Management Officer, Industrial
Investment Division

Konrad Fialkowski Chief, Informatics Unit

Vladimir Podshibyakin Chief, Industrial and Technological Information
Section

Morteza Abtahi Industrial Development Officer, Unit for Process
Industries Sector

Liana Masens Industrial Development Officer, Industrial
Technology Monitors Unit

Vladimir Kojarnovitch Industrial Development Officer, New Technologies
Unit

Department for Programme and Project Development

Nivaran N. Tandon Director, Area Programmes Division

Heinrich Pichler Director, Special Measures and Activities Division

Huishun Fan Chief, Section for Economic Co-operation among
Developing Countries

Gloria Rocas Chief, Europe, Mediterranean, Global and Inter-
regional Programmes and Projects

Mafoud Bouhacène	Industrial Development Officer, Regional and Country Studies Branch
Nita Constantin	Area Programme Officer, Section for Economic Co-operation among Developing Countries
Mundeke Kapwala	Coordinator, Co-ordination Unit for the Industrial Development Decade for Africa
Jean-Noël Aquistapace	Industrial Development Officer, Project Review Committee Secretariat and Funds Administration Section

Arab Countries Programme

Mehdi Al-Hafedh	Officer-in-Charge
Abdul Karim Hasson	Area Programme Officer
Karin Liebl	Area Programme Officer
Jette Jensen	Area Programme Officer
T. Al-Khudayri	Consultant

Annex III

LIST OF PROJECT PROFILES

UNIDO

1. Preparatory assistance for the development of a regional network between national research and development institutions.
2. Cooperative programme for developing national capabilities in the area of maintenance and production management in metallurgical and allied engineering industries using computerized systems.
3. Preparation of manuals on quality control in selected branches of industry in the Arab countries.
4. Cooperative programme for the development of indigenous engineering and management capabilities in the Arab countries.
5. Establishment of a computerized database for petrochemicals in the Arab countries.

AIDMO

6. Programme for the development and integration of the petrochemical industry in the Arab region.
7. Sectoral study on aluminium industry in the Arab countries.
8. Programme on the status and development of the sugar industry in the Arab region.
9. Preparation of a feasibility study for an integrated plant for the production of long and flat steel products in the Gulf region.

ESCWA

10. Preparation of three feasibility studies proposed in the study on engineering infrastructure.
11. Preparation of five project profiles in the electronics sector.
12. Seminar on the industrial uses of laser technology.
13. Technical assistance for existing industrial establishments in various Arab countries and the improvement of their efficiency.
14. Study on industrial policies and strategies in Arab States.