



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 33rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. BIRIDO (Sudan)

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AGENDA ITEM 87: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE: SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

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

AGENDA ITEM 87: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE: SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/40/3, 173, 423, 430-433, 434 and Add.1, 435-441, 672, 770; A/C.2/40/3 and 7; E/1985/67 and 68)

1. Mr. MOYA PALENCIA (Mexico) said that the first resolution which the General Assembly had adopted in 1985 had concerned the earthquake in his country, a fact which demonstrated the international community's solidarity. The earthquake had left in its wake 150,000 casualties, more than 5,000 dead and damage amounting to more than \$4 billion. The Mexican people had spontaneously organized rescue and support brigades, and more than 60 countries and many international institutions had responded immediately by sending assistance. His delegation wished to place on record its gratitude for the sympathetic support which Mexico had received and especially to the Secretary-General and his representative, Miss Margaret Joan Anstee.
2. Once the emergency had been dealt with, rehabilitation and reconstruction mechanisms had had to be organized. The President of Mexico had established the National Committee for Reconstruction as an advisory body which actively involved the public, private and social sectors. The Committee for the Co-ordination of International Relief Assistance had as one of its mandates the co-ordination with the United Nations of measures adopted as a result of General Assembly resolution 40/1.
3. Reconstruction would be long and costly. The Mexican economy, which had been in difficult circumstances before the earthquakes, was facing new challenges that would require additional efforts on the part of the Mexican people and favourable international terms. In undertaking that endeavour, the people and Government of Mexico had drawn inspiration from the Mexican revolution, which would soon mark 75 years of existence and had as its principal objectives agrarian reform, workers' rights, individual and social guarantees and full sovereignty.
4. His delegation believed that efforts based on solidarity aimed at solving the emergency situations experienced by other developing countries afflicted by natural disasters should be increased. The international community must be mobilized to that end, and his delegation would fully support such efforts.
5. Mr. NIGREGAI (Central African Republic) said that the international economic situation continued to place many obstacles in the way of the development of third world countries; in many cases, their problems were being aggravated by natural disasters whose consequences had an even greater impact because those countries had limited resources or were island or land-locked countries. Special economic assistance from the United Nations had enabled them to strengthen their recovery plans. The Central African Republic had benefited from such assistance since 1980, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 35/87. Despite the efforts and sacrifices of the Government, the country's situation remained critical and justified the retention of the Central African Republic as a recipient

(Mr. Nigregai, Central African Republic)

of special economic assistance, a view shared, moreover, by the Secretary-General in his report (A/40/441).

6. In addition to the difficulties arising from the fact that the Central African Republic was a land-locked country, there were problems caused by the major drought which had devastated the country in 1982-1983, namely an increase in external debt, a reduction in agricultural and livestock production, limited drinking-water supply, damage to plant and animal life and frequent electrical power shortages. The Government had adopted a three-year plan for 1983-1985 designed to improve the balance-of-payments situation, re-establish public finances on a sound basis, restructure State services, rehabilitate road infrastructures, stimulate agricultural and livestock development in order to achieve self-sufficiency in food and promote private initiative.

7. The United Nations had contributed in a concrete manner by sending an evaluation mission to the country; 37 projects had then been formulated which currently constituted the programme of special economic assistance to the Central African Republic. A second mission had subsequently evaluated the level of project execution and the mobilization of resources for that purpose. Of the 37 projects which had been formulated, five had received partial financing and 13 had yet to secure financing from even a single source. The Secretary-General's report (A/40/441) pointed out that the Central African Republic required external assistance, and the Government hoped that the Committee would unanimously adopt the draft resolution that would enable the country to continue to rely on special economic assistance from the international community.

8. With regard to the various draft resolutions on special economic assistance, he believed that, as each one referred to a specific situation, no changes should be made during the current session; the Governments of individual countries should be given time to assess the new format for submitting draft resolutions in all its dimensions.

9. Mr. DOUGAN (Equatorial Guinea) said he wished to draw the Committee's attention once again to the critical economic situation his country was experiencing. Since coming to power in 1979, the Government of Equatorial Guinea had endeavoured to lift the country out of the lethargy into which dictatorship had plunged it. Nevertheless, despite the determination of the people and the international community's positive response, the task of carrying out reconstruction in the short term with uncertain resources was extremely difficult. The situation was gradually changing, and it was possible to glimpse a better future, but the international community must respond once again and lend its assistance to the clearly defined development projects with which Equatorial Guinea intended, at the very least, to remove itself from the list of least developed countries.

10. The programmes and projects in question had already been submitted in other forums, and not all of them had had the desired impact in the field. In order to obtain the necessary support and assistance, a round-table meeting of donors would be held in Equatorial Guinea in 1986, at which the status of projects already approved and in progress would also be evaluated.

(Mr. Dougan, Equatorial Guinea)

11. The Government of Equatorial Guinea had confidence in the international community and with the advice it had been given, had used its own initiative to improve its economic situation. By joining the various subregional institutions in which it now participated, it had clearly demonstrated its belief in seeking socio-economic development by becoming a part of a community of countries. The Secretary-General's report (A/40/430) clearly described the situation in Equatorial Guinea and what the Government had done towards establishing a solid basis that would gain the confidence of donors and constituted a response to the appeal which the United Nations had been making since 1979 for immediate and long-term emergency aid to Equatorial Guinea. He asked the international community to attend the round-table conference to be held in 1986 at a date to be announced, in good time, so that the interested parties could make a careful study of the projects and arrive at an informed decision.

12. He thanked all those who had so far provided support. The Secretary-General's report, in listing the countries that, in one way or another, had provided Equatorial Guinea with bilateral assistance, had omitted to make mention of Nigeria, Morocco, Egypt, Cameroon, Gabon and the Republic of Korea. He hoped that the Committee would adopt the resolution on economic and financial assistance to Equatorial Guinea.

13. Mr. CHEKAY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his country had always been on the side of the developing countries which were suffering from the consequences of their colonial past and of unfair economic relations with the imperialist countries, and whose problems were very frequently aggravated by natural disasters. In 1984, the USSR's technical assistance to developing countries had amounted to 10,700 million roubles, which was the equivalent of 1.4 per cent of its GNP and assistance to the least developed countries to 1,300 million roubles, the equivalent of 0.17 per cent of its GNP.

14. Through governmental and public organizations the USSR was helping many countries in economic recovery and rehabilitation after natural disasters. Within the framework of disaster relief assistance, it had provided medicines, food, transportation and other necessities, always on the basis of equality, without interfering in the internal affairs of the recipient countries and with respect for their sovereignty. Detailed information on the assistance provided by the Soviet Union in that field could be found in a statement made by the Soviet representative at the second regular session of the Economic and Social Council in 1985. During the current year, free aid had been given to many countries in the Sahelian region, including, Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad, the Gambia, Senegal and Mauritania. Along with the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies his country had provided assistance to Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Yemen, Afghanistan, Iran, Madagascar, Benin, Equatorial Guinea, Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau.

15. The USSR was firmly convinced that the United Nations should provide special economic and disaster relief assistance only at the request of the Governments concerned and with full respect for their sovereignty. Furthermore, the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO) was increasingly involving

(Mr. Chekay, USSR)

itself in operational activities of an executive nature, to the detriment of the co-ordinating functions assigned to it under General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI). His delegation objected to the use of UNDR0 special programmes for purposes other than natural disasters, in direct violation of the Office's mandate and a covert use of the United Nations emblem for political purposes. It also objected to the recommendations put forward by some United Nations missions urging the introduction of private capital into the developing countries.

16. The machinery for convening the meetings of the appropriate organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system provided for in resolution 36/225 on strengthening the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to natural disasters and other disaster situations should be used only at the request of the State affected and should in no case replace the functions of the Security Council, the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council, the organs with the primary responsibility for considering requests by Governments for emergency assistance. His delegation took strong exception to the fact that when a country was faced with an emergency situation and required assistance from the United Nations decisions were taken only through the mechanism of meetings convened by the Co-ordinator. It was essential that the General Assembly should inform the Council and the General Assembly about UNDR0 activities.

17. There had recently been intensive activity in the Office for Emergency Operations in Africa to carry out the provisions of resolution 39/29. The work of the Office, however, could only be successful if the views of all groups of States Members of the United Nations were taken into account. Furthermore, the composition of the Office violated the principle of equitable geographical distribution, and member countries did not have enough information on its activities. His delegation felt that in addition to studying the situation of given countries and their aid needs the Office should aim at co-ordinating the assistance provided to those countries by the United Nations system, without undermining the sovereignty of the recipient States and without trying to influence on bilateral aid flows, whose volume and terms were determined by relevant governmental agreements. In effect, the Office had tried to assume the role of a central institution, collecting data on all kinds of assistance, including bilateral assistance. Proof of that was the request made by the Director of the Office that he should be systematically provided with information on the contributions by different countries to emergency activities in Africa to help the Office prepare its report on the subject. His delegation felt that such attempts by the Secretariat to interfere in bilateral assistance matters were inadmissible and out of place. The Office had no right arbitrarily to demand that donor countries report to it on the subject or to assume that unlawful function and use it to circumvent the fundamental role of other bodies.

18. With respect to the situation in southern Africa, his delegation strongly condemned the policy of the racist régime of South Africa which, with the United States as its accomplice ignored Security Council resolutions on the independence of Namibia, it also condemned South Africa's policy of aggression against Angola, Mozambique and other States in southern Africa. As long as Israel did not end its



(Mr. Chekay, USSR)

illegal occupation of Arab territories and its policy of aggression against the Palestinian people, international assistance could not solve their economic difficulties.

19. Mr. AL-HADDAD (Democratic Yemen) said that agenda item 87 was of special importance not only to his delegation but also to those developing countries and least developed countries affected by natural disasters, with their serious socio-economic consequences which, together with the scarcity of material and human resources, was hindering those countries' development. For example, because of the heavy floods in March 1982, Democratic Yemen had been compelled to suspend many of the important development projects initiated under its second five-year economic and social plan so that it could cope with the loss of life and property and the vast damage caused by that natural disaster, which amounted to \$1 billion. The Secretary-General's report on agenda item 87 (A/40/34) provided data on the very valuable assistance rendered by the international community to the developing countries affected by natural disasters, and on the measures taken by the parts of the United Nations system to meet the needs of those countries. Those tremendous efforts reflected the international community's commitment to maintain fruitful co-operation with those countries and strengthened the credibility of the United Nations, which used all the means at its disposal to mitigate the serious impact of natural disasters on developing countries.

20. His delegation wished in that connection to draw the Committee's attention to the importance of eliciting an even greater response from the international community and United Nations organs and agencies when developing countries were stricken by natural disasters in order to provide them with necessary assistance, and of those countries making optimum use of the assistance provided. There was also a need to co-ordinate assistance mechanisms at the national level and within the United Nations system in order to avoid duplication and to ensure that assistance was not limited to the period immediately following disasters, but was co-ordinated with the affected national Governments with a view to promoting medium-term and long-term development. Lastly, Governments of countries affected by or exposed to natural disasters should undertake, in co-operation with the competent international bodies, the preparation of studies and programmes intended to prevent natural disasters and minimize their impact.

21. His Government expressed its deep appreciation to the international community for its assistance in mitigating the effects of the March 1982 floods. Thanks to the appeal made by the General Assembly, many reconstruction programmes, financed with bilateral and multilateral aid, had been carried out, in addition to programmes which were currently under way. His delegation was hopeful that the donor countries would continue to provide assistance in order to lay the groundwork for the country's progress, recovery and rehabilitation, especially in view of the preparations the Government was now making for the third five-year economic and social plan, which was to begin in 1986.

22. Mr. OULD CHEIKH EL GAOUTHE (Mauritania) said that the drought besetting his country over the past 15 years continued to affect two thirds of its population and

(Mr. Ould Cheikh El Gaouthe, Mauritania)

entailed increasingly serious consequences, such as the deterioration of natural resources and the intensification of desertification. Those problems, along with the unfavourable international economic situation, lessened development potential and therefore made greater efforts necessary to consolidate the progress achieved and meet the needs of the affected populations. In particular, the advance of desertification had had a disastrous impact on the country's agricultural and food situation. In view of shortfalls in agricultural production during 1984-1985, a free food distribution programme had been set up with funds from donor countries and agencies, including the United States of America, Canada, Belgium, the European Communities, UNICEF, UNDRO and CARE. Even though his Government, through its food security commissariat had adopted important measures, including the procurement and mobilization of various means of transport, to ensure the success of the emergency programme, which had begun 10 months ago, the food situation was still precarious. The Government was also trying to encourage the displaced populations to return to their lands in order to promote stockraising and agriculture, and was providing additional agricultural inputs and food supplies to those regions.

23. In order to continue to implement those urgent programmes, his Government requested the international community's support in three areas in particular, namely, the transport and free distribution of food to drought victims, the conduct of the 1985-1986 agricultural campaign and the procurement of small-scale agricultural equipment. Specifically, with regard to the food distribution programme, the assistance requested was intended to meet increasingly urgent transport needs in order to guarantee future food deliveries. In that connection, ground transport originated in the port of Dakar, Senegal since Mauritania still did not have its own port. Activities for the 1985-1986 agricultural season had already begun, particularly with regard to the resettlement of populations and the provision of agricultural inputs. However, his country could not continue that effort, whose cost was estimated at \$US 2 million, unless it received the financial support of donors. Lastly, the procurement of agricultural equipment was essential to carry out the projects planned by the Government as part of the campaign, whose major goal was to achieve food self-sufficiency.

24. His delegation expressed its deep appreciation to UNDP and the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office and urgently appealed to all donor States to provide those and other organizations of the United Nations system for development assistance with the necessary means to fulfil the mandate entrusted to them by the international community. His Government welcomed the commendable measures adopted by FAO and WFP to assist countries affected by natural disasters and endorsed the innovative approach proposed by the Committee on World Food Security, designed to achieve three complementary goals, namely adequacy of food supplies and production, stability of food supplies and markets and security of access to supplies.

25. Mr. FIELD (United Kingdom), speaking on agenda item 87, said that his delegation shared the views expressed by the representatives of Belgium and France, while in no way weakening its traditional policy of supporting countries facing particular economic difficulties and United Nations development activities. The current system should be rationalized to avoid the problems raised in some

(Mr. Field, United Kingdom)

developing countries by the numerous visits of representatives from various agencies and bilateral donors.

26. In view of the comments made concerning the Office for Emergency Operations in Africa, he expressed his delegation's support for its important co-ordination work, which had contributed significantly to the highly successful attack on the problems raised by the emergency in Africa and had thus heightened the visibility of the United Nations. It was especially gratifying that the United Nations system had been able to staff the Office almost exclusively from within the system. That was indeed how a large organization should respond to emergency situations.

27. Mr. DIECKMANN (Federal Republic of Germany) associated himself with the statements made by France, Belgium and the United Kingdom. His country also co-operated closely with most of the countries affected by emergency situations and fully supported national and international assistance efforts, but his delegation doubted that the approach chosen by the Committee was the right one. The decision to send missions, very often costly missions, to countries experiencing difficulties to prepare studies encouraged, as the delegation of France had said, the duplication of studies that had already been done or were being prepared by the Office for Emergency Operations in Africa, UNDP round tables and the world Bank. Scarce available resources could perhaps be used in a better way in the interests of the developing countries concerned. The General Assembly was of course interested in those developments, but the best solution might be for the World Bank and UNDP to prepare reports giving a full picture of the relevant needs and activities in order to deal with them. In such exceptional cases as the recent situation in Mexico, the Secretary-General's intervention was of course fully justified.

28. With regard to the critical remarks made at that session concerning the Office for Emergency Operations in Africa, he expressed his full support for the Office and appreciation for its work, which demonstrated the useful role that the United Nations system could play in emergency situations.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.