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ASSISTANCE IN CASES OF NATURAL DISASTER

Report of the Third Committee (Part II)

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The General Assembly, at its 1939th plenary meeting on 25 September 1971, allocated to the Third Committee agenda item 59 entitled "Assistance in cases of natural disaster".
2. The Committee considered the item at its 1888th and 1890th meetings, on 30 November and 1 December. It had before it a comprehensive report of the Secretary-General (E/4994)^{1/} on the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 2435 (XXIII) and 2717 (XXIV) and of paragraphs 10 and 11 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1546 (XLIX) on the same subject. The report had been considered by the Council at its fifty-first session: on the basis of this report the Council had adopted resolution 1612 (LXI) entitled "Assistance in cases of natural disaster and other emergency situations", which contained proposals and recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly.
3. The Committee also had before it a draft resolution (A/C.3/L.1897) based on the recommendations of the Economic and Social Council and a statement of the administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution (A/C.3/L.1899).
4. At the 1888th meeting, Mr. Martin Hill, Consultant to the Secretary-General, and the Assistant Secretary-General for Inter-Agency Affairs made introductory statements on the item.

II. DRAFT RESOLUTION AND AMENDMENTS

5. At the 1888th meeting, the representative of Turkey introduced a draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897 on behalf of Afghanistan, Algeria, Austria, Belgium, Burundi, Canada, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Guinea, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Lesotho, the Libyan Arab Republic, Madagascar, Mauritania, New Zealand, Niger, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, Peru, Senegal, Sweden, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United Republic of Tanzania, the United States of America and Yemen. Subsequently Australia, the Congo, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, Jamaica, Kenya, Liberia, Malaysia, Mali, Morocco, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Nigeria, the Philippines, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Swaziland, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda and Uruguay became co-sponsors.

^{1/} Transmitted to the members of the General Assembly by a note of the Secretary-General (A/8436).

6. At the 1890th meeting the representative of France introduced amendments on behalf of Dahomey and France (A/C.3/L.1906). The amendments read as follows:

"1. Operative paragraph 2

Replace 'Under-Secretary-General' by 'Assistant Secretary-General'.

"2. Operative paragraph 3

Replace 'an adequate permanent office' by 'a small office'.

"3. Operative paragraph 4

Replace 'be located in _____ (Geneva or New York)' by

'be located in Geneva'."

The representative of France subsequently withdrew the second amendment.

7. The representative of Turkey orally revised the 59-Power draft resolution (A/C.3/L.1897) as follows:

(a) In the fifth preambular paragraph, substitute "2717" for "2771";

(b) In the twelfth preambular paragraph, insert the word "related" before the word "agencies"; insert the word "natural" before the word "disasters";

(c) In the thirteenth preambular paragraph, substitute the word "could" for the word "should";

(d) In the fifteenth preambular paragraph, insert the word "system" before the word "prospective";

(e) In paragraph 1 (c), add the words "in particular by the International Red Cross" after the word "organizations."

III. VOTING

8. At its 1890th meeting, after a procedural proposal by the representative of Morocco, the Committee decided without objection to close the debate. It proceeded to vote on the draft resolution (A/C.3/1897) and the amendments (A/C.3/L.1906) thereto as follows:

(a) The first amendment was rejected by 51 votes to 10, with 29 abstentions;

(b) The third amendment was adopted by 72 votes to 5, with 12 abstentions;

(c) Paragraph 4 of the draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897, as amended, was adopted by 83 votes to 6, with no abstentions.

(d) At the request of the representative of Ghana, a separate vote was taken on the words "and other disaster situations" in the title of the draft resolution. The words were retained by 62 votes to 1, with 23 abstentions.

(e) At the request of the representative of the USSR a separate vote was taken on paragraph 2 of the draft resolution. The paragraph was adopted by 78 votes to 7, with 5 abstentions.

(f) At the request of the representative of the USSR a separate vote was taken on paragraph 3 of the draft resolution. The paragraph was adopted by 79 votes to 8, with 3 abstentions.

(g) At the request of the representative of the USSR a separate vote was taken on paragraph 10 of the draft resolution. The paragraph was adopted by 83 votes to 8, with 2 abstentions.

(h) The draft resolution as a whole, as amended, was adopted by 85 votes to none, with 8 abstentions.

IV. RECOMMENDATION OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE

9. The Third Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Assistance in cases of natural disaster and other disaster situations

The General Assembly,

Bearing in mind that throughout history natural disasters and emergency situations have inflicted heavy loss of life and property, affecting every people and every country,

Aware of and concerned about the suffering caused by natural disasters and their serious economic and social consequences for all, but especially the developing countries,

Also aware of the varying needs of nations experiencing such disorders, which present new challenges for international co-operation,

Concerned over the ability of the international community to come to the aid of countries in a disaster situation,

/...

Recalling its resolutions 2034 (XX) of 7 December 1965, 2435 (XXIII) of 19 December 1968, 2608 (XXIV) of 16 December 1969 and 2717 (XXV) of 15 December 1970, and Economic and Social Council resolutions 1533 (XLIX) of 23 July 1970 and 1546 (XLIX) of 30 July 1970 on assistance in cases of natural disaster,

Expressing appreciation of the Secretary-General's comprehensive report and of its perceptive examination of all aspects of the question and taking note of the relevant passage in his statement to the Economic and Social Council at its 1773rd meeting, on 5 July 1971,

Taking note of Economic and Social Council resolution 1612 (LI) of 23 July 1971 on assistance in cases of natural disaster and other emergency situations,

Noting the study, annexed to the Secretary-General's report, on the legal status of disaster relief units made available through the United Nations,

Mindful of the need to strengthen and make more effective the collective efforts of the international community, and particularly the United Nations system, in the field of international disaster assistance,

Bearing in mind that assistance to meet the requests of the stricken countries without prejudice to their individual country programmes under the United Nations Development Programme can be an effective contribution to the rehabilitation and development of the stricken areas,

Bearing in mind also that the possible response of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and other credit organizations and development agencies to a request from the Governments concerned for complementary assistance for the stricken areas, without prejudice to the assistance provided by those organizations for the normal development programmes of the stricken countries, can be an important element in the reconstruction and development of those areas,

Noting the competence of the United Nations and its related agencies, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Programme to render assistance in natural disasters and other disaster situations,

Noting further the key role which the Resident Representatives of the United Nations Development Programme could play at the country level,

Recognizing the vital roles in international relief played by the International Red Cross, and other voluntary societies,

Recognizing further the necessity to ensure prompt, effective and efficient response to a Government's need for assistance, at the time of a natural disaster or other disaster situation, that will bring to bear the resources of the United Nations system, prospective donor countries, and voluntary agencies,

1. Calls upon the Secretary-General to appoint a disaster relief co-ordinator, who will report directly to him, and who will be authorized, on behalf of the Secretary-General to:

(a) Establish and maintain the closest co-operation with all organizations concerned and make all feasible advance arrangements with them for the purpose of ensuring the most effective assistance;

(b) Mobilize, direct and co-ordinate the relief activities of the various organizations of the United Nations system in response to a request for disaster assistance from a stricken State;

(c) Co-ordinate United Nations assistance with assistance given by intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, in particular by the International Red Cross;

(d) Receive on behalf of the Secretary-General contributions offered to him for disaster relief assistance to be carried out by the United Nations, its agencies and programmes, for particular emergency situations;

(e) Assist the Government of the stricken country to assess its relief and other needs and to evaluate the priority of those needs, to disseminate that information to prospective donors and others concerned, and to serve as a clearing-house for assistance extended or planned by all sources of external aid;

(f) Promote the study, prevention, control and prediction of natural disasters, including the collection and dissemination of information concerning technological developments;

(g) Assist in providing advice to Governments on pre-disaster planning in association with relevant voluntary organizations, particularly with the League of Red Cross Societies, and draw upon United Nations resources available for such purposes.

(h) Acquire and disseminate information relevant to planning and co-ordinating relief for disasters, including the improvement and establishment of stockpiles in disaster-prone areas, and to prepare suggestions to ensure the most effective use of available resources:

(i) Phase out relief operations under his aegis as the stricken country moves into the stage of rehabilitation and reconstruction, but continue to interest himself, within the framework of his responsibilities for relief, in the activities of the United Nations agencies concerned with rehabilitation and reconstruction:

(j) Prepare an annual report for the Secretary-General, to be submitted to the Economic and Social Council and to the General Assembly;

2. Recommends that the disaster relief co-ordinator should be appointed by the Secretary-General normally for a term of five years and at a level comparable to that of an Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations;

3. Endorses the Secretary-General's proposals for an adequate permanent office in the United Nations which shall be the focal point in the United Nations system for disaster relief matters;

4. Recommends that this office should be headed by the disaster relief co-ordinator and located in Geneva, be a distinct element within the United Nations Secretariat and be augmented as necessary by short-term secondment of personnel for individual emergencies;

5. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Economic and Social Council at its fifty-third session, taking into account any relevant suggestions and the experience gained by the disaster relief co-ordinator on any further steps which may be required to enable the disaster relief co-ordinator adequately to perform the functions entrusted to him under the present resolution;

6. Further endorses the plan for a roster of volunteers to be drawn from experienced staff members of the United Nations system and interested non-governmental organizations, who could be made available at very short notice;

7. Recommends that the disaster relief co-ordinator should maintain contact with the Governments of States Members of the United Nations or members of specialized agencies or of the International Atomic Energy Agency concerning available aid in emergency situations, such as food supplies, medicines, personnel, transportation and communications, as well as advice to countries in pre-disaster planning and preparedness;

8. Invites potential recipient Governments:

(a) To establish disaster contingency plans with appropriate assistance from the disaster relief co-ordinator;

(b) To appoint a single national disaster relief co-ordinator to facilitate the receipt of international aid in times of an emergency;

(c) To establish stockpiles of emergency supplies, such as tents, blankets, medicine and non-perishable foodstuffs;

(d) To make necessary arrangements for the training of administrative and relief personnel;

(e) To consider appropriate legislative or other measures to facilitate the receipt of aid, including over-flight and landing rights and necessary privileges and immunities for relief units;

(f) To improve national disaster warning systems;

9. Invites potential donor Governments:

(a) To respond promptly to any call by the Secretary-General or by the disaster relief co-ordinator on his behalf;

(b) To consider and to continue offering on a wider basis emergency assistance in disaster situations;

(c) To inform the disaster relief co-ordinator in advance about the facilities and services they might be in a position to provide immediately, including, where possible, relief units, logistical support and means of effective communications;

10. Decides to authorize the Secretary-General to draw on the Working Capital Fund in the amount of \$200,000 for emergency assistance in any one year, with a normal ceiling of \$20,000 per country in the case of any one disaster;

11. Further invites all organizations of the United Nations system and all other organizations involved to co-operate with the disaster relief co-ordinator.
