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REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Assistance to refugees in Somalia

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 42/127 of 7 December 1987 on assistance to refugees in Somalia, the General Assembly called upon: the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to ensure, as appropriate, that the care, maintenance and rehabilitation needs of the refugees are adequately covered; the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to assume the leading role, as required by the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (see A/39/402, annex), in the conceptualization, implementation and monitoring of refugee-related projects, and to be involved in the mobilization of the financial and technical means required, in close co-operation with the High Commissioner and the World Bank; and UNDP, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) to consult with the Government of Somalia on how best the international community could assist Somalia in protecting and rehabilitating its damaged environment.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly further called upon the international community to support the activities of non-governmental organizations in Somalia, local and international, in the planning and implementation of refugee projects and refugee-related development activities. The Assembly requested the pertinent organizations of the United Nations system, namely, FAO, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the World Health Organisation (WHO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), as well as UNEP and the World Food Programme (WFP), to prepare, in consultation with the Government of Somalia, detailed project documentation for the implementation of those projects and activities identified in the report of the Secretary-General as priority endeavours for a comprehensive programme of action.

3. In the same resolution the General Assembly also requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Administrator of UNDP to apprise the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1988 of the progress made in their respective fields of responsibility with regard to those provisions of the present resolution which concern them.

4. In the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UNDP, to submit a report to the Assembly at its forty-third session on the progress achieved in the implementation of the resolution. The present report is submitted in response to that request.

II. BACKGROUND

5. The background to the influx of refugees in Somalia, their characteristics and arrangements made to assist them are detailed in the previous reports of the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner (A/AC.96/677, part II, and A/42/498 and Add.1).

6. Since 1979, Somalia has hosted one of the largest refugee populations in the world, while at the same time tackling numerous economic problems and drought-related emergencies. In addition, economic development was further hampered by lingering balance-of-payments difficulties. Therefore, the influx of refugees took place in an already constrained economic environment and their presence has undoubtedly put a severe strain on an already fragile infrastructure and contributed to further deterioration of the ecosystem.

7. At the beginning of 1982, the Somali Government and the United Nations agreed on a planning figure of 700,000 refugees in Somalia. From the last quarter of 1984 through 1986, new refugees from the Ogaden arrived in the north-west region which, according to Government estimates totalled 140,000 persons. On 17 March 1987, an umbrella agreement was concluded with the Government of Somalia covering the re-enumeration of refugees in Somalia. The first phase, involving an aerial survey, was completed in the last quarter of 1987, and the second phase, which consists of a socio-demographic survey, has begun. Results are expected during the first half of 1989. A large proportion of refugees, all of whom are from Ethiopia, are women and children. They are accommodated in 44 centres located in four regions: 15 in the north-west, 12 in Gedo, 12 in Hiran and 5 in Lower Shabelle.

8. Since 1983, the Government of Somalia has, on several occasions, reaffirmed its position that voluntary repatriation remains the most appropriate long-term solution for refugees in the country and has stated its readiness to facilitate the departure of refugees wishing to repatriate. It has also stated that, in the meantime, a programme of local settlement could be formulated for refugees who did not wish to return or could not attain self-sufficiency in the centres where they now reside. Within this framework, a number of agricultural schemes were initiated and some 5,500 ha of land have since been developed, involving over 15,000 refugee families. Progress regarding local settlement schemes has nevertheless been slow, owing to a number of factors, which include land availability and water, reduced programme activities in 1985-1986 that affected the agricultural sector, the need to establish appropriate implementation arrangements and the time consuming nature of the appraisal sequence for such projects. Consequently, the programme of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Somalia largely has remained one of care and maintenance.

9. While this has ensured that basic needs of refugees were met, difficulties associated with a prolonged relief operation, including dependency and passivity, have also increasingly been perceived. Therefore, the programme had to evolve towards a different and more durable solutions-oriented path. Following the resumption, by mid-1986, of assistance at its previous level, this has been attempted by simultaneous and systematic pursuit of both voluntary repatriation and local integration. Parallel to the shift of emphasis, a major review of care and maintenance sectors was undertaken in the first quarter of 1988. The result was a streamlining of activities, particularly in respect of domestic relief items that were not considered essential at this post-emergency stage of the programme. Care and maintenance activities were therefore concentrated on infrastructural support to refugee centres.

10. A United Nations inter-agency mission visited Somalia in September 1987, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 41/138 of 4 December 1986. The mission estimated that 840,000 refugees continue to have a severe impact on the fragile economy of Somalia. The report of the mission identified a number of priority areas requiring international assistance, such as water resources development, food and livestock production, forestry and range development, health services, educational and vocational training, roads and ports. Moreover, the report recommends a structured and co-ordinated approach both with regard to the formulation of a comprehensive programme of assistance, as well as for the mobilization of the resources to implement it. Concrete steps have already been taken to implement the mission's recommendations, particularly those concerning the promotion of refugee-related development projects and the identification of labour intensive schemes benefiting both the refugees and the local population.

III. RESPONSE OF THE ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

A. Action taken by the Secretary-General

11. The Secretary-General, on 18 March 1988, transmitted to States Members of the United Nations, a copy of General Assembly resolution 42/127, together with the report of the inter-agency mission that visited Somalia in September 1987. He appealed to the international community to continue to support, through bilateral and unilateral channels, the various programmes and projects recommended or under implementation. Furthermore, he expressed the hope that the necessary financial, technical and material assistance could be provided to the Government of Somalia to enable it to deal effectively with the serious social and economic problems created by the refugee situation in the country.

12. On 7 March 1988, the Secretary-General also transmitted General Assembly resolution 42/127 and the report of the mission to the heads of all concerned organizations in the United Nations system urging them to maintain and increase their assistance to the Government of Somalia to enable it to cope with the situation.

B. Action taken by the United Nations Development Programme/ United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office

13. The UNDP office has initiated the collection and compilation of information and data on refugee-related activities as well as the reports and other pertinent documentation that could be utilized for programming purposes.

14. In order to address the fact that the individual project orientation that prevailed in the past had not generated adequate interest among donors, UNDP is now reorienting its activities to create substantive and integrated programmes in close co-operation with bilateral and multilateral partners. Furthermore, because of the considerable additional work-load generated by this integrated approach, steps are being taken to strengthen the capacity of the UNDP field office.

15. The Qorioley Refugee Settlement Project was approved under preparatory assistance in May 1988. The project will produce a feasibility study and a technical plan for the settlement of refugee families who have been living in refugee camps for the past eight years. Major output of the project will include the preparation of a plan for the creation of a rain-fed agricultural farm and the setting up of a village water system. The special significance of this project is that it is intended to serve as a model for other development projects for refugees in Somalia. It is worth noting that, in addition to the collaboration foreseen between UNDP and UNHCR under this project, it also provides a framework for collaboration between the same two United Nations agencies and the Save the Children Fund (United States of America) for the implementation of the project.

16. The United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) and UNDP have provided assistance to Somalia in the preparation of a national plan to combat desertification in Somalia. As a follow-up to the strategy prepared under the project, a desertification management unit is to be established in the country also with UNDP/UNSO financing. An agro-forestry project in the Mogadishu area is being prepared for implementation with UNDP/UNSO financing as are significant extensions of ongoing sand dune fixation projects in Shalla and Shalambot.

17. UNSO is actively co-operating with the Government of Somalia in identifying, formulating and financing development projects and programmes for the protection and rehabilitation of the environment and the productive resources of the country.

18. Since 1980, UNSO has been engaged in sand dune fixation in the coastal zones north and south of the capital of Mogadishu. Three separate projects in different locations have stabilized more than 2,000 ha of active dunes.

19. In 1988, UNSO financed and assisted in the preparation of a National Plan of Action to Combat Desertification for the Somali Government. The plan includes reinforcement of the administrative capacities for managing the natural environment as well as practical proposals for interventions. It would also constitute a basis for an increasingly co-ordinated and integrated approach to desertification control and national resource concerns. UNSO is also working with the Government to prepare a plan for the development of a Somalian environmental monitoring centre. A team of experts will work with the Government to formulate a project for a centre that, in the future, would provide Somali authorities with some of the data necessary for the monitoring of various aspects of environmental and essential resource concerns.

20. Other UNSO missions will be formulating projects, including activities for the protection and amelioration of the fragile environment around Mogadishu and to curb desertification. This is intended to include the Red Sand Hills, which are being heavily exploited by an increasing number of newly-settled people.

C. Action taken by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees/World Food Programme

21. In compliance with General Assembly resolution 42/127, UNHCR has consulted with the Government of Somalia, and, on the basis of these consultations, UNHCR has identified assistance requirements for 1988 and 1989. It should, however, be noted that, at the time of preparation of the present report effects of a number of unknown factors on both the 1988 and 1989 programmes could not be determined, but it was acknowledged that these would require a major revision as soon as developments allow. These factors include the effects of the situation in the north-west region, the outcome of the re-enumeration exercise and a recent substantial change in the exchange rate.

22. Organized voluntary repatriation from the Gedo region began in December 1986, and some 4,940 refugees have so far returned to the Sidamo province of Ethiopia. Further efforts to promote repatriation are presently under way, which include a thorough review of assistance measures required under this programme. To facilitate the movement of refugees, a suspension bridge at the Dolo crossing point between Somalia and Ethiopia was constructed in 1987, and the rehabilitation of the Luuq-Dolo road was carried out during 1988. There is also hope that new development in bilateral relations will further contribute to the success of this programme.

23. Concurrently, a number of initiatives were taken to formulate a major programme aimed at developing self-sufficiency projects. In the agricultural sector, where some 5,500 ha were developed, a three-pronged approach is being promoted, focusing on area development, local settlement and mini-settlement projects. Implementation arrangements involve the further strengthening of the inter-agency framework and increased participation of voluntary agencies. To complement this programme, a substantial increase of non-agricultural income-generation activities and community development projects is also foreseen to promote economic activities in refugee centres and to develop linkages with the local economy.

24. The German Agency for Technical Co-operation completed, on behalf of UNHCR, the appraisal of an area development project in Qorioley. The project includes a pilot agricultural scheme for 400 families complemented by road construction, water development and afforestation activities. It is anticipated that implementation could start during the second half of 1988. The appraisal of the Tug Wajale Rain-fed Farming and Forestry Project was carried out in the last quarter of 1987 by a joint UNHCR/IFAD/World Bank mission. While the mission made detailed proposals, considerations relating to the proximity of the site to the border prevented further progress.

25. The Furjano refugee settlement project in Lower Shabelle was appraised by the World Bank in mid-1987. Subsequently, it was necessary to review further this appraisal to ensure replicability, sustainability and reduce the high per capita cost that the originally proposed semi-mechanized dryland farming would entail. The reappraisal was undertaken in early 1988 by a joint World Bank/European Economic Community (EEC)/UNHCR team, which concluded that improved traditional

rain-fed farming was a potential alternative. A World Bank appraisal mission will visit Somalia in mid-1988 to assess possible options suitable for the Furjano project.

26. At the beginning of 1988, a major initiative was taken by UNHCR, the World Bank and EEC to develop a comprehensive programme combining refugee assistance and development needs. It aims at providing employment both to refugees and to the local population, rehabilitating some of the physical damage caused to the environment and infrastructure by the presence of refugees and their livestock and developing a range of durable assets for the economy of Somalia. Income accruing to refugees will enhance economic activity within the camps and promote linkages between refugee centres and the local economy, thus leading to further job opportunities. The rationale underlying this programme is one of area development and promotion of interaction between refugees and locals. The joint World Bank/EEC/UNHCR mission, which took place in February 1988, found scope for such projects in the forestry, rangeland and watershed management, irrigation and road construction sectors. Subsequent steps in the appraisal sequence are being taken, and it is expected that the project would become operational in the course of 1989.

27. Another development that will affect the UNHCR programme in Somalia is the planned construction of the Bardhera dam, as a result of which most of the refugee camps in the Gedo region will be flooded. At the time of preparation of the present report, discussions were under way between UNHCR, the World Bank and the Government of Somalia to formulate a plan that would lead to durable solutions for the affected refugees. The three components of this plan include the facilitation of voluntary repatriation, inclusion of the refugees in settlement areas connected with the dam and identification of other local integration possibilities.

28. In order to develop a coherent planning framework for achieving durable solutions, a draft action plan has been prepared and is under discussion with the authorities. The plan aims at identifying refugees who wish to repatriate voluntarily and those who would rather opt for local settlement in order to agree with the Government of Somalia on the type of practical measures that could renew the momentum towards voluntary repatriation and local self-sufficient settlement. Steps are being proposed to determine intentions of refugee families, together with a clear time-frame for adjusting assistance programmes accordingly.

29. Food assistance, whose co-ordination is ensured by WFP, will be about 142,000 metric tons in 1988, at an estimated cost of \$US 53 million. Following recommendations of a nutritional survey undertaken in the first half of 1988, rations have been revised upwards from 490 to 520 g a day and steps have been taken to improve the timing of deliveries in the food pipeline. Food requirements will be reassessed once the results of the re-enumeration become available, and adjustments made wherever necessary upon establishment of a new distribution system.

30. The assistance programmes of UNHCR in Somalia are implemented through the National Refugee Commission (NRC), an inter-ministerial body created by the Somali Government to co-ordinate the distribution of assistance to refugees. Refugee units were established within specific ministries to co-ordinate assistance in each sector. Implementation arrangements involve the Refugee Health Unit for health

care delivery; the Refugee Agricultural Unit for agricultural programmes; the Institute of In-service Teacher Training for primary education and teacher training programmes; the Refugee Adult Education Unit for literacy and adult education programmes; the Women's Education Department for family life education programmes and the Refugee Water Supply Division for water supply assistance. Assistance in meeting immediate individual needs and the local settlement of refugees is provided by the NRC counselling offices, while refugee participation and self-help are being promoted by the NRC Community Development Unit. The transport and distribution of the international assistance is undertaken by a specialised unit of the non-governmental organisation CARE.

31. At present, some 20 voluntary agencies participate in the programme, and most of them are operating in the camps. Their activities mainly cover the health, income generation, agricultural settlement and education sectors. The programme at the centre for unaccompanied and handicapped children at Mogadishu is also implemented by a voluntary agency with UNHCR assistance. Some of these voluntary agencies operate as implementing partners in UNHCR programmes and an increased participation is planned for 1989 in the agricultural settlement and income-generation sectors.

32. As noted earlier, inter-agency co-operation is gaining an ever increasing momentum, particularly for agricultural settlements and refugee aid and development projects. In this context, co-operation with the World Bank deserves a special mention, and three major projects are presently in the pipeline. As regards food assistance, WFP assumes a vital and complementary role, with increasingly effective mechanisms being established.

D. Action taken by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations

33. FAO is involved in a wide range of activities in Somalia, including food security and livestock relief in the rangelands. Included in their active project pipeline are: projects for epidemiology and veterinary field services; range water and rehabilitation; forestry sector support and training; land resources survey and land use planning; tropical forestry action plan; and rehabilitation of rural water resources. The aforementioned projects are directed primarily to the general population, but indirectly benefit refugees; moreover, where conditions permit, the refugee population could participate in the projects.

34. Emergency food assistance operations are ongoing for Ethiopian refugees in Somalia; the total value of emergency operations in 1988 is \$US 17.3/ million. In addition, 80,000 expectant and lactating mothers and pre-school children from the refugee population are beneficiaries of the vulnerable group feeding operation which is supported by WFP.

35. FAO is in continuous consultation with the Government on a considerable variety of ongoing and projected activities, including those mentioned above directed to the priorities of the Government and FAO mandates. FAO shares the inter-agency mission's strong interest in protection and rehabilitation of the

environment. FAO participated in the National Workshop on Desertification and Environment, held at Mogadishu from 5 to 9 March 1988, organized jointly by UNSO, UNDP and the Government of Somalia. The Workshop was attended by a number of national institutions, as well as international, multilateral and bilateral agencies; it discussed a wide range of development issues related to the management and conservation of natural resources, with particular reference to desertification and ecological, social and economic problems.

E. Action taken by the International Fund for Agricultural Development

36. At present, a substantial number of refugees are in the region of two co-financed projects of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), namely, the North-west Region Agricultural Development Project and the Animal Health Services Project. However, these projects do not encompass any activities targeted directly to refugees.

37. Recently, a joint World Bank/IFAD/UNHCR mission had appraised the Togwagale Agricultural Development Project. The appraisal report was the subject of discussions at IFAD on 15 March 1988. About 25 per cent of the target group will be refugees who will benefit from the project on an equal footing with the nationals. Unfortunately, further project processing has been delayed, pending the resolution of the security situation in the region.

F. Action taken by the United Nations Environment Programme

38. UNEP has ongoing consultations with the Somali Government regarding rehabilitation of its degraded resources base and environmental protection.

39. UNEP has extended assistance, on Government request, covering, inter alia, the following subject areas:

(a) Consultancy mission on useful plants for sand dune fixation (January 1986);

(b) Support to the Seminar on the Protection, Management and Development of the Coastal and Marine Environment (September 1986);

(c) Project proposals on the above were submitted to the donors' meeting (March 1988) of the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN), and follow-up is under way;

(d) Support to the Workshop on Sand Dune Fixation (March 1987);

(e) Consultancy mission on the state of wildlife resources (May 1987);

(f) Consultancy mission on measures to deal with deadly sharks (August 1987);

(g) Within the context of the Cairo Programme of Action of AMCEN, the Somali Government will be assisted in strengthening, through participation in AMCEN networks (environmental monitoring, climatology, water resources, energy, genetic resources, science and technology, education and training), Somali national institutions dealing with aspects of resources management;

(h) Within the framework of AMCEN, some pilot projects on sustainable development will be implemented. The Somali Government has already identified sites and the mobilisation of funds is part of the overall fund-raising drive of UNEP in support of the Cairo Programme;

(i) Somalia is one of the countries benefiting from UNEP co-operation with the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Desertification.
