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### PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE SIXTY-SIXTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Thursday, 7 November 1985, at 10.30 a.m.

President: Mr. DE PINIÉS (Spain)  
later: Mr. SARRÉ (Vice-President) (Senegal)

- Critical economic situation in Africa: report of the Secretary-General [30]

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 30

CRITICAL ECONOMIC SITUATION IN AFRICA: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/40/372 and Add.1 and 2)

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate on this item be closed today at 12 noon

If I hear no objection, it will be so decided.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Spanish): I therefore request those representatives wishing to participate in the debate to put their names on the list as soon as possible.

I call on the Secretary-General.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: It is particularly appropriate that the critical economic and social situation in Africa should figure prominently on the agenda of this session of the General Assembly.

As representatives are aware, over the past year the United Nations has been engaged in an almost unprecedented effort to mobilize the international community in common action with the African peoples and their Governments to avert the danger of starvation which threatens the lives of more than 100 million men, women and children on the African continent. The task is still incomplete and we must continue these efforts. At the same time, I believe it would be useful now to look back on this experience to see what we have learned as a guide to the future.

We have learned about the courage of people enduring suffering and hardship; but, even more important, we have learned that the people of the world do care about their fellow human beings. I have been deeply moved by the overwhelming response of voluntary organizations as well as ordinary citizens throughout the world. As we look forward, it is important to engage and draw strength from this sense of common humanity.

(The Secretary-General)

We have learned that Governments are prepared to join in a common effort, and this is an important lesson in these days when multilateralism is being questioned. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) has provided indispensable leadership in mobilizing support on that continent, but countries everywhere have joined in the effort in partnership with the affected countries themselves. The pattern of effective common action which evolved should have significance for our future endeavours.

Finally, we have learned that the United Nations system can play a leading role in mobilizing the international community. Within the United Nations, the Office for Emergency Operations in Africa serves as the focal point to facilitate a co-ordinated response by the organizations of the system and by the international community as a whole. It is a team effort which involves the active participation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO), as well as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

As a part of this process the organizations of the system have demonstrated a capacity to deliver. For example, during 1985 5 million tons of food aid were distributed, together with vast amounts of other essential relief supplies. Among other things, this involved the realistic assessment of requirements and the identification of those most in need on a country-by-country basis. Even more difficult has been the task of establishing logistic arrangements to ensure the efficient distribution of supplies. I should like to take this opportunity to pay a personal tribute to all those involved at Headquarters and in the field, in particular, Mr. Bradford Morse and his colleagues, Mr. Farah, Mr. Strong and Mr. Adedcji.

(The Secretary-General)

The net result of all these efforts has been a new alliance between peoples, Governments and the United Nations system, a process of practical consultation and collaboration among all concerned, which saved the lives of millions. It is essential that we maintain this alliance in the future as we deal with both the continuing emergency situation and the equally urgent problems of rehabilitation and development.

The emergency situation in Africa has not ended. Rains have come to some areas and prospects for those countries have improved, but one season of rain does not mean the end of the famine and we must expect that drought will be a recurring feature of African life. Even now the drought continues in some parts of Africa and too many people still face an immediate threat of starvation and malnutrition. There are urgent non-food emergency requirements which have not been adequately met: agricultural and pastoral inputs, health, water and logistics. Moreover, it will take time to repair the damage caused by the drought and deal with the problem of displaced persons. We must continue our efforts to provide the necessary relief and recovery assistance to all those in need. I urge all Member States to continue their generous support.

The drought emergency has highlighted the seriousness of the underlying development crises in Africa. Even if the worst of the famine is over, there are serious economic problems which do not stem from the famine. Africa is the only continent where standards of living have declined in the past decade and continue to decline today.

The international community must attack the fundamental problem of long-term development with the same sense of collective urgency as characterized the response to the drought. Emergency aid, recovery and development cannot be distinguished but are a continuum of required action. Failure to recognize this will inevitably result in a recurring cycle of crisis and will condemn millions of our fellow human beings to lives of poverty and degradation.

(The Secretary-General)

In my recent meetings with Government leaders and in listening to their statements before the Assembly I have been impressed that there is wide agreement on the nature and urgency of the problems confronting Africa. Clearly, the improvement of performance in the agricultural sector, in particular with respect to food crops, must be given highest priority.

(The Secretary-General)

Equally pressing is the need to restore external resources, which must involve relief of debt service payments, increased net financial flows and improved export earnings. In this context, it is significant that at their recent meetings in Seoul, Korea, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank emphasized that adjustments should be centred on growth rather than short-term adjustment and the consequent need for additional resources.

A high degree of priority is given to the rehabilitation, maintenance and repair of existing industry and infrastructure and to the promotion of non-traditional commodity exports. The purpose of development remains the well-being of people; thus greater attention must be paid to social aspects of development and the mobilization of human resources.

There also seems to be a growing consensus on what needs to be done. The Declaration on the Critical Economic Situation in Africa adopted by the thirty-ninth session of the General Assembly provides a comprehensive outline, and the Assembly has before it my report on subsequent developments. The Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, meeting in July of this year, approved both a declaration and a priority programme for economic recovery. These documents and the recent resolution of the Economic and Social Council on the critical economic situation in Africa, as well as the report by the Group of Experts on Aid appointed by the Bonn Economic Summit, have been circulated and I commend them to the attention of the Assembly.

The Organization of African Unity has proposed the convening of a special session of the General Assembly to deliberate on the issues of the critical economic situation in Africa. A special session could serve to sensitize and mobilize the international community, to bring into effective operation that alliance of peoples, Governments and the United Nations system which worked so well in dealing with the drought-related emergency. The work of the session should

(The Secretary-General)

be directed towards achieving practical agreement on action.

It should be possible to improve upon and apply the experience recently acquired in dealing with the drought emergency. Country-level consultation with the full participation of all concerned, in particular the affected countries, proved to be vital in reaching common agreement on specific needs and co-ordinating action to respond to those needs.

There is one final lesson which I hope we have all learned, namely, that delay and procrastination result only in unnecessary human suffering and misery. There were ample warnings of the impending drought-related crises and the failure to respond earlier resulted in an untold number of deaths and the crippling of a young generation. We cannot let that happen again. Let us act now with urgency and with compassion.

Mr. SARRE (Senegal) (interpretation from French): My country, Senegal, has the signal honour of introducing, on behalf of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), of which it is current Chairman, agenda item 30, on the critical economic situation in Africa.

The concern of the international community over the exacerbation of the tragic situation in African countries affected by the crisis was made particularly clear in December 1984 by the adoption of resolution 39/29, to which the Declaration on the Critical Economic Situation in Africa is annexed. That resolution of the Assembly contributed notably to what may be considered the awakening of the international community to the serious problems of Africa. I should like to express once more, on behalf of the current Chairman of OAU, the deep gratitude of OAU, and of Africa, to the entire international community, in particular to the United Nations system, its Secretary-General and his assistants and to the many charitable organizations and individuals that have so generously responded to the appeal launched.

(Mr. Sarré, Senegal)

This surge of human solidarity has made it possible, as everybody knows, to save millions of human lives and alleviate the sufferings of many people during the worst famine ever experienced by Africa. We reiterate our appeal to the community of donors to continue to give humanitarian assistance to the peoples of the countries affected. The statement just made by the Secretary-General on the situation in Africa was most eloquent on the subject.

However, even though the alarming emergency situation on our continent did attract the attention and generous sympathy of the international community, the fact remains that structural economic problems could exhaust the economies of African countries seriously affected by the crisis and even result in the emergence of serious crises if the appropriate energetic measures are not very speedily taken. Indeed, the crisis in which the world economy has become bogged down, despite several signs of a relative recovery in some of the developed countries, has had disastrous and alarming consequences for the economies of African countries, whose prospects of development have never been as dubious as they are at the present time.

Just over two weeks ago, Mr. Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic of Senegal and current Chairman of OAU, recalled in this Hall that 40 years earlier the founding fathers of the United Nations had committed themselves not only to bringing about peace and international security but also "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom".

The establishment of a truly peaceful world in which international security would not be seriously threatened depends above all on the elimination in all regions of the world of hunger, misery and despair, because no real prospects for survival, even less of development, have emerged.



(Mr. Sarre, Senegal)

Can the world in which we live today remain much longer peaceful if we must remain eternally divided into rich nations and increasingly poorer ones?

Africa, as we are all well aware, is the only continent in which the standard of living has declined during the last decade and unfortunately will continue to decline unless bold measures are taken with urgency. Africa according to all economic indicators and forecasts, holds some sorry world records: the lowest level of development; three quarters of the least-developed and most severely affected countries; the smallest share of world industrial and agricultural production; the most disastrous food situation; the lowest literacy rate; and, finally, the greatest number of refugees. To that collection of negative records must be added, unfortunately, a continuing deterioration in terms of trade, an alarming decline in commodity prices, an unfavourable trade, financial and economic environment, a distinct lack of financial resources, insurmountable protectionist barriers, unrelenting drought and desertification, a crushing burden of foreign debt, a substantial reduction of public assistance for development, considerable fluctuation in rates of exchange, high interest rates and so on.

(Mr. Sarré, Senegal)

Our continent is the only region in the world where food and agricultural production has declined in more than 30 countries. One African out of every five today is fed by imports, which consumes one quarter of foreign currency earnings. In 1984 grain production in Africa was for the first time less than 100 kilograms per capita, when the minimum daily ration should be 140 kilograms. In 42 African countries, representing 95 per cent of our continent's population, per capita food production in 1984 did not reach the 1974-1976 level.

Africa is the driest of continents, where only one fifth of the land is cultivable, and according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), every year the encroaching desert takes 60,000 to 70,000 square kilometres of agricultural land. Some countries affected by desertification find their very existence threatened.

The process of industrialization, which has been at a standstill in our continent, has also encountered serious difficulties and has not been capable of giving the necessary dynamism to the structural transformation of African economies. Today, as has been noted in the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Africa is the least industrialized region in the world and must import nearly all capital goods and most modern consumer goods.

In trade, African exports have declined by 7 per cent in volume and 20 per cent in value between 1981 and 1982. According to some forecasts, the year 1985 will doubtless see a new decline in the terms of trade for African countries, and this in conjunction with a revival of protectionism, may well further increase Africa's poverty.

The spectacular growth in Africa's total foreign debt, which in 1983 represented 59 per cent of the gross domestic product, together with the rise in the cost of debt servicing which will have more than doubled between 1981 and 1984, have made our continent a net contributor of funds to the developed countries."

(Mr. Sarré, Senegal)

These various external constraints have considerably reduced the anticipated scope of the adjustment and recovery measures, socially and economically very costly which our various Governments have courageously undertaken at the national level.

Given this gloomy and alarming picture which various reports, studies and publications have clearly highlighted, our Heads of State or Government, at their 21st conference held last July in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, undertook with objectivity, calm, lucidity, courage and a spirit of responsibility, a critical analysis of our continent's economic and social situation and its prospects for development, for they are convinced that, as the Secretary-General states in his report, in view of its vast resources Africa has the necessary potential for its economic growth.

The recent meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) at Seoul last month clearly demonstrated that policies of structural adjustment were not viable without sustained growth.

Mr. Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic of Senegal, speaking from this same rostrum on 21 October of this year in his capacity as the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), gave a most useful analytical summary of the main decisions taken at the important summit meeting at Addis Ababa, which we all recognize constituted a decisive turning point for our continent's future.

Indeed, having recognized and solemnly reaffirmed that Africa's economic recovery is first and foremost the responsibility of the African Governments and peoples, the OAU adopted a declaration on the economic situation in Africa and a priority five-year programme which will enable us to lay down a basis for sustained growth and self-reliant and self-sustained development at the national, regional and continental levels. This priority programme is based essentially on the following five measures. The first is accelerated implementation of the Lagos Plan

(Mr. Sarré, Senegal)

of Action and the Final Act of Lagos; the second is improvement of the food and agricultural situation in Africa; the third is the lightening of the external debt burden which, because it seriously endangers the recovery of our continent, has led our Heads of State or Government to propose serious and in-depth consultations to lay the best possible grounds, for the holding of an international conference on the foreign debt of the African countries; the fourth point of the priority programme is the working out of a common platform for action at the sub-regional, regional, continental and international levels, and the fifth is action against the effects of South Africa's systematic policy of destabilization on the economies of the States of southern Africa, and I would point out here that the current Chairman of the OAU made a formal proposal to the international community that an international conference on sanctions against South Africa should be held in June 1986 under United Nations auspices.

This programme is not intended to deal with the whole problem, nor to come up with a magic formula for resolving the economic and social crisis now gripping our continent. We are aware that it could be improved and supplemented. The magnitude of the crisis requires the international community to support the efforts of African countries to meet the dual challenge of survival and development as it undertook to do in the Declaration on the Critical Economic Situation in Africa, annexed to General Assembly resolution 39/29.

It is precisely the working out of a platform of joint action at the international level that the OAU is asking the international community to co-operate on.

This is why the current Chairman of our continental organization launched an appeal from this very rostrum on behalf of the Heads of State or Government of the OAU for the convening during the first half of 1986 of a special session of the General Assembly on the critical economic situation in Africa. It is fortunate

(Mr. Sarré, Senegal)

that the Secretary-General, in the report that he has just presented to the General Assembly, highlighted what we expect of this special session devoted to the economic situation in Africa.

For us Africans this special session should focus on the restoration of our economies, as well as on medium-term and long-term development problems, and lead to specific agreed and co-ordinated measures. Above all, it will enable us to analyse these problems from a comprehensive standpoint and in relation to each other, to mobilize the international community and financial institutions through an integrated approach in order to contribute effectively and with lasting effect to the economic recovery of Africa.

The success of this special session clearly depends on its preparation. Therefore, we should recall that precise guidelines and clear suggestions were given by our Heads of State or Government, in particular to a steering committee set up within the OAU that has been asked, inter alia, to follow-up the recommendations of the twenty-first summit of the OAU.

Africa does not intend to remain the weakest and most vulnerable link in the interdependence of the world economy. Its wish and duty is to realize fully the role which falls to it. To do that it needs above all the solidarity and sustained and co-ordinated efforts of the international community, for the magnitude of the crisis requires specific and urgent measures.

We should emphasize everything that reinforces international solidarity for the greatest good of mankind. What is at stake here is the credibility of the United Nations before the judgement of our peoples and, above all, of history.

Goism has never been a force for peace; on the contrary, it always sows mistrust and tension.

(Mr. Sarré, Senegal)

We should pool the enormous achievements of science and technology; we should engage in serious thinking and be as imaginative as possible in order to promote co-operation and development and to preserve international peace and security with respect for human dignity.

What could be more humiliating for a man than to be in continual need of assistance, even if in the name of human solidarity. What could be more distressing for a country than to be forced to make continual appeals to other countries to meet its people's most basic needs. What could be more frustrating for an entire continent than to be unable fully to play the role incumbent upon it in international co-operation.

In thus introducing the agenda item on the critical economic situation in Africa, I wish, on behalf of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and on behalf of its current Chairman, to reaffirm to the international community, without undue optimism, complacency or, above all, questioning the motives of anyone, Africa's commitment to finding lasting solutions to the dual challenge of survival and development in concert with all nations devoted to peace, freedom and justice and with respect for the choice of each people.

That dual challenge to the conscience of mankind as a whole is today threatening the lives of tens of millions of men, women and children, as well as the very existence of certain African States.

We remain confident that, to meet it, Africa will find at its side all those who wish to join their determined efforts, as President Abdou Diouf stated

"into a single blueprint for the future, where the common future of man will prevail over the individual interests that tear our world asunder today."

(A/40/PV.42, p. 27)

(Mr. Sarré, Senegal)

In conclusion, I should like to quote further the words of the current Chairman of the OAU. He stated:

"Mankind has in the past given us too many examples of its ability to meet constant challenges for us to have any doubts that it will be able to overcome those that beset it today. To do that, mankind need only be guided by the noble ideals and principles that it established for itself in the United Nations Charter." (A/40/PV.42, p. 15)

That is why, given the seriousness of the critical economic situation in Africa, our continent is urging the international community to reorient its effort of solidarity towards a medium- and long-term approach, which is the only dynamic approach that can effectively contribute to the economic recovery and development of our continent. I am sure, speaking on behalf of Africa, that the international community will meet the challenge with generosity and understanding.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank once again the Secretary-General, not only for the eloquent and persuasive report he has submitted to the General Assembly on the critical economic situation in Africa, but, above all, for the steps he has taken to cope with that situation. I should also like to thank Mr. Bradford Morse and all who work with him.

Africa invites all those present here to reflect about what I have said.

Mr. PHILIPPE (Luxembourg) (interpretation from French): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the European Community, Spain and Portugal.

The challenge to international solidarity and to the multilateral system posed by the exceptional gravity of the crisis in Africa is unprecedented, and it has left its mark on the previous session of the General Assembly. At stake is the survival of a continent.

(Mr. Philippe, Luxembourg)

The task, our task, is of course far from completed, as is evident, unfortunately, from the millions of human beings still threatened by the scourge of famine, in sub-Saharan Africa in particular.

Nonetheless, some glimmers of hope seem to be emerging. The most urgent problems created by the famine in Africa seem to be finding a solution.

The early-warning system of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the information provided by other sources seem, in fact, to indicate that, over all, the prospects for the next harvest are more favourable than they were at this time last year. The spectre of famine would appear to be fading, but, since the final forecasts for the harvest are not yet in, we must maintain a cautious attitude.

Even though, since everything calls for caution, the time has certainly not yet come to abandon emergency assistance, in particular in the form of food aid in 1986, it is up to us, the international community and our African partners, to ensure the future of a continent.

As we have said, emergency assistance must continue, but short-term concerns must be viewed in a broader and long-term perspective. Thus, we must also learn from the past and from the international solidarity effort from which the multilateral United Nations system draws its justification.

Indeed, many donor countries reacted even before the crisis had reached disastrous proportions, and in so doing they were sustained by a spontaneous and highly committed surge of public opinion.

The efforts to increase the awareness of the agencies of the United Nations system, and in particular of the Conference on the Emergency Situation in Africa held last March at Geneva, have also made a major contribution to mobilizing the international community and have given new impetus to a large-scale movement of international solidarity with Africa.



(Mr. Philippe, Luxembourg)

In certain cases, however, there are still certain serious logistic obstacles, such as the back-up at ports, bureaucratic obstacles and land-transit problems, that have considerably hindered the arrival of assistance. Further, in some critical sectors needs remained unsatisfied: medicines and other health articles, shelter and means of survival and equipment for water-supply and transport. The European Community has sought to take a longer-term view of these various forms of assistance.

The lack of means of agricultural production, in particular seeds and fertilizer, remains a major obstacle, particularly to ensuring transition from an emergency situation to one of recovery and development.

For their part, the European Community and its member States have taken direct action by responding, at the first indications of an approaching crisis, with emergency assistance which, since 1984, has rapidly reached the regions concerned. Since that time, such assistance has been part of longer-term efforts by the African countries and the international community, taking into account the changing needs and experience in the area.

Since 1984 the assistance of the European Community and its member States to sub-Saharan Africa has represented 50 per cent of international assistance.

Our Heads of State and Government, meeting in December 1984 at Dublin in the European Council, launched a plan of action that provided for the delivery to the eight African countries most affected by the crisis of 1,200,000 tons of grain or the equivalent. That plan is coupled with provisions to ensure an effective supply of assistance to the populations concerned. As at 1 October 1985, 87 per cent of the assistance of the European Community to combat the famine had already been provided.

(Mr. Philippe, Luxembourg)

The adjustment of goods and deliveries to the real needs is a basic characteristic of the Dublin plan, as is apparent in the delivery in particular of essential seeds for the next harvest. Moreover, it was agreed to make a particular effort to protect the opportunities for local or regional markets. In that continent afflicted by so many armed conflicts, the European Community has devoted special attention to the problem of refugees and has provided substantial financial assistance for the programmes of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

It may thus be thought that, through these various measures and the commitments undertaken by the various countries, the essential food needs of the 20 African countries most affected by the famine will be covered in the coming months, provided that it will be possible to overcome the immense difficulties involved in the shipping of international assistance to the peoples concerned. Nevertheless, however necessary it might be in an emergency, food aid will not be a lasting solution.

The crisis in Africa has clearly highlighted the role the United Nations system has played and can play in emergency situations in promoting and co-ordinating international co-operation. The efforts made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in this connection attest to the desire for consistency and unity in United Nations activities. In particular we should like to stress the very important role played in this context by the Office for Emergency Operations in Africa established by the Secretary-General in January 1985, to ensure that the competent bodies of the United Nations and other organs of the system can react in an appropriate and co-ordinated manner to emergency situations. The experience gained should be used for the benefit of future emergency situations, particularly as far as co-ordination is concerned.

(Mr. Philippe, Luxembourg)

However, co-ordination is necessary not only in connection with emergency situations. It is just as important in connection with long-term development, where it should play a priority role. This is true, in the field of technical co-operation, for the United Nations Development Programme, which must receive all the necessary support so as to fulfil its role as the co-ordinator of donors, recipient countries and the competent agencies. Generally speaking, it is necessary to study the results of long-term development assistance operations and establish the appropriate links between emergency measures and long-term action.

The transition from emergency relief for ensuring survival to assistance for recovery and development has very important organizational and co-ordination aspects. We attach particular importance to this. The study being carried out by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on food production in Africa is part of the same context, as are the special facilities established by the World Bank for the sub-Saharan African countries. The European Community and its member States believe that more than ever it is necessary to avoid duplication of efforts, to act in an integrated manner and to ensure that resources are used in the best possible manner.

The post-emergency situation must now be dealt with. In the medium term the economies of the countries which were affected by both famine and drought must literally be rehabilitated and reconstituted. It is necessary to rebuild seed stocks, to deliver agricultural tools and fertilizers, pesticides and all the inputs essential for agriculture and to increase storage facilities, if one is to ensure that the displaced persons or refugees return to their homes and again become productive agents of development.

The Council of Ministers of the European Community has just adopted, on 4 November, a plan for the rehabilitation and recovery of the African countries which have been most affected by the drought. This plan proposes financing to the

(Mr. Philippe, Luxembourg)

extent of 100 million ECUs, that is, \$85 million, which is available immediately, and additional contributions from Member States in an equivalent amount. The plan is aimed at guaranteeing continuity between the Dublin plan, which has almost been executed, and the implementation of the third Lomé Convention, which is currently being executed.

In particular, it is necessary to strengthen the capacity of the African countries themselves to deal with disasters by improving their own ability to organize themselves and to define and implement emergency plans by themselves. The plan also provides for the agricultural recovery of the economies concerned by ensuring the availability of basic input sfor the 1986-1987 agricultural season.

Over and above emergency assistance, effective policies for long-term development must be implemented. Our Governments have stressed the need to establish a global co-ordinated strategy to combat drought. The Heads of State and Government of Africa have recognized the fundamental importance of this approach in the Declaration they adopted at Addis Ababa, which confirms, in this connection, the Lagos Plan of Action and Final Act, which recognize that it is the Governments and people of Africa themselves that have primary responsibility for the development of the continent's economy. We support the policies which they will implement in the areas of food security and the campaign against desertification.

In establishing priorities for recovery, it is also important to ensure that the measures envisaged take into account the experience gained in the continent's current economic crisis in this regard. In accordance with the critical areas identified, special attention must be devoted to ensuring well-balanced growth between agriculture and industry and between agricultural products intended for export and those intended for local consumption. In that regard, the African countries have taken an important decision to increase the proportion of investments from 20 to 25 per cent of public expenditures.

(Mr. Philippe, Luxembourg)

In the longer term, it is the whole problem of African agriculture, faced with increasing desertification, that is now being raised. Since 1980 the crisis situation in Africa has accelerated the constant decline in average per capita income recorded since 1973, particularly for the sub-Saharan countries. The effect of the population trend in Africa in this connection has very troubling aspects. Recent studies predict that the African population will double in the next 30 years, although Africa is already the only continent where the production of foodstuffs is below demographic growth. The annual per capita volume of foodstuff production, and in particular grain, has declined by 2 per cent since 1970. In 1984, for the first time, this production was under 100 kilogrammes per capita, whereas the fateful threshold of 140 kilogrammes had already been crossed in 1975.

With regard to the environment, programmes for reforestation deserve special attention. In this connection, we should like to refer in particular to the first Dakar Conference in 1984 on desertification and protection of nature and to the conference to be held this month. Another important objective consists of the preservation of natural resources.

The programming of financial means under the third Lomé Convention, currently in progress, is an effort to respond to this priority. In addition to bilateral assistance from Member States, primarily devoted to African development efforts for the next five years, the sub-Saharan African countries will receive the bulk of the 8.5 billion ECUs, or almost \$1.5 billion, per year.

The aim of the European Community's contribution is to support the integrated, freely determined and self-reliant economic, social and cultural development of the countries concerned and to help raise the standard of living of their peoples. The accent is placed on research to find a balance between, on the one hand, the protection of the environment and, on the other, the restoration of the natural equilibrium, the self-sufficiency and the food balance of the peoples concerned, by encouraging the production of foodstuffs and the balanced development of rural areas. In order to avoid any recurrence of the present disasters, it is also planned - and this is particularly important - that assistance action should be designed and implemented on the basis of the agricultural and food policies and strategies defined by the countries concerned.

Another aspect of this dialogue that we intend to pursue and intensify with the countries that will benefit from our assistance relates to programming. To be effective, medium-term and long-term financial and technical assistance must in fact be part of economic and social development plans and programmes, and must be consistent with the goals and priorities set at the national and regional level by the countries concerned. The coherence of these goals are, more than ever before, an indispensable prerequisite for the success of action to assist development. The village communities concerned must be associated as closely as possible with the recovery efforts, the farmers must be motivated and the traditional African structures must be reactivated.

In that approach, it is important to bear in mind the causes of the African agricultural food crisis: the small number of markets, the lack of trading circuits and means of transportation, and the excessive blocking of public or private means of distribution. The too-great rigidity of markets and the insufficient profits earned from agriculture, in addition, result in the devaluation of work on the land and an exodus from rural areas, particularly by the young, which creates urban unemployment.

(Mr. Philippe, Luxembourg)

During the summer session of the Economic and Social Council, we were able to confirm the fact that the European Community and its member States are continuing to support the efforts undertaken or envisaged by the African States to ensure the recovery of the continent and the resumption of development. The Addis Ababa Programme of Action indicates, in this respect, priorities whose full importance we recognize and which could help in the crystallization of policies.

We have in mind in particular the proposal to hold a special session of the United Nations General Assembly on the critical situation in Africa. The role that the General Assembly can play was stressed here by President Abdou Diouf, during the general debate. The European Community and its member States willingly give their support to that initiative, which could confirm the results already achieved through the adoption during the thirty-ninth session of the General Assembly of a Declaration on Africa, and through the resolution adopted last January by the Economic and Social Council on the critical economic situation in Africa. We hope that the special session will make it possible to identify longer-term development policies that would take into account both the specific needs indicated by the African countries themselves and the conditions for effective implementation, in which the international community could join.

In that spirit, the European Community and its member States will participate in the preparatory work for the special session, with a view to organizing that important session in the best possible conditions and to establishing its agenda.

Mr. GOLOB (Yugoslavia): I have the honour of expressing on behalf of the Group of 77 its full support for the efforts the African countries have been exerting to overcome the critical economic situation on their continent.

In spite of the encouraging response by the international community to the emergency aspects of the crisis in Africa, the situation has continued to

(Mr. Golob, Yugoslavia)

deteriorate. It is exacerbated by famine, drought and desertification. It endangers the lives of millions of people, the social fabric of their societies and their development processes.

This was noted, it will be recalled, by many Heads of State or Government in the course of the general debate in this Hall. It was stressed particularly by the President of the Republic of Senegal, Mr. Abdou Diouf, whose impressive statement left an indelible imprint on the mind of all those present. He reasserted the need for the international community to undertake effective measures to address the structural causes of the current critical economic situation in Africa.

The economic and social crisis in Africa is of such a multidimensional, complex and extensive nature that it is beyond the capacity of African countries to tackle it alone. Governments and peoples of Africa themselves recognize that their development is primarily their own responsibility. However, their efforts cannot be sufficient to overcome the consequences both of natural disasters afflicting the continent and of the negative effects of the adverse external economic environment.

Drought in Africa has ceased to be a short-term and transitory phenomenon. In many countries the drought has virtually destroyed farm land, and the Sahara desert is spreading at an accelerated pace. Serious distortions have occurred in the ecological balance, threatening the lives of the present and future generations.

Food production has been heavily hit and continues to lag behind the rate of population growth. According to data in the report of the Secretary-General, the food needs and the availability of food have been growing at divergent rates, with the gap growing by more than 2 per cent per year in most countries. In the course of the last decade Africa has allocated, on the average, over 20 per cent of its export earnings for food imports.



(Mr. Golob, Yugoslavia)

With respect to external economic conditions, on which countries of Africa have no influence, the situation is equally dramatic. The foreign debt of African countries has tremendously increased. It is expected to exceed \$170 billion by the end of 1985. The amount of \$20.4 billion which is required for the debt-servicing in the same year is well beyond the resources of the weak economies of African countries. The collapse of commodity prices and declining flows of official development assistance to the region have further dashed the development prospects of Africa.

(Mr. Golob, Yugoslavia)

Many African countries are, moreover, victims of constant aggression by the racist minority régime in South Africa. Atrocities perpetrated against the peoples of South Africa, the illegal occupation of Namibia and the repeated aggression against front-line States by the racist régime of Pretoria, in violation of all norms and principles of international law, constitute shameful pages in the records of the civilized world. The material damage sustained and the growing defence expenditures that the Governments and peoples of these countries have to shoulder because of the South African policy of aggression represent an enormous burden on their economies. Only after the racist régime is eliminated will the people and countries of southern Africa be able to address themselves fully to the pressing problems of economic and social development.

The key problem today is to help Africa embark on the path of development, and this should be borne in mind while discussing this issue. At the 21st conference of the Organization of African Unity the leaders of African States reiterated their determination to take concrete action and measures, individually and collectively, for the achievement of the economic development of their continent.

The food and economic crisis in Africa in general is of such proportions that it is not possible to resolve it without substantial international aid. The Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Mr. E. Saouma, was right when he said recently in his statement in the Second Committee of the General Assembly that Africa is unable to finance its own development.

African countries cannot be expected to increase food production and solve the problem of famine on a lasting basis without the active participation of the international community in emergency food assistance and particularly in the rehabilitation of African agriculture and support for the process of long-term economic development.

(Mr. Golob, Yugoslavia)

It is expected that the solidarity with the people of Africa manifested by food aid in the course of last year and the current year will be continued also in the years to come. It is estimated that the emergency measures, efficiently co-ordinated by the United Nations Office for Emergency Operations in Africa under the untiring and able direction of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP), Mr. Bradford Morse, which helped Africa alleviate the problem of famine, will have to be extended over the next few years. However, a process of broad international co-operation for a long-term and lasting solution of the problem of famine in Africa should be started now. It is necessary to enable Africa to produce alone, drawing on its abundant potential, sufficient quantities of food. Here we should like to express our highest appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, for his timely and dedicated efforts to enhance the international community's awareness of the critical economic situation in Africa and to secure international assistance for the countries of that continent.

The Group of 77 considers that the international community should undertake the necessary measures to redress the structural deficiencies in the current critical economic situation in Africa and to prevent their recurrence by assisting in the implementation of the priority five-year programme of action for the economic development of Africa.

The Group of 77 and the Ministerial Conference of Non-aligned Countries in Luanda have given full support to the request of the 21st Assembly of Heads of State or Government of the Organization of African Unity for the convening early next year of a special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations to be devoted to the critical economic situation in Africa. The session, according to the President of Senegal:

(Mr. Golob, Yugoslavia)

"could offer an opportunity to consider the problems as a whole, as well as their interrelationship, to evaluate what has been achieved and to mobilize all the industrialized countries, the multilateral financial institutions and the entire international community through an integrated approach and co-ordinated action, to make a proper effort to contribute to the continent's economic recovery". (A/40/PV.42, p.24)

The Group of 77 stands firmly behind the proposal of Africa to start preparations for the holding of an international conference on the external debts of African countries with the aim of providing an overall and lasting solution.

With the adoption last year by the General Assembly of resolution 39/29, to which the Declaration on the Critical Economic Situation in Africa was annexed, the international community expressed its determination to contribute in a concerted and co-ordinated manner to the solving of the problem of the critical economic situation in Africa. As a practical step in that direction, the African countries have submitted a draft resolution entitled "The critical economic situation in Africa." The Group of 77 extends its full support to that draft resolution.

Considering that African countries will also need aid in the coming years, the Group of 77 expects that the spirit of co-operation and international solidarity will continue to be manifested as a test of the resolve of the world community to undertake such measures as would assist the countries of Africa and thereby contribute to the strengthening of peace and international co-operation.

Mr. SUCRE FIGARELLA (Venezuela) (interpretation from Spanish): In this community of nations the delegation of Venezuela carries out no task with a greater sense of duty than that of participating for the second consecutive time in the annual debate in the General Assembly on item 30 of its agenda, which concerns the critical economic situation in Africa.

(Mr. Sucre Figarella, Venezuela)

The fact that adversity unites is one of the most uplifting indications of true solidarity, because it is in times of difficulty that the connection between understanding and co-operation is put to the test. Whatever may be said about the differences of opinion at the United Nations, there can be no doubt that at moments of tragedy a higher ideal of civilization and fraternity unites the political will of our States.

(Mr. Sucre Figarella, Venezuela)

There is no better indication of this than the sympathetic attention that has been given to the situation in Africa. We are not here just to utter words; generous sentiments have been expressed, and effective action has been taken.

In particular I believe that in general we have learned a great lesson: over and above philanthropy, good intentions and charity days, it is necessary to make a consistent and determined effort to enable African society to be the instrument of its own development.

On this question of Africa's great suffering we are certainly confronted with factors stemming from the uncontrollable forces of nature. But for other reasons also we are obliged better to prepare human resources and the natural environment with a view to improving the social and economic conditions of life so as to have a sense of permanence and continuity.

It is rightly said in the Declaration on the Economic Situation of Africa, signed by the Heads of State of the Organization of African Unity in Addis Ababa during their meetings between 18 and 20 July last:

"We wish to reiterate that the current struggle to save lives and to reduce the impact of hunger and malnutrition must not be the only objective of international co-operation. Otherwise, the international community would, without wishing to do so, be contributing to turning the emergency into a permanent phenomenon. For our part, we are not only determined to cope effectively with the current emergency and future emergencies but also to go further and deal with the roots of the crisis in agriculture and food in Africa."

In other words, what is happening in Africa enables us to see the situation in greater depth. This is a challenge the scope of which is broader than many have thought. The whole structure of society is at stake: its human resources, its wealth, its economic and social systems, its administration, its effectiveness.

(Mr. Sucre Figarella, Venezuela)

The continent in which hundreds of thousands of human beings are dying from lack of food and inferior subsistence conditions is teaching us that it is necessary to reconsider fundamental problems.

What has happened with its agriculture? What is the level of preparedness of the people? What are the indications for population growth?

Mr. Eduardo Saouma, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), in his recent statement to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) at its Geneva session in July last, indicated that an immense effort would be necessary to increase Africa's agricultural capacity once the factors of natural adversity had been overcome. Where will the fertilizers come from, and the skilled manpower, the priority plans of certain productive sectors?

In this connection it is very important to take into account here the report introduced at this fortieth session on the item under consideration by the Secretary-General. As in any crisis situation, two aspects must be considered: the emergency itself and long-term planning.

The establishment of the Emergency Office in January 1985 has helped co-ordinate and mobilize a great many valuable efforts through the United Nations. Our delegation would like to pay a well deserved tribute to all the relevant organizations of the United Nations system that have responded so responsibly so as to cope with the most urgent needs that have resulted from the crisis. Rightly, it has been said here that:

"Some progress has been made in checking the spread of famine, malnutrition, disease and poverty. The Office for Emergency Operations in Africa has proved to be an effective mechanism in providing the necessary framework for concerted international action in response to the crisis." (A/40/372, para. 21)

(Mr. Sucre Figarella, Venezuela)

The action taken in this context of emergency will no doubt go down in the history of the United Nations as one of its most brilliant moments that confirmed recognition of the most encouraging values of international ethics.

My country is aware that it is necessary for there to be more decisive action, including structural aspects. The survival of thousands of human beings is at stake, as is a future better society in Africa. As the Secretary-General says in his report:

"The next five years will be crucial for sub-Saharan Africa, faced as it is with the double challenge of economic problems and severe drought. There is clearly a need for more vigorous action to consolidate the response to the emergency situation and to relaunch the development process". (Ibid., para. 28)

From our own experience we know that there are no magic formulas for the solving of such problems. Only the efforts of each country and contributions resulting from international co-operation can gradually bring about the desired results. It stands to reason that immense efforts are required in the case of Africa, in particular all the sub-Saharan countries. At stake is a new vision of man and society. From our position in Latin America in general, and in Venezuela in particular, we know that many of the experiences of Africa are shared by us.

In Venezuela, despite a great deal of progress, agriculture is an economic sector that has been disregarded, and we have arrived at the point where a large percentage of the national diet is imported. In the past we were a basically agricultural society, but, with the arrival of oil and the industrialization of other sectors, the incentive for agriculture was lost, and a large percentage of the farmers moved to the cities, tempted by the dream of abundance in urban life, though they were inadequately prepared for modern life. Although a manufacturing



(Mr. Sucre Figarella, Venezuela)

industry began to grow, we did not have the qualified manpower, and the fields lost their traditional farmers.

That has taught us that the process of economic and social change must be balanced and that we must not neglect traditional cultivation, particularly as regards the feeding of the population.

But there are other even more important things that I should like to point out. The major factor of capital that must be used is human capital. Professor Theodoro Schultz, the Nobel Prize winner for economics, has in one of his best known books drawn attention to the importance of preparing individuals as a factor of greater productivity. The experience of other countries shows us how decisive a contribution education makes to the transformation of the living conditions of peoples.

When we consider the long-term strategy Africa needs to solve its problem, we attach priority importance to the question of education in its broadest sense, the consolidation of greater knowledge, spiritual preparation for understanding society and as a factor of creativity to make the necessary reforms required in the modernization of a country.

There is no doubt that in studying all the measures Africa needs in order to overcome its backwardness and its disasters, the participation of human capital will play a decisive role. No society has prepared a better future without preparing better individuals to deal with the great challenges. Adversity forges and prepares man more completely. It enables him to see his errors, and it gives him strength to continue his struggle. At this tragic time for Africa, whose anguish and material problems are shared by my Government and people, I am certain that this is the most encouraging factor, which promises a more dignified and civilized future for the millions of human beings now living on that continent in

(Mr. Sucre Figarella, Venezuela)

such critical conditions. Thus we have the firm hope that this African emergency will serve as a way of finding means and solutions for other more structural and essential problems that may decide the fate of Africa.\*

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\*Mr. Sarré (Senegal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. HELENIUS (Finland): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the Nordic countries - Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Finland.

The crisis in Africa is one of the greatest and most urgent challenges for the international community. The United Nations has in recent years been a major catalyst in mobilizing international awareness and assistance to alleviate the plight of the Africans. This General Assembly should, in the view of the Nordic countries, consider new important steps to meet the dual challenge of survival and development in Africa and the particular role of the United Nations in this regard.

A fight for survival in the drought-stricken regions has been the first and most urgent priority. Governments, the United Nations system, other international organizations and a large number of voluntary organizations have responded in a commendable manner to the calls for increased emergency aid. More recently, the rains which the African people had been awaiting for such a long time have improved the food situation in a number of countries. The crops in 1985-1986 are expected to be 10 per cent higher than in 1981, the last normal year before the recent droughts.

However, this fight is far from being won and there is a risk that in certain regions in sub-Saharan Africa the nutritional situation may again deteriorate, therefore large amounts of emergency assistance are still needed, in particular food aid, agricultural inputs, transportation equipment and medicines. Further measures are also required to ensure that co-ordinated emergency relief reaches those in need.

In this connection the Nordic countries wish to pay tribute to the United Nations Office for Emergency Operations in Africa (OEOA) for its remarkable achievements in the assessment of needs and in the co-ordination of relief operations.

(Mr. Helenius, Finland)

It is equally important that emergency aid be linked to the longer-term development objectives of the affected countries. Dependence on disaster relief must not become a permanent feature in Africa. Effective action should therefore be taken especially for the rehabilitation of agricultural production and the creation of a firm basis for future rural development. The Secretary-General appropriately suggests in his report before this Assembly that the provision of relief may be seen as a first step in a continuum of relief-recovery-development. We recognize that the OEOA was set up for relief purposes but we also believe that the experiences gained from the OEOA operations should be fully utilized in the consideration of appropriate United Nations modalities for longer-term efforts.

The Declaration on the Critical Economic Situation in Africa, adopted by the General Assembly last year, provides an internationally agreed framework for redressing African economic problems. Resolution 1985/80 of the Economic and Social Council, adopted last July, is another important step in the elaboration of policy measures to cope with these problems. Our Governments have also been encouraged by the determination and commitment of the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in their declaration of last July to cope more effectively with current and future emergencies but also to get to the root of Africa's food and agricultural crises. Such an approach is indeed indispensable in order to improve the longer-term outlook of Africa's overall development.

The Nordic countries commend the efforts of the African Governments to restore the internal balances in their economies. They continue to undertake necessary but often painful adjustment measures at high social and political costs. The responsibility for taking appropriate domestic policies rests with the African countries themselves, but their efforts must be supported by the international community.

(Mr. Helenius, Finland)

The Nordic countries must once again emphasize that the restoration and expansion of external financial resources is a matter of urgency for the affected African countries. This calls for positive action on a number of interlinked issues, such as net transfer of resources, debt relief and export earnings.

We welcome the fact that many donor countries have increased their development assistance to sub-Saharan Africa, yet on aggregate there has over the last three years been a reduction in net financial flows to sub-Saharan Africa, mainly as a result of a decline in private capital flows on the one hand and the burden of debt servicing on the other. Concessional aid has not risen enough to fill that gap. The debt problems of many African countries have clearly reached proportions which call for action. The donor community - Governments and international development institutions alike - should accept the long-term challenge of relaunching development in the same commendable manner as they have done in meeting the most immediate needs of emergency aid. The Nordic countries, which already strongly support development efforts in Africa, are prepared to meet their share of that challenge.

I should also like to mention that the Nordic countries and the members of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) are at present exploring new ways and means for expanding their mutual economic co-operation and for enabling those countries to become less dependent on South Africa. This initiative is in line with the strengthened Nordic Joint Programme of Action against South Africa, which was adopted by the Nordic Governments three weeks ago.

The African countries, with the support of the Group of 77, have called for the convening of a special session of the General Assembly to consider the critical economic situation in Africa. In the light of the gravity, persistence and urgency of the problems, the Nordic countries, realizing the political importance of such

(Mr. Helenius, Finland)

an initiative, can endorse the idea of a special session. We are ready to join the other Member States in consultations with a view to achieving a constructive decision at this session of the General Assembly.

With regard to the nature and objectives of a special session, the Nordic countries would like at this stage to emphasize the following considerations.

First, the special session should be carefully prepared and should aim at action-oriented results which would assist and guide the African Governments and the international community in their efforts to relaunch sustained development.

Secondly, the priorities of the African countries themselves, as reflected in the Declaration of the OAU summit meeting, provide a natural point of departure for the consideration at the special session of long-term development in Africa. In this context we welcome the strong emphasis given to agriculture and rural development. We agree that in other sectors priority should be given to the rehabilitation, maintenance and repair of existing industries and infrastructures.

(Mr. Helenius, Finland)

Thirdly, the deliberations of the special session should focus on a limited number of key issues that are critical for the African economies in transition from emergency to sustained development. In this connection we should pay particular attention to the assessment of the most urgently needed forms of rehabilitation assistance and to the supporting and co-ordinating role of the United Nations.

Mr. ABULHASAN (Kuwait): His Excellency Mr. Abdou Diouf, Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), on 21 October called from this rostrum for the convening of a special session of the General Assembly on the economic situation in Africa. This decision of the Twenty-first Summit of the Organization of African Unity is a timely and welcome one. It is a serious indication of the determination of the African countries to solve the problems confronting them. We hope that the proposed session will receive the unqualified attention and support of all States.

Less than a year ago this Assembly addressed the situation in the African continent, its natural and man-made, as well as internal and external, causes; its immediate and long-term effects; and local and international measures to deal with the situation. Now, a year later, the emergency situation has somewhat abated. Favourable climatic conditions and relief assistance by the international community, combined with efforts by individual countries, were major factors in alleviating human suffering and containing to a degree that dimension of the crisis. But out of the original 20 African countries, 12 remain in a serious emergency situation; and if the daily survival needs of some have been met, their recovery and development needs have yet to be satisfied.

While stressing requirements connected with immediate problems of survival, thought and effort should be concentrated on medium and longer-term problems of recovery and development. In this regard my delegation would like to express its belief that the problem of the infrastructure required in the transport, water, energy and other areas should be addressed seriously and urgently according to

(Mr. Abulhasan, Kuwait)

priorities drawn up by the individual countries. Food and agricultural problems should be considered in a comprehensive manner with a view to eradicating hunger and malnutrition and the achievement of self-sufficiency in food production. In view of their importance the rural sector and the role of small farmers should be the subject of concrete policy measures. The financial obligations of developing countries towards developed countries and multilateral institutions should be addressed in an appropriate dialogue jointly to find mutually agreed, equitable and durable solutions. In this respect we should like to emphasize that no solution will be feasible if it adversely affects opportunities for growth and development or the political stability of developing countries.

Kuwait endorses international efforts to address, in an integrated approach, the interrelated problems of survival and development confronting the African continent. Our bilateral commitments had in fact long predated the emergence of the crisis situation. Kuwait's assistance was focused on the development of infrastructure. Kuwaiti loans had been and continue to be of a concessionary nature. Our objective has been neither financial nor political gain.

Kuwait will support international development efforts just as it has supported international efforts for survival. Here again, appalled by the tragic human dimension of the crisis, a Kuwaiti Relief Committee was set up in October 1984 to draw up relief assistance and co-ordinate operations in affected African countries. Relief supplies were airlifted by the Kuwaiti Air Force. Trucks were purchased and camps established to facilitate the distribution of relief material. Kuwaiti boy scouts volunteered to work for the Committee and field volunteers have been and still are considered to be on official mission during their absence from work, in line with a decision of the Government.

Our participation in international efforts will be reflected in a document issued on this item and this sense of sharing will guide our approach to the critical economic situation in Africa.



Mr. JACOB (India): At this time last year when the General Assembly met, millions of African lives hung in precarious balance as a result of drought and famine. The consensus Declaration adopted at the thirty-ninth session of this Assembly represented the concerns of this family of nations over the calamity facing Africa. In the year gone by, through the efforts of the African countries and the international community, mass starvation was averted. A crucial factor contributing to this result was the prompt response of the United Nations system and the spontaneous outpouring of sympathy and fellow feeling from peoples all over the world, an outpouring which led to diverse activities that were as creative and productive as they were heartening. An international consensus was forged to meet the emergency situation. This consensus must not be dissipated; indeed, it must be built on.

The situation facing Africa today is no less daunting even though it may not be as tragically dramatic. The task now is to bring a measure of improvement to those lives that were saved and to the lives of the many millions more who are still haunted by underdevelopment, poverty, malnutrition, disease and a bleak and uncertain future. The past year has been one of respite, not solutions. Portents which could spell growing impoverishment, food scarcity, ecological disaster and financial insolvency have not been dispelled. The world community cannot sit by and watch another tragedy overtake the countries of Africa.

(Mr. Jacob, India)

The African crisis which has been building over the years has several dimensions. It does not serve much purpose to debate whether these were largely exogenous or endogenous. A combination of historical legacies, adverse external circumstances, domestic policy directions and population and environmental factors have all led to the present situation, which has rightly been summed up as basically a crisis of development. African leaders and Governments have shown the will and the vision to deal with the situation. They have not hesitated to bring about a reordering of policies and priorities whenever necessary. Clearly, however, many of the problems are beyond the influence of any national policy. What is required, therefore, is not more advice, but supportive action. Ultimately, the struggle for survival and development will be waged through the toil and effort of the African people. The task of the international community is to see that that toil is not in vain. This, in fact, is the essence of the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos, to which all African countries are fully committed.

It is clear that, because of growing populations, environmental degradation and the disruptions of past years, several countries in Africa, despite the onset of rains in some areas, will continue to require food and relief assistance. Such assistance should be timely and assured, and must be delivered in a manner that does not overstrain the fragile transportation and administrative structures of the affected countries. Fortunately, the world as a whole does not lack for food. The irony lies in its overproduction and problems of surplus management, in some quarters, while millions suffer from hunger and malnutrition elsewhere. We hope that such problems can be addressed within the comprehensive concept of food security being developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). It should not be beyond our ingenuity to devise mechanisms which can even up the mismatch of abundance and desperate need.

(Mr. Jacob, India)

Relief and food assistance need to be fully integrated into the longer-term development aspects. One way of achieving this is through the food-for-work programme for infrastructure development, which is vitally necessary in many countries to lay the foundations for future growth. We also look forward to learning of the conclusions of the internal task force of the United Nations referred to in the Secretary-General's report in document A/40/372, which is currently addressing such linkages.

Neither food imports, which already absorb more than 30 per cent of Africa's foreign exchange earnings, nor food aid can provide a long-term solution. Whereas one places an intolerable burden on declining export earnings, the other perpetuates external dependence by affecting production and shifting demand towards food items which cannot be domestically produced. It is crucially important, therefore, that domestic agriculture production be stepped up. The importance of an appropriate price policy and price incentives has been underlined. Many African countries have taken action along these lines. Appropriate pricing policies, although necessary, are not however sufficient in themselves. More positive measures would be required to promote adaptive research into crops and to develop drought-resistant varieties that can prosper in African conditions. The results of such research would need to be carried from the lab to the land, which would require assistance for the expansion and effective operation of an extension service network. The determination of the African countries to take such steps is reflected in the decision of the Summit Conference of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to bring about a 20 to 25 per cent increase in the share of public investment in agricultural development. The report of the Secretary-General on the food and agriculture situation in Africa brings out the fact that even at a low level of technology Africa can produce more than enough food for its population. The productivity of labour needs to be stepped up, and that will require the

(Mr. Jacob, India)

provision of intermediate inputs such as seeds, irrigation, fertilizer and assistance in the management of credit and marketing institutions.

I mention these aspects at some length because there are many prophets of doom who believe that the cause of African development is irrevocably lost. But similar problems have been faced by many other developing countries about which similar prophesies were also made, including my own not too long ago. They have been overcome by the successful implementation of concrete measures, and the food and agricultural situation has been transformed. The co-operation extended by the international community can be of critical importance. With this intention - and in order to identify the gaps where it can make a contribution - the Co-ordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement adopted a Plan of Action for Africa focused on the food and agricultural sector. Based on the requirements of the African countries, the Plan attempts to focus on the skills and capabilities available in other countries members of the Non-Aligned Movement where action will have a supplemental value in enhancing the effectiveness of the totality of the international co-operation effort. Many countries of the Non-Aligned Movement are implementing programmes identified in the Plan of Action. In co-operation with FAO, India has taken up eight such projects for implementation. As the focal point for the Non-Aligned Plan of Action, India will shortly be sending a technical team to discuss further implementation of the Plan with African countries. The Plan of Action is a concrete manifestation of the principle of collective self-reliance and the promotion of economic co-operation among developing countries to which the Non-Aligned Movement has been committed from its very inception.

While emphasizing the need for action and support at the country level and the sectoral level, one cannot lose sight of the over-all adverse external environment which confronts Africa and the developing countries. The impact of the accumulated problems of the international monetary, financial and trading systems, of declining

(Mr. Jacob, India)

commodity prices, high interest rates, exchange-rate fluctuations and increasing protectionism have had a devastating impact on growth and development prospects. It is therefore ironical that, at the time of greatest need, a reverse transfer of financial resources is taking place from Africa. Adjustment efforts carried out under such unhelpful circumstances necessarily extract an unacceptably heavy toll in social and economic costs.

A very disturbing feature of the current African crisis is that, given the external constraints, many African countries may simply not be in a position to finance their development. The facts regarding the precipitous deterioration in the terms of trade of developing countries, the decline in resource flows and the mounting burden of indebtedness of African countries are well known and do not need any repetition. Appropriate international policy measures to deal with the interrelated problems of money, finance, debt and trade are vitally necessary to bring about an external environment which would support African development efforts. At the same time, specific measures to deal with the problem of resource flows and debt are urgently required. The Non-Aligned Movement has always felt a close affinity with the countries of Africa, which form its largest constituent part.

The Economic Declaration of the seventh Summit Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement held at New Delhi in March 1983 expressed grave concern at the extremely slow and in some cases negative rate of growth of countries in sub-Saharan Africa and stressed the need for urgent corrective measures. The Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement held in Angola in June 1985 supported the call of the eighteenth Summit Conference of the OAU for an international conference on African indebtedness and for a special session of the United Nations General Assembly.

It is urgently necessary to increase the flow of concessional resources to the low-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa. We attach importance to the special

(Mr. Jacob, India)

facility created by the World Bank, and we hope its resources will not be overburdened by undue conditionality which hinders quick disbursement. It is also necessary urgently to improve the resource position of the World Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and other multilateral financial institutions.

(Mr. Jacob, India)

People in poverty, wherever they may be, need support and assistance. Despite India's very great needs, out of our solidarity with the people of Africa the Government of India has decided to refrain from its entitlement under the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Trust Fund reflows from 1985 to 1991, as well as some other special facilities being considered in the World Bank and the IMF. The Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund called this decision "one of the important decisions of the Seoul meetings".

Within the constraint of its resources, India has also attempted to contribute to the fullest extent towards meeting the critical economic situation in Africa. In addition to gifting 100,000 tonnes of wheat valued at over \$20 million in 1984, India has announced a contribution of \$10 million to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Special Fund, which can be used for the purchase of wheat and cereals. India was the first country outside Africa to announce such a contribution.

While these measures have been taken in the context of the emergency situation in Africa, India has a long history of involvement with development efforts in that continent. We have been contributing through our technical co-operation programmes as well to infrastructural development by implementation of numerous projects.

Under our education and training schemes, more than 900 African trainees are provided with fully funded Government of India scholarships every year. In addition a large number of African students are pursuing higher studies in Indian technical and academic institutions which are heavily subsidized by the Government. Many bilateral and multilateral donor agencies are making use of Indian training facilities for training African nominees, particularly in fields such as forestry, soil conservation, irrigation and water management, and agricultural research and extension.

Under the Indian economic and technical co-operation programme more than 80 Indian experts are working in various African countries. A large number of feasibility studies and consultancies have been conducted with Indian funding in

(Mr. Jacob, India)

the past year, and in several cases equipment and materials have been provided. India currently has 48 joint venture enterprises in Africa, which are geared towards assisting in Africa's industrial development.

At the multilateral level, India is providing \$US 1.5-million-worth of assistance to the Economic Commission for Africa for specific projects. India has also offered 50 training slots annually for nominees of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Southern Africa Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC). Similar arrangements have been entered into with the African Development Bank.

India's efforts of co-operation with the African countries are guided by the noble motto of the paddy-field:

"Lighter is the burden of labour

When each bends his back with his neighbour."

We fully intend to continue to do our utmost in Africa, our neighbour across the sea.

Mr. KASEMSRI (Thailand): I have the honour, in my capacity as Chairman of the Asian Group for the month of November, to make the following statement on behalf of the members of the Group of Asian States.

The Member States of the Asian Group would like to express their deep appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on the critical economic situation in Africa, (A/40/372 and Add.1 and 2). We also recall with profound appreciation the memorable statement made in this Hall by the President of Senegal in his capacity as Chairman of the Organization of African Unity. We wish also to welcome the proposal that the General Assembly convene a special session on this very important matter.

The member States of the Asian Group fully appreciate the urgency and gravity of the multifaceted problems facing Africa today and the clearly felt need to bring durable solutions to them. While the international community has moved quickly to contribute to the speedy alleviation of the plight of the African people, the



(Mr. Kasemsri, Thailand)

difficulties they are facing, ranging from famine, desertification, starvation and mounting debt burdens to a bleak prospect for long-term economic and social development, demand a wide-ranging and more comprehensive solution.

Beyond the emergency assistance that the various parties concerned have directed to the African continent, therefore, lies the urgent need to formulate a longer-term approach. We, the peoples of Asia, are of the view that a viable solution to a problem of such magnitude requires both international co-operation and self-reliance. While foreign assistance represents an effective means of mitigating the immediate difficulties of critical proportions and helps restore the morale of those who need it most, another dimension of international co-operation should be directed towards reactivating the economic and social development of the African countries. The establishment of viable common economic programmes which could serve the dual purpose of achieving individual national goals and generating regional co-operation is perhaps another possible approach. These economic programmes should also function in co-ordination with international or bilateral aid programmes. We support the view that a lasting solution of the present crisis in Africa definitely requires infrastructure development and timely industrialization within the African continent. We should also take into account various factors such as the rehabilitation of the agricultural sector, the restoration of the external resources to a level sufficient to meet the real need and a more effective system of mobilizing and developing human resources.

The member States of the Asian Group would like to take this opportunity to express their sincere appreciation to various sectors within the United Nations, other international organizations and the donor countries for their kind and generous contributions in response to the urgent needs of the African people. These humanitarian undertakings deserve high praise, particularly if they ensure follow-up actions and an element of continuity.

(Mr. Kasemsri, Thailand)

We members of the Asian Group earnestly hope that the item before us today will continue to be accorded highest priority and that a longer-term remedy for the African problem will with the necessary urgency eventually be formulated. The members of the Asian Group will continue to render assistance and co-operation to the best of the ability of each of us, in solidarity with the African countries.

Speaking now as representative of Thailand, I wish to pledge Thailand's continued support, within the limits of our capabilities, for the international efforts to help alleviate the plight of our African brothers at this critical juncture.

Mr. SEEREKISSOON (Mauritius): It is a great honour for me to speak as Chairman of the African Group, on the occasion of this debate on the critical economic situation in Africa.

One year ago the General Assembly adopted by consensus a Declaration on Africa which provides the needed framework for concerted international action in favour of our continent. Since the adoption of that Declaration, African Heads of State and Government have had the opportunity at the summit conference of the Organization of African Unity held in Addis Ababa in July 1985 to indicate clearly where in their view the priorities for action lie - action both by them and by the international community. As evidenced by the recent debate on Africa during the second regular session of the Economic and Social Council, there has already been a commencement of action, especially to deal with the most immediate problems and life-threatening situations. The time has now come to agree on further action to halt the economic decline of the whole African continent.

The economic and social situation of the African continent is deteriorating rapidly. Africa is the only continent in which the standard of living declined in the last decade, is at present declining and is expected to decline up to the year 2000, according to present trends. I need not say what these bleak prospects represent in terms of social misery, unemployment, malnutrition, famine and even death for millions of people.

There are several crises going on at the same time on the continent. I am sure Member States are all aware of the tragedy of the drought-induced emergency in large parts of the continent, and of the valiant efforts of African Governments to save human lives and restore basic economic activity. In this connection, I should like to indicate our gratitude to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the initiatives he has taken to assist concerned African Governments to deal with this emergency - in particular the establishment of the Office for Emergency Operations in Africa, which has functioned in a very effective manner.

(Mr. Seereekissoon, Mauritius)

Quite distinct from the drought-induced emergency, there is also a short-term economic crisis gripping many African countries. This is particularly the result of the world economic recession of the last few years, which had a severe impact on many countries of the continent, especially those which did not have the necessary flexibility in their economies to adjust to the situation. Reduced export earnings, growing external indebtedness, the adverse effect of the rise in value of the dollar combined to create an almost unsustainable situation for many Governments. They have been forced to take drastic measures to redress the situation, which has resulted in a drop in the already very low standards of living in the continent. We are gratified to note that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) decided at the recent Seoul meeting of the Development Committee to strengthen their assistance to African countries in their efforts to ensure economic recovery and rehabilitation.

There is also another, longer-term aspect of the African crisis; it relates to structural problems. Africa has got the potential for growth, and its soil is rich with minerals. But only 19 per cent of its land is suitable for agricultural use; it is also the driest of all continents. Eleven out of the 21 land-locked countries of the world are in Africa, and one country out of two in the continent is classified as least developed. Above all, Africa is a continent of young nations: there were only two independent African States when the United Nations was founded 40 years ago. It is also a continent which has inherited from the colonial Powers a structure of production and trade which was designed to be dependent on the industrial centres of the world. It is against that background that political, social and economic changes are now in the making in Africa. The international community at large must provide the necessary assistance to concerned countries so that these processes lead, as they are meant to, to the improvement of the condition of living of the African population.

(Mr. Seereekissoon, Mauritius)

The causes for the present crises in Africa have been reviewed in many international forums and are documented in many reports, including the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations which we now have before us and which we find very useful. What is needed now is to turn our attention to the future and to create a will to undertake, in common, the necessary action that would help to reverse the negative trends forecast for the future, and help make of Africa an area of hope and peace.

There are several priority areas for concerted action. Our continent must first be in a position to feed itself. The development of agricultural production, especially food production, is being given a high priority. That is not a new objective for us Africans. It is inscribed in the Lagos Plan of Action and in almost every official document of the Organization of African Unity. Recently, our Heads of State and Government have pledged their commitment to increase the share allotted to food and agriculture in their national budgets to at least 20 per cent of those budgets.

But, rather than helping the African economies, an increase in agricultural production may contribute to creating further economic problems if no action is taken to facilitate the trade of export commodities and to stabilize their prices. African countries will not be better off if they produce economically competitive commodities which cannot find external markets as a result either of trade protectionist policies in industrialized countries or of farm subsidies which artificially lower producer prices in these same countries. My country, which is the largest African exporter of sugar, with the exception of South Africa, knows from first-hand experience that the facilitation of commodity trade would go a long way towards easing Africa's economic difficulties.

(Mr. Seereekissoon, Mauritius)

Also, the priority given to agricultural production may seem meaningless if it is not backed by appropriate technology and appropriate research. In these fields, the support of industrialized countries for African efforts has not always been at the necessary level. African countries, as well as other developing nations, have not always been able to get the necessary access, for example, to genetic research on seeds. We therefore hope that the forthcoming Food and Agriculture Organization Conference, which, inter alia, will examine problems related to seed research, will result in increased access to such research for developing countries.

Apart from agriculture, the Priority Programme of Economic Recovery adopted by our Heads of State and Governments at Addis Ababa also contains many other areas for urgent action, both in the economic and social fields. The Ambassador of Senegal, speaking on behalf of the Organization of African Unity, has already referred to them, as have a number of other representatives. As he has indicated, the repair, maintenance and development of the transport and communications infrastructure are of vital importance to Africa, just as is the need for the promotion of industrialization, particularly for the transformation of agricultural production.

I should like to stress in particular the importance of concerted action in the field of financial resources for development. Without an adequate level of such resources, our countries will not be able to make the necessary investments to ensure growth and development. Most African countries have taken steps to mobilize to the greatest possible extent their domestic savings and would welcome further financial and technical support through South-South co-operation or from the donor community to progress further in this field. But internal resources will not be at a sufficient level to finance the needed investments. At present, in most countries

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in Africa, there is an acute need for a sustained level of net financial flows from outside to support the development process. Official development assistance, which has stagnated in recent years, must be stepped up. Adequate measures are also needed to reduce the debt burden of African countries. The debt-servicing burden of the sub-Saharan countries alone has practically doubled, from \$5.7 billion in 1983 to an estimated \$11.1 billion in 1985. That is equivalent to more than 25 per cent of the value of exports. That is truly an unbearable situation which is seriously constraining the vital process of rehabilitation and development in sub-Saharan Africa. It is high time to realize that many African countries simply cannot repay their debts as scheduled, and that they must obtain new arrangements from their creditors.

There are two major constraints on the development of Africa which must also be borne in mind.

Firstly, the African continent will not be in a position to tackle the problem of development fully as long as it is threatened by drought-induced emergencies such as the one we have just experienced. African countries, with the assistance of the international community, including the United Nations system, must take the necessary measures to free themselves from the scourge of drought and famine, in order to be able to focus their action fully on problems of development.

The second major constraint is of a political nature. No African will ever lead a free life so long as the inhumane régime of apartheid is maintained in South Africa. It is high time that all industrialized nations take the necessary measures to facilitate and speed up the dismantling of the racist policies in South Africa. The question is no more whether apartheid will disappear; the question is when will it disappear. The earlier the better.

(Mr. Seereekissoon, Mauritius)

In closing, I should like to recall that we recognize that the main responsibility for solving the present crisis indeed rests with our own Governments on our own shoulders. But our efforts will not yield the expected results if the whole international community does not provide us with the required support. In the interdependent world in which we live, it is indeed in the interest of the industrialized nations themselves to have a prosperous African continent which would be not just a producer of commodities, but also a strong trading partner. In the present circumstances a common endeavour of the African countries and their main trading partners for the development of the continent therefore stands to benefit both sides.

It is precisely with such thoughts in mind that the African Heads of State and Government are requesting that a special session of the General Assembly be convened to discuss the economic problems of Africa, and to agree on specific action to solve them. Such a session would help to fashion a new alliance between Governments of rich and poor countries, and between peoples of all continents, to sustain the development efforts of the whole African continent. It is important that such a session takes place as proposed, and agrees on specific international action. The future of 500 million people is at stake.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.