



General Assembly
Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/39/267/Add.1
E/1984/96/Add.1
21 June 1984

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Thirty-ninth session
Item 83 (a) of the preliminary list*
SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF
ASSISTANCE: OFFICE OF THE UNITED
NATIONS DISASTER RELIEF CO-ORDINATOR

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
Second regular session of 1984
Item 18 of the provisional
agenda**
SPECIAL ECONOMIC, HUMANITARIAN
AND DISASTER RELIEF
ASSISTANCE

Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Strengthening the capacity of the United Nations system to
respond to natural disasters and other disaster situations

CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
I. INTRODUCTION	1 - 5	3
II. PROPOSALS BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL	6 - 48	3
A. Concerted relief programmes (A/38/202-E/1983/94, paras. 75-79)	7 - 11	4
Specific proposals by the Secretary-General	10 - 11	4
B. Appeals (A/38/202-E/1983/94, paras. 80-84)	12 - 16	5
Specific proposal by the Secretary-General	16	6

* A/39/50.

** E/1984/100.

CONTENTS (continued)

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
C. Delivery of relief supplies to and within a disaster-stricken country (A/38/202-E/1983/94, paras. 85-99) ...	17 - 28	6
Specific proposals by the Secretary-General	25 - 28	8
D. Roster of experts (A/38/202-E/1983/94, paras. 100-102)	29 - 32	8
Specific proposals by the Secretary-General	31 - 32	9
E. General-purpose funding (A/38/202-E/1983/94, paras. 103-106)	33 - 38	9
Specific proposal by the Secretary-General	38	10
F. Evaluation (A/38/202-E/1983/94, paras. 107-110)	39 - 40	10
Specific proposal by the Secretary-General	40	10
G. Transition to the rehabilitation and reconstruction phase (A/38/202-E/1983/94, paras. 111-114)	41 - 43	10
Specific proposal by the Secretary-General	43	11
H. Disaster preparedness and prevention (A/38/202-E/1983/94, paras. 48-57)	44 - 48	11
Specific proposal by the Secretary-General	48	12

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its thirty-seventh session, the General Assembly, in resolution 37/144 of 17 December 1982, requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report on the implementation of Assembly resolution 36/225 of 17 December 1981, including a report on the implementation of Assembly resolution 37/144, through the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1983.
2. Accordingly, the Secretary-General prepared a comprehensive report on the strengthening of the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to natural and other disaster situations (A/38/202-E/1983/94), which was submitted to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session through the Economic and Social Council.
3. The General Assembly, in adopting resolution 38/202 of 20 December 1983, took note with appreciation of the comprehensive report and requested the Secretary-General to prepare, in consultation with Governments of both the donor and recipient countries, as well as with appropriate agencies, specific proposals to follow up the conclusions and problems which had been identified in the comprehensive report as well as in resolution 38/202, and to submit them to it at its thirty-ninth session, through the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session in 1984.
4. As a result, the Secretary-General held consultations, with representatives of both the donor and recipient countries, as well as with appropriate agencies prior to the preparation of the present report.
5. In preparing his proposals, the objective of the Secretary-General was to obtain the greatest value from the expanding international relief assistance through action taken either individually by Member States or multilaterally through international organizations. Some of those proposals would specifically require action by UNDRO jointly with the operational organizations of the United Nations system. In the light of the above-mentioned consultations, the Secretary-General understands that Member States would wish the implementation of those proposals to be co-ordinated by the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator in view of his Office's function as the focal point in the United Nations system for disaster relief co-ordination (para. 3 of General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI), of 14 December 1971, and para. 3 of resolution 36/225, of 17 December 1981).

II. PROPOSALS BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

6. The following are some considerations followed by specific proposals which Member States may wish to adopt as a follow-up to the conclusions of the comprehensive report and of General Assembly resolution 38/202.

A. Concerted relief programmes (A/38/202-E/1983/94, paras. 75-79)

7. These programmes, developed in accordance with the directives of the General Assembly in resolution 36/225 and within the framework of Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI) under which UNDRO was established, have in recent years become the cornerstone of the Office's co-ordinating function. Inter-agency consultations at headquarters and in the field are an essential prerequisite for their development; these take place through individual or collective contacts, bearing in mind the inherent degree of urgency. Consultations at headquarters are conducted through inter-agency meetings; consultations in the field are conducted through joint assessment missions and by meetings of local agency representatives under the aegis of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) resident representatives, United Nations resident co-ordinators acting in their capacity as UNDRO representatives.

8. Inter-agency assessment missions are necessary to prepare independent in-depth multi-sectoral assessments in the disaster-stricken country. Those field assessments of urgent and essential relief needs enable the reaching of agreement with both the recipient Government and the relief organizations engaged in the country on priorities and a common relief strategy. An estimate of the needs is obtained through the co-operation of the various organizations concerned, each providing specialized technical input in its respective area of responsibility, thereby ensuring the complete coverage of the vital requirements of the population affected by the disaster.

9. Inter-agency missions are consequently composed of representatives of agencies of the United Nations system, including one or two UNDRO delegates (one at the senior level to act as the co-ordinator and secretary of the mission and the other to remain in the stricken country after the departure of the mission to provide the necessary follow-up with the recipient Government and representatives of agencies of the United Nations system, other governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as potential bilateral donors) and, occasionally, representatives of other relief organizations. 1/

Specific proposals by the Secretary-General

10. So far as the inter-agency meetings are concerned, the Secretary-General has noted the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit and the Advisory Committee for the Co-ordination of Information System (ACCIS) that the feasibility of tele-conferencing should be examined and proposes that, once steps have been taken to implement those recommendations, UNDRO should take advantage of the resulting arrangements by conducting, on an experimental basis, its headquarters' consultations through this innovative approach.

11. Regarding inter-agency missions, the Secretary-general proposes that, in those significant emergencies in which the stricken countries have requested assistance, an international appeal be launched and, to this effect, inter-agency assessment missions be organized by UNDRO with the participation of the appropriate organizations of the United Nations system and other international relief bodies.

B. Appeals (A/38/202-E/1983/94, paras. 80-84)

12. Normally appeals launched by the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator are based on an objective assessment of needs arrived at in consultation with the Government of the affected country. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 37/144 and Administrative Committee for Co-ordination decision 82/1, united appeals for funds are launched for the affected country requesting international assistance on behalf of the Secretary-General, particularly in the case of major compound disasters, after the joint development of concerted relief programmes with the agencies concerned. Naturally, those united appeals are not intended to supplant appeals by individual organizations. Their purpose is merely to provide potential donors with a coherent framework for the relief programme as a whole so that they may see how the appeals by individual organizations relate to the overall operation.

13. Potential donors should then feel free to respond as they wish either through bilateral contributions to the affected country, contributions to specialized agencies or other intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations, or, should they wish to support at the same time several aspects of the programme, through a contribution to UNDRO as the focal point for the whole operation. The aim is to meet the various relief requirements without duplication or gaps, with individual donors joining together in a properly co-ordinated programme of operations. Indeed, recent experience in dealing with major disasters and other emergencies has shown that important relief programmes sponsored individually or jointly by various donors were severely impeded by not providing for the coverage of certain critical areas. The identification and subsequent filling of these gaps by means of a concerted relief programme and appeals based thereon are essential prerequisites for the successful implementation of the overall relief effort in a given country.

14. For instance a severe drought calls not only for emergency food aid but often also for transport so that the assistance may reach those in need together with the required medical attention. A good example of the value of such an approach is to be found in the case of the emergencies in Chad and Mozambique, when the multi-donor-funded programmes were co-ordinated by UNDRO and executed by operational agencies of the United Nations system and other relief organizations. Those experiences illustrated the advantage of contributing to a centrally-directed concerted relief programme covering several needs in an inter-related fashion, contributions being allocated to the operational agencies involved, through inter-agency consultations, in proportion to the importance of their respective sectors in the overall programme.

15. Subsequently the role of UNDRO would be, in co-operation with operational agencies concerned, to monitor continuously and to report contributions against current - possibly changing - needs so as to provide donors with a continuous balance sheet of remaining needs and corresponding resources required as the disaster situation evolves.

Specific proposal by the Secretary-General

16. The Secretary-General proposes, therefore, that Member States recognize the value of united appeals as a most effective tool for co-ordination and that they continue to respond to those appeals accordingly.

C. Delivery of relief supplies to and within a disaster-stricken country (A/38/202-E/1983/94, paras. 85-99)

17. Experience shows that too often the time taken to mobilize, ship and distribute urgent relief supplies to the population in need can extend to several weeks or months, depending on the nature of the relief items, their location, transport etc. These delays inevitably jeopardize the usefulness of the relief itself, as it is not always practicable for emergency stocks in the affected country, when they exist, to be used pending replenishment from international sources. It is, therefore, imperative that steps be taken to expedite the provision of emergency assistance. The speed of transport of international relief supplies to the stricken country depends to a certain extent on the suitable prepositioning of stocks of supplies and equipment to be immediately available in case of need for humanitarian assistance. In this connection, UNDRO has made an arrangement with the Government of Italy to use the United Nations Supply Depot at Pisa for the storage of relief supplies. No additional machinery is implied by such an arrangement, which is intended to maximize the use of the existing United Nations capabilities. Under this arrangement, Italy also utilizes unused capacity of the Depot, which has valuable expertise in the grouping and shipment of goods, in order to keep a minimum level of essential relief items as a national emergency stockpile which can be airfreighted to a disaster-stricken country at few hours' notice.

18. The next step may be to urge other Member States to set aside stocks of commonly-used emergency supplies either at strategic distribution points in their countries or by making them available for storage in Pisa, the latter with the added advantage of broadening the variety and quantities of relief items available at short notice. The resulting additional costs for the Depot could be met, in keeping with the terms of the above-mentioned arrangement, by voluntary contributions from participating donor Governments. Stock replenishment would be the responsibility of the donor country as supplies were used. In this connection, mention should be made of the long existing services offered by the UNICEF Packing and Assembly Centre, Copenhagen, as well as of the standard emergency health kits developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) to cope with common health hazards in emergency situations; the use of both of these successful services should be further intensified and the experience gathered in their operation utilized.

19. Member States may wish to give further attention to the question of reducing the long delays in the provision of emergency food aid. Such delays hamper timely implementation of emergency operations requiring large quantities of food aid. An important step towards reducing delivery time would consist of making part of or all contributions to the international emergency food reserve (IEFR) administered by the World Food Programme (WFP) physically available at the beginning of each

fiscal year. Food commodities procured from IEFER funds should be stored in donor countries' ports of export for shipment by WFP immediately after approval of emergency operations supported by that Programme.

20. The distribution of relief supplies in a country is normally the responsibility of the national authorities, possibly with some assistance from organizations of the United Nations system or non-governmental organizations. Sometimes, however, the logistic capacity, transport equipment, fuel and the maintenance readily available to the national authorities are insufficient to enable proper and full distribution; disasters in Chad and Mozambique are recent cases in point where contributions in kind could not be delivered owing to the above-mentioned shortcomings.

21. To overcome the problem, the Co-ordinator has appealed for and obtained cash grants to be used for financing internal distribution programmes. Such cash grants can be used for transport operations, to be carried out by the appropriate entities of the United Nations system, such as UNDP or WFP, by non-governmental organizations, by independent carriers or by subsidizing fuel and maintenance costs of governmental transportation services.

22. Another means of overcoming this problem in the initial phases of an emergency operation might be to create an arrangement by which a number of land transport vehicles would immediately be made available for shipment to the affected country. This could be done through agreements reached with potential donors to cover provision of equipment, technical personnel and operating funds. Nationally, one or more agreements could be reached with major manufacturers to maintain vehicles at the ready for this purpose. UNDRRO would, on behalf of the operational organization, act as the focal point for the co-ordination of those arrangements, and potential donors would inform it of their willingness to contribute to such a joint venture and to ensure, wherever possible, that between them those pools would cover the broad range of commonly used emergency transport vehicles.

23. The rationale for this suggestion is based on the experience gained in recent years, during which international relief operations have grown in scale and frequency. While Member States have provided on several occasions transport vehicles of various capacities to support internal emergency distribution, those vehicles have, more often than not, been available and become operational only after considerable delays, which have severely diminished their value.

24. In addition to the above, reference also should be made to the request addressed by the General Assembly, in resolution 37/144, paragraph 4, to the Secretary-General to facilitate, when necessary, rapid appointment of temporary staff and procurement of supplies by the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator in order to permit a timely response to requests for emergency assistance. In line with guidance provided on this matter by the External Auditors, efforts are now being made to adapt existing policies and procedures for the procurement of relief supplies to comply with the exigencies of emergency situations.

Specific proposals by the Secretary-General

25. The Secretary-General recommends that, in special cases, contributions in kind should be accompanied by a provision for cash grants to cover the transport of relief goods to and within the country to reach the population in need. Financial support could be provided either by the donor of the relief supplies or by other donors acting in consultation with UNDRO.

26. The Secretary-General further proposes that a study should be undertaken by the Co-ordinator to determine with potential donors the most appropriate steps to ensure the ready availability of relief supplies and transport equipment to be promptly mobilized in case of disaster. The study would explore ways and means of concluding agreements with major manufacturers and suppliers with a view to ensuring the immediate availability of relief supplies, including transport and equipment, with the minimum amount of organizational and financial implications. The Co-ordinator would, as a start, conduct a series of contacts and visits with various emergency units in donor countries to study the feasibility of such a proposal.

27. The Secretary-General proposes that Member States should give further attention to the question of reducing the long delays in the provision of emergency food aid through WFP. This could be achieved, as recommended by WFP, by making physically available at the beginning of each fiscal year at least part of the pledged contributions to the international emergency food reserve.

28. The Secretary-General also recommends that policies and procedures for the procurement of relief supplies by United Nations organizations should be adapted to the special requirements of emergency situations, taking into full account the paramount objective to provide immediately life-saving assistance to disaster-affected populations.

D. Roster of experts (A/38/202-E/1983/94, paras. 100-102)

29. Work has continued in UNDRO on the review of the records of 300 candidates who were originally identified as being of potential use. So far, 150 names have been processed and entered in the computerized roster, which is being progressively expanded to include specialists able to control, mitigate and monitor all types of disasters, including events such as fires and oil spills. At the same time, information is being exchanged with agencies of the United Nations system and other organizations maintaining similar specialized rosters, such as WHO.

30. The main fields of expertise covered by the roster are agriculture, engineering, telecommunications, physical sciences, emergency operations and preparedness, health and sanitation, human settlement, logistics, risk and vulnerability analysis. The roster is used for relief, preparedness and prevention activities and it comprises experts who generally have disaster experience in one or more countries.

Specific proposals by the Secretary-General

31. The Secretary-General proposes that national Governments and international relief organizations should transmit to UNDRO the names and specializations of qualified disaster personnel with actual emergency expertise whom they could make available in case of need for either multi-agency assessment missions or the execution of relief programmes.

32. As disaster management training is also an essential element closely linked with preparedness, Member States are invited to inform the Co-ordinator of existing disaster management training capabilities open to responsible emergency co-ordination officials in disaster-prone countries, together with an indication of funding and scholarships which might be available to support such training.

E. General-purpose funding (A/38/202-E/1983/94, paras. 103-106)

33. The Secretary-General has indicated in the past that, in the context of the UNDRO Trust Fund, emphasis should be placed on a general-purpose fund for unearmarked emergency relief (see A/36/73/Add.1, para. 40). To this effect, the Trust Fund for Disaster Relief Assistance, established by the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI), has been reformulated to receive unearmarked contributions for disaster relief.

34. With adequate resources, the Trust Fund for General Disaster Relief could act as a revolving fund guaranteeing and, if necessary, advancing the sums required to bridge in emergency situations the gap between the time a firm pledge is received from governmental donors and the actual receipt of that money. Another function of the Trust Fund for General Disaster Relief is its use as a reserve with respect to the extrabudgetary activities of UNDRO which, within a given year, have recently involved disbursements in the neighbourhood of \$7 million. Utilized as a reserve and revolving fund for disaster relief, the Fund could, for instance, make advances against the pledges to cover, at least partially, the costs of internal distribution, emergency communications equipment and operating costs for international relief efforts.

35. Once the level of resources in the Trust Fund for General Disaster Relief exceeds \$4 million, that is, the estimated requirements for an operating reserve and revolving fund, these excess resources would be used by the Co-ordinator to meet critical needs (for instance, costs of transport, internal distribution and its monitoring) pertaining to concerted relief programmes and not provided for by other donors.

36. It is also envisaged that the Trust Fund would serve to accept contributions by donors to be used only on their specific instructions. Such an arrangement would allow the "depositing donor" to respond instantly to sudden disasters taking advantage of established financial arrangements between UNDRO and UNDP resident representatives which permit the advancing of cash donations by the latter for relief purposes the moment a disaster strikes.

37. Donors would be kept regularly informed by UNDRO of the status of the Trust Fund for General Disaster Relief and of expenditures financed therefrom.

Specific proposal by the Secretary-General

38. The Secretary-General proposes that an appeal to all States should be made to help in increasing progressively the financial resources of the Trust Fund for General Disaster Relief through voluntary contributions, from its present level of some \$800,000.

F. Evaluation (A/38/202-E/1983/94, paras. 107-110)

39. UNDRO operations are at present subject to systematic internal evaluation which is, however, limited in scope, as well as to scrutiny by the United Nations Administrative Management Service, the Joint Inspection Unit and the Internal and External Auditors. Should Member States wish to go further and expand and broaden the evaluation procedures for international disaster relief as co-ordinated by UNDRO, consideration might be given to arrangements allowing the commissioning by UNDRO of experts from outside the organization to carry out such evaluation work. A group of that kind might be in a position to evaluate not only the performance of UNDRO in each disaster case, but also to look at the response of the international community, including the co-operation extended by concerned United Nations agencies as a whole. Notwithstanding such provisions, the Co-ordinator will, of course, continue to improve the current internal evaluation procedures using the resources at his disposal.

Specific proposal by the Secretary-General

40. The Secretary-General proposes that the internal evaluation system of UNDRO should be reviewed, if necessary, with the assistance of qualified specialists made available by appropriate international bodies

G. Transition to the rehabilitation and reconstruction phase
(A/38/202-E/1983/94, paras 111-114)

41. While the mandate of UNDRO in relief operations is limited to the emergency phase, there is an obvious need for a smooth transition to the rehabilitation phase so that the normal development co-operation activities of the international community, carried out through the international system or bilaterally, can be applied effectively towards mitigating the effects of an emergency on the economic and social system of the stricken country. Projects for reconstruction and rehabilitation should therefore be drawn up as soon as practicable by relevant United Nations agencies and arrangements made to increase the ability of bilateral and multilateral programmes, including UNDP, to respond more flexibly to Governments' requests to meet such unforeseen rehabilitation and reconstruction needs. Such continuity between emergency and reconstruction can be seen in the

case of the appeal launched by the Secretary-General on 10 August 1983 for Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru. The work of UNDRO in the emergency phase was followed up by UNDP and the Economic Commission for Latin America for the reconstruction and rehabilitation phase, taking fully into account international assistance provided from the outset of the emergencies.

42. Consequently, at the end of any emergency phase, the experience and knowledge gained by UNDRO should be readily transferred to the relevant United Nations agencies and, if appropriate, other major donors responsible for reconstruction and development. As a rule, such a transfer should be the responsibility of the resident co-ordinator in his double capacity as the resident representative of UNDP and of UNDRO.

Specific proposal by the Secretary-General

43. The Secretary-General proposes that, before the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator phases out his emergency co-ordination responsibilities in a given country, he should ensure the necessary transition into the rehabilitation and reconstruction phase by passing on relevant data and proposals to the appropriate organization of the United Nations system responsible for overseeing post-emergency activities.

H. Disaster preparedness and prevention (A/38/202-E/1983/94, paras. 48-57)

44. The General Assembly, in resolutions 36/225 and 38/202, repeated the appeal that more attention be paid by Governments to preparedness and prevention and that the international community assist disaster-prone countries.

45. Early warnings of approaching disasters and information about ongoing disasters, disseminated by the specialized agencies, are necessary for short-term preparedness. UNDRO receives and continuously analyses the various early warning systems in order to assist at the national level by:

(a) Stimulating, in co-operation with the competent agencies of the United Nations system, the improvement of existing early warning services and their expansion so as to ensure coverage of subject areas and geographical regions so far not monitored;

(b) By advising United Nations resident co-ordinators of potential threats to the countries in which they are serving; subject to the availability of sufficient resources, those activities would be ameliorated and strengthened.

46. As for the broader area of pre-disaster planning, in general designed for longer-term disaster prevention or shorter-term preparedness, it is aimed not only at mitigating the consequences of an event, but also at facilitating rapid and effective response to a disaster or other emergency. At present, efforts by UNDRO and other United Nations agencies in this area are still short of requirements,

mainly because of a lack of resources. 2/ This applies in particular to preparedness work, which is usually required at the national level and can be provided only in response to a specific governmental request. Until comparatively recently, it was possible to meet such requests because of a credit balance in the sub-account for technical co-operation in disaster prevention and planning, which has now been exhausted.

47. It follows that, in order to respond to national requests for preparedness work, the Co-ordinator is now obliged to engage in fund-raising with potential bilateral donors before proceeding with any action.

Specific proposal by the Secretary-General

48. While the Secretary-General appreciates the generosity of donors who have contributed to such specific programmes as the Pan-Caribbean Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Project, he proposes that Member States should, for the reasons briefly mentioned above, also look favourably upon the reiterated requests made by the General Assembly for general support of the technical co-operation sub-account of the UNDRO Trust Fund. It should be possible for the important work of UNDRO to be based upon a firm financial foundation; it is wasteful of resources if staff have to devote time and energy to fund-raising for individual preparedness missions instead of being able to give their full attention to the expeditious and efficient completion of those and associated activities.

Notes

1/ The costs of the participation of UNDRO in such inter-agency missions are covered from the regular budget and the UNDRO Trust Fund Sub-Account for Strengthening the Office of the Co-ordinator.

2/ A total of only \$13,000 was received as an unearmarked contribution to the relevant Sub-Account of the UNDRO Trust Fund in 1982-1983.
