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Item I.2 of the provisional agenda*

REPORT ON THE SPECIAL DEBATES ON THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
CRISIS IN AFRICA AT THE SECOND 1984 REGULAR SESSION OF
THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL, THE THIRTY-NINTH SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND THE TWENTIETH
SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT
OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

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INTRODUCTION

1. The tenth meeting of the ECA Conference of Ministers, held in Addis Ababa from 24 to 28 May 1984, adopted the Special Memorandum on Africa's Economic and Social Crisis (E/ECA/CM.10/37/Rev.2). In resolution 526 (XIX), the ECA Conference of Ministers also requested the Executive Secretary of ECA to "transmit the ECA Special Memorandum on Africa's Economic and Social Crisis and its Annexes to the United Nations Economic and Social Council." and the Secretary-General of the OAU to also "transmit the Special Memorandum and annexes to the 20th Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity".

2. As a follow-up to the above resolution, the present report provides an account of developments that have taken place in the United Nations as well as at the 20th Ordinary Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity. The report also briefly reviews the documentation prepared in 1984 with respect to the critical economic situation in Africa, particularly in the context of the United Nations Secretary-General's initiative.

I. THE SECOND REGULAR SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

3. The United Nations Economic and Social Council, during its second regular session held in Geneva in July 1984, devoted the period from 12 to 17 July to a special debate on the economic and social crisis in Africa (item 4 of its agenda). The following reference documents, served as the basis for the special debate:

(a) The critical social and economic situation in Africa: report of the Secretary-General (E/1984/68);

(b) The Special Memorandum on Africa's Economic and Social Crisis (E/1984/110 and Add.1), adopted at the tenth meeting of the ECA Conference of Ministers;

(c) The critical social and economic situation in Africa: report of the Secretary-General: Addendum (E/1984/68/Add.1) on the emergency situation in the food-aid-dependent African countries; prepared by the Secretary-General's Special Representative in collaboration with the United Nations institutions and specialized agencies involved in the activities of the temporary office in Nairobi.

4. The special debate opened with a message from the Secretary-General and a report by his Special Representative based on the reference documents mentioned above. The Council also heard substantial statements, 74 in all, by representatives of the OECD countries, the States members of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), many third-world developing countries, United Nations institutions and specialized agencies, and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. All these statements emphasized the multisectoral nature of the crisis and the need to broach together the problems of satisfying emergency needs and of dealing with short-medium-

and long-term structural difficulties. The members and observer countries of the Council and the organizations that took part in its work also expressed their willingness to increase their technical and financial assistance in the face of the dual challenge of survival and development.

5. Concurrently with the special debate, a working group of the whole had been set up to draft a declaration expressing the collective determination of the international community to strive for a lasting solution to Africa's present crisis. The representatives of the African countries clearly voiced their commitment to undertake the requisite far-reaching economic reforms to pave the way for sustained growth and development. They were unable, however, to secure similar commitments for the stabilization of export earnings, increased concessional flows of resources, and the alleviation of their foreign debts or the associated debt-servicing terms. The Council did however recommend inclusion of the critical economic situation on the agenda for the thirty-ninth session of the General Assembly, and expressed its unanimous desire to reach consensus on the matter.

6. The second regular session of the Economic and Social Council in 1984 also gave the Secretary-General's Special Representative an opportunity to hold consultations with African intergovernmental organizations, including OAU and the African Development Bank, and non-governmental organizations. The purpose of these meetings was to consider (a) how far the intergovernmental organizations should reorient their priorities and resources to deal with the current crisis, and (b) in what priority areas the non-governmental organizations should step up their relief and humanitarian aid activities.

II. THE THIRTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

7. The United Nations General Assembly, at its thirty-ninth session, devoted the period from 1 to 6 November 1984 to a consideration of the critical economic situation in Africa. In addition to the documentation which previously had been submitted to ECOSOC, the following additional material was submitted to the Assembly:

(a) Critical situation in Africa: note by the Secretary General (A/39/627), indicating the priority areas for international action and the activities to be undertaken by the United Nations;

(b) Critical economic situation in Africa: review of the emergency rehabilitation and reconstruction situation in food-aid and drought-affected countries: report of the Secretary-General (A/39/594);

(c) Critical social and economic situation in Africa, a technical paper containing data on food-aid-dependent and drought-affected countries as reported to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the economic and social crisis in Africa.

8. As during the second regular session of the Economic and Social Council in 1984, large numbers of member States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations (about 70 in all) spoke in testimony of their wish to arrive at a far-reaching programme of action to benefit Africa. Many participants alluded to a World Bank report on a concerted programme of action for stable development in sub-Saharan Africa, which had come out after the Economic and Social Council's meeting. This report, endorsed by the joint World Bank/IMF Development Committee on 23 September 1984, was also supported by the General Assembly, which noted that the report backed the approach advocated by the Secretary-General in his report A/39/59: integrated short-, medium- and long-term measures as well as emergency relief.

9. The will to attain consensus which was evident during the second session of the Economic and Social Council found expression at the thirty-ninth session of the General Assembly in the adoption, on 7 December 1984, of resolution A/Res/39/29 and the Declaration annexed thereto on the Critical Economic Situation in Africa. Copies of both the resolution and the Declaration are annexed to this report. The resolution draws on a number of sources, including the twentieth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of OAU, held from 12 to 15 November 1984, and the statement by the Committee for Development Planning at its twenty-first session, held from 19 to 21 November 1984.

10. In its Declaration on the Critical Economic Situation in Africa, the General Assembly recognizes that "emergency relief aid on a massive scale is urgently needed in the following areas: additional food aid and other emergency supplies, together with the technical and financial assistance necessary for their transportation; storage and distribution to the affected populations; improvement of water supplies; improvement of health and nutrition, particularly for vulnerable groups, including refugees and displaced persons; safeguarding national nucleus of herds of livestock; establishment of income-generating projects and promotion of new and renewable energy projects, particularly in rural areas". The Declaration also stresses the need for help in the process of recovery and rehabilitation, and for the execution of longer-term programmes in food and agriculture, industry, transport and communications.

11. Internationally, the Declaration highlights the need to (a) ease the debt burden of African countries by the total or partial conversion of official development assistance debts into grants, with longer maturities and grace periods, lower interest rates and extended multi-year rescheduling; (b) increase net transfers of resources to African countries; and (c) stabilize basic commodity prices and increase the use of compensatory financing arrangements for export earnings shortfalls. It also urges the World Bank to explore with donors possible means of mobilizing the resources required to implement its Special Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa.

12. After the adoption of resolution A/Res/39/29, the Secretary-General, in a meeting with Permanent Representatives to the United Nations on 17 December 1984, announced a number of steps he intended to take in pursuance of the Declaration on the Critical Economic Situation in Africa. These included:

(a) His Special Representative would continue to consult African Governments and United Nations institutions and specialized agencies in order to keep abreast of developments in all aspects of the crisis (emergency requirements and short-, medium- and long-term needs);

(b) An office for emergency operations in Africa (OEOA) headed by Mr. Bradford Morse, Administrator of UNDP, was set up to deal with emergency relief operations in Africa;

(c) Mr. Adebayo Adedeji, Under-Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Mr. Abdulrahim Farah, Under-Secretary-General were also nominated as members of the Office;

(d) For longer-term operations, of which the African Governments meant to take charge, he believed the United Nations was the most suitable body to channel aid from the international community in such areas as foreign debt, trade in basic commodities and official development assistance. He referred in this connection to the important roles of FAO, in the vital sector of food and agriculture, and the World Bank in raising additional concessional resources.

III. THE TWENTIETH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF OAU

13. The critical economic situation in Africa was one of the main items on the agenda at the twentieth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity. As stated above, the session was held in Addis Ababa from 12 to 15 November 1984, immediately after the special debate on the same subject at the thirty-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly.

14. The African Heads of State and Government devoted much of their session to a discussion of the critical economic situation in Africa. In addition to a report by the Secretary General a.i. of OAU and all the documents that had been submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1984 and the United Nations General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session, the summit was addressed by the Executive Secretary of ECA who provided a comprehensive account of the situation in all its dimensions (i.e., emergency, short-, medium- and long-term requirements). He also provided a preliminary assessment of the special debate which took place in New York on the critical economic situation in Africa. At the end of the debate the Heads of State and Government adopted a Declaration (annexed to this report) on the critical economic situation in Africa. The Declaration endorses the ECA Special Memorandum and outlines emergency, recovery and long-term development measures at the national, regional and international levels. The Assembly also decided to set up a special emergency fund for drought and famine in Africa, and voiced its support for the World Bank's initiative of proposing a special fund for Africa, under the Bank's auspices, to fund economic recovery programmes.

15. The Assembly of Heads of State and Government of OAU also decided, by resolution AHG-132(XXI), to devote its twenty-first session in 1985 to Africa's economic problems with particular emphasis on:

(a) The progress made in the implementation of the Lagos Plan of Action and the definition of measures for an earlier attainment of the objectives of the Plan;

(b) The formulation of an emergency programme for Africa comprising immediate measures in the priority economic areas and particularly in the agricultural and food sectors;

(c) The establishment of a common platform for action intended for the specialized agencies of the United Nations System on international economic issues of a crucial interest for Africa.

A Steering Committee comprising Algeria, Cameroon, the Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Senegal, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe was set up to prepare the documents, with technical support from the OAU and ECA secretariats for submission to the Economic Summit through the OAU Council of Ministers.

IV. ACTIVITIES IN PROGRESS

16. At the request of the United Nations Secretary-General, his Special Representative on the economic crisis in Africa has drawn up a preliminary report assessing emergency and recovery needs for 1985 in the food-aid-dependent African countries. Its aim is to give an overall assessment of needs in 1985 so that plans for future activities can be better co-ordinated than in 1984. This preliminary assessment was substantially used in the preparation of the documentation for the United Nations conference on famine in Africa convened by the Secretary-General in Geneva on 11 March 1985 to mobilize more emergency aid for the food-aid-dependent countries in 1985.

17. The World Bank has announced that it has raised approximately \$US 1 billion. This initial amount for the Special Fund for Africa should allow certain high-priority economic recovery activities to be funded.

18. Finally, the Steering Committee set up by the twentieth OAU summit met from 11 to 15 February 1985 to draft the agenda and associated documents for the organization's twenty-first summit. Its proposals will be taken up at the forty-first session of the OAU Council of Ministers, which is scheduled to be held in Addis Ababa from 25 February to 5 March 1985.