

of joint action plans at regional and international levels, and with examining any disputes that may arise between member states with a view to settling them by peaceful means. The Joint Defence and Economic Co-operation Treaty signed in 1950 provided for the establishment of a Joint Defence Council as well as an Economic Council (renamed the Economic and Social Council in 1977). Economic, social and cultural activities constitute principal and vital elements of the joint action initiative.

Arab Common Market. An Arab Common Market came into operation on 1 Jan. 1965. The agreement, reached on 13 Aug. 1964, provided for the abolition of customs duties on agricultural products and natural resources within five years, by reducing tariffs at an annual rate of 20%. Customs duties on industrial products were to be reduced by 10% annually. However, it never became reality although it has remained the ambition of many people throughout the Arab world for many years since.

Organization. The machinery of the League consists of a Council, 11 specialized ministerial committees entrusted with drawing up common policies for the regulation and advancement of co-operation in their fields (information, internal affairs, justice, housing, transport, social affairs, youth and sports, health, environment, telecommunications and electricity), and a permanent secretariat.

The League is considered to be a regional organization within the framework of the United Nations at which its Secretary-General is an observer. It has permanent delegations in New York and Geneva for the UN, in Addis Ababa for the Organization of African Unity (OAU), as well as offices in Athens, Beijing, Berlin, Brussels, London, Madrid, Moscow, New Delhi, Paris, Rome, Vienna and Washington, D.C.

Headquarters: Al Tahrir Square, Cairo, Egypt.

Website: <http://www.arableagueonline.org>

Secretary-General: Amre Moussa (Egypt).

Further Reading

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Gomaa, A. M., *The Foundation of the League of Arab States*. London, 1977

ARAB FUND FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (AFESD)

Established in 1968, the Fund commenced operations in 1974.

Aims. To contribute to the financing of economic and social development in Arabic states through: financing economic and social development projects by making loans on concessionary terms to governments and public enterprises and corporations, giving preference to projects which are vital to the Arab world and to inter-Arab projects; and financing private sector projects in member states by providing all forms and loans and guarantees to corporations and enterprises processing juridical personality.

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Publications. *Annual Report; Joint Arab Economic Report.*