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REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

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Item 7 of the provisional
agenda**
REGIONAL CO-OPERATION

Special measures for the social and economic
development of Africa in the 1980s

Report of the Secretary-General

1. It was on account of the fact that Africa is the most disadvantaged of the developing continents, its peoples suffering to a greater degree than others from the effects of insufficient and sub-nutritional food, a lack of shelter, poor health, drought and widespread illiteracy, to name just a few of Africa's ills, that the General Assembly recognized that special measures should be adopted by the international community for the social and economic development of African countries (resolution 35/64 of 5 December 1980).

2. Pursuant to that resolution, the Secretary-General provided an interim report (A/36/513) to the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session. That report dealt comprehensively with the contributions planned by organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations for the implementation of the Lagos Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Monrovia Strategy for the Economic Development of Africa 1/ and the Final Act of Lagos. 2/ Pursuant to Assembly resolutions 35/64 and 36/180, the Secretary-General submitted a report to the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1982 on possible contributions by non-governmental organizations to the implementation of the Lagos Plan of Action (E/1982/80).

* A/38/50/Rev.1.

** E/1983/100.

3. At its thirty-seventh session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 37/139 of 17 December 1982, which read as follows:

"The General Assembly,

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"3. Renews its call upon the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to examine measures to increase the resources for the execution of the programmes for the Industrial Development Decade for Africa and to apply the special measures in a comprehensive and co-ordinated manner;

"4. Urges donor countries to provide substantial and sustained levels of resources for promoting the accelerated development of African countries and the effective implementation of the Lagos Plan of Action, and to contribute generously to the United Nations Trust Fund for African Development;

"5. Invites all international financial institutions, particularly the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the International Development Agency and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, to continue to consider actively increasing substantially their development assistance to Africa during the Decade;

"6. Requests the Secretary-General to continue to allocate the necessary resources to the Economic Commission for Africa, taking into account its role as the main economic and social development centre within the United Nations system for the African region, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 32/197 of 20 December 1977 and 33/202 of 29 January 1979;

"7. Further requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session, through the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1983, a full report on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution."

4. The present report, the third since the adoption of resolution 35/64, reviews special measures taken by the international community for the social and economic development of Africa in the 1980s, concentrating on clearly identifiable measures introduced with the sole objective of facilitating the implementation of the Lagos Plan of Action. It does not review, therefore, action taken by organizations within the scope of their respective mandates, which is covered by other reports to be presented by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session.

5. The appeal for increased resources for special measures was made at a time when the world economy continued to falter with no visible sign then, or even now, of a real, sustainable upturn after some four years of decline or stagnation. The impact of these conditions on the flow of aid, in real terms, from developed countries has, regrettably, been felt adversely throughout the United Nations system.

6. In Africa, as elsewhere, multilateral assistance financed through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has not progressed as planned. For example,

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the UNDP regional programme for Africa, planned at \$US 283,400,000 for the quinquennium 1982-1986, now stands at \$137,208,000. Added to this, in its negotiations with traditionally friendly donors for multilateral assistance in support of regional projects designed to benefit the peoples of Africa, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has witnessed a severe tightening of the purse. The effect of this combined reduction in technical co-operation resources will lead to the Commission's technical co-operation programmes being seriously altered to the detriment of the African people.

7. Further evidence of the shrinking of assistance at the multilateral level lies in the response to the direct appeal of the General Assembly to donor countries to contribute generously to the United Nations Trust Fund for African Development. As a result of that appeal, which opened up the Fund to possible contributions from sources outside the African region, the Executive Secretary of ECA invited 51 non-African countries to the Fourth Biennial Pledging Conference, held at Addis Ababa on 2 May 1983, in connection with the Commission's Silver Jubilee Anniversary Meetings. The results were disappointing. Not a single developed country made a direct cash contribution to the Fund. Even those projects aimed at directly assisting African least developed countries did not receive support from donor countries and institutions. It is with a sense of gratification, however, that the Commission received the announcement of cash contributions by China and India.

8. The Secretary-General hopes that donor countries will, during the course of 1983, be in a position to announce pledges to the Fund, so that the resource gap of approximately \$9 million between the cost of implementing the Commission's approved work programme for 1984/85 and the resources the Commission anticipates from both regular and extrabudgetary sources will be bridged.

9. There is no discernible evidence that there has been any special effort by the international community, during the last three years, in direct response to the appeals made by the General Assembly, to provide the resources for special measures required to give impetus to and sustain the development effort being made by African countries themselves. Under the best of conditions it takes time for a given pattern of economic assistance to change, unless such change is prompted by political considerations peculiar to the circumstance. The Secretary-General, as he continues, together with the Executive Secretary of ECA, to keep this matter under close surveillance and as he continues to explore every avenue to ensure an increase in the flow of resources to Africa, hopes that donor countries and financial institutions will treat the matter of making a special effort in support of African social and economic development with the sense of urgency it requires, which, up till now, they have not done.

10. It must be recalled that Africa has the largest number of least developed countries: 26 out of 36, which is more than 50 per cent of the total membership of the Economic Commission for Africa. After the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, which adopted the Substantial New Programme of Action for the 1980s for the Least Developed Countries, 3/ African least developed countries, with the assistance of organizations of the United Nations system, embarked on the preparation of review meetings aimed at financing their respective

development programmes, as provided for in the Substantial New Programme of Action.

11. While African least developed countries have devoted, with great seriousness, substantial resources, both financial and human, in the preparation of their review meetings, the results so far have not been conclusive. Actually, the review meetings have tended to be merely correlative meetings on the development needs of the countries rather than forums for firm commitments from donor countries and institutions. It is in this context that the General Assembly, in resolution 37/224 of 20 December 1982, strongly urged "all donor countries to implement their commitments, as contained in paragraphs 61 to 69 of the Substantial New Programme of Action, so as to achieve, in that regard, a substantial increase in resources for the development of the least developed countries".

12. A similar request was also made by the Third Meeting of the Conference of Ministers of African Least Developed Countries, held in Addis Ababa on 25 and 26 April 1983. The meeting adopted two resolutions dealing with resource flows and country review meetings, respectively. The meeting noted with great concern that the declining trend of overall official development assistance (ODA) flows to African least developed countries, which started in 1980, continued in 1981-1982, despite the fact that most donor countries committed themselves, at the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, to devoting 0.15 per cent of their GNP to assistance to least developed countries or to double such assistance by 1985. Actually, aid to least developed countries from DAC donors in 1981 represented only about 0.07 per cent of their GNP, a figure which is far below the target of 0.15 per cent. As concerns international financial institutions, it should be noted that, although action was taken by such institutions to increase the flow of resources to the developing world, no special measures specifically concerning the implementation of the Lagos Plan of Action have been introduced. Similarly, there is no evidence of any increase in resources that would have been specially provided by the international community for the execution of programmes for the Industrial Development Decade for Africa.

13. Nor have aid modalities improved, and aid-tying practices continue to hamper the efficient use of resources made available to least developed countries. In addition, African least developed countries suffer from insufficient non-project aid, for example, balance-of-payments support, budgetary support, import financing and commodities. It is essential that full support is rendered in those areas if the least developed countries are to overcome their particular problems.

14. The General Assembly's request to the Secretary-General to continue to allocate the necessary resources to the Economic Commission for Africa in accordance with Assembly resolutions 32/197 and 33/202 has been taken into account in the preparation of the proposed programme budget for 1984-1985, which, in the context of a general policy of budgetary restraint, has provided for some growth for ECA. This is in line with the effort to decentralize economic and social activities through a strengthening of the regional commissions. Progress made towards decentralization, and specific measures for the strengthening of ECA, will be the subject of a separate report to the General Assembly pursuant to paragraph 7 of resolution 37/214.

15. Finally, with respect to the programmatic aspects of resolution 37/214, the Secretary-General is pleased to report that there is continuous, almost daily, collaboration between the Economic Commission for Africa and the organizations of the United Nations system as well as the intergovernmental organizations in Africa, in particular the ECA-sponsored institutions, among which are the African Regional Centre for Engineering Design and Manufacturing, the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning, the African Regional Centre for Technology, the Eastern and Southern African Mineral Resources Development Centre, the African Centre for Applied Research and Training in Social Development and the regional institutes for population studies. Specifically, such collaboration, in the case of the Industrial Development Decade for Africa, is conducted through the Joint ECA/UNIDO Division and takes the form of joint policy and programme formulation, as well as the development of specific projects for which financing is jointly sought. Similar pursuits are conducted with ECA as lead agency through the Inter-Agency Co-ordinating Committee in respect of the Transport and Communications Decade for Africa on which the Secretary-General has placed several reports before the General Assembly.

Notes

1/ Adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity at its second extraordinary session, held at Lagos on 28 and 29 April 1980 (A/S-11/14, annex I).

2/ A/S-11/14, annex II.

3/ Report of the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Paris, 1-14 September 1981 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.82.I.8), part one, sect. A.
