

**REPORT  
OF THE  
WORLD FOOD COUNCIL  
on the work of its twelfth session**

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**16-19 June 1986**

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**OFFICIAL RECORDS: FORTY-FIRST SESSION**

**SUPPLEMENT No. 19 (A/41/19)**



**UNITED NATIONS**

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#### **NOTE**

**Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.**

[22 July 1986]

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## ABBREVIATIONS

EEC	European Economic Community
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WFC	World Food Council
WFP	World Food Programme

PART ONE

MATTERS BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORLD FOOD COUNCIL  
AT ITS TWELFTH MINISTERIAL SESSION

I. THE WORLD FOOD SITUATION

1. We, the Ministers and Plenipotentiaries of the World Food Council convened in Rome for the twelfth session, under the chairmanship of Mr. Henri Nallet, from 16 to 19 June 1986. Our deliberations focused on urgent measures for Africa's recovery, the difficult food, economic and financial situation in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the lessons to be learned from Asia's food efforts. We also had a frank exchange of views on the current disorders in the international trade in foods and adopted measures designed to strengthen the role of the Council as the political forum of the United Nations General Assembly for food and hunger issues.

2. Our review of the world food situation gives rise to both satisfaction and concern. Global food supplies are ample, following record production in many regions. However, food production performance has been uneven, with many developing countries experiencing a deterioration in their food situation. According to several delegations, hunger and malnutrition are the results of diminishing effective demand in the developing countries, which is in itself the consequence of the international financial and trade crisis and an inequitable international economic order. They also consider that the elimination of hunger and malnutrition can be accomplished through a global process of restructuring international relations on a fair, equitable and democratic basis and the establishment of a new economic order.

3. The economic and financial situation of many developing countries, domestic and regional conflicts and international tension all contribute to the deterioration of the food situation in parts of the developing regions. The solution of food and development problems is primarily the responsibility of each country, but national food objectives cannot be achieved without the support of increased international solidarity and co-operation, in conditions of long-lasting peace. This is a major concern for Council action. In the view of several delegations, a policy of disarmament in the industrialized countries as well as the developing countries could release financial resources that could be employed towards solving food problems.

4. The food situation in Africa has relatively improved in the last year, but the continent's problems are due to endogenous and exogenous causes that will not go away without increased international co-operation and solidarity. Millions of African people are still in need of emergency aid and the Council should promote the implementation of early warning and information systems.

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME OF ACTION  
FOR AFRICAN ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT

5. We welcome the adoption by the General Assembly at its special session on the critical economic situation in Africa, held in New York from 27 May to 1 June 1986, of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 (resolution A/S-13/2).

6. The Programme is above all an expression of the resolve of African leaders to put their countries on the road to economic recovery. Its central focus on food

and agriculture is consistent with the adoption by an increasing number of African countries of national food strategies and policies. In adopting the Programme, the international community has established a framework of reference for co-operation and a shared responsibility for working together to meet African food and development objectives.

7. We emphasize the importance of a "quick start" if the Programme is to be implemented within a five-year period. In the field of food and agriculture, the Council, as a political body, will promote appropriate measures to translate the Programme into specific action and will assist the Secretary-General and the General Assembly in keeping progress under review and urges both recipient and donor countries to take effective steps towards the Programme's implementation. We hope the recipient countries will accelerate the needed policy reforms and investments in the agricultural sector, while the international community commits itself to making every effort to provide sufficient resources to support and supplement the African development effort. The particularly difficult situation of most African countries makes it incumbent upon the international community to mobilize all the assistance it can in their favour.

8. We reiterate the unconditional rejection of all forms of apartheid and racial discrimination.

### III. REGIONAL AND INTERREGIONAL CO-OPERATION

9. We endorse the recommendations of the Council's regional consultations, held during the first half of 1986 in Dakar, New Delhi, Guangzhou and Buenos Aires, in support of strengthening regional and interregional co-operation.

10. The ministerial Colloquium held at Dakar from 30 January to 1 February 1986 identified areas for technical co-operation where significant immediate progress is feasible. It also recommended that efforts to expand economic and trade co-operation focus initially on two areas: (a) the harmonization of food and agricultural policies, especially price policies and the protection of regional markets; and (b) the development of preferential mechanisms to increase intra-Africa trade in agricultural products and related inputs. Strengthened co-operation will also require the reorganization of regional institutions.

11. The Council's Asia/Africa workshops, held at New Delhi and Guangzhou in May 1986, have demonstrated the considerable potential for South-South co-operation in support of African food and development objectives. The majority of the priority areas for co-operation identified at these policy exchanges have been incorporated in the United Nations Programme for African Economic Recovery and Development, 1986-1990. The Council's supporting role in these areas should initially focus on a continuation of the exchange of experience in agricultural policies and strategies, as well as a transfer of technology, particularly in the field of irrigation and in other areas relevant to food production. We call on the donor community to facilitate, with appropriate financial support, co-operation between Africa and other developing regions.

12. At the Buenos Aires Consultation, held in April 1986, Latin American and Caribbean Ministers explored practical ways of encouraging regional co-operation in food trade and food security, such as the initiative of the Presidents of Argentina and Uruguay for a regional treaty for assistance in emergency food situations. The Ministers also emphasized their countries' efforts to protect the food and

nutrition levels of low-income people during the difficult period of economic adjustment. The World Food Council was requested to bring the critical problems that affect the agricultural economy of the countries of the region to the attention of the industrialized countries and the international financial and credit organizations. Furthermore, the Council was requested to point out with the greatest possible emphasis the destructive effects of the unfair and strongly protectionist trade practices employed by the developed countries on the production systems of the developing countries, and the need for the former to introduce drastic adjustments in their agricultural policies.

#### IV. INTERNATIONAL FOOD-TRADE PROBLEMS

13. The Council made a broad survey of the problems that currently affect the international agricultural commodity markets. The Council noted with concern that the present agricultural trade situation, marked by structural surpluses, growing protectionism, heavy subsidies and distortions in the use of resources, was not in the interest of developed or developing countries. For the developing countries, it also constituted a serious constraint on their nutrition and development objectives. In the search for solutions, however, the countries maintain divergent points of view, principally because they find themselves in relatively different positions in this regard.

14. The Council also requested that the possibility of continuing these discussions in the Council be examined by the different parties concerned, in particular with regard to the relationship between problems of trade and agricultural development. There was consideration of the possibility that the report of these discussions be made available to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the competent body with regard to trade problems, but there were many reservations and general agreement could not be reached.

#### V. STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF THE COUNCIL

15. We discussed practical measures to strengthen the role of the Council. In this, we were assisted by the recommendations of an advisory group appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in consultation with the Council's President, and we wish to thank the members of that advisory body for their work.

16. There was consensus that the Council is playing a unique political role at the ministerial level and should continue to do so within its existing mandate.

17. The Council should continue to be a political catalyst, a forum for discussion of policy ideas and proposals, through its role of monitoring world food problems. It was recognized that the Council should not have an operational role but should continue to play its role in stimulating action. The mandate and terms of the Council as approved by the General Assembly should not be amended, but every effort should be made to strengthen the Council through improvements in its organization, programmes and method of work, within the framework of its terms of reference, keeping in view the current budgetary constraints.

18. We endorse the necessity of ensuring the individual identity of the Council. We also endorse the proposals of the advisory group to improve co-operation with other United Nations bodies and organizations. Also, we feel that the Council should acquire more visibility in the United Nations, by having its President report directly in plenary sessions of the General Assembly.

19. We support the efforts of the President to involve the Council's Bureau more closely in assuring the continuity and thrust of Council activities between annual sessions. Bureau members are invited to promote initiatives and meetings which concern their region's food security.

## VI. THE COUNCIL'S FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

20. In support of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 and the efforts of countries in other regions to meet their food objectives, the Council will continue to promote national and regional food strategies and will intensify its efforts to mobilise political and financial support for the food and agriculture component of the Programme. In particular, it will seek to advance progress in critical areas such as in investment, research, food policy and programme management and institution building.

21. The recommendations of the Council's recently concluded regional meetings suggest specific areas for further action. The secretariat is requested to investigate prospects for regional and South-South co-operation.

22. The Council is specifically concerned about the consequences of economic adjustment measures for the food and nutrition levels of low-income groups. The secretariat should report on the adequacy of ongoing activities in this realm and, if necessary, suggest specific areas where Council initiative might be of benefit.

23. The Council requests the secretariat to follow studies undertaken by the United Nations Centre and Commission on Transnational Corporations and other concerned bodies on the activities of transnational corporations in the food sector.

\* \* \*

24. On the occasion of the twelfth session of the World Food Council, we wish to express our warmest gratitude to Mr. Maurice J. Williams, who, as Executive Director, has most ably guided the work of the Council for the past eight years. His dedicated and untiring leadership during this often difficult period has earned our highest esteem. Our sincere good wishes go with him at this juncture in his distinguished career.

\* \* \*

25. These conclusions and recommendations were adopted by the Council by consensus, with a number of countries placing on record reservations as follows:

Paragraph 3, last sentence: Australia, the Federal Republic of Germany, the United States of America and the African and Latin American groups of Council members; paragraph 13, last sentence: Argentina, Brazil, Honduras and Mexico; paragraph 16: Mali; paragraphs 17, 18 and 19: Chile; paragraph 18: Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic, Honduras, Mexico and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics reserve their position with regard to the Council President's direct reporting in plenary session of the General Assembly; paragraph 19, last sentence: Brazil and Mexico; paragraph 21: Argentina, Brazil, Honduras and Mexico.

26. The clarifications that were provided by some delegations on their reservations are recorded in part two, paragraph 79, of this report.

**PART TWO**  
**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COUNCIL**

## CHAPTER I

### ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

1. The twelfth ministerial session of the World Food Council was held at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome from 16 to 19 June 1986. It was opened by the President of the World Food Council, Mr. Henri Nallet. At the opening ceremony, a message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations was read. Statements were also made by the Director-General of FAO, Mr. Edouard Saouma, and by the President of the Council (see account of proceedings under chapter II).

#### A. Membership of the Council

2. At the time of the session, the Council consisted of the following 36 States: Antigua and Barbuda,\*\*\* Argentina,\* Australia,\*\*\* Bangladesh,\*\*\* Brazil,\*\* Bulgaria,\*\* Burundi,\* Canada,\*\* Central African Republic,\* Chile,\* China,\*\* Côte d'Ivoire,\*\* Cyprus,\*\*\* Dominican Republic,\*\*\* Finland,\* France,\* German Democratic Republic,\*\*\* Germany, Federal Republic of,\*\*\* Guinea,\*\*\* Honduras,\*\*\* Hungary,\* Iraq,\* Italy,\* Japan,\* Kenya,\*\* Mali,\*\*\* Mexico,\*\* Morocco,\* Pakistan,\* Somalia,\*\*\* Sri Lanka,\*\* Thailand,\*\* Turkey,\*\* Union of Soviet Socialist Republics,\*\*\* United States of America\*\* and Zambia.\*\*

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\* Term of office expires on 31 December 1986.

\*\* Term of office expires on 31 December 1987.

\*\*\* Term of office expires on 31 December 1988.

#### I Attendance

3. The session was attended by representatives of all member States of the Council.

4. Observers from the following States non-members of the Council were present: Afghanistan, Austria, Belgium, Burma, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Gabon, Greece, Holy See, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Israel, Republic of Korea, Lebanon, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Rwanda, Senegal, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela, Yugoslavia and Zaire.

5. The following United Nations bodies and specialized agencies were represented: World Food Programme (WFP), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, International Labour Organisation, FAO, World Bank and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

6. Observers from the following intergovernmental organizations were present: African Development Bank, Commonwealth Secretariat, European Economic Community,

Council of European Communities and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

7. Observers were also present from the following non-governmental organizations: International Alliance of Women, International Catholic Rural Association, International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage, International Council of Voluntary Agencies, International Federation of Agricultural Producers and World Council of Churches.

#### C. Officers

8. The following officers of the Council were present:

President: Mr. Henri Nallet (France)

Vice-President: Mr. Yovtcho Roussev (Bulgaria)

Mr. Roussev was also designated Rapporteur.

#### D. Agenda

9. The Council adopted the following agenda (WFC/1986/1) for the session:

1. Opening of the session and adoption of the agenda.
2. Africa's transition to food-centred development.
3. Strengthening the Council's future role and programme.
4. Other topics requested by the Council:
  - (a) Reports of the workshops in Latin America and the Caribbean and on regional co-operation in Africa;
  - (b) Review of origins and possible solutions to instability in international food trade;
  - (c) Consideration of the role of transnational corporations in the food sector.
5. Conclusions and recommendations for the General Assembly.

#### E. Documentation

10. The documents before the session are listed in the annex to the present report.

## CHAPTER II

### ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDINGS

#### A. Opening statements

11. In a message read by the Executive Director of the World Food Council, the Secretary-General of the United Nations said that although the global food situation in 1986 was better than it was when the Council was created, the challenge before the Council had not diminished. The Council was meeting at a time of growing trade conflicts between major grain exporters, as a result of over-supply in exporting countries and under-demand in importing countries. At the same time, the problem of hunger and malnutrition remained acute because many people in the world still had no access to food. The Council still carried a heavy responsibility in mobilizing the necessary political goodwill and advising governments and international agencies on the adequacy and coherence of their efforts to resolve world food problems.

12. The Secretary-General commended the World Food Council on the series of regional meetings it had held in 1986 at Dakar, Buenos Aires, New Delhi and Guangzhou. He said that such regional meetings, which enabled policy makers to exchange experience, represented an original approach by the Council that should be continued. The momentum must be maintained in advancing regional integration and South-South co-operation in the food sector.

13. Turning to the fragile economies of Africa, the Secretary-General welcomed the approach of integrated food strategies adopted by many African countries with the support of the Council. He emphasized the need for the entire United Nations system to implement effectively the United Nations Programme of Action for African Recovery and Development 1986-1990 (General Assembly resolution A/S-13/2), which had just been adopted by the Assembly at its special session on the critical economic situation in Africa. Since the Programme of Action placed central priority on food and agriculture and its success would depend on donors supporting the domestic reforms undertaken by African countries, the World Food Council had a key role to play in its implementation.

14. In his statement, the Director-General of FAO, Mr. Edouard Saouma, congratulated Mr. Gerald Ion Trant on his appointment as the new Executive Director of the Council and assured him of the collaboration of FAO. He also paid tribute to the outgoing Executive Director, Mr. Maurice J. Williams, for his many years of devoted service.

15. Recalling the political nature of the Council, Mr. Saouma said that it could play an important role in broadening the political consensus, maintaining the political impetus and mobilizing greater resources in support of initiatives taken by the specialized agencies. Food was a vital question and the Council might wish to launch an appeal for this sector and for the multilateral agencies concerned with it to be considered a priority target for relaxation of budgetary restrictions.

16. Turning to the world food situation, Mr. Saouma said that the Council, as a political body, should sensitize the world to the astonishing paradox of the existence of huge food stocks simultaneously with increasing hunger. He reminded the Council that in the case of Africa, despite improvements in the food situation of many countries, exceptional emergency food aid was still needed this year in at

least six countries and he appealed to donors to finance triangular transactions to enable the surpluses produced in some African countries to be used to meet deficits in others. He also recalled the United Nations Programme of Action for African Recovery and Development 1986-1990, and stressed the need to look beyond emergency and ensure the long-term rehabilitation and development of the African economies. In order to ensure growth and fight poverty, hunger and malnutrition, it was also necessary to increase the trade of developing countries by ensuring price stability and market access for their products.

17. In his statement, the President of the Council, Mr. Henri Nallet, gave a brief report of the Council's activities during the past year, and said it was a remarkable record. These activities included the preparation of the report of the Advisory Group; the organization of four regional seminars and a workshop on agricultural statistics; Bureau meetings held in Paris, Rome and Buenos Aires, and the Council's contribution to the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on the critical economic situation in Africa.

18. Mr. Nallet said that most significant were the regional seminars and meetings. He was impressed by the good ministerial participation in Dakar and Buenos Aires and the excellent orientation of the exchanges of experience that had taken place in New Delhi and Guangzhou. The seminar approach had proved as useful for the exchange of experience and the transfer of techniques on a South-South basis as for the study of regional or subregional problems by political authorities from the participating countries.

19. Mr. Nallet observed that the political nature of the Council must be strengthened. He underlined the value of active participation by Ministers and top officials of agricultural ministries to the success of its work. Moreover, he stressed that the Council should continue to be selective, concentrating on a few priority issues at a time because it could not address at once all the problems presented to it by member States.

20. Mr. Nallet welcomed the appointment of Mr. Gerald Ion Trant (who was not present because of illness) as the new Executive Director of the World Food Council. He thanked Mr. Maurice J. Williams for having accepted to stay on for the current session.

## B. General debate

### 1. Africa's transition to food-centred development

21. The main topic of discussion at the twelfth session was the food crisis facing Africa. To help focus discussion, the Council had before it the following four documents: "Conclusions of the Colloquium on Regional Co-operation and Food Strategies in Africa" (WFC/1986/2); "Report of the Workshop on Exchange of Experience Between African and Asian Food Policy-Makers" (WFC/1986/3); "Programme for Recovery in Africa; the imperative of food-centred development" (WFC/1986/4); and "Summary report and conclusions of the Workshop on Statistics in Support of African Food Strategies and Policies" (WFC/1986/4/Add.1).

22. The topic was introduced by the Executive Director, who reported on the thirteenth special session of the General Assembly, devoted to the critical economic situation in Africa, held in New York from 27 May to 1 June 1986. The Assembly had adopted the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic

Recovery and Development 1986-1990 (resolution A/S-13/2). The Programme of Action was based on a recognition that the African crisis is both an African problem and a world problem and its solution requires a new pattern of development co-operation based on a partnership of mutual understanding among African countries themselves, and between them and the rest of the world. Its central feature was a commitment by African Governments to a development pattern centred on food and agriculture and an undertaking by the international community to support Africa's efforts.

23. In keeping with its priority focus on food and agriculture, the Programme included a number of specific proposals of direct relevance to the Council, such as measures to combat food emergencies, establish food security arrangements, increase food production, improve crop and animal husbandry practices, and assist small farmers, especially women and youth, to become more efficient food producers. It reflected many of the Council's own conclusions and recommendations during the past year, as well as in earlier years.

24. The Executive Director recalled that at its eleventh session the Council had decided to devote priority efforts to food strategy development for economic recovery in Africa, and had also undertaken to encourage regional and interregional co-operation in resolving African food problems. In pursuit of these priorities, the secretariat organized three major activities: the Colloquium on Regional Co-operation and Food Strategies in Africa, held at Dakar, the Workshop on Exchange of Experience between African and Asian Food Policy-Makers, held at New Delhi and Guangzhou, China; and the Workshop on Statistics in Support of African Food Strategies and Policies, held at Brussels. The conclusions and recommendations of these meetings were before the Council for consideration. It was gratifying to note that the bulk of the conclusions and recommendations have been incorporated in the Programme of Action for African Recovery and Development 1986-1990, adopted by the General Assembly at its thirteenth special session.

2. Role of the World Food Council in the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990

25. The Ministers discussed how best to pursue priority questions in food and agriculture at the national, regional and international levels, and how the World Food Council should exert its efforts in support of action at these levels. The problem was no longer one of priorities but of implementation.

26. A number of specific action proposals relevant to the work of the Council were discussed. These included the immediate measures to deal with food emergencies and the establishment of improved food security arrangements. A wider number of medium-term proposals for increasing food production, the development and use of improved crop and animal husbandry technologies and more effective market and price incentives were discussed, on the basis of specific country experience with recent food and agricultural policy adjustments. Emphasis was placed on the need to strengthen research on farming-systems technologies and development services to small farmers, especially women.

27. All delegates agreed that the Programme of Action provided a solid frame for launching the process of implementation, and that the World Food Council faced the task of helping African Governments to implement the mutually-agreed food sector priorities by concrete and accelerated assistance in support of food strategies and policies.

28. While a number of countries have made promising progress with recent food strategies and related policies, these efforts need to be accelerated. Policy development and adjustments vary from country to country, and include the provision of remunerative prices to producers, the reduction of subsidies, the creation of more efficient marketing mechanisms, greater efforts in adaptive research and water management and sometimes major reorientation of rural institutions and administrations to mobilize the energies of the farmers themselves in their own development process. Many delegates proposed that the secretariat should co-ordinate preparation of policy guidelines for furthering food strategies with African Governments and donor organizations.

29. The UNDP round tables and World Bank consultative groups were seen as important forums in which to focus on policy and institutional adjustments, public investments in food and agriculture and necessary external resource support. It was suggested that the Council would review with the World Bank and UNDP the question of how best to assist those countries not covered by round tables or consultative groups in the preparation and implementation of their national recovery and economic development plans and programmes.

30. The Ministers agreed that mechanisms for assistance co-ordination should not be used by donor countries as a means of interfering or exerting pressure on recipient countries to the detriment of their sovereign right to set development priorities of their own choice.

31. Many delegates referred to the importance of debt restructuring for most afflicted African countries, liberalization of food trade and support of expanded South-South co-operation. Several delegates stressed the importance of putting agricultural trade on the "fast track" of upcoming multilateral trade negotiations in GATT. The majority of delegates, both from industrialized and developing countries, stressed the negative effects on their economies of the current trade confrontation between the industrialized countries.

32. The Ministers noted with satisfaction the proclamation by the General Assembly of 1986 as the International Year of Peace and reaffirmed their conviction that the safeguard of peace and the promotion of international security were prerequisites for creating favourable conditions for agricultural production and the solution of the food problem. They agreed that the abolition of hunger and poverty and the meeting of mankind's growing food requirements were global problems, the successful solution of which would be promoted through the termination of the arms race and the substantial reduction of the military expenditures of all States.

### 3. Food-centred development

33. There was much debate on further Council action in implementing the provisions of the Programme of Action for food-centred development. A number of areas were seen by the Ministers as specifically important.

34. First, there was wide agreement that assistance to African countries in the accelerated formulation or refinement and sustained implementation of their food strategies needed to be stepped up. In this context, several Ministers pointed to the need for special training assistance in improving national food data systems and food policy analysis capacities. Greater assistance in strengthening countries' own capabilities in food sector planning and the management of policy implementation was required.

35. Second, all agreed on the need to improve further the effectiveness of aid and to mobilize additional resources - both domestic and external - for meeting food objectives. Many Ministers felt that, as African Governments are vigorously moving on restructuring their food and agricultural policies and programmes, official development assistance should be tailored to enhance and complement their efforts during the next five years of crucial policy transition. Donors should not try to impose their policies on African countries as a condition for aid.

36. Third, the Ministers welcomed the Council's initiatives on regional and interregional co-operation and stressed that the Council should follow up its work on facilitating such interregional co-operation on food, including consideration of the areas of assistance in policy and management training, small farmer-oriented agricultural research, small-scale irrigation, water management, dry-land farming techniques and management of co-operatives.

37. Fourth, many delegates felt that, as an organ of the United Nations General Assembly, the Council should play a key role in the monitoring and appraisal of progress in the implementation of the food policy and programme components of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990. Progress in increasing food production and reducing hunger and malnutrition should be continuously monitored by the Council. Reporting in this area could be based on country reports by national food-strategy planners, and from progress on food policy adjustments and programmes as considered in the countries' consultative forums. The aim would be to review progress and the special problems that Governments face in food strategy implementation. A number of delegates also pointed to the need to assist in evaluating the impact and cost effectiveness of aid and experience with food emergency operations by various bilateral and multilateral agencies.

38. To achieve economic recovery in Africa, the Ministers stressed the need for demonstrating greater effectiveness in resource use through better management and innovative agricultural programmes and more serious aid co-ordination. This will become even more crucial when African Governments press ahead with meeting their declared goal of allocating 20 to 25 per cent of public expenditures to investment in food and agriculture. At the same time, it was widely pointed out that African countries would also need more foreign exchange resources, much of which would initially have to come from increased aid and debt relief arrangements. Combining increased domestic investment with additional external resources was seen as an essential step, before any significant move could be made from declared objectives to meaningful implementation of structural food and nutritional policy reforms.

39. Some delegations emphasized that a genuine solution to the problem of overcoming hunger and economic backwardness in Africa required an integrated approach to socio-economic development, a development that included industrialization as the basis of an independent national economy. Account must also be taken of the external factor that impede Africa's development. All these elements should be seen in their entirety. The development of the food industry and of agriculture is part of it and cannot be seen divorced from those other aspects of Africa's development.

40. In this context, delegations condemned in particular the policy of destabilization pursued by the racist régime of South Africa against the economies of the States of southern Africa.

41. The Council highlighted the necessity of implementing those General Assembly resolutions that condemn all measures of economic coercion, inter alia, in food aid and trade.

42. Many delegations considered that the solution of the food problem in the developing countries was possible only within the restructuring of international economic relations and strict observance of the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States, the Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order and the International Development Strategy for the 1980s.

43. Some delegations expressed the view that integrated development of the productive forces of developing nations, based on the implementation of profound socio-economic transformation, the elimination of obsolete forms of land ownership and cultivation, the realization of progressive agrarian reforms, the eradication of all forms of colonial and neo-colonial oppression and racism and the abolition of domination by transnational corporations, should serve as the main instrument for putting an end to hunger and malnutrition in developing countries.

#### 4. Regional co-operation and food strategies

44. Concerning African regional co-operation and the conclusions of the Dakar Colloquium the Ministers stressed the substantial scope for exploiting the potential of regional complementarities in food production and trade within the context of national food policies and strategies. They emphasized the need for creating a basis for common regional and subregional action in the areas of transport, agricultural research and training, the role of women in food production, anti-desertification activities to strengthen productive capacity and exchange of information on food surpluses in various African countries. Delegates also suggested that exploitation of under-utilized regional economic capacity could be enhanced by "trilateral co-operation" in food trade and aid arrangements.

45. Many delegates strongly encouraged the Council's secretariat to organize follow-up activities in this area, but warned that intra-regional trade should not take place to the detriment of traditional trade with developed countries.

#### 5. Strengthening South-South co-operation

46. The Workshop on Exchange of Experience between African and Asian Food Policy-Makers, held in New Delhi and Guangzhou in May 1986, was viewed as a significant milestone in South-South co-operation and the Ministers expressed the hope that this would be only a first step towards a more extensive South-South collaboration in the food sector.

47. Delegates noted that the budgetary and political support given to the agricultural sector by China and India had contributed significantly to the remarkable increase in food production over the past decade. Logans calling for food self-sufficiency had become reality through increased investment in the food sector and the deployment of manpower and institutional resources to meet the needs of small farmers. Both countries had made big strides in irrigation technology, water resource management and indigenous research capacity. It was recognized that the resolution of food problems in Africa would depend not only on clearly outlined national food strategies but on necessary policy reforms and international support.

48. Some delegations emphasized the importance of the co-operative and public sectors for enhancing food production and overcoming malnutrition.

49. The Council emphasized the importance of rapid human resources development, as well as of the application of science and technology in agricultural production and food processing for increasing the self-reliance of developing countries.

50. Reference was made by a number of delegates to those specific areas of South-South co-operation identified in the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990. In this respect, concern was expressed about follow-up given the limited financial resources of the developing countries, and the Council was urged to play an active role in mobilizing the necessary resources from the international community. An expansion of triangular co-operation was called for, which would entail the linkage of Asian technical and manpower skills relevant to Africa's food sector development with financial assistance from developed countries, multilateral agencies such as UNDP and the World Bank, and non-governmental organizations.

51. It was generally agreed that the scope for South-South co-operation was considerable, not only bilaterally but also multilaterally. Several delegations mentioned specific areas where their individual countries' expertise might contribute to the development and amelioration of Africa's food and agriculture sector, and the Council was requested to co-ordinate the necessary follow-up.

52. Some delegates also expressed their appreciation to the Council and the European Economic Community (EEC) for having organized the workshop on "Statistics in support of African food strategies and policies", held in Brussels in May 1986. They supported such efforts as an important component in improving the analytical and decision-making capacity of African countries and hoped that the recommendations from the workshop could be quickly implemented by all concerned.

53. The Deputy Director-General of the Development Commission of the European Communities pointed to the remarkable efforts made by African Governments in adjusting their economies and introducing policy changes in food and agriculture in the light of international economic crises and the serious drought effect. A review of the EEC experience in supporting the implementation of food security programmes in the first four African countries indicated four principal requirements for successful co-operation.

54. First, Governments needed to define more clearly the interrelated objectives and priorities for the food sector. Second, the food strategy must fit into the larger macro-economic development policy frame of the country. Third, under the leadership of the Government concerned, a flexible but strengthened mechanism for aid co-ordination and consultation was needed. Fourth, donors must support local efforts by making available finance and technical assistance in a flexible form adapted to specific needs.

55. It was pointed out that emphasis was on adjusting food policies and strategies in favour of small-holder production, grass-roots initiatives and the building of more effective support services. Special efforts were made to integrate the use of food aid with generated counterpart funds in technical and resource assistance programmes. The EEC also welcomed the Council's Dakar initiative on regional aspects of food strategy implementation in Africa and stood ready to assist African countries within the framework of the Lomé Convention to develop and strengthen their regional co-operation.

## 6. Role of external resources, including food aid

56. During the debate, several agencies briefed the Ministers about their plans and activities in support of Africa's recovery efforts and other matters of interest to the Council.

57. Mr. James Ingram, the Executive Director of WFP, stressed the need for food aid to be accepted as a development resource complementary to financial and technical assistance and congruent with the development framework of individual recipient countries. WFP was sponsoring food-for-work projects in the areas of irrigation, reafforestation, soil conservation, rural infrastructure and enhancement of human resources and this was quite in line with the "food-centred" development called for at the recent special session of the General Assembly.

58. He said that Africa would depend heavily on food aid for the foreseeable future. It required a sound conceptual approach that ensured that it was supportive of, rather than detrimental to, the development process. WFP consistently evaluated its work and sought innovative ways of using food aid to promote food production and combat the underlying causes of hunger and poverty.

59. The Vice-President of IFAD, Mr. Donald S. Brown, stressed that, notwithstanding the successful completion of negotiations on the second replenishment of the Fund, steps must be taken to reinforce the Fund's financial ability to carry on its critical role in increasing food production and alleviating rural poverty. An expert group was considering the technical feasibility of different approaches to put future replenishments on a more predictable basis and make IFAD financially more self-supporting.

60. IFAD had been responding to Africa's growing crisis in a variety of ways, e.g. through increased share of lending to sub-Saharan Africa, increased attention to major food policy and institutional issues, expanded co-operation with other international and multilateral agencies, and adoption of specific measures to improve project implementation and accelerate loan disbursements. In addition, particular focus had been placed on manpower development.

61. However, in the light of Africa's pressing requirements and the reduced regular resources of IFAD, the Fund had established a special programme for sub-Saharan African countries affected by drought and desertification, with target funding of \$300 million. The programme, whose principal objective is to help African small-holders lay the foundation for sustained growth in food production, became operational in May 1986. The Vice-President of IFAD urged members of the Council to support this special programme, particularly in view of the fact that the General Assembly at its special session on the critical economic situation in Africa had, in its resolution A/S-13/2, recognized its potential importance.

62. Mr. E. Schuh, the Director of Agriculture and Rural Development of the World Bank, explained the relevance of the recent Bank study entitled "Poverty and Hunger: Issues and Options for Food Security in Developing Countries" to the Bank's structural adjustment policy. While recent emphasis on resource efficiency, policy reforms and economic adjustment had generally been good for agriculture, these policies had raised food prices for politically volatile urban consumers, with serious nutritional consequences for the poor. Because of the political importance of urban consumers, such reform measures were bound to be resisted. The new policy study provided policy guidelines on how to address nutrition and more equitable food security needs if rational agricultural policy adjustments were to be successfully introduced.

63. The study drew four principal conclusions. First, broad-based, equitable economic growth was the ultimate solution to the food security problem and, for most countries, the key to such growth was the strengthening of the agricultural sector. Second, policies that provided for cheap food to urban consumers in the name of food security tended to discriminate against the majority of the poor, who were in the rural sector. Third, cost-effective food and nutrition programmes were those that focused on the right target population groups and caused minimum sacrifice to economic growth. Fourth, equitable economic growth need not mean less economic growth, as the very policies that improved the lot of the poor also increased the rate of growth.

## 7. Food policies and strategies in Latin America and the Caribbean

64. To introduce the discussion on the Ministerial Consultation on Food Policies and Strategies in Latin America and the Caribbean, held at Buenos Aires from 1 to 3 April 1986, a delegate of Argentina read a message from Mr. Lucio Graciano Reca, Secretary of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries of Argentina, who is currently Vice-President of the World Food Council for the Latin American region. Mr. Reca said that the existence of hunger and malnutrition in a world of food surpluses was a violation of the right of every human being to an adequate diet. He emphasized the incompatibility of protectionism and unfair trade practices, such as the heavy subsidization of agricultural products by developed countries, with demands for fulfilment of debt-service obligations. As agricultural exports play only a minor role in the economies of most developing countries, trade liberalization and national agricultural policy adjustments in those countries would entail relatively small sacrifice, while they would assist greatly in the generation of essential resources for economic recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean. This would, in turn, facilitate approaches to the solution of the debt problem and structural adjustment implementation in the interest of both developed and developing countries.

65. The current crisis particularly called for a shift in policy attention to the rural areas and for greater national efforts by countries of the region to raise food self-sufficiency levels. National efforts combined with closer regional and subregional co-operation in food trade and food security could contribute significantly to the region's economic independence. As a step in this direction, the Presidents of Argentina and Uruguay had recently signed a declaration to promote a treaty on regional assistance in food emergencies, which could serve as a model for countries of the region.

66. During the debate, delegates stressed that the currently prevailing adjustment policies in many countries were having a temporary negative impact on income and employment levels that could not be compensated in the short term by the proposed structural reform. It was recognized that hunger is not a simple function of adequate supplies and that national food strategies should include efforts to ensure a more equitable distribution of income that would allow the affected population to purchase food or provide it with the means to produce it.

67. As regards the need for speedy implementation of food emergency programmes to help to alleviate hunger and malnutrition, countries should use the experience already available in the region and expand food trade among themselves.

68. International and regional organizations for co-operation and financial bodies were requested to promote the exchange of experience and to support direct food programmes. In particular, the international and regional financial and co-operation organizations, such as the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, FAO, the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences and others, should make a major effort to maximize the combined impact of their available resources and to ensure increased assistance flows to the region. Better co-ordination was essential to this end so as to avoid duplication of activities and to focus on the solution of the food security problem.

#### 8. Trade and finance in food and agriculture

69. There was a general consensus that if exports from developing countries were restricted, those countries would be less able to import the food they needed and to develop their agriculture, with a detrimental effect on the prospects of reducing poverty and hunger. It was emphasized that there was a simultaneous situation of over-supply and under-demand in world markets. As a result, food demand was weak, world prices were at low levels, and surpluses accumulated by developed countries were being dumped on international markets with minimum regard to long-term economic and food security ramifications. Thus, the capacity of developing countries to confront their food problems had been hindered.

70. Some delegations underscored the increasing interdependence of development partners. It was recognized that the present trend in international market performance was unsustainable. Regarding agricultural trade in particular, developing countries and the world as a whole would benefit from improved market access and could provide a basis for the launching of adjustment policies that allowed for both domestic expansion and debt servicing, including accommodation of essential production, food-import programmes and expansion of capital investment in food and agriculture.

71. Many delegations pointed out that food transfers from developed countries - involving both aid and trade - could play a crucial role in those developing countries that found it difficult to increase the per capita production of food. For many developing countries, economic progress in domestic agriculture was a prerequisite to overall economic growth. Sound economic relations between North and South must be built on a less restricted trade environment based on comparative advantage and competitive pricing, and not on market sharing or on dumping.

72. The Ministers took note of the information note (WFC/1986/8) by the Executive Director on the status of research within United Nations agencies on the role of transnational corporations in food and agriculture. Some of them wanted the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations to continue to study the problems in the fields indicated in paragraphs 9, 10, 18, 23, 24 of the information note and report to the World Food Council, at its fourteenth session in 1988, on the status of research on the role of transnational corporations in food and agriculture, particularly taking into account the adverse impact of transnational corporations' activities on the developing countries.

73. The Minister for Agriculture of Italy, Mr. Filippo Maria Pandolfi, expressed concern about the increasing tensions in North-South relationships as well as among industrialized countries as a result of the present unbalanced food trade situation. He argued that any proposed solutions to the problem of surpluses would be difficult to realize as they would mean painful adjustments for industrialized

countries. However, he insisted, the world should still try to find new solutions in which the European Community would have a major role to play.

74. The Minister said that he certainly did not ignore all the criticism of the European Community in third world countries because of its common agricultural policy and subsidized exports. It would not be realistic to underestimate the importance of those criticisms that tarnished - in many minds - the good image built up by the Community in recent years, thanks to its commitment to development. It was necessary to look for remedies, as any postponement of the problem would only make it more difficult to manage. He also stressed that no solution would yield valuable results if the commitment and burden were not fairly shared out on a world scale between all the countries that were the very cause of the phenomenon of surpluses and the ensuing trade conflict.

75. There was general agreement among delegations that the appropriate forum to deal with international trade issues in any detail was GATT. However, given the political nature of the Council, some delegations stressed that the Council should maintain contact with GATT and continue to make policy recommendations, tender advice and lend support to the new GATT round of negotiations.

## CHAPTER III

### REPORT OF THE COUNCIL TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

76. The Bureau of the Council met three times during the year - in Paris, Rome and Buenos Aires - and took important decisions regarding preparations for and conduct of the twelfth session. Partly because of the tight budgetary situation, the Bureau decided that the Council would not hold a preparatory meeting in Rome. It also decided that during the ministerial session there would be no formal drafting group for the conclusions and recommendations but that these would be drafted by the President assisted by the Bureau in consultation with the regional groups and then submitted for discussion and approval by the Council in plenary. At the end of the session, some delegates complained that the new procedure had made it more difficult to reach agreement on the conclusions.

77. The conclusions and recommendations presented to the plenary were adopted by consensus. Some delegations indicated reservation on certain paragraphs.

78. The African Group regretted that the need to reschedule the debt of developing countries was not included in the recommendations, as it constituted an imperative for the developing countries in improving their export trade prospects.

#### Clarification of reservations

79. The text of the clarifications given with respect to the reservations recorded at the end of part one, paragraph 26, of this report is reproduced below:

#### Argentina

Paragraph 13: Eliminate the last sentence and, if necessary, replace it with: "In the search for necessary solutions, countries expressed different points of view on the means of confronting the serious problems set out above".

Paragraph 21: Replace the second sentence of paragraph 21 with: "Emphasis was placed on the need for the Council to promote and follow up the recommendations of the regional meetings, as well as activities aimed at improving economic and technical co-operation at regional and intergovernmental levels".

#### Brazil

Paragraph 13: The delegation of Brazil reserves its position on the paragraph since the majority's opinion is not reflected in the last sentence of the paragraph, regarding unfair trade practices adopted by developed countries; moreover, as drafted, that sentence is meaningless.

Paragraph 18: The delegation of Brazil reserves its position only in regard to the modification of the procedures of the General Assembly so as to enable the Council's President to directly report in plenary, since member countries did not have a chance to examine this recommendation in detail and also because it does not reflect discussions held in plenary.

Paragraph 19: The Brazilian delegation expresses its reservation for not considering appropriate to delegate to Vice-Chairmen the promotion of regional food security initiatives and meetings, since there are competent bodies for that effect.

Paragraph 21: The Brazilian delegation reserves its position because the paragraph does not provide a clear and positive basis for the Council's future work programme. Besides, (a) the text does not reflect the Latin American member countries' request for the promotion, by the Council, of the implementation of the recommendations approved by the Ministerial Consultation on Food Policies and Strategies, held in April 1986, in Buenos Aires; and (b) the investigation of prospects for regional and South-South co-operation should be promoted by other competent regional and international bodies.

#### Chile

Paragraph 3: The delegation of Chile considers that this paragraph touches on the problem of disarmament and also that, in this matter, the duties of developing countries cannot be compared with those of developed countries, especially nuclear Powers.

Paragraphs 17, 18 and 19: The delegation of Chile states that paragraphs 17, 18 and 19 of the above-mentioned report cannot be interpreted in a sense contrary to the spirit and the letter of the Council's terms of reference and rules of procedure, approved by resolution 31/120 of the United Nations General Assembly, nor can it be modified in any way.

#### United States of America

Paragraph 3: The United States does not consider the World Food Council to have a mandate to discuss disarmament. Such issues are properly discussed in the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly.

ANNEX

List of documents before the Council at its  
twelfth ministerial session

<u>Document number</u>	<u>Agenda item</u>	<u>Title</u>
WFC/1986/1	1	Provisional agenda with annotations
WFC/1986/2	2	Conclusions of the Colloquium on Regional Co-operation and Food Strategies in Africa
WFC/1986/3	2	Report of the Workshop on Exchange of Experience between African and Asian Food Policy-Makers
WFC/1986/4	2	Programme for recovery in Africa: the imperative of food-centred development
WFC/1986/4/Add.1	2	Summary report of conclusions of the Workshop on Statistics in Support of African Food Strategies and Policies
WFC/1986/5	3	The World Food Council - Recommendations and suggestions for the future - Report of the Advisory Group
WFC/1986/6	4	Report of the Ministerial Consultation on Food Policies and Strategies in Latin America and the Caribbean
WFC/1986/7	4	Problems of stability and security in international food trade
WFC/1986/8	4	Status of research within United Nations agencies on the role of transnational corporations in food and agriculture
WFC/1986/9		Current world food situation
WFC/1986/10		Report of the eleventh session of the Committee on World Food Security
WFC/1986/11	1	Eleventh annual report of the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes

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