

42nd meeting

Tuesday, 22 July 1980, at 3.20 p.m.

President: Mr. Andreas V. MAVROMMATIS (Cyprus).

E/1980/SR.42

AGENDA ITEM 4

Special economic and disaster relief assistance (continued)

STATEMENT BY THE UNITED NATIONS DISASTER RELIEF CO-ORDINATOR ON THE MEASURES TAKEN, IN RESPONSE TO COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1980/8, TO ASSIST THE DISPLACED PERSONS IN ETHIOPIA

1. Mr. BERKOL (United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator), introducing the report of the interagency mission to Ethiopia (E/1980/104), said that Ethiopia had a background of extreme underdevelopment and had received less international aid *per capita* than any other country. Thus, any programme of assistance to displaced persons in that country would have to be in the nature of a comprehensive development programme. According to the Central Planning Supreme Council of Ethiopia, agriculture, industry, power, food, water, training, health, housing, mining, transport and communications were all areas needing priority assistance.

2. The mission had decided to indicate the assistance required over a period of years, so that potential donors could see the whole picture and plan a programme of aid. The report therefore covered, as far as practicable, food requirements for a period of three and a half years and the needs of the resettlement programme over a similar period, together with the expansion of health, education and water and power supplies to bring them to an acceptable level. Special arrangements for the most vulnerable groups, namely, children, the elderly and the disabled, were also touched upon; none of the projects was described in great detail, since it was felt that donors would wish to follow up the proposals themselves, in co-operation with the potential executing agency. In its concluding section, the report referred to the need for some new type of organizational machinery when, as in the case of Ethiopia, no single existing agency in the United Nations system was responsible for implementing a comprehensive relief and development programme.

3. Mr. ADUGNA (Ethiopia), Commissioner for Relief and Rehabilitation of Ethiopia, said that the war imposed on Ethiopia had claimed thousands of lives. There was widespread devastation, and whole villages and towns had been razed to the ground. Development projects worth several hundred million dollars had been completely destroyed. Various agricultural projects had been severely disrupted and veterinary establishments put out of action. The transport network had been severely dislocated, many roads and bridges being unusable; railway lines had been seriously affected, and air transport facilities worth several million dollars had been seriously damaged. Many schools and hospitals had been destroyed. There were almost 2.5 million displaced persons in Ethiopia, and although in order to feed them the Government had diverted substantial resources from development programmes, their average consumption was still below the daily famine ration of 400 grams per head.

4. The effects of natural and man-made disasters could only be overcome by adequate development efforts, and some three years previously the Ethiopian Government had therefore launched a comprehensive economic development campaign. The initial results were promising, though overshadowed by events. The rehabilitation of displaced persons, as in the case of victims of drought, had to be based on economic self-sufficiency and self-reliance; steps had therefore been taken to resettle some 700,000 displaced farmers and nomads who had elected to become farmers; it was hoped that they would become self-sufficient in food within three and a half years. In addition to the problems of the drought and displaced persons, Ethiopia was also now faced with the need to provide relief and rehabilitation for a large number of people returning from neighbouring countries; in the administrative region of Eritrea alone, there were between 60,000 and 70,000 such people and the numbers were expected to grow over the next few months.

5. With more than 5 million people at risk, the tasks facing the Ethiopian Government were more than it could manage with its own resources. A large external contribution would be needed if lives were to be saved. That meant that the lukewarm attitude of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees would have to change; although he had visited Ethiopia and discussed the situation with the Government, no action had so far been taken.

6. At the Government's invitation, the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator had organized a multi-donor mission to assess the situation created by the serious drought; following the mission's report, an appeal had been launched for assistance. Subsequently, the plight of the displaced persons had obliged the Government to make a further appeal for international assistance, as a result of which the interagency mission had visited Ethiopia. Its report revealed the full magnitude of the problem. He therefore hoped that the Secretary-General would make a proposal at the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly regarding the special arrangements mentioned in the report to co-ordinate both relief and development assistance for displaced persons and people affected by persistent drought and that other countries would respond accordingly.

7. In conclusion, he thanked all those who had already given assistance to the people of his country.

AGENDA ITEM 3

General discussion of international economic and social policy, including regional and sectoral developments (continued)*

DRAFT RESOLUTIONS E/1980/L.50, E/1980/L.47/Rev.1
AND E/1980/L.48

8. Mr. CHAGULA (United Republic of Tanzania) introduced a draft resolution on assistance to displaced persons in Ethiopia (E/1980/L.50) on behalf of the spon-

* Resumed from the 40th meeting.

sors, who had been joined by Algeria, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Nepal, the Sudan and Viet Nam.

9. In operative paragraph 4, the words "the United Nations Development Programme," should be followed by the words "the World Bank, "; the Bank had been a member of the interagency mission, and the sponsors apologized for the omission of its name from the text.

10. Mr. JÖDAHL (Sweden) introduced a revised draft resolution on international efforts to meet humanitarian needs in emergency situations (E/1980/L.47/Rev.1) on behalf of the sponsors. The revision contained no changes of substance but was simply a response to drafting comments made during the consideration of the original text.

11. In addition, in the seventh preambular paragraph of the revised text, the words "the International Committee of the Red Cross" should be preceded by the words "inter-governmental organizations, ". In the second line of operative paragraph 2, the words "to prepare" should be followed by the words "within existing financial resources".

Mr. Xifra de Ocerín (Spain), Vice-President, took the Chair.

12. Mr. BARAKAT (Jordan) introduced a draft resolution on the situation of refugees in Somalia (E/1980/L.48) on behalf of the sponsors, who had been joined by Burundi, Kuwait, Lesotho, Morocco, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia.

13. The sponsors had made two revisions to the text. First, the following should be inserted as a new fourth preambular paragraph:

"Expressing its appreciation to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and his staff for the dedicated and efficient manner in which they continue to work in support of refugees in Somalia".

14. Secondly, a new operative paragraph 3 should be added, reading as follows:

"Appeals once again to all Member States and inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations and all voluntary agencies to increase further their assistance to the Government of Somalia in its effort to provide relief and assistance to refugees in Somalia".

15. Mr. FRANZI (Italy) expressed the hope that draft resolution E/1980/L.48 would be adopted by consensus.

16. Mr. BLANKSON (Nigeria) said that the African group would like to submit a draft resolution on the refugee question and therefore requested that the time-limit for the submission of proposals should be extended.

It was so decided.

17. Mr. WHYTE (United Kingdom) suggested that before the Council considered the various draft resolutions consultations might usefully be held with a view to preparing a consolidated text.

Mr. Mavrommatis (Cyprus) resumed the Chair.

18. Mr. Abdullahi Said OSMAN (Observer for Somalia) reminded the Council that on 16 July 1980 the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator had been supposed to make an oral report to it on his visit to Ethiopia. One delegation, however, had insisted on the submission of an extensive written report. For reasons that were not clear to his delegation, that report (E/1980/104) had only just appeared, so far in English only, and there had been no time to study it in depth. He therefore requested that the Council should defer consideration of the report, which in the mean time could not be endorsed by his delegation.

19. At the 38th meeting, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had informed the Council in detail of the serious situation in Somalia and the extent of the assistance required; he had stated on 4 March 1980 that the

number of refugees in that country constituted the most serious problem of that type in the world. The Council was fully aware of the unparalleled influx of refugees into Somalia, which was bearing the brunt of the flight of refugees from Ethiopia, and in particular from Eritrea, to neighbouring areas. Successive official UNHCR reports had clearly shown that the cause was Ethiopian oppression. The phenomena of refugees and displaced persons were interconnected, particularly in the Horn of Africa, where they were attributable solely to the oppressive tyrannical régime in Addis Ababa.

20. The Ethiopian régime had appealed for emergency help from the international community for over 5 million so-called displaced persons reportedly facing starvation. But only one year before, a report by UNHCR had mentioned a request by the Ethiopian authorities for assistance for no more than 150,000 displaced persons. From the disparity in figures, the Council would doubtless draw its own conclusions about the veracity of the Ethiopian régime's statements.

21. Mr. TERREFE (Ethiopia), speaking on a point of order, said that the observer for Somalia should confine his remarks to the topic under consideration, namely, the statement by the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, and should refrain from slanderous remarks.

22. The PRESIDENT appealed to all speakers to eschew polemics. Although it was difficult to deal with subjects in isolation, the humanitarian aspect of the topic under consideration was surely the Council's foremost concern.

23. Mr. Abdullahi Said OSMAN (Observer for Somalia), continuing his statement, said it was ironic that a country which could place orders for more than 1 billion dollars' worth of arms from a guardian super-Power in order to spread death and disaster among its people should now be appealing for international aid to provide food and medicine for the victims of its destructiveness.

24. According to a recent issue of *The Sunday Times* of London, a United Nations mission to Ethiopia in May 1980 had reported that there were grounds for questioning the accuracy of the figures provided by the Ethiopian Government on the number of displaced persons. Stringent investigative procedures should therefore be applied to ensure that any international aid which might be given to Ethiopia reached the people who were genuinely affected and was not used to feed Ethiopian troops in their war of repression against the civilian population.

25. Mr. POPOV (Bulgaria), speaking on a point of order, urged that the observer for Somalia should be requested to confine his remarks to the item under discussion, namely, the report of the interagency mission to Ethiopia (E/1980/104), and to refrain from commenting on the internal affairs of that country.

26. Mr. Abdullahi Said OSMAN (Observer for Somalia), continuing his statement, said that his primary concern was to draw attention to the humanitarian problems posed by the plight of the massive numbers of refugees in the Horn of Africa. Was it not pertinent to seek the fundamental causes of that tragic situation? They were to be found in the unprecedentedly brutal oppression imposed on the region by the Addis Ababa régime. The Ethiopian forces were systematically destroying the very fabric of society, transforming many thousands of men, women and children into displaced persons in their own land or refugees beyond its frontiers. At the same time, the Addis Ababa régime was ruthlessly applying an *apartheid* type of policy, dispossessing thousands of farming families and removing them from the Ethiopian highlands to make way for new settlements. Against such a background of misery, international assistance could have no real impact until the Addis Ababa

régime abandoned its commitment to a military solution and acknowledged the will of the people to achieve self-determination.

27. Somalia, in keeping with its humanitarian tradition, was determined to support the call for assistance to refugees and displaced persons wherever they might be found. It would never oppose any action designed to relieve human suffering and misery and to ensure respect for human dignity. But any assistance sponsored by the United Nations must be carefully monitored to ensure that it actually reached the people for whom it was intended and was not diverted in support of the Ethiopian war effort. The United Nations should also address itself to the very heart of the problem, namely, the human rights of the afflicted population and the question of foreign intervention. Without a serious examination of those basic issues, any attempt to solve the region's problems would be doomed to failure.

28. The PRESIDENT pointed out that it was the duty of the international community as a whole, and of the Economic and Social Council in particular, to respond positively and without delay to human disasters wherever they might occur. The Council had indeed acted in that manner at its preceding session. But the root causes of those situations were a subject for discussion in other bodies. There was no place in the current discussion for the apportionment of blame. Moreover, the United Nations agencies responsible for administering relief could surely be trusted to ensure that it served its intended purpose.

29. He rejected the suggestion by the observer for Somalia that the delay in taking up the item under discussion could be ascribed to sinister machinations of some kind and assured him that enough time would be allowed for the Council to discuss the matter thoroughly.

30. Mr. HESSEL (France) welcomed that assurance by the President. Adequate time should be allowed for proper consideration of the documents before the Council. Noting that draft resolutions E/1980/L.48 and E/1980/L.50 each contained references to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, he said that he would be unable to take a position on those texts until the High Commissioner himself had had an opportunity to react to them.

31. Tragic though the circumstances were, the Council should exercise circumspection in its response. Any texts submitted for its adoption should be considered most carefully, with the aim of ensuring in advance, as far as possible, that their wording would command a great measure of support. Pending the submission of the draft resolution referred to by the Nigerian representative, members of the Council might usefully engage in consultations to determine what should be done and what measures of support could be approved by consensus.

32. Mr. INAN (Turkey) commended the report of the interagency mission to Ethiopia and deplored any suggestion that the impartiality of any United Nations mission could be called in question.

33. His delegation supported the aims of each of the three draft resolutions before the Council. It welcomed the oral revision made by the representative of Sweden to operative paragraph 2 of draft resolution E/1980/L.47/Rev.1, the effect of which should be to make additional sums available for relief work.

34. Mr. AL-SHAMMA'A (Iraq) suggested that, in view of the limited time available, the Council might merely take note of the report of the interagency mission to Ethiopia and leave its formal adoption to the General Assembly. Operative paragraph 1 of draft resolution E/1980/L.50 might thus be amended, the word "Endorses" being replaced by the words "Takes note of".

35. Mr. ADUGNA (Ethiopia), speaking in exercise of his right of reply, observed, with reference to the report of the interagency mission to Ethiopia, that there had been no opportunity to study the corresponding report on Somalia which had been submitted to the Council at its first regular session of 1980; it had nevertheless been accepted as a Council document. He appealed to members of the Council, having regard to the magnitude of the problem, not to postpone a decision on the Ethiopian report.

36. The observer for Somalia had raised the question of the root cause of the problems in the Horn of Africa. The world was well aware that it was the myth of Greater Somalia, based on legal and historical fictions, which had prompted successive Somali leaders to pursue a dangerous and colonialist policy of expansion, aimed at incorporating in the Somali State not only part of Ethiopia but also parts of Kenya and the whole of Djibouti. Their expansionist obsession was reflected in the Somali flag and Constitution. The Government of Somalia had pursued it through unceasing propaganda, aggression against Ethiopia and efforts to stop Djibouti from achieving real independence. It had diverted the scarce resources of the region from development, in Somalia and elsewhere.

37. It was not Ethiopia, but rather Somalia, which diverted humanitarian relief supplies to other ends, as was shown by recent newspaper accounts of sacks of grain donated as relief being found in guerrilla camps. Somali aggression violated the letter and the spirit of the OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. Somalia should respect the Charter of the United Nations with regard to the sovereignty of States, their territorial integrity and the principle of non-interference in their domestic affairs. It should ratify the international instruments on refugees.

38. Somalia's self-inflicted economic distress had recently prompted it to take advantage of a dangerous international situation and offer the country as a base to the highest bidder. It had also attempted to pass off its own widows and orphans as refugees. While there were some Ethiopians in Somalia, there were no *bona fide* refugees; they were people who had been forcibly kept there and trained for guerrilla warfare. It would be unfortunate if in the name of humanitarianism the Council were to lend support to a war of aggression. If, on the other hand, Somalia were to ask for assistance on account of the drought, which was indeed affecting its very limited area of arable land, Ethiopia would be the first to support the appeal.

39. The human suffering in Ethiopia might seem remote to some members of the Council, but it was a matter of life and death. He therefore urged the Council to consider the recommendations submitted in the report of the interagency mission to Ethiopia (E/1980/104).

40. Mr. Abdullahi Said OSMAN (Observer for Somalia), speaking in exercise of his right of reply, wondered whether the Ethiopian representative was really unaware of the reign of terror which was going on in Ethiopia, with loss of life and property and violation of every fundamental human right. There was clear evidence of the Ethiopian Government's inhuman treatment of the population, not just in a few areas, but in many regions of the country. In fact, it had been well said that, in spite of the change of régime, the Empire remained an empire still — autocratic, colonialist and racist. That was the sole reason for the floods of destitute refugees not only to Somalia but to other neighbouring countries. The reports of United Nations officials who visited the refugee camps bore eloquent testimony to the real situation.

41. With regard to Djibouti, Somalia had always been in the forefront of those championing its independence. United

Nations records showed that it was the Ethiopian delegation in imperial times which had consistently opposed it, as the Emperor of Ethiopia had laid claim to Djibouti himself. Somalia, on the other hand, had a tradition of supporting freedom fighters against oppression, whether of the old-style colonialist or the new-style hegemonist sort. The sanctity of frontiers did not apply in a colonialist situation.

42. The Council should exercise care in considering the claim for international assistance advanced by the Ethiopian representative.

43. Mr. CHEREDNIK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the Council was being somewhat slack in applying the rules of procedure to the statements of one of the observers at the current session. He proposed that the Council should address itself to the specific proposals which had been submitted to it. His own delegation had no difficulty in supporting draft resolutions E/1980/L.47/Rev.1, E/1980/L.48 and E/1980/L.50. Members had had just as much time to study the report of the interagency mission to Ethiopia and the relevant draft resolution as the documents relating to a number of other agenda items. The draft resolution on assistance to displaced persons in Ethiopia (E/1980/L.50) seemed to be clear and to the point. As the President had already observed in reply to the irresponsible and irrelevant comments by the observer for Somalia, the Council should apply the same principle to all three draft resolutions as it had in similar circumstances at its first regular session of 1980.

44. Mr. Saleh Haji FARAH (Observer for Djibouti), speaking in exercise of his right of reply, said his country was grateful to Member States that had supported it in its struggle for independence. However, he was surprised that the Ethiopian and Somali representatives had felt constrained to speak in the name of Djibouti when that country had its own representative present. Djibouti well knew how to speak on its own behalf and would not allow any other delegation to act as its advocate on any political matter.

45. Mr. ADUGNA (Ethiopia), speaking in exercise of his right of reply, said he wished to assure the observer for Djibouti that he had not intended to speak on that country's behalf. He had merely referred to the fact that the Somali Constitution and flag implied that Somalia incorporated Djibouti.

46. With regard to the destruction wrought in Ethiopia by Somali aggression, he could not do better than refer to the 1979 report of the Deputy Assistant Administrator of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa, in which it was stated that all the promising irrigation schemes started in Ogaden

in 1976 to resettle nomads on the land had been destroyed by the war and that the population had been dispersed. True freedom meant freedom from hunger and disease. He again appealed to the Council to consider the report of the interagency mission to Ethiopia as a matter of urgency.

47. Mr. Abdullahi Said OSMAN (Observer for Somalia), speaking in exercise of his right of reply, said that although the Soviet representative had seen fit to describe his comments as irresponsible, he had never referred to the Soviet Union either by name or by implication. However, it was worth reminding the Soviet representative of the destruction that had taken place in Afghanistan and of the generally disruptive role which, in the name of socialism, the country he represented had played everywhere in Africa and Asia.

48. Mr. CHEREDNIK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) enquired how the President proposed to apply rule 46 of the rules of procedure.

49. The PRESIDENT said that when the question of the interpretation of rule 46 had been raised at the Council's first regular session of 1980, he had ruled, in conformity with the practice of the Council since its establishment, that observers could exercise the right of reply. His ruling had not been challenged by any member of the Council. It was for members to take the appropriate action to put an end to the exchange if they so desired.

50. Mr. Abdullahi Said OSMAN (Observer for Somalia), speaking in exercise of his right of reply, said that observers at meetings of the Economic and Social Council enjoyed full rights, with the exception of the right to vote.

51. It was clearly untrue that the havoc in Ethiopia had been caused by Somali aggression, since conditions in Eritrea and elsewhere were no better than in the Ogaden.

52. The question before the Council was one of procedure; as the Iraqi representative had observed, it was inappropriate for the Council to approve a long and detailed report which it had not had an opportunity to examine. The most the Council could do was to take note of the report and leave it for consideration by the General Assembly or by a subsequent session of the Council, when representatives would have had time to hold the necessary consultations.

53. Mr. ADUGNA (Ethiopia), speaking in exercise of his right of reply, said that, on the subject of Somali aggression, it was instructive to remember the statement issued by the Somali Government itself on 15 March 1978 announcing that it had withdrawn all its forces from the battlefield.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

43rd meeting

Wednesday, 23 July 1980, at 3.25 p.m.

President: Mr. Andreas V. MAVROMMATIS (Cyprus).

E/1980/SR.43

AGENDA ITEM 2

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (*continued*)*

CALENDAR OF CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS
(E/1980/L.41 AND ADD.1)

1. The PRESIDENT pointed out that the Committee for Development Planning, at its sixteenth session, had pro-

posed the changes in the venue and dates of two of its working group meetings recorded in paragraph 5 of the note by the Secretariat (E/1980/L.41). The Secretariat also proposed that the twenty-first session of the Statistical Commission should be rescheduled, as indicated in paragraph 2 of document E/1980/L.41/Add.1. If there were no objections, he would take it that the Council concurred in those changes.

* Resumed from the 39th meeting.

It was so decided (decision 1980/157).