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REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Humanitarian assistance to refugees in DjiboutiReport of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 42/126 of 7 December 1987, the General Assembly urged the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to intensify his efforts to mobilise 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-third session on the implementation of the resolution.

II. GENERAL SITUATION AND RECENT TRENDS

2. At the end of 1987, the Government estimated that there were 11,356 refugees in Djibouti. Approximately 11,000 live in Dikhil and Ali-Sabieh camps, while the rest were believed to be residing in Djibouti-Ville. The voluntary repatriation of refugees to Ethiopia commenced in December 1986; by 30 June 1987, 3,223 persons had returned home.

3. The Government's commitment to an asylum policy, in conformity with its international obligations, continued throughout 1987. Nevertheless, practical, physical and economic obstacles to successful local integration by refugees through material self-reliance remain all over the country, in Dikhil, Obock and elsewhere. It has been concluded that the establishment of a refugee community in Obock would be impractical and costly. Resettlement remains a durable solution for only a small percentage of the refugee population, either for cases of family reunion or for security reasons.

* A/43/150.

4. Health and nutrition surveys and subsequent supplementary feeding programmes, including protein-enriched diets, were successfully implemented for the benefit of vulnerable groups. Primary education, vocational training, library facilities and a canteen for new asylum-seekers formed part of the multipurpose assistance provided to the refugees.

5. The emphasis of the current year's multipurpose assistance programme is on improvements in the quality of community and preventive health care and nutrition of the refugees in Dikhil (particularly the dependent population) and the strengthening of educational services, including language training. The proposals for 1988, which anticipate a net reduction in the refugee population, will allow for the continuation of activities for the benefit of those for whom voluntary repatriation or resettlement does not at present constitute an alternative durable solution.

6. A detailed description of assistance provided by UNHCR in 1987 in the various sectors follows, as well as projected requirements for 1988 and 1989.

Multipurpose assistance

7. The 1988 appropriation covers assistance towards the improvement of community and preventive health care, as well as nutritional and educational facilities. The allocation also serves to finance administrative and logistic needs for the receipt and storage of food commodities for the refugees. It is used to meet vital needs of the community in Dikhil such as shelter and safe drinking water. The allocation proposed for 1989 at a level equal to that of 1988, despite the relative decline in the total assisted population, should permit an improvement in the quality of services rendered, and reinforce the social services available in Dikhil, enabling durable solutions to be achieved for those refugees who have not chosen voluntary repatriation or resettlement. Particular emphasis is being placed, therefore, on improving the quality of assistance with supplementary feeding and health care according to the recommendations of the nutrition consultant, on language training and relief substitution activities and on primary education for those refugees who will continue to reside in Djibouti during 1989.

Voluntary repatriation

8. An increase in the approved appropriation for 1988 was considered essential in order to continue promotional work and to maintain the momentum to realize this durable solution. The proposed expenditure for 1988 was designed to continue the same exercise on a lesser scale as soon as the results of the census were known.

Other forms of assistance

9. The reduction of \$644,000 in the combined approved appropriation for 1987 for counselling legal assistance, lower secondary education, supplementary aid and assistance to handicapped refugees was based on a reduction of actual beneficiaries as a result of voluntary repatriation. The proposed expenditures for 1988 reflect a further decrease in financial requirements based on the assumption that there

will be a further voluntary repatriation movement. Refugees who qualify for resettlement will continue to benefit from the funds made available under the High Commissioner's programme.
