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Cooperation between the United Nations
and the League of Arab States

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Report of the Secretary-General*

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 13 of General Assembly resolution 54/9 of 18 November 1999.

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III. Follow-up action on proposals agreed to at general meetings between organizations of the United Nations system and the League of Arab States

4. A summary of the reports of the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system on their cooperation with the League during the period under review follows. It represents the follow-up action on proposals adopted at the joint meetings held at Geneva in 1997 (A/52/378) and Vienna in 1999 (A/54/180).

A. United Nations Secretariat

1. Department of Public Information

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7. The United Nations Information Service in Geneva publicized statements by representatives of the League and of Arab countries to the Commission on Human Rights, the Conference on Disarmament and treaty bodies. It disseminated information on statements by the Secretary-General and activities by the Security Council on the Middle East, the humanitarian and relief efforts in Sudan and Somalia, and the work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.

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J. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

29. UNHCR and the League are pursuing efforts, both at a bilateral level and within the framework of the United Nations system, to strengthen their cooperation in areas related to refugees and global humanitarian issues of common concern. These efforts resulted in the signing on 27 June 2000 of a cooperation agreement by UNHCR and the League. The conclusion of the agreement will pave the way for the organization of a regional (informal) conference on refugees and migration in the Arab region (excluding Palestinians); collaboration between UNHCR and ALECSO to identify areas of educational assistance to refugees; strengthening UNHCR cooperation with other specialized institutions of the League in areas of common concern; convening of seminars on refugee law and basic principles of international protection for government officials, non-governmental organizations and others jointly identified by the two organizations; and the exchange of expertise, documents and reports regarding issues of common concern.

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N. International Labour Organization

39. ILO maintained close cooperation with the League and particularly with its specialized agency, the Arab Labour Organization (ALO), by conducting joint activities and coordinating work pertaining to issues of common interest. The two organizations signed a memorandum of understanding in March 2000, with respect to employment in the Palestinian Territories. It is designed to promote regular and close consultations and dialogues with the concerned parties in the Arab region, including ILO constituents, in particular the Palestinian Authority and the pertinent regional and international organizations. The memorandum refers to collaboration, in particular, in the fields of labour administration, employment policies, vocational training and guidance, occupational safety and health, labour codes, social security, information, and workers' education. Particular importance will be attached to efforts for securing adequate levels of funding from donors for joint activities between ILO and the League and its specialized agency ALO, and for establishing a funds-in-trust.

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R. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

46. Cooperation remained close between UNRWA and the League during the period under review. UNRWA maintains contact with the League secretariat in Cairo and with the Permanent Observer of the League in New York, participates in regular sectoral meetings organized by the League, and seeks to foster cooperation between its officials and the Arab League secretariat at various levels and in various forums.

47. High-level contacts between UNRWA and the League included a meeting between the Commissioner-General and the Under-Secretary-General for Palestine Affairs at League headquarters in Cairo in January 2000. The Commissioner-General also met the League's overseers of refugee affairs during their meeting at the League headquarters, also in January 2000. The ninth annual joint meeting between UNRWA and the League's Council of Educational Affairs for the Children of Palestine (Cairo, November 1999) reviewed educational services offered to Palestine refugees in the host countries and issues facing the UNRWA education programme. UNRWA's Director of Education also attended a meeting between the United Nations and the League on "Youth and employment" (Beirut, 23-25 May 2000).

48. UNRWA continued to benefit from the generous financial support of the League and its continuing efforts to urge donors to increase voluntary contributions to UNRWA. In 1999, League member States contributed \$9.6 million in cash and in kind to the UNRWA regular budget and extrabudgetary special assistance programmes. UNRWA's critical financial situation, as well as its role, were the subject of considerable discussion in League meetings during the period under review. The League reiterated its support for UNRWA humanitarian activities, expressed concern over the repeated funding shortfalls faced by the Agency and their implications for Palestinian refugees and the host authorities, and stressed the importance of increased contributions to the Agency by the international community.

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* In accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/248, sect. C, para. 1, the present report is being submitted on 20 September so as to include all contributions from the United Nations system.