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SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE: SPECIAL  
PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE

Assistance to drought-stricken areas in Djibouti, Ethiopia,  
Kenya, Somalia, the Sudan and Uganda

Note by the Secretary-General

1. At its thirty-fifth session, the General Assembly, in resolution 35/90 of 5 December 1980, noted with concern the grave effects in Djibouti, Somalia, the Sudan and Uganda of successive years of drought and the resulting shortage of foodstuffs, livestock, fodder, and water, and, inter alia, (a) recommended that Governments of the drought-stricken countries of the region should consider the establishment of an intergovernmental body with the responsibility for co-ordinating and supporting the countries' efforts to combat the effects of drought and other natural disasters and to deal with the problem of medium-term and long-term recovery and rehabilitation, and (b) requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other organizations concerned within the United Nations system, to assign, as early as possible, the responsibility for assisting those countries in the region to the appropriate body, within the system, which would be funded from voluntary contributions, would be responsible for the co-ordination of the activities of the United Nations system in support of the recovery and rehabilitation efforts of the countries concerned and would also provide direct assistance to the Governments of those countries in co-ordinating inputs from donor sources and in strengthening their national and regional capabilities to mitigate the effects of future droughts and promote sustained economic and social development.

2. At its thirty-sixth session, the General Assembly, in resolution 36/221 of 17 December 1981, dealing with assistance to the drought-stricken areas in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, the Sudan and Uganda, inter alia, (a) urged the Governments of drought-stricken countries of the region to continue their consultations and to finalize the necessary arrangements for the establishment of

an intergovernmental body with the responsibility for co-ordinating and supporting each country's efforts to combat the effects of drought and other natural disasters and to deal with the problem of medium-term and long-term recovery and rehabilitation, (b) invited the Secretary-General, in close co-operation with the Administrator of UNDP, and within existing resources, to assist those countries in the establishment of the proposed intergovernmental body. The Assembly also noted that arrangements had been made by the Secretary-General for a unit within UNDP to be established when funds were made available through voluntary contributions and to be assigned responsibility for assisting the countries of the region.

3. At its thirty-seventh and thirty-eighth sessions, in its resolutions 37/147 of 17 December 1982 and 38/216 of 20 December 1983, the General Assembly took note of the ongoing consultations between the Governments concerned on the establishment of an intergovernmental body to combat the effects of drought and other natural disasters and urged them to finalize, as soon as possible, the necessary arrangements for the establishment of that body. In addition, in its resolution 37/147, the Assembly noted that the Secretary-General had made arrangements with the Administrator of UNDP, subject to the availability of funds, for a unit within the programmes administered by the Administrator to be assigned responsibility for assisting the affected countries in the region and for co-ordinating the activities of the United Nations system in support of recovery and rehabilitation in those countries. In both resolutions, the General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General, in close co-ordination with the Administrator of UNDP and the appropriate specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system, to assist the Governments of the region, at their request, in establishing or improving national machinery to combat the effects of drought and other natural disasters.

4. At its thirty-ninth session, in its resolution 39/205 of 17 December 1984, the General Assembly, inter alia, noted with satisfaction the decision taken by the Governments of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, the Sudan and Uganda to establish an intergovernmental body to combat the effects of drought and other natural disasters, as recommended by the Assembly in resolution 35/90, and to meet in Djibouti on 15 January 1985 to finalize the necessary arrangements for the establishment of that body; and invited the Secretary-General, in close co-operation with the Administrator of UNDP, and within existing resources, to extend to the six countries concerned the technical assistance needed to finalize the necessary arrangements for the establishment of the proposed intergovernmental body.

5. The present note is submitted in accordance with paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution 39/205, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to apprise the Economic and Social Council, at its second regular session of 1985, of the progress made in the implementation of the resolution and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fortieth session.

6. During 1984 and in 1985, most regions of the East African countries once again experienced severe and extended drought; the problem of drought is put into the context of the overall situation in Africa in the report of the Secretary-General on the critical economic situation in Africa (A/40/372-E/1985/104 and Add.1 and 2). Additional information on the question is contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the medium-term and long-term recovery and rehabilitation programme in the Sudano-Sahelian region (E/1985/65) and in the report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification dealing with the overall implementation of the Plan and the implementation of the Plan in the Sudano-Sahelian region (UNEP/GC.13/7/Add.1).

7. In response to the continued problems of drought in the region and to the decision taken by the East African countries to meet at Djibouti in early 1985 to discuss the creation of an intergovernmental body referred to above, a ministerial meeting was held at Djibouti from 4 to 6 February 1985. The purpose of the meeting was to adopt an agreement for the establishment of an intergovernmental authority to combat the effects of drought and desertification in the region. The meeting, which was also attended by representatives of the Secretary-General and the Administrator of UNDP, adopted an agreement creating the Inter-Governmental Authority for Drought and Development. It was decided that its headquarters would be at Djibouti and that the first Heads of State meeting would take place at the end of the year (later postponed to early January 1986 - see para. 10 below).

8. A second ministerial meeting was held at Djibouti on 7 and 8 May 1985. The purpose of the meeting was to sign formally the agreement for the establishment of the Inter-Governmental Authority that had been agreed upon at the first ministerial meeting; to agree upon the internal rules and regulations of the Authority; to review its structure and provisional secretariat; and, finally, to examine the financial contributions expected of member States.

9. One of the recommendations that emanated from the meetings was that two experts should be appointed from each member country to work on the preparation of a Plan of Action consisting of an analysis of the drought and desertification problem in the region and an inventory of projects to be submitted to the Heads of State at their first meeting. The Secretary-General was requested to fund the services of two internationally-recruited experts to assist the team of national experts in the collection and analysis of relevant socio-economic data for each of the countries in the region and in the formulation of the Plan of Action. The services of the consultants were provided and funded by the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office and UNDP.

10. The consultants were fielded in mid-1985 and concluded their work in September. A regional Plan of Action was completed together with a document outlining proposed financial and administrative modalities for the newly created body. These documents will be presented for approval to the Heads of State meeting which will be held at Djibouti in early January 1986.

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