

United Nations
**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**



THIRTY-EIGHTH SESSION

*Official Records**

SECOND COMMITTEE

36th meeting

held on

Friday, 11 November 1983

at 10.30 a.m.

New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 36th MEETING

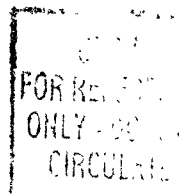
Chairman: Mr. DIETZE (German Democratic Republic)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 81: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)

- (a) OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DISASTER RELIEF CO-ORDINATOR: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)
- (b) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)
- (c) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MEDIUM-TERM AND LONG-TERM RECOVERY AND REHABILITATION PROGRAMME IN THE SUDANO-SAHELIAN REGION: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)



*This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, Room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate fascicle for each Committee

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.2/38/SR.36
25 November 1983
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 81: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)

- (a) OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DISASTER RELIEF CO-ORDINATOR: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/38/3 (Part II); A/38/201 and Corr.1 and 2, A/38/202)
 - (b) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/38/3 (Parts I and II); A/38/211-217 and Add.1; A/38/218 and 219; A/C.2/38/2)
 - (c) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MEDIUM-TERM AND LONG-TERM RECOVERY AND REHABILITATION PROGRAMME IN THE SUDANO-SAHELIAN REGION: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/38/152, 180 and Add.1)
1. Mrs. MARTINHO (Portugal) expressed her profound concern about the economic situation of many low-income countries, especially the least developed countries of Africa, which in recent years had continued to deteriorate. The recovery of the world economy was not enough to overcome the crisis faced by those countries; concrete support measures were needed to supplement their own development efforts. In that respect, it was important to note the adoption, at the sixth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, of a resolution on the implementation of the Substantial New Programme of Action for the 1980s for the Least Developed Countries.
2. Portugal was both a donor and a receiver of assistance. Despite its intermediate development level and its serious economic difficulties, it participated actively in multilateral economic assistance programmes. Official agencies had been established to promote and direct co-operation with the developing countries through co-ordination of economic and financial matters in all the related social, technical, cultural and technological aspects. The beneficiaries of that assistance were mainly African countries. Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau and Sao Tome and Principe until recently had been absorbing more than 50 per cent of official development assistance for areas as diverse as education, training, health, agriculture, transport, communications, meteorology, industry and energy. A restricted round table of donor countries and international organizations on assistance to Guinea-Bissau would be held in Portugal the following week.
3. Her Government, which was in a position to provide technology and experts, was very interested in exploring new possibilities for trilateral co-operation with other countries and international agencies which had the necessary financial capacity. The financial obstacles blocking the implementation of many projects could thus be overcome. Some good results had already been achieved in a few cases where such trilateral co-operation had actually materialized.

/...

(Mrs. Martinho, Portugal)

4. Referring to item 81 (c), her delegation noted that Portugal supported the activities of rehabilitation programmes in the countries affected by drought in the Sudano-Sahelian region and its regional organization, the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel. Portugal was a member of the Club du Sahel and contributed to the United Nations Trust Fund for Sudano-Sahelian Activities, in order to co-operate in the efforts to promote development in that region.

5. Mrs. NJIE (Gambia) said that, following the events of July 1981, her country had been the beneficiary of a special economic assistance programme launched in response to General Assembly resolution 36/220. Gambia continued to suffer from drought and food shortages, and its critical internal situation had been aggravated by the world recession. Eighty per cent of the Gambian population earned its living from agriculture, and the ground nut crop was the principal source of income. However, between 1973 and 1981, droughts had drastically reduced production, which had fallen from 140,000 tons in the early 1970s to 45,000 tons in 1980/81. International prices of ground nuts had also fallen, so that despite the increase in production in 1982/83 due to the increase in extension services and attractive prices offered by the Government to farmers, the average price obtained was 45 per cent lower than in 1981/82. That situation, plus the deterioration in the terms of trade by 35.4 per cent in 1982/83, had caused serious problems for the Gambia's balance of payments.

6. The Government's second five-year development plan had been designed to develop the cultivation of rice and cotton, exploit water resources and develop livestock and fishing as well as tourism, in order to overcome the problems of an economy based on a single crop. The lack of resources, however, had prevented the full implementation of that plan, and as local production of food covered only 70 per cent of the population's needs, it was necessary to import nearly 350,000 tons of grain, despite the detrimental effects on the economy of the country. After the events of 1981, the second five-year plan had been modified to provide for the expenditure needed for national security, reconstruction and development. Emphasis had been placed on rural development and the creation of employment opportunities to hold back the migration of young people to the city.

7. Her delegation expressed the appreciation of the Government and people of her country to the Under-Secretary-General and to the Joint Co-ordinator of Special Economic Assistance Programmes for their tireless efforts. It also took the opportunity to appeal to the international community to respond generously to the needs of the Gambia at the round table to be held in November 1984. Her delegation intended to submit a follow-up draft resolution at the current session in which the attention of the international community would be drawn to the need for bilateral and multilateral financial, technical and material assistance for the implementation of the special economic assistance programme, and it entertained the hope that the Committee would, as in the past, adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

/...

8. Mr. AL-HADDAD (Democratic Yemen) said that in the developing countries, especially the least developed, natural disasters aggravated the financial situation and had adverse effects which were impossible to overcome without outside assistance. It was therefore essential for the international community to provide sufficient resources to strengthen the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO). The Secretary-General's report on that subject (A/38/202) noted the initiatives of some organizations and specialized agencies concerning emergency relief operations, including the establishment of emergency units or disaster focal points. It also stressed that there was a need for comprehensive, up-to-date information and that the Co-ordinator should maintain contact with Governments in order to keep abreast of the aid available for emergency situations. Governments and relevant organizations and agencies should improve their flow of information on relief assistance, action and plans so that UNDRO could use that information to co-ordinate activities. The early warning system was fundamental, but the economic difficulties which kept it from operating properly in many countries must be kept in mind. The assistance operations could be effective only if more resources were allocated. He stressed the importance of having a general-purpose fund to be used for unearmarked emergency relief. Such a fund would be of special value in cases of disasters (A/38/202, paras. 103-106). In that respect, his delegation firmly supported the Co-ordinator's appeal for additional resources.

9. In 1982, his country had been the victim of floods caused by unprecedented rainfall, which had caused the loss of human lives and considerable damage to farmlands, roads and houses, and had decimated livestock. Losses of more than \$1 billion had occurred. As a result of those disasters, the ongoing development projects had had to be interrupted to make way for rehabilitation and reconstruction work. The Secretary-General's report on assistance to Democratic Yemen (A/38/212) described the adverse effects of the floods and the reconstruction plans. He thanked the Secretary-General for his efforts and the countries and agencies which had given their aid, as well as the Co-ordinator and UNDRO. There remained much to be done, however, and he expressed the hope that the international community would respond generously and thereby help his country to overcome the difficulties it was experiencing.

10. Mr. SAIF EL-NASR (Egypt) said that next to war natural disasters were the second major human problem and the international community must therefore actively and constantly review ways of tackling them. The United Nations must play a central role in that process, especially UNDRO which helped Governments to prepare national emergency plans.

11. However, in most cases the relief operations were organized after the event, and it would therefore be better to give more attention to international disaster prevention planning and to initiate an UNDRO/DPI information programme to increase public awareness of the problem. More publicity should also be given to the UNDRO computerized disaster information data base, and its early warning systems should be used to enable UNDRO to play a more effective part as a co-ordinating agency and a source of information. It was also important that Governments should supply accurate information and there should accordingly be a single national authority to act as a focal point for information, since the disaster-stricken country was in

(Mr. Saif El-Nasr, Egypt)

the best position to determine its needs. The UNITAR study on rules for disaster relief operations could serve as a guideline for the development of standard procedures, rather than leaving everything to be extemporized.

12. Disasters had a crippling effect on development programmes and any development plan, especially in disaster-prone countries, must include an early warning system. The role of UNDRO was most important in preventing the droughts, floods and famines which plagued developing countries. The worst affected of those countries were in the Sudano-Sahelian region which had been under consideration by the United Nations since 1971. In that connection he praised the work of the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office in assisting the Sudano-Sahelian region in the planning, programming, financing and supervision of their projects, even though its resources were not matched by its expanding responsibilities. In that respect he agreed with the Secretary-General's comment concerning the JIU recommendation on the staffing of UNSO (A/38/180/Add.1, para. 7).

13. His delegation stressed that priority should be accorded to projects which allowed local Governments, their experts and the population concerned the greatest share. Finally, he expressed appreciation of UNDRO's contribution towards one of the most noble tasks confronting the international community.

14. Mr. KAABACHI (Tunisia) said that the action taken in implementation of General Assembly resolutions 36/225 and 37/144 had strengthened UNDRO's role in dealing with emergency situations. Nevertheless, as the Secretary-General had pointed out (A/38/202, para. 73) insufficient time had passed to draw definite conclusions about the new arrangements.

15. To judge from the experience of the past two years, the following points were noteworthy: in the first place, combined assistance programmes required better co-ordination between the various bodies and specialized agencies and it would therefore be desirable to hold regular joint meetings of various specialized bodies and co-ordinating centres in order to devise and publicize effective procedures. In the second place, with regard to joint appeals for resources, it would be highly advisable to keep UNDRO informed of such activities and the results achieved so that it could revise its estimates of requirements, identify deficiencies and proceed with the procurement of the additional resources required. In the third place, delivery and distribution of relief supplies should be speeded up so as to reduce as far as possible the human suffering caused by disasters. In the fourth place, the establishment of a general-purpose contingency fund would enable emergency relief operations to be started quickly in the knowledge that they would not have to be halted at a critical moment for lack of funds.

6. The funds allocated to UNDRO were inadequate for its tasks and the regulations governing its funding must be amended. Finally, his delegation expressed its appreciation to UNDRO and to all those countries and organizations which had helped the people affected by the floods in Tunisia in October 1982.

/...

17. Mr. ALBORNOZ (Ecuador), speaking also for the delegations of Bolivia and Peru, said that there was as yet little public awareness of the disastrous impact on the Pacific Seaboard caused by the vicissitudes of the "El Niño" current which had resulted in drought, floods and abnormally high tides inflicting heavy damage on the people and economy of the three countries on behalf of which he was speaking, quite apart from the fact that the danger might very well occur again. In view of the extent of the disaster, the Economic and Social Council had adopted resolution 1983/45 calling for measures to assist the three Governments in the reconstruction and rehabilitation and of the areas affected, and for the mobilization of international resources, and requesting the submission of a report to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session. The Secretary-General had appointed a personal representative to visit the affected areas and submit a report to supplement the preliminary report of ECLA, which had later made a follow-up report (E/CEPAL/4/N.33) with a detailed inventory of the damage caused by the disaster and setting forth plans for rehabilitation and rebuilding and for the prevention of similar damage in future, particularly as regards food and health. The report stated that, if the three countries were to recover fully, they would have to devote their entire resources to that purpose for many years to come. The aggregate figure was some \$423.1 million which was a large amount in view of the relatively weak economies of the three countries concerned.

18. He expressed appreciation of the co-operation given by UNDRO and other organizations of the United Nations system whose actions had been effective, discreet, timely and continuous and expressed the view that given the important role of their aid in disaster situations, the ceiling of \$30,000 per country in the case of any one disaster should be raised to \$50,000, having regard to the extent of the damage. He hoped that, as on previous occasions, the international community would once again support the peoples affected by the disastrous events which he had described.

19. Mr. RAMOS (Cape Verde) said that the plight of the drought-stricken countries of the Sahelian region had led to the recognition in 1973 that national measures were not enough and therefore regional actions were required, following which the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) had been established. In 1977 regional projects for the period from 1977 to 1982 had been approved and, in 1982, medium-term programming for 1982 to 1990 had been formulated. However, despite the strong will and determination of the Sahelian peoples, the medium-term and long-term objectives could only be achieved with the increasing support of the international community. It had to be acknowledged that that support had been inadequate in view of the magnitude of the problem; a disease which required major surgery could not be cured with headache powders.

20. The United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office, founded in 1973, had done much, and, his delegation noted with satisfaction the recommendation of the Joint Inspection Unit in its report (A/38/180, para. 129) that "UNSO should energetically continue its specific activities to combat drought", but he did not entirely agree with the views expressed in paragraphs 31 and 32 of the same report which gave the impression that drought was a cyclical phenomenon which had run its course. That was certainly not the case in many Sahelian countries in which the irregularity

/...

(Mr. Ramos, Cape Verde)

of rainfall was causing serious food problems and shortages of water for the population. In Cape Verde drought had become an endemic feature affecting the already insufficient food production capacity as well as the water supply. The rain expected in October had not come and much of the harvest would therefore be lost, thus increasing the estimated food aid needs. As the President of Cape Verde had stated when addressing the General Assembly, thanks to the assistance of the international community, Cape Verde had recorded encouraging economic growth indicators. However, development assistance would attain its true objectives only if it ceased to be a mere palliative for emergency situations and became an actual stimulus for the mobilization of internal productive forces.

21. On the basis of those concepts, his Government had drawn up a national plan for 1982-1985 designed to reduce unemployment which affected 29 per cent of the work-force; improve the quality of education and health care; improve the housing situation; increase the supply of water for rural areas and the main urban centres; and, in particular, enhance the capacity of industry and other productive sectors. His Government was taking efforts to build an infrastructure to serve as the basis for the country's development. To achieve that goal, it had begun a joint project with companies from the Netherlands and Portugal to construct a dry dock facility in the port of Mindelo which would revitalize the economy of the island of Sao Vicente. At the same time an integrated project had begun on the islands of Boa Vista and Maio; there were plans for the construction of a cement factory on the island of Maio. A considerable part of the investments would also be used for the development of ports and inter-island transport by air and sea. It was estimated that the total investments required for the implementation of that plan would amount to approximately \$471 million. Internal financing was estimated at approximately 10 per cent and it was hoped that most of the financing would come from foreign sources. The success of the plan for 1982-1985 depended on several factors, mainly the readiness of Governments and international organizations to provide support in a continuous and predictable manner. His Government expressed gratitude for the assistance given to Cape Verde and reiterated that it was aware of its important responsibility.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)
(A/C.2/38/L.24/Rev.1, L.27, L.28, L.29 and L.30)

Draft resolution A/C.2/38/L.24/Rev.1

22. Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh), speaking on behalf of the delegations of Madagascar, the Sudan, Tunisia, Yemen and his own delegation, introduced draft resolution A/C.2/38/L.24/Rev.1, which he had already submitted at the second regular session of the Economic and Social Council in 1983. The draft resolution was based on Council resolution 1983/43 and the resolutions of the International Conference on the Question of Palestine, recently held in Geneva.

23. In the last line of paragraph 2 the words "of the UNDP programme for the Palestinian people" should be replaced by the phrase "of the UNDP assistance programme for the Palestinian people".

/...

(Mr. Chowdhury, Bangladesh)

24. In view of the urgent need to provide substantial economic and social assistance to the Palestinian people and bearing in mind the fact that the draft resolution reflected prior decisions of various United Nations forums, it was the hope of the sponsors that the draft resolution would be given wide support by Member States.

Draft resolution A/C.2/38/L.27

25. Mr. VERCELES (Philippines) said that the delegation of Bangladesh had joined the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.2/38/L.27. The draft resolution took account of previous relevant General Assembly resolutions, particularly resolution 36/41, and Economic and Social Council resolutions such as the Acapulco Document on World Tourism adopted by the World Tourism Meeting. Since resolution 36/41 had been adopted by consensus, it was the hope of the sponsors that that would also be the case with the draft resolution under consideration.

Draft resolutions A/C.2/38/L.28 and L.29

26. Mr. FAREED (Pakistan), introducing on behalf of the sponsors, who had been joined by Nigeria and Venezuela, the draft resolution on protection against products harmful to health and the environment (A/C.2/38/L.28), said that the Under-Secretary-General had stated several days earlier that the consolidated list of products referred to in paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 37/137 would be published in December 1983. He stressed the importance of the draft resolution under consideration and said that it would facilitate the additional work connected with that list. Since resolution 37/137 had been adopted with the support of all delegations except one, it was the hope of the sponsors that the draft resolution under consideration would be adopted by consensus.

27. Several changes had been made in the text of the draft resolution following consultations. In paragraph 3 the word "yearly" should be replaced by the word "regular". Paragraph 5 should be divided into two parts: the first addressed to Governments and the second to intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. In paragraphs 6 and 7 the words "through the Economic and Social Council" should be deleted. In the fifth and sixth lines of paragraph 8 the words "on regulatory decisions taken by other Governments, and on technical information" should be deleted.

28. Introducing the draft resolution on consumer protection (A/C.2/38/L.29) on behalf of the sponsors, he said that under Economic and Social Council decision 1983/174 the General Assembly, at its thirty-eighth session, was to determine the procedure which would facilitate the adoption of guidelines for consumer protection. In order not to delay work and to facilitate the participation of certain countries through their experts, the draft resolution recommended the establishment of a working group at the next regular session of the Council in order to consider the draft guidelines, the results of which would be finalized at the second regular session of the Council with a view to their adoption by the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session. It was hoped that the draft resolution could be adopted by consensus and he suggested that informal consultations should be held for that purpose.

/...

Draft resolution A/C.2/38/L.30

29. Mrs. MORENO (Mexico), introducing the draft resolution on the Transport and Communications Decade in Africa (A/C.2/38/L.30) on behalf of the Group of 77, stressed the importance of mobilizing economic resources in order to develop transport and communications in Africa. The preamble of the draft resolution referred to the most important stages in their development, while the operative part included a recognition of both the progress made to date and the need to set up new and more effective mechanisms for further progress.

30. The draft resolution requested that the subject, so vital for the African continent, should continue to be studied by the General Assembly in view of its present and future importance for the development of Africa. The Group of 77 considered that the support provided for the Decade would be a very important element to show how developing countries could make use of international co-operation in order to supplement their internal resources for achieving their full development.

31. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, since there were still some difficulties in the way of submitting a draft resolution on transnational corporations before 1 p.m., the original deadline, and in view of the importance of the question, the deadline for submitting it would be extended to 6 p.m. on Thursday, 17 November 1983.

32. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.