Meeting the challenges of development and dignity is the topic of this ACUNS Annual Meeting. This paper focuses on the so-called Regional Commissions of the United Nations (UN), which – generally speaking – have not received much attention. They are not particularly recognizable as institutions, but do function as bridges between the universal organization (the UN) and its major ‘regions’ (mostly continents), given the objectives of discussing economic and social issues in specific regions and of strengthening regional cooperation as well as cooperation with the rest of the world. These Regional Commissions are ECA for Africa, ECE for Europe, ECLAC for Central and Latin America, ESCAP for Asia and the Pacific and ESCWA for Western Asia. They have a small joint Office in New York.

The paper furthermore focuses on a specific organ of these Regional Commissions, namely their Secretariats. We know relatively little about the Secretariats of international organizations (IOs), mainly due to the fact that the general focus of research is on the entire organization and its actions, rather than on this and other specific organs. The Secretariat however is an entity that follows the mandate of the organization and the decisions of the assembly of member states, but it also is the place where IO actorness originates. The hierarchically organized group of international civil servants who make up an IO’s Secretariat may also be referred to as a bureaucracy, led by the Executive Head (Secretary, Secretary-General or similar title) who is responsible for directing the Secretariat and who acts as representative of both the Secretariat (vis-a-vis other bodies) and the entire institution (in international relations between states and other IOs). Each of the UN Regional Commissions has a self-designed organizational structure, which includes a ministerial-level governing board that reports to the Economic and Social Council of the UN (ECOSOC), a Secretariat and specialized committees to carry out Commission projects. The paper presents a first assessment of how the Secretariats of the UN Regional Commissions emerged and to what extent both Secretariats and Executive Secretaries meet the challenges of development and dignity in their region.

The paper first presents some general characteristics of the Regional Commissions and then informs about the development of each of the five Secretariats. Discussing Secretariats is more difficult than discussing entire institutions, as Secretariats are ‘inner’ parts of institutions, which implies that one needs information about what is going on internally – which is more difficult to get than information about external activities, while Secretariats are also less researched. The paper observes the Secretariats by researching some qualities of their executive heads over a certain time period, assuming that elements such as education, national careers, diplomatic experience and regional connections matter for both these individuals and the Secretariats they are supposed to lead. The paper discusses the five most
recent Executive Secretaries\(^1\) of each Regional Commission and explores their education, national careers, diplomatic and international experience and regional connections before they became office-holders. How well educated are they? Did they have responsible positions in their countries of origins? Did they have any international (diplomatic or other) experience and did they play regional roles before they became Executive Secretaries of a Regional Commission?\(^2\)

**Regional Economic and Social Commissions of the UN ECOSOC**

In 1947 the rationale for establishing Regional Commissions for Asia and the Far East and for Europe was postwar reconstruction. This could have resulted in temporary institutions for the two continents, but that is not what happened. While Article 68 of the UN Charter provides for the creation of commissions under the aegis of ECOSOC, the process of creating Regional Commissions had its own dynamics. Robert Gregg (1966: 209) speaks about an early instance of UN coalition politics, when Asian and Latin American states engaged in some ‘effective logrolling which led to the creation of commissions for each of those regions over the opposition of Western European and North American Members’. The creation of two Regional Commissions in Asia and Europe laid the foundations for honouring the claims of other regions (Latin America in 1948, Africa in 1958 and Western Asia in 1974) and for broadening the mission of the Regional Commissions from reconstruction to economic development.

While starting as mechanisms in postwar reconstruction, the aim of the Regional Commissions became to assist in raising the level of economic activity in the respective regions and to maintain and strengthen the economic relations between the countries in each region both among themselves and with other countries of the world. The Commissions are empowered to make recommendations directly to member governments and to specialized agencies of the UN. However, they cannot take action in respect of any country without the agreement of that country’s government. All action is intended to fit into the framework of over-all UN economic and social policies, given the fact that they are subsidiary organs of ECOSOC, to which the Regional Commissions report annually.

All of the Commissions are funded by the regular UN budget. They adopt their own rules of procedure, including the methods of selecting their chairperson, who, however, is appointed by the UN Secretary-General. The Secretariats of the Commissions are integral parts of the UN Secretariat as a whole, but have their headquarters in the region. Each Commission is headed by an Executive Secretary, who holds the rank of Under-Secretary-General of the UN. The decrease in the number of posts in the Regional Commissions’ Secretariats since the 1980s is in line with the rest of the UN Secretariat, given the overall reduction between 1985 and 2015 (see Table 1). The largest Commission is the one for Africa (over 750 posts), followed by the Commissions for Central and Latin America and Asia and the Pacific (slightly over 500), and two smaller ones for Europe and Western Asia (between 220 and 250). Cooperation among the Regional Commissions is a topical issue, given the

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\(^1\) Database 2 of the IO BIO Project, *The Biographical Dictionary of Secretaries-General of International Organizations*, helps to provide an overview of the Executive Secretaries of the UN Regional Commissions, available at [www.ru.nl/fin/iobio](http://www.ru.nl/fin/iobio) (IOBIO).

\(^2\) I use the personal information that is available through the Commissions’ websites (the section on the Executive Secretary and his/her predecessors). It must be noted that such information with regard to CVs is restricted or not always exact, which is a more general problem with regard to information about executive heads of IOs. However, the information I have available (summarized in the appendices), allows answering the four questions.
2015 report on this aspect by the UN Joint Inspection Unit (Tarasov and Achamkulangare 2015).

Table 1: The Number of Secretariat Posts in the UN Regional Commissions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional Commission</th>
<th>1985</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>780</td>
<td>767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECLAC</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESCAP</td>
<td>861</td>
<td>519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESCWA</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York Office</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Tarasov and Achamkulangare 2015: 9, Table 3).

With regard to the Executive Secretaries, two persons have clearly left their marks on the image of the UN Regional Commissions. One is Gunnar Myrdal, who was the first Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) between 1947 and 1957, who believed that the ECE should be used as a bridge of functional cooperation between East and West and that the Commission should resist all efforts to institutionalize within ECE the rift between the two blocs (Gregg 1966: 212). The second person is Raúl Prebisch, who headed the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) between 1950 and 1963. With his original economic theory he infused the ECLA Secretariat ‘with a sense of purpose and gave the Commission its sense of direction’ (Gregg 1966: 216). Prebisch’s analysis of the difficulties of developing countries and his remedy to overcome the dependence of the ‘periphery’ upon the ‘centre’ (the developed states) had an impact on Central and Latin America and also beyond that region. According to Albert Hirschman, the ECLA Secretariat attracted most attention, as it possessed attributes ‘not frequently encountered in large international organisations’: ‘a cohesive personality which evokes loyalty from the staff, and a set of distinct beliefs, principles, and attitudes, in brief an ideology, which is highly influential among Latin American intellectuals and policymakers’ (quoted in Gregg 1966: 216). However, the preoccupation of the ECLA Secretariat with economic theory has also been seen as an impediment, as it weakened ECLA’s actual impact.

I will now discuss the Secretariats of the five Regional Commissions in chronological order.

ESCAP, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
On 28 March 1947 the UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) was established to initiate and participate in measures for facilitating concerted action for the economic reconstruction of Asia and the Far East. In 1974 it became the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), which better reflected the economic and social aspects of development and the geographical location of its members. Its membership rose from 10 states (of them only 4 Asian ones at the time) to 53 member states (including France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States) and 9 associate members. In 1947 and 1948 headquarters was located in Shanghai, China, but political

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3 See also Myrdal’s entry by Chloë Maurel in IO BIO at www.ru.nl/fm/iobio.
4 See also Prebisch’s entry by Edgar Dorsman in IO BIO at www.ru.nl/fm/iobio.
5 One wonders whether Hirschman’s remark about IO Executive Heads is correct, because more cohesive personalities than just Prebisch can be found in several IOs. To mention just one example: Jim Grant of UNICEF would qualify here as well. Hence, how often is ‘not frequently’?
developments in China led to the Secretariat’s departure and since 1949 headquarters has been in Bangkok, Thailand. ESCAP has a Sub-Regional Office (ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre) in Port Vila, Vanuatu since 1984.

We are relatively well informed about the early development of this Secretariat (Hart Schaaf 1953: 465; Wightman 1963: 75-81). In 1950 the Secretariat had 75 posts, in 1953 180, of whom one third professional UN officers, From 1956 to 1957 the number of posts jumped from 154 to 201 and the professional staff grew from 57 to 79. In 1960 there were 208 established posts in the Secretariat, about 40 per cent being in professional grades. In 1968 there was a total staff of about 370 professional and general service personnel. The general service personnel were mostly local recruits, who worked as administrative and statistical assistants, secretaries, typists and building and ground officers. In 1953 there were nationals of 18 countries, including 10 Asian countries. In 1962 23 nationalities were represented, about half being Asian. However, Asians held over 80 per cent of all professional posts and an even larger proportion of the more senior posts. On the staff side ECAFE became a ‘thoroughly Asian organization’, according to David Wightman (1963: 76): ‘This is just as its Asian member countries wished’. In the early 1960s Indians formed the largest single group, followed by Chinese, Japanese and Thais. Pakistan felt underrepresented in the senior positions, especially by comparison with India, which had provided the first two Executive Secretaries. Japan did not become a UN member until 1956, while most Japanese did not have a sufficient command of the English language, but this began to change. Like elsewhere in the UN, the choice of nationality for the posts were heavily circumscribed by political considerations and smaller Asian countries remained behind because they could not afford to send able nationals to ECAFE and even paid them better at home in an effort to prevent the brain drain. Problems were solved by temporary secondment of staff from the UN Secretariat or ECE and short-term employment of consultants on specific assignments.

The Secretariat was organized into the Office of the Executive Secretary, the Research and Planning Division, Technical Divisions and the Division of Administration. The Secretariat was characterized by horizontal strength, but at many points weak in depth. ‘For instance, its sections on electric power, metals and engineering, mineral development, housing and building materials, railways, highways, and highway transport each contained only two professional posts at the beginning of 1961’ (Wightman 1963: 81). Maybe the most significant part was the ECAFE Library. From the very beginning the Commission had requested its member governments to supply the Secretariat regularly with all the official publications, statistical, economic and monetary publications. The Library grew and by 1961 housed 22,000 volumes, receiving more than 800 periodicals and serials. In 1955 it received a grant from the Ford Foundation and became an economic research library for the region, with library services extended to many outside the Secretariat, such as government officials, experts and scholars (Wightman 1963: 80-81). Eventually ESCAP became the largest UN body serving the Asia-Pacific region (since I focus on the Secretariat I do not discuss the further activities and characteristics of the Commission).

ESCAP has had 10 Executive Secretaries since 1947, of whom 8 are men and 2 women. Their countries of origin are: India (2), Indonesia (2), Pakistan (2), Bangladesh (1), Burma (1), Singapore (1) and South Korea (1). What can be said about the last five Executive Secretaries, whose characteristics are summarized in Appendix 1 and who cover the period since 1992? In this case there are three men (Rafeeudin Ahmed, Adrianus Mooy, Kim Hak-Su) and two women (Noeleen Heyzer and Shamshad Akhtar).

With regard to education, all five have academic degrees, with at least four PhDs (Ahmed took graduate studies at Fletcher, but I don’t know whether this resulted in a PhD). They all started studies in their home countries, but continued their studies abroad, i.e. in the
US (4) and the UK (1). Among the foreign universities are Harvard, Cambridge and the Fletcher School. Conclusion: all are highly educated, including international experience.

With regard to national careers, I did not find a national career for Heyzer. Three of the other four had high-level experience in their Central Banks (Mooy, Kim, Akhtar) as well as other economic governmental service and one (Ahmed) in Foreign Service. Conclusion: these four are nationally experienced in the economic field.

With regard to diplomatic and international experience, all have extensive international economic experience, with one as ambassador for international economic affairs (Kim) and four (Ahmed, Mooy, Heyzer and Akhtar) in a number of specialized agencies of the UN system and some other IOs (Commonwealth, EU), including positions such as Assistant Administrator of UNDP (Ahmed), IMF Governor (Mooy, Akhtar) and Executive Director of UNIFEM (Heyzer). Conclusion: they know the UN system well from inside.

With regard to regional connections, all have connections in the region, including Colombo Plan Secretary-Generalship (Kim), ADB (Mooy, Akhtar) and UN activities in the region (Ahmed, Heyzer). Akhtar, ESCAP’s present Executive Secretary, is seen as one of the top ten professional women in Asia, according to Wall Street Journal Asia. Conclusion: all five have regional connections.

General conclusion for the group of five ESCAP Executive Secretaries: highly educated, four out of five nationally experienced, well experienced with the UN system and regionally well connected.

ECE, Economic Commission for Europe
On 28 March 1947 the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) was established ‘to initiate and participate in measures for facilitating concerted action for the economic reconstruction of Europe, for raising the level of European economic activity, and for maintaining and strengthening the economic relations of the European countries both among themselves and with other countries of the world’. Its present aim is to promote pan-European economic integration. Membership rose from 18 in 1947 (several European countries plus the US) to 56 states (including Canada and the US). Switzerland gained full admission in 1972 (before it had consultative status), Canada joined in 1973 and Israel in 1991. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia membership rose from 34 to 53 between 1991 and 1993. The Holy See has consultative status. Headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland in the Palais des Nations.

In 1956 the Secretariat had 155 established posts, which number remained remarkably stable since 1951, with 16 European and 6 non-European nationalities (Wightman 1956: 66). Although relatively small (also today), the Secretariat has been a strong one, which is generally related to Gunnar Myrdal, ECE’s first Executive Secretary. He firmly established with governments the convention that the Secretariat should take positive initiatives in seeking agreement on points of substance (Rostow 1949: 257). Myrdal also refused that any government discussed his choice of staff. This rugged independence made the ECE a desirable place for able men seeking an outlet for their ideas and Myrdal succeeded in recruiting a staff of high quality, including ‘in many individual cases (notably that of Mr. Myrdal himself) private votes of confidence in the concept of unified European economic recovery and future development, and in its ultimate acceptability to the governments’. Although no major power formally advocated that the ECE machinery be used for the elaboration of Marshall’s European recovery plan, the ECE Secretariat was largely mobilized for it (Rostow 1949: 258).

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6 See also Myrdal’s entry by Chloé Maurel in IO BIO at www.ru.nl/fm/iobio.
The Secretariat was organized into three principal divisions: the Office of the Executive Secretary (known as the Central Office), the Technical Divisions and the Research and Planning Division, which in the mid-1950s comprised 62 established posts, of which 35 in professional grades. The Division gained a high reputation, resting on the production of the annual Economic Surveys of Europe and the quarterly Economic Bulletins. The production of these publications demanded teamwork of a high order and begun on the sole initiative of the Secretariat, hence were not produced in response to any directive from the Commission. The ECE tradition of independent publication contrasted with the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), where government officials wielded their blue pencils over OEEC drafts (Wightman 1956: 68-69). Compared to the other Regional Commissions, the ECE Secretariat remained relatively small, with 235 posts in 1985 and 222 in 2015, but it should be taken into account that Europe has a large number of regional IOs, which also played their roles after the end of the Cold War. For a description of the ECE development see (Berthelot and Rayment 2007).

The number of ECE Executive Secretaries since 1947 is 13, of whom 11 are men and 2 women. Their countries of origin are: Czechoslovakia / Slovakia (2), Finland (2), Poland (2) and Yugoslavia (2), as well as Austria (1), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1), Denmark (1), France (1) and Sweden (1). What can be said about the last five Executive Secretaries, whose characteristics are summarized in Appendix 2 and who cover the period since 2002? In this case there are four men (Marek Belka, Ján Kubiš, Sven Alkalaj and Christian Friis Bach) and one woman (Brigita Schmögnerová).

With regard to education, three out of five have a PhD and three continued their national studies in the US (Schmögnerová, Belka, Alkalaj), while two had national higher education (Friis Bach and Kubiš, who graduated from Moscow State Institute for IR). Conclusion: highly educated (but somewhat less than their counterparts in ESCAP).

With regard to national careers, all have national experience as ministers, two in the field of finance (Schmögnerová, Belka), two in the field of foreign affairs (Kubiš and Alkalaj) and one in development cooperation (Friis Bach). Conclusion: all have national political experience, though not always in the field of economics.

With regard to diplomatic and international experience, one had no obvious international experience before but got this after her ECE period (Schmögnerová), one had relations with the Organization of American States and NATO but not within the UN system (Alkalaj) and two had restricted experience with the IBRD (Friis Bach, who had more experience with NGOs, and Belka). Only one was more involved in the UN system (Kubiš). Conclusion: rather diversified international experience and not strongly experienced within the UN system.

With regard to regional connections, one developed these after her ECE period (Schmögnerová), one had restricted private experience (Belka) and one had restricted public experience (Friis Bach). One had extensive regional contacts, a.o. as secretary-general of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (Kubiš) and one in relation to the postwar reconstruction of his country (Alkalaj). Conclusion: even if we take into consideration that four belonged to EU member states, regional connections are relatively weak.

General conclusion for the group of five ECE Executive Secretaries: rather highly educated, all with national political experience, but diversified international experience and relatively weak in the UN system as well as relatively weak regional connections.

ECLAC, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
On 28 February 1948 the UN Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) was established with the aim of helping Latin American governments promote the economic
development of their countries and improve the standard of living of their people as well as to strengthen economic relations among countries in the region and with other nations in the world. In 1984 the reference to the Caribbean was added and ECLA became the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). Membership rose from 25 states in 1948 (20 Latin American ones and 5 others) to 33 member states from Latin America and the Caribbean as well as 12 Asian, European and North American member states with historical, economic and cultural ties with the region plus 13 associate members (non-independent territories in the Caribbean). ECLAC headquarters is in Santiago, Chile and there are Sub-Regional Offices for Central America and the Spanish-Speaking Caribbean (in Mexico City since June 1951) and for the Caribbean (in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago in December 1966) as well as a liaison office in the US (in Washington DC) and country offices in Argentina (Buenos Aires), Brazil (Brasilia), Colombia (Bogotá) and Uruguay (Montevideo).

In 1968 the Secretariat had about 350 staff members. The number of professional staff in 1960 was 87 and in 1964 103 (Gregg 1966: 225). The Secretariat was organized into divisions for economic development and research, trade policy, social affairs, statistics and administration, plus a joint agriculture division with the Food and Agriculture Organization. As mentioned before, it was Raúl Prebisch who, as Executive Secretary, made the most conspicuous contribution to integration in Latin America by developing his economic theory about import substitution industrialization in combination with regional free trade arrangements, which resulted in Latin American and Central American Free Trade Agreements as vehicles for integration. ECLA played the catalytic role in these experiments through the force of ideas and through ‘ECLA-trained personnel, with which to meet challenges requiring adaptation’ (Gregg 1966: 217). The Secretariat also met its restrictions in influencing governments. While it spent a number of years urging upon Latin American governments the detailed programming of economic development, the Secretariat’s shift to common market studies reflected some frustration with the limited impact of its programming activity, according to Gregg (1966: 218).

The number of ECLAC Executive Secretaries since 1948 has been 10, of whom 9 men and 1 woman. Their countries of origin are: Argentina (3), Mexico (3), Colombia (1), Guatemala (1), Uruguay (1) and Venezuela (1). What can be said about the last five Executive Secretaries, whose characteristics are summarized in Appendix 3 and who cover the period since 1985? In this case there are four men (Norberto González, Gert Rosenthal, José Antonio Ocampo, José Luis Machinea) and one woman (Alicia Bárcena).

With regard to education, four out of five have a PhD (Rosenthal received a honorary one later). Four also studied in the US (a.o. at Harvard, Yale and Berkeley) and one in the UK (LSE). Conclusion: all of them are highly educated, including international experience.

With regard to national careers, four have experience as minister (Ocampo economy, Machinea finance, Rosenthal planning and Bárcena as Vice Minister of Ecology), while Machinea was also central bank president. The fifth has an academic career, including government service in planning (González). Conclusion: four have governmental experience, but only two in the economic field.

With regard to diplomatic and international experience, one had no obvious international experience but got this after his ECLAC period (Ocampo later in the UN Secretariat in New York). Three had their career development within ECLAC (González, Rosenthal and Bárcena) and one had experience as IBRD (and IDB) consultant (Machinea). Only two had further experience within the UN system (Rosenthal with an UNCTAD project and Bárcena as UN Secretary-General Annan’s Chef de Cabinet). Conclusion: the international experience is strongly related to ECLAC itself, which in three cases formed their careers, and is not diversified within the UN system.
With regard to regional connections, one developed these after his ECLAC period (Ocampo in a UNDP/OAS project). Two had regional connections related to ECLAC (Gonzalez through ILPES, the planning body of ECLAC, and Rosenthal through the Central American Common Market), one had experience through the Inter-American Development Bank (Machinea) and one through UNDP and UNEP (Bárcena). Conclusion: regional connections are strongly related to ECLAC and not very extensive.

General conclusion for the group of five ECLAC Executive Secretaries: highly educated, restricted economic governmental experience, international experience and regional connections strongly related to ECLAC and not diversified within the UN system.

ECA, Economic Commission for Africa
The UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) was established on 29 April 1958 to initiate and take part in measures for facilitating Africa’s economic development. Its membership rose from 10 independent African plus 6 European member states to 54 African member states, with South Africa suspended between 1965 and 1994. ECA’s headquarters is in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with five sub regions and five sub-regional offices for Central Africa (in Yaoundé, Cameroon), Eastern Africa (in Kigali, Rwanda), North Africa (in Tangier, Morocco), Southern Africa (in Lusaka, Zambia) and West Africa (in Niamey, Niger). First they were ‘sub regions’, then in 1979 ‘Multinational Programming and Operational Offices’ (so-called MULPOCs), then in 1997 ‘Sub-Regional Development Centres’ (SRDCs) and then since 2002 ‘ECA Offices’.

African regionalism struggled with young states (or those still in pursuit of independence), differences between English and French colonial history, Arab and non-Arab cultures and differing foreign orientations, as well as the South African Apartheid issue. According to Isebill Gruhn (1984: 28), the terms of reference of the UN Regional Commissions include a dual mandate, i.e. to act as part of the UN’s international structure, but also serve the special needs of the specific region. She believes that ECA has developed its institutional structure and programmatic personality without resolving the conflict arising from the competing and overlapping demands of the dual mandate. More than other Regional Commission ECA has ‘both mirrored and generated international and African trends of thought and action regarding regional cooperation and integration’. Gregg (1966: 225) mentions that in the mid-1960s ECA in its relative brief life had overtaken the other Regional Commissions in size of staff, in the volume of UN regional technical assistance projects and in the number of sub-regional offices and that its real meaning was ‘every cent for Africa’.

In 1968 the number of staff in the Secretariat was about 340, with 34 professional staff in 1960, 70 in 1962 and 102 in 1964 (Gregg 1966: 225). In 1968 60 per cent of the professional staff was African, by 1976 close to 80 per cent and in 1984 over 80 per cent (Gruhn 1984: 34). Oxford-trained Robert Gardiner,7 who became Executive Secretary in 1962, was confronted with the scarcity of highly qualified African economists and civil servants. This called ECA’s status as an ‘African’ organization into question and forced him to ‘Africanize’ the organization and its knowledge base, particularly when the newly established Organization of African Unity (OAU, 1963) claimed to be a ‘genuine’ African organization. This contributed to weakening ECA and fostered a rivalry between the two executive heads. Another OAU element that impacted ECA was that the OAU’s founders favoured a weak and a-political OAU Secretariat, a body which implemented decisions but did not make them, according to Senegal’s President Leopold Senghor. Leadership has been a

7 See the entry on Gardiner by Samuel Mistli in IO BIO at www.ru.nl/fm/iobio.
matter of African heads of state. Since 1969 the ordinary biennial sessions of ECA have been held at ministerial level and are known as meetings of the Conference of Ministers.

During Gardiner’s tenure ECA’s staff was made up of generalists, ‘better prepared to handle administrative work than the technical aspects of development planning’, and in this respect resembled the Secretariat of UN headquarters rather than that of a technical division of one of the specialized agencies of the UN, according to Gruhn (1984: 34). But under Gardiner’s successor, Adebayo Adedeji (Executive Secretary between 1975 and 1991), ECA moved in the direction of a think-tank with the sort of reputation that ECLA enjoyed under Prebisch. It concentrated somewhat more on generating a continental strategy for development, rather than seeking to play the role of executing agency for the UN system (Gruhn 1984: 39-40). Gruhn (1984: 43) was rather critical of ECA’s capacity to carry out its own annual work plan, as it was ‘seriously undermined and restricted by the inadequate staffing at headquarters’. ECA was spreading itself ‘too thin, taking on too many subjects and problems’.

Since 1959 ECA has had 8 Executive Secretaries, all of them men. Their countries of origin are Ghana (2), Algeria (1), Gambia (1), Guinea (1), Guinea-Bissau (1), Nigeria (1) and Sudan (1). What can be said about the last five Executive Secretaries, whose characteristics are summarized in Appendix 4 and who cover the period since 1991? In this case there are five men (Issa Ben Yassin Diallo, Layashi Yakar, Kingsley Amoako, Abdoulie Janneh and Carlos Lopes) and no women.

With regard to education, three out of five have a PhD (from Paris 1, Berkeley and the Graduate Institute in Geneva), while one undertook graduate studies in Bradford, UK. Yaker’s university details are not provided. Three of them are economists, one specialized in planning and one in international development studies and history. Conclusion: highly educated abroad.

With regard to national careers, two do not mention national careers (Amoako and Janneh), one was minister of trade and ambassador (Yaker), one worked in the ministry of foreign affairs as director-general (Diallo) and one had an international academic career, with service in the public sector (Lopes). Conclusion: only two have governmental experience.

With regard to diplomatic and international experience, all five have extensive experience within the UN system, in both the UN Secretariat (Diallo and Lopes) and specialized agencies such as UNESCO, UNDP, IBRD as well as UNITAR. No mentioning of experience outside the UN system. Conclusion: international experience is mainly within the UN system.

With regard to regional connections, three of them develop regional connections when working for ECA (Diallo, Yakar and Amoako). One is an editor of African scientific journals (Lopes) and only one had connections through his function as UNDP regional director for Africa (Janneh). Conclusion: even if some have had connections through their work in the UN system, explicit regional connections beforehand are relatively weak.

General conclusion for the group of five ECA Executive Secretaries: highly educated abroad, relatively little governmental experience, international experience through the UN system and weak regional connections.

**ESCWA, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia**

In 1963 a UN Economic and Social Office (UNESOB) was set up in Beirut, Lebanon to bring UN staff closer to the countries in the Middle East for intensifying UN economic and social activities in the region. The Office had its own staff in two sections, plus a group of regional advisers serving upon request as consultants to governments. On 9 August 1973 the UN Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA) was established to raise the level of economic activity in member countries and strengthen cooperation among them. In July 1985
ECWA became the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), which included new responsibilities in the social field. Membership rose from 13 to 18 member states, including Palestine (before: PLO). Israel and Turkey are ECE members and Iran is an ESCAP member. ESCWA headquarters was in Beirut, Lebanon between 1963 and 1982, in Baghdad, Iraq between 1982 and 1991, in Amman, Jordan between 1991 and 1997 and returned to Beirut, Lebanon in 1997.

The ESCWA Secretariat belongs to the smaller ones of the UN Regional Commissions, with a staff of 344 in 1985 and 251 in 2015 (I did not find data about earlier times, but it was comparatively small then as well). The relatively late emergence and weak character are related to difficulties of a political rather than economic nature. However, ESCWA meets with marked imbalances in economic structures and large income disparities existing between and within the member states. It therefore fosters inter-sectoral coordination and cooperation at the regional level (Schiavone 2001: 91).

Since 1974 the number of Executive Secretaries has been 8, of whom 6 men and 2 women. Their countries of origin are: Jordan (3), Egypt (2), Qatar (1), Syria (1) and Yemen (1). What can be said about the last five Executive Secretaries, whose characteristics are summarized in Appendix 5 and who cover the period since 1993? In this case there are three men (Sabah Bakjaji, Hazem El-Beblawi, Bader Al-Dafa) and two women (Mervat Tallaway, Rima Khalaf).

With regard to education, all also studied abroad, with three having a PhD (from Portland State, Paris and Louvain, Belgium: i.e. Bakjaji, El-Beblawi and Khalaf) and two having a Master degree (Johns Hopkins and Graduate Institute Geneva: i.e. Tallaway and El-Dafa). Conclusion: highly educated, with international experience.

With regard to national careers, three out of five have governmental experience as minister (Bakjaji in planning, Tallaway in foreign as well as affairs and Khalaf in trade) and one as ambassador (Dafa). One served as chair of an export development bank. Conclusion: three have governmental experience, one diplomatic experience and one international banking experience.

With regard to diplomatic and international experience, two have no international or diplomatic experience mentioned (Bakjaji and El-Beblawi), two have experience in the UN system with several specialized agencies (Tallaway and Khalaf, the two women) and the ambassador has experience as representative to the OAS and international NGOs (Al-Dafa). Conclusion: international experience rested with the two women (within the UN system) and the ambassador.

With regard to regional connections, one was a chief negotiator at the Middle East Peace Conference in the early 1990s (Tallaway) and one was director of the UNDP regional bureau for Arab states (Khalaf), while one was engaged in a study for the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (Bakjaji) and one in relations between NGOs (Al-Dafa). One became active regionally after his ESCWA period (El-Beblawi). Conclusion: regional connections are rather poor, with exception of those of the two women.

General conclusion for the group of five ESCWA Executive Secretaries: highly educated, governmental experience, relatively weak international experience and regional connections (with the exception of the two women).

**Conclusion**

The emergence and evolution of the UN Regional Commissions is remarkable. Although in line with the UN Charter, the process of their creation had a dynamic of its own (which was not foreseen) and resulted in more institutions, a permanent character and a broadening of their mission (from reconstruction to economic development and to economic and social development). It is furthermore remarkable that individual heads, such as Myrdal, Prebisch
and Gardiner, could leave their marks on the institution, while these marks were rather different from each other. Information about Secretariats was difficult to find (and not much was found for ESCWA). It remained restricted to numbers of staff, an indication of the percentage of professional staff, the number of nationalities, some staff policy by the Executive Secretary and the structure (divisions) of the organ as well as its stronger and weaker sides. Yet some basic characteristic were revealed, such as the relevance of the ECAFE library and the ECE Economic Surveys, both based on well-chosen Secretariat’s policies, the satisfaction of the Asian countries that ECAFE was an Asian organization with regard to staff and the struggle over the ‘African’ character of ECA. I also found relevant information about some qualities of the Executive Secretaries, which inform us about the people who lead Secretariats.

With regard to education, it can be concluded that the Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions are highly educated, with at least 17 of the 25 Executive Secretaries having earned a PhD before nomination (Honorary PhDs were left aside and no information is available in two cases). Almost all, i.e. 22, also studied abroad, 14 of them in the US at good or excellent universities; hence in this respect international academic experience is available at leadership level.

With regard to national careers there are differences, with ESCAP having 4 Secretaries with governmental experience in the economic field (as may be expected given the character of the Commissions), ECE 5, but only two in the economic field, ECLAC 4, but only two in the economic field, ECA only 2, with one in the economic field and ESCWA 3, with one in the economic field. Hence, 18 out of 25 have governmental experience, but only 10 in the economic field. ESCAP seems strongest in this respect and ECA weakest.

With regard to diplomatic and international experience, there are differences with regard to the UN system. In ESCAP and ECA all 5 Secretaries had careers within the UN system before, in ESCWA only 2 and in ECE only 1. In ECLAC 3 careers developed in ECLAC itself, while experience in other UN entities was restricted. The Secretaries in ECA had no experience outside the UN system. The results for ECA and ECLAC can be related to some general aspects discussed before. Gruhn discussed ECA’s dual mandate (between UN and Africa), but here it is revealed that ECA Secretaries depend strongly on the UN system with regard to international experience. ECLAC under Prebisch had a strong influence, also beyond its own region (e.g. in ECA under Adedjji), but being strong in economic theory did not necessarily mean actual impact. Here it is revealed that ECLAC remained a comparatively isolated institution, with international (and regional) connections strongly related to itself and not diverse within the UN system.

With regard to regional connections, there are also differences. In ESCAP all five had strong regional connections; in ECE only one had strong connections and some had weak ones; in ECLAC regional connections were related to ECLAC itself and not diverse; in ECA regional connections were weak and in fact developed when working for ECA; and in ESCWA the two female Secretaries had strong regional connections. Six Secretaries developed regional connections during and after their work for the Regional Commission (3 in ECA and one each in ECE, ECLAC and ESCWA).

While the legal setup of the various Regional Commissions is rather similar (not discussed in this text, but taken for granted), it strikes that the five Commissions and their Secretariats have developed in different directions. This is true for the general characteristics mentioned before in the various sections on the five Commissions, but also for the differences found with regard to the national careers, international experience and regional connections of the Executive Secretaries. Hence, similar institutions do not need to develop similarly in a number of regions.
Among the 25 Executive Secretaries are six women. Before only men were office-holders and one Commission (ECA) has had only men up to today. One woman (Brigita Schmögnerová in the ECE: 2002-2005) reached the position without experience in the UN system and regional connections, hence mainly based on her national career as minister of finance. The other five women (Noeleen Heyzer in ESCAP 2007-2013; Shamsad Akhtar in ESCAP since 2013; Alicia Bárcena in ECLAC since 2008; Mervat Tallaway in ECSWA 2000-2007 and Rima Khalaf in ECSWA since 2010) all have had broad experience in the UN system as well as regionally, which raises the questions of how and to what extent the UN system has facilitated their Secretaryship of the Regional Commissions. This research does not answer these questions, but does show that international experience in the UN system and regional connections are strong in these cases in addition to education and national experience (the latter aspect with the exception of Heyzer).

I hope this paper has contributed to our understanding of the evolution of the UN system by paying attention to the UN Regional Commissions, their Secretariats and actoriness, the qualities of its executive heads as well as some change with regard to regional development and gender.
# Appendix 1: The Last Five Executive Secretaries of ESCAP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name, nationality &amp; gender</th>
<th>Time in office</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>National career</th>
<th>Diplomatic &amp; international experience</th>
<th>Regional connections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shamshad Akhtar, Pakistan (f)</td>
<td>2013 -</td>
<td>MSc Econ. Islamabad; MA Dev. Econ. Sussex; PhD Econ. Paisly Collof Techn; Fulbright Fellow at Harvard</td>
<td>Memb. Pak. Econ. Advis. Comm + Gov. Cl. Pak. Statistics Bureau; Governor Central Bank of Pak.</td>
<td>IMF Governor + Vice Pres ME&amp;NA Region IBRD</td>
<td>15 yrs ADB, DG of SE Asia Region one of ‘top ten professional women in Asia’ Wall Str Jrn Asia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 2: The Last Five Executive Secretaries of the ECE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name, nationality &amp; gender</th>
<th>Time in office</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>National career</th>
<th>Diplomatic &amp; international experience</th>
<th>Regional connections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sven Alkalaj, Bosnia and Herzegovina (m)</strong></td>
<td>2012-2014</td>
<td>MA in IR UofSarajevo; program at Harvard Grad. School of Bus Adm.</td>
<td>Director int. company and 2007-12 Minister of For Aff.</td>
<td>1993 Amb to the US, 2000 to OAS, 2004 to Belgium &amp; NATO</td>
<td>Postwar reconstr B&amp;H via EU and other IOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marek Belka, Poland (m)</strong></td>
<td>2005-2008</td>
<td>MA + PhD/Hab in economics UofLódz; scholarships Columbia, Chicago &amp; LSE</td>
<td>Consultant for Miny Fin; 97+ 2001-02 Min of Fin; 2004-05 Prime Minister</td>
<td>1990s cons. to IBRD; 2003 resp. for econ. policy interim coal. administrator Iraq</td>
<td>2002-03 advisor JP Morgan for CE Europe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 3: The Last Five Executive Secretaries of ECLAC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name, nationality &amp; gender</th>
<th>Time in office</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>National career</th>
<th>Diplomatic &amp; international experience</th>
<th>Regional connections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alicia Bárcena</strong>, Mexico (f)</td>
<td>2008 -</td>
<td>BA biology UofMexico; MA Public Administr. Harvard</td>
<td>Univ. career; vice Min of ecology</td>
<td>Division chief ECLAC; at UN Secretar.: Chef de Cabinet Annan</td>
<td>Coordinator reg. program UNDP &amp; project UNEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Norberto González</strong>, Argentina (m)</td>
<td>1985-1987</td>
<td>Econ. Uof Buenos Aires; MA LSE; doctorate UofBuenos Aires</td>
<td>Academic career; Nat. Reinsurance Institute; Pres prov. Planning Board</td>
<td>1979 Dep Ex Secr of ECLAC</td>
<td>Dir of ILPES 10 years; Dir of ECLAC’s Div of Int Trade 7 yrs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 4: The Last Five Executive Secretaries of ECA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name, nationality &amp; gender</th>
<th>Time in office</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>National career</th>
<th>Diplomatic &amp; international experience</th>
<th>Regional connections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carlos Lopes, Guinea-Bissau (m)</td>
<td>2012 -</td>
<td>MA int. devel. Studies Geneva Graduate Inst.; PhD in history Univ. de Paris 1</td>
<td>Int. academ. career; nat. planning &amp; diplomacy</td>
<td>1988 UNDP economist; 2005 UN Dir Pol Aff; 2007 UNITAR &amp; College in Turin</td>
<td>Editor of some African scientific journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdoulie Janneh, Gambia (m)</td>
<td>2005-2012</td>
<td>MA Planning UofNottingham; postgrad studies in Bradford</td>
<td></td>
<td>1979 UNDP; 1990s UNDP funds</td>
<td>UNDP 2000 Reg Dir for Africa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 5: The Last Five Executive Secretaries of ESCWA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name, nationality &amp; gender</th>
<th>Time in office</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>National career</th>
<th>Diplomatic &amp; international experience</th>
<th>Regional connections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rima Khalaf, Jordan (f)</td>
<td>2010 -</td>
<td>BA econ AmUofBeirut; PhD Portland StateU</td>
<td>Min Industry &amp; Trade 1993-95, Min for Planning 1995-98; Dep Prime Min 1999-2000</td>
<td>2000-06 UNDP; Comm. World Bank Group 2008-09</td>
<td>UNDP Reg. Bureau for Arab States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bader Al-Dafa, Qatar (m)</td>
<td>2007 - 2010</td>
<td>BA Western Michigan; MA econ Johns Hopkins</td>
<td>In Miny of ForAff; ambassador to Russia &amp; other states</td>
<td>Ambassador to US; perm. Observer in OAS; INGOs</td>
<td>Arts, education, religious freedom between Arab world &amp; int comm.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References
IOBIO Biographical Dictionary of Secretaries-General of International Organizations. www.ru.nl/fm/iobio IO BIO entries can be found in alphabetical order by Executive Head.