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REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Humanitarian assistance to refugees in Djibouti

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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* A/41/150.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 40/134 of 13 December 1985 on humanitarian assistance to refugees in Djibouti, the General Assembly requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to mobilize the necessary resources to implement lasting solutions in respect of the refugees in Djibouti and, in co-operation with the Secretary-General, to report to the Assembly at its forty-first session on the implementation of the resolution.

II. GENERAL SITUATION AND RECENT TRENDS

2. Throughout 1985 there were an estimated 17,000 refugees in Djibouti, predominantly of Ethiopian origin, located in the Ali Sabieh and Dikhil centres, as well as in the capital. The majority were from rural areas, while some 2,700 were from urban centres. The estimated 10,000 drought victims who gathered at Aseyla in the first months of 1985 returned spontaneously to their homes or repatriated in mid-August, while only those suffering from acute malnutrition and unable to travel sought supplementary feeding or medical treatment in Dikhil. The arrival of asylum-seekers in Djibouti during the first months of 1986 has averaged 40 to 60 persons per month. The authorities have recently adopted a policy of transferring all refugees from the capital to Dikhil. The possibility of refugees being subsequently moved to the Obock area in the north of Djibouti is also under consideration by the Government.

3. As the implementation of suitable durable solutions has so far proved impracticable, assistance has continued to focus on care and maintenance projects through a multi-purpose assistance programme. Tuberculosis has remained a major health problem for both refugees and nationals. Attempts to encourage agricultural activities have met with little success owing to the limited facilities, the poor soil, the lack of regular rainfall with occasional flooding and the salinity of ground-water and soil. As a result, rations have been provided by the World Food Programme (WFP) for most of the caseload for a number of years. In 1985, these rations were supplemented by supplies of vegetable oil and sugar purchased through trust funds and by donations of protein-enriched biscuits. Vulnerable groups have benefited from supplementary feeding projects. Other activities have concerned primary education and vocational training, the promotion of handicrafts, support to a library for refugees and a canteen for asylum-seekers.

4. Current assistance activities and those planned for 1987 will again be mainly provided through a multi-purpose programme. With regard to the possible move to the Obock area, UNHCR will assist the relevant ministries to undertake surveys to determine how many people could be settled in that area. Another major aspect of current programmes concerns the development of counselling services designed to assist both urban and rural refugees. UNHCR also continues to support the legal unit ("Bureau d'Eligibilité") in Dikhil, which prepares applications to the National Eligibility Commission. Since voluntary repatriation remains the most feasible durable solution for refugees in Djibouti, arrangements will be made to facilitate the registration of potential repatriants. As in past years, assistance

is being implemented through agreements with the "Office national d'assistance aux réfugiés et sinistrés" (ONARS) and voluntary agencies. Three United Nations volunteers worked with ONARS in 1985 providing support in administration, project monitoring and accounting. Voluntary agencies involved in the programme of assistance to refugees in Djibouti include the Irish Agency for Personal Service Overseas (vocational training), an agency from the Federal Republic of Germany "Dienst in Uebersee" (agricultural extension and medical services), World University Service of the United Kingdom and Canada (primary education and vehicle maintenance) and the French "Médecins sans Frontières" (temporary support to medical services). Both the Protestant and Catholic churches in Djibouti also lend valuable support.

5. A detailed description of assistance provided by UNHCR in 1985 in the various sectors follows, along with projected requirements for 1986 and 1987. For further details, see document A/AC.96/677 (part II).

Multi-purpose assistance

6. In 1985, an amount of \$1,849,900 was obligated. It is proposed to increase the approved appropriation for 1986 from \$1,249,000 to \$1,596,700 mainly to take account of increased needs that have arisen as a result of the transfer of urban refugees from the capital to Dikhil. Such requirements include procurement of medicines from sources outside the country and strengthened staffing of the primary school. Other increases concern spare parts and the replacement of vehicles used in delivering assistance to drought victims in Aseyla and the provision for a census of the refugee population. Financial support for the vocational training centre in Ali Sabieh was phased out in June 1986, as planned. The proposed allocation for 1987 of \$1,357,000 again covers the following major components: supplementary feeding, health, primary education, income-generating activities, agriculture and household supplies, transport and support of the implementing partner. A new language training course is proposed to improve prospects of resettlement, which have so far been limited.

Legal assistance

7. In 1985, an amount of \$37,200 was obligated and the approved 1986 allocation of \$40,000 remains unchanged. The increased level of the allocation proposed for 1987, namely \$52,000, reflects salary increases and improvements to the premises of the legal unit designed to improve the efficiency of this important service.

Counselling

8. An amount of \$382,700 was obligated in 1985. In view of the increased cost of operational services for the benefit of refugees in Djibouti town, Ali Sabieh and Dikhil, it is proposed to increase the approved allocation of \$374,000 for 1986 to \$423,000. The proposed allocation for 1987 of \$445,000 will ensure the maintenance of these services.

Supplementary aid

9. A total of \$53,000 was obligated in 1985. It is proposed to increase the approved appropriation of \$70,000 for 1986 to \$85,000 to provide temporary assistance to individual refugees in urban areas in view of the increased cost of living and the fact that medicines are no longer provided free of charge to refugees. In 1987, an amount of \$85,000 has been proposed.

Other forms of assistance

10. It is proposed to maintain in 1987 the current level of assistance with respect to lower secondary education (\$13,000), assistance to handicapped refugees (\$20,000) and voluntary repatriation (\$10,000). Repatriation is at present limited to individual cases. Should a large-scale movement become feasible, a substantial increase would of course be required in this allocation.
