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SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE

Assistance to the drought stricken areas in Ethiopia

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 34/54 of 29 November 1979, requested the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other United Nations organizations and specialized agencies to continue and intensify their assistance to Ethiopia; appealed to Governments of Member States and to intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and all voluntary agencies to continue and increase their assistance to the Government of Ethiopia for relief, rehabilitation and recovery of the drought stricken areas; called upon all concerned to ensure that the international assistance provided be used for the sole purpose of relief and rehabilitation; and requested the Secretary-General, the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator and the Administrator of UNDP to report to the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session and to the Economic and Social Council at its first regular session of 1980 on the implementation of that and other relevant resolutions of the Assembly and the Council.
2. The United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator presented an oral report on behalf of the Secretary-General at the first regular session of the Economic and Social Council in 1980. A representative of the Administrator of UNDP reported to the Council on the nature and progress of the development work being undertaken in Ethiopia.
3. In his oral report, the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator described the assistance being given to the drought stricken areas of Ethiopia, reviewed the general situation and stressed the importance of meeting the humanitarian need, not only for its own sake, but so that a firm base could be provided on which the essential development programme could be built. Only with the help of such a development programme could any lasting solution to Ethiopia's problems be found. He further stated that the efforts of the Government and of several United Nations agencies were increasingly being directed towards that end.

4. In late April and early May 1980, the Government of Ethiopia, finding itself faced once more with drought and increasing numbers of people needing assistance, arranged a visit to the worst-affected areas for representatives of potential donors and the in-country staff of various United Nations bodies. This visit disclosed conditions which called for action, and the Government requested the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator to arrange an assessment mission composed of representatives of donor Governments and intergovernmental organizations as well as of United Nations agencies concerned. This was done and the group visited Ethiopia between 27 May and 7 June 1980.

5. The mission's concerns were the very practical ones of ensuring that whatever aid was eventually given would be capable of being handled at the ports, transported thence to distribution centres, and ultimately to the people in need. This last, the final "absorption factor", proved to be the most difficult element because of the obstacles to distribution in the remote regions of the northern, north central and south-eastern areas where a high percentage of the 5 million affected people, as estimated by the Government, were said to be. In the course of its work the mission once more came to the conclusion that the real solution to Ethiopia's problems must reside in the promotion of development programmes in areas of agricultural potential, rather than in the provision of perennial relief to people in areas where the possibilities for even subsistence agriculture have long since been exhausted. The mission proposed also an examination of the machinery for providing co-ordinated short, medium-term and long-term aid to Ethiopia.

6. The report of the mission was issued on 13 June 1980, after a telexed appeal summarizing its findings had been sent to the donor community and a meeting to brief donors was held at Geneva.

7. In mid-June the Secretary-General requested the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator to lead a mission to Ethiopia to examine the needs of displaced persons. This mission was called for by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1980/8, passed at the first regular session in April. The displaced persons were to be found, in fact, in the same areas as those surveyed by the earlier mission, so that the field visits covered some of the same places. It is for this reason that the work of the mission organized in response to resolution 1980/8 is mentioned in the present report, for the assistance recommended (and which is detailed in document A/35/360 and Corr.2) is in large part of the same character as that which had been proposed by the UNDRO mission.

8. At the time this report was prepared it was too early to present a full list of the responses to the appeals for help to Ethiopia, and this information will be provided orally during the debate in the Second Committee.
