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CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present document gives a brief account of the meeting between representatives of the general secretariat of OAU and the secretariats of the United Nations and other organisations within the United Nations system, as called for in paragraph 17 of resolution 42/9.

II. PREPARATORY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE MEETING

2. The Secretary-General, in consultation with the Secretary-General of OAU, convened the meeting between representatives of the OAU secretariat and the secretariats of organisations within the United Nations system from 31 August to 2 September 1988 at Headquarters in New York. Participation in the meeting was as follows:

(a) United Nations

Office of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation

Department for Special Political Questions, Regional Co-operation, Decolonization and Trusteeship

Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO)

World Food Programme (WFP)

World Food Council (WFC)

United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO)

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (HABITAT)

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)

(b) Specialized agencies

International Labour Organisation (ILO)

Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)

World Health Organization (WHO)

World Bank

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

(c) The general secretariat of OAU.

3. The meeting confined its discussion to a review of the current state of co-operation between the United Nations system and the OAU secretariat and its specialized agencies and on measures taken or planned to alleviate the adverse socio-economic impact of emergency situations in Africa, including ways and means by which the OAU secretariat and the United Nations system can co-operate in order to bring about a more effective response.

4. The documentation for the meeting consisted of papers relating to the dimensions and impact of emergency situations in Africa (see annex), presented by OAU and the various components of the United Nations system.

III. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

5. As in past years, it was agreed that the meetings would be chaired alternately by a representative of the United Nations system and a representative of the general secretariat of OAU. The present meeting was chaired by Mr. Abdulrahim A. Farah, Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Questions, Regional Co-operation, Decolonization and Trusteeship of the secretariat and Mr. A. Haggag, Assistant Secretary-General in charge of the Department for Economic Development and Co-operation of OAU.

6. The agenda of the meeting included a general discussion on progress made and obstacles encountered in the co-operation between the United Nations system and the OAU secretariat, as well as recommendations on (a) strengthening co-ordination and co-operation between the United Nations system and the OAU secretariat and (b) bringing about a more effective response to emergency situations in Africa.

IV. OPENING STATEMENTS

7. The Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation of the United Nations Secretariat welcomed all participants on behalf of the Secretary-General. After referring to recent achievements on the political front, to which the joint efforts of OAU and the United Nations had contributed and to the ongoing actions organized in the context of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery, the Director-General endorsed the view, expressed by the OAU secretariat, that there was scope for further and closer co-operation and that this should reflect on the complementary roles and capacities of the two organisations.

8. In the light of the recurrent nature of natural calamities in many parts of the African continent, there was need for a coherent and integrated approach to emergency situations in Africa, which should include not only strengthening the preparedness of African countries to deal with emergency situations, but also the rehabilitation of the productive, transport and logistic capacities damaged by natural calamities.

9. The United Nations continued to play an important role in the development of such an approach; this role was particularly significant in rehabilitation efforts, the establishment and maintenance of permanent national emergency mechanisms, the strengthening of subregional and regional institutions as well as in the utilization of the emergency assistance in a manner which supported and strengthened recovery and development. The United Nations had established emergency operational groups in various countries in Africa, under the chairmanship of the United Nations Resident Co-ordinators and composed of representatives of the United Nations agencies and organizations.

10. The Secretary-General of OAU, in a message read by the OAU Assistant Secretary-General, paid tribute to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the steps he had taken to organize the meeting. He said that the most important aspect of the joint exercise consisted not in managing the emergency situations, but in providing the emergency assistance required and in responding to emergency needs. He added that emergency situations should not be considered as a permanent phenomenon but as a temporary one. The two complementary Programmes, Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery and the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery, should be the basis for United Nations-OAU joint actions in tackling the problem of the emergency situations, as they offered a solid basis for a permanent solution.

11. The OAU Secretary-General paid tribute to, and recorded OAU's appreciation for, the work of such organizations as FAO, WFP, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNDP, UNDRO and others, which had continued to provide humanitarian assistance to affected African populations. He stressed again that whatever emergency assistance might be provided in order to meet the immediate needs, it was even more important to seek ways and means to mitigate the effects of those situations. The most important issue, he said, was to seek to build effective economic and social infrastructures that would enable those affected to cope with the emergencies through their own efforts.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

12. The following conclusions and recommendations emerged from the discussions:

A. Co-operation in political, economic, social and cultural fields

13. The meeting noted the positive co-operation between the United Nations system and OAU and its specialized agencies as manifest in their many joint activities. In keeping with the spirit of the guidelines in General Assembly resolution 42/9, the meeting considered in detail the status of co-operation and made specific recommendations for further strengthening this co-operation.

14. The meeting stressed the need for maintaining and strengthening regular consultations between OAU and the United Nations system as needed, with a view to implementing fully the joint responsibilities of OAU and the United Nations with respect to policy instruments adopted by their policy organs.

15. The meeting noted the complementary roles of OAU and the United Nations system. To further the common objectives of both organizations, it was recommended that OAU should, wherever necessary, lend its political and moral support to the efforts of the United Nations system in programmes designed to assist African countries.

16. The relationship agreements with OAU provided not only for the exchange of information and representation in meetings, but also for joint action in the field of development. It was agreed, therefore, that an appropriate arrangement should be worked out with OAU for United Nations agencies to keep the OAU legislative authorities informed on their activities in Africa, to enable OAU to assist in the appraisal of those activities. This arrangement should be taken into consideration and harmonized with sectoral conferences of ministers. The present practice of the OAU general secretariat attending meetings of the legislative bodies of the United Nations agencies should be expanded, as such attendance has proven to be most effective in assisting African countries in working out common positions at these meetings.

17. While the active participation of the organizations of the United Nations system in the meetings of the Permanent Steering Committee of OAU was noted, it was recommended that further avenues of co-operation should be explored. The meeting agreed on the need for systematic exchange of information on projects and programmes at all levels and the establishment of joint work programmes and calendars, which should be reviewed periodically and communicated to all concerned for their inputs. In relation to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery, United Nations specialized agencies should endeavour to keep OAU and the Permanent Steering Committee fully informed on their activities in the area of their responsibilities through periodic reports and communications.

18. Closer working arrangements should be planned in order to harmonize the activities of the OAU Permanent Steering Committee and the United Nations Steering Committee for the follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery during the second phase.
19. The OAU general secretariat and its specialized agencies should identify their specific requirements, which arise mainly but not exclusively from requests addressed to the former by its legislative authorities, for assistance from United Nations agencies, subject to the legislative mandates of the respective agencies. Such assistance could include financing of experts on short-term assignments, preparation of studies, financing of OAU missions on substantive issues, and staff training.
20. Joint development of project proposals should also be envisaged. This related to work programmes emanating from OAU or its specialized agencies, which required promotion by United Nations agencies for financing through special-purpose contributions or, where feasible, from their regular budgets. Such joint formulation would enable the OAU general secretariat or its specialized agencies to request for financing from pertinent United Nations specialized agencies.
21. The OAU referred to the practice of some United Nations agencies and organizations in taking advantage of OAU conferences to peddle, without prior consultation, resolutions of specific interest to them. To avoid misunderstandings and as a matter of courtesy, it was hoped that in future the agencies would provide advance information to the OAU secretariat on any resolution which they planned to promote at such conferences.
22. The meeting was informed that of a Joint Committee had been established as a co-ordinating mechanism among the secretariats of OAU, ECA and UNIDO. The Committee meets every six months to harmonize and co-ordinate their joint activities relating to the implementation of the Industrial Development Decade for Africa. It would meet in the near future to exchange views on the issues to be presented to the ninth meeting of the Conference for African Ministers for Industry and the meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts of the Whole on Industrialization of Africa, to take place during the third quarter of 1989. UNIDO invited agencies concerned to provide suggestions regarding the provisional agenda to be considered by the Joint Committee.
23. Attention was drawn to the mid-term independent evaluation of the Industrial Development Decade for Africa, and those United Nations agencies that the evaluation team would be visiting were urged to provide it with all necessary information. A detailed letter on the matter will be sent by UNIDO to all the agencies concerned.

B. Emergency situations

1. General considerations

24. The participants in the joint meeting noted that the factors outlined in the paper prepared by OAU on the political dimensions of emergency situations were indeed an important component of the emergency situation in certain countries. In some cases, the principal factor was the campaign of destabilization conducted by South Africa; in other cases, other internal and external forces were at work. Close co-operation between OAU and the United Nations was required in order to help alleviate those situations.

25. The OAU and the United Nations system should co-ordinate their efforts and take every opportunity to sensitise the international community on the urgent and imperative need to end apartheid and the illegal occupation of Namibia, which constitute the root cause of the present tragedy in southern Africa.

2. Need for an integrated approach

26. The meeting was of the view that while immediate relief and life-saving action must be undertaken whenever possible, particularly in response to natural and man-made disasters, emergency relief programmes should, from inception, be broadened to form the basis of recovery and development (including measures to reduce vulnerability and improve response capacity to drought and conflict situations). Long-term solutions should be taken into consideration simultaneously with emergency considerations for self-sufficiency, including the provision of shelter and production of building materials from the region.

27. The meeting noted with concern the difficulties experienced by donors in addressing in a comprehensive manner problems related to emergency relief, rehabilitation and related development programmes. Some participants suggested that since a solution to the problem would require changes in internal structures and procedures, as well as the support of major donors, it might be useful to encourage the holding of an international meeting on the theme "Relief and/or development", to sensitise donors and the international community to the vital necessity of development as a final solution for emergency situation in Africa. Given the complexity of the issues involved and the need for further analysis, it was agreed that participants who were also attending the Standing Committee of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery should refer the proposal to that body for its consideration.

28. Joint efforts should be made to design and support multi-sectoral integrated programmes that are linked from inception to rehabilitation, environmental protection and development. These should focus, in particular, on:

- (a) Moving from food relief emergency to household food security;

(b) Rehabilitation and strengthening of basic services, especially primary health care and shelter;

(c) Provision of special assistance to most vulnerable groups;

(d) Enhancing capacities of key institutions and programmes to address the emergency situation.

29. In this context, the meeting noted with appreciation the excellent response of donors to appeals for food aid and other urgent humanitarian requirements in times of emergency. The meeting, however, expressed grave concern over the consistently inadequate response on the part of the donor community to the crucial rehabilitation requirements that are an integral part of emergency assistance appeals. The meeting, therefore, strongly recommends that in the future, extra efforts must be made jointly by the United Nations, OAU and affected Governments to convince the donor community to provide a more appropriate and consistent response to such requirements.

30. The meeting recommends that donors involved in emergency aid programmes should establish a capacity within their aid structure to deal specifically with rehabilitation programmes and activities. In the implementation stage, the United Nations system has an important role to play in support of rehabilitation efforts and the establishment and maintenance of permanent national emergency mechanisms.

31. The meeting recognized the effectiveness and importance of non-governmental organisations in the mobilization of emergency and rehabilitation assistance in complex emergency situations in Africa. It urged OAU and the United Nations system to co-operate more fully with such organizations.

32. The meeting noted the crucial importance of working closely with representatives of donor Governments in assessing emergency and rehabilitation requirements and in preparing international appeals.

33. The meeting noted that rehabilitation needs were not receiving adequate support. Long-term support of rehabilitation programmes should go hand-in-hand with emergency assistance. The reconstruction and equipping of social services, e.g., health, water, education, shelter and the rehabilitation of displaced persons, are areas that require urgent and sustained support. The United Nations system and OAU have an important role to play in mobilizing assistance from the international community for self-sustained recovery and long-term self-reliant development. An integrated approach to the problem is required, which would cover the preparedness, prevention, response and rehabilitation aspects.

3. Enhancing national capacities

34. There is an urgent need to adopt a comprehensive approach to emergency situations aimed at enhancing national and regional capabilities to forecast, prepare for, respond to, and combat emergency situations.

35. Co-operation between the OAU secretariat and the United Nations system in developing more effective responses to emergency situations in Africa in support of Governments depends in part on United Nations inter-agency co-ordination. In the emergency planning process, each agency's mission should be well defined within the context of the agency's mandate to avoid overlapping of efforts. To increase the effectiveness of the emergency response of governments, it is essential to increase investment in management training by making full use of training institutions and programmes already existing in Africa.

4. Disaster preparedness

36. Further improvements in the area of mitigation of disasters are necessary and possible. Too often pre-disaster planning deals only with disaster impact and relief, without adequate consideration of recovery in the longer term. The recent agreement between UNDR0 and UNDP on their respective roles and their necessary co-operation in the field should facilitate a continuity from relief through rehabilitation and development.

37. In the case of slow-moving disasters like drought, it is important to devote an adequate part of the research to the ongoing socio-economic and ecological context in which the disaster develops. Detailed information on potentially disastrous situations in Africa is lacking for almost all hazards. A more systematic approach of African Governments to early warning systems, already well developed by FAO and WFP, should be encouraged. The International Decade on Natural Disaster Reduction should provide an important opportunity to acquire better scientific, technical and social knowledge of disasters in Africa. Each African Government should be encouraged to set up its own national committee for the Decade.

38. In this context, steps should be taken to implement Economic Commission for Africa resolution 645 (XXIII) which asks the Executive Secretary of ECA, working in co-operation with the Secretary-General of OAU and UNDR0, to prepare a plan of action for coping with natural disasters and limiting their adverse affects on the economic and social development of Africa in general and of African least developed countries in particular.

5. Addressing root causes

39. Efforts should be intensified to address the root causes of the emergency situations. The OAU and the United Nations system can collaborate further to promote better disaster planning and preparedness on the African continent, either at the level of individual States or regionally.

40. In the ongoing efforts at economic restructuring of African countries, policy-makers and decision-makers should keep in mind the human dimension - social development - as a viable investment in reducing vulnerability in the face of recurring emergencies. The Khartoum Declaration of March 1988 endorsed by OAU clearly analyses this concept, and its recommendations merit continued advocacy and support by both the United Nations and OAU.

41. Given the wide mandate of OAU, and the specific responsibilities and resources available to the United Nations system, the meeting recommended that as a possible division of labour, the OAU could provide assistance to the United Nations system in securing political and moral support. The OAU could also assist in mobilising the international community to provide needed resources in emergency situations.

42. The meeting agreed on the need to give priority to environmental aspects of emergency situations. In this respect, it added that the United Nations Plan of Action to combat desertification, adopted in 1977, provides guidelines for a concerted resource management programme to respond to emergencies (famine, diseases, conflicts, etc.) that arise from the intermittent drought and desertification processes in Africa.

43. The meeting stressed the need to implement the Cairo Programme of Action for Environmental Co-operation in Africa, adopted in 1985. The Programme aims at halting and reversing environmental degradation through scientific and technical co-operation and assisting African countries to achieve self-sufficiency in food and energy.

44. The meeting noted that both Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery and the UN Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery recommend a set of practical environmental measures for possible joint action by OAU and the United Nations at the subregional, regional and international levels, with regard, inter alia, to:

(a) Promotion of exchange of information, know-how and technologies in desertification and drought control;

(b) Establishment of an early-warning system for drought;

(c) Better management of water resources, including river basins and irrigation;

(d) Improvement of drainage in irrigated areas;

(e) Implementation of OAU resolution CM/Res.450 (XXI) on the establishment of an international hydrological map for Africa to locate the underground water resources to mitigate the effects of drought;

(f) Full implementation of the Plan of Action to combat Desertification;

(g) Full implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action for African Co-operation on the Environment.

6. The situation of refugees and other displaced persons

45. With respect to the refugee situation and the problem of displaced persons in Africa, new approaches should be found to allow the refugees and the displaced to become self-reliant and to channel their energies into genuine development. In

this regard, OAU and the United Nations should co-ordinate their efforts in assessing the basic requirements and in evolving joint programmes and projects.

46. The OAU and the United Nations system should, in addition to providing international protection and material assistance to refugees, intensify and co-ordinate their efforts, as a matter of priority, with a view to:

(a) Creating favourable conditions for the voluntary repatriation of refugees, by providing a suitable and adequate consultative platform between the country of asylum and the country of origin of the refugees;

(b) Evolving settlement and rehabilitation policies and programmes in either the recipient country or the country of origin and, if need be, supporting the regional resettlement of refugees;

(c) Taking active and positive collective measures for the promotion and implementation of the existing international and regional instruments on the protection of refugees, recognizing clearly their rights and the implications for the young generations;

(d) Promoting respect for the rights of human beings;

(e) Accelerating the implementation of projects of the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, with special emphasis on the linkage between refugee aid and development.

47. The meeting noted that the problem of internally displaced people in Africa was growing in scope and severity. While the requirements attendant to their urgent and mid-term needs were essentially similar to those for refugees and returnees, the meeting concluded that additional efforts were required on the part of the United Nations and OAU to assist Governments concerned with the problems created by the presence of large numbers of displaced people within their territories. This would require assistance in the elaboration of appropriate programmes and a subsequent mobilization of resources to fund them.

48. The meeting took note of the recommendation made at the recent Oslo International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa that appropriate steps should be taken within the United Nations system to allocate specific and clear cut responsibility within its overall structure for assisting Governments in dealing with the plight of displaced people in Africa.

7. Information and co-ordination

49. The meeting recognized the important role that public information networks can play at both country and international levels in the dissemination of information on the plight of displaced people and refugees. The meeting noted with satisfaction that this fact was also recognized by the Oslo Conference.

50. The need for experience sharing and exchange of information in emergency situations was stressed. The wide political mandate and existing mechanisms of OAU could be of critical importance to the efforts of the United Nations system in disaster situations. UNDRO, in consultation with the UNDP Resident Representatives/Resident Co-ordinators, issues urgent situation reports and monitors developments through permanent linkages with the emergency information systems of FAO, WFP, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNDP and others. The attention of the meeting was drawn to the existence of UNDRONET, a computerized information system analysing and circulating up-to-date information on emergency situations to all interested countries and institutions.

51. Concerning refugees and other displaced persons, it was noted that the Steering Committee of the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa will be responsible for the follow-up within the United Nations system to the Oslo Conference (see para. 54). At present there appears to be no general compendium of development projects related to refugees. It was recommended that the current information systems related to rehabilitation and development efforts in favour of refugees and other displaced persons should be reviewed. A similar appraisal would also be useful with regard to the information systems concerning overall requirements and responses as established in the context of the proposed integrated relief, rehabilitation, preparedness and development programmes related to emergency situations.

52. It was generally felt that the United Nations system should intensify its efforts to co-ordinate its activities in the field of disaster prevention and preparedness and related rehabilitation and development work in Africa, in order to provide timely, effective and result-oriented advice and support to African Governments. The meeting recognized this would require increased co-operation and regular information exchange between the OAU secretariat and the Office for Special Emergency Programme with regard to relief and rehabilitation and with ECA and the Office of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation of the Secretariat with respect to economic recovery and development in the context of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery.

53. Emphasis was placed on specific responsibilities and capabilities within the United Nations system in assisting the OAU and African countries in the areas of early warning systems, needs assessment, resource mobilization, pipeline management, disaster preparedness, training and support, and socio-economic research.

VI. THEMES AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

54. The following themes were proposed by some participants for the next meeting between the OAU general secretariat and its specialized agencies and the United Nations system:

1. Human resources development;
2. Self-sufficiency in food production.

55. Other participants indicated that they would forward suggestions to the OAU secretariat in due course.

56. It was proposed by OAU that the next meeting between the United Nations system and the OAU secretariat be held at Addis Ababa.

ANNEX

Documentation*

General discussion on Co-operation between the OAU secretariat and the United Nations system: Progress made and obstacles encountered - Discussion paper prepared by OAU.

Dimensions and Impact of Emergency Situations on Africa: Socio-Economic Dimensions - Discussion paper prepared by OAU.

The Socio-Economic and Rehabilitation Aspects of Emergency Situations in Africa - Discussion paper prepared by ECA.

Impact of Emergency Situations in Africa and Political Dimensions - Discussion paper prepared by OAU.

Human Dimensions of Emergency Situations in Africa - Discussion paper prepared by UNICEF.

Environmental Dimensions and Impacts of Emergency Situations in Africa - Discussion paper prepared by UNEP.

Disaster Prevention and Preparedness - Discussion paper prepared by UNDRO.

Other documents were made available at the meeting.

* The documents were issued in English only.