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REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Humanitarian assistance to refugees in Djibouti

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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* A/39/150.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The General Assembly, in resolution 38/89 of 16 December 1983 on humanitarian assistance to refugees in Djibouti, called upon the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to mobilize the necessary resources to implement lasting solutions in respect of the refugees in Djibouti. It requested the High Commissioner, in co-operation with the Secretary-General, to report to the Assembly at its thirty-ninth session on the implementation of the resolution.

2. As was reported last year (A/38/399 and Corr.1), a UNHCR mission was undertaken in February 1983 to review with the Government the programme of assistance for 1983 and 1984. In the course of that mission, it was agreed to maintain assistance at the level approved by the Executive Committee of UNHCR for 1983 with only minor adjustments, while bearing in mind the possible need for more radical changes should the planned programme of voluntary repatriation achieve its full potential.

II. GENERAL SITUATION AND RECENT TRENDS

3. The number of refugees in Djibouti, most of whom are of pastoral background, was estimated at 35,000 in 1983. With the exception of a group of 200 housed in a camp at Belbella, outside Djibouti town, and some 2,000 to 3,000 refugees of urban background scattered in various locations, virtually all the refugees in Djibouti live in camps in the districts of Ali Sabieh and Dikhil. During 1983 a total of 615 individuals registered applications for asylum with the Eligibility Bureau and a further 157 were registered in the first two months of 1984; 41 refugees were resettled and 5 refugee students found places at schools and colleges in other countries.

4. The limited water supply, which has been further diminished by the current drought, has hindered the planning of local integration for rural refugees. As resettlement placement has not kept pace with demand, voluntary repatriation has remained the most viable of the standard durable solutions promoted by UNHCR.

5. As was reported last year, a Tripartite Commission, comprising the Governments of Djibouti and Ethiopia and UNHCR, was constituted to study and promote the possibility of the voluntary return of refugees to their country of origin. The Commission met at Djibouti on 31 January and 1 February 1983, and in Addis Ababa on 15 and 16 April 1983. In these meetings, the three parties concerned agreed on the essential need to ensure that repatriation take place on a strictly voluntary basis. In addition to emphasizing this point, the Commission adopted specific conclusions to promote organized repatriation and to provide appropriate relief and rehabilitation to returnees.

6. An information campaign was subsequently conducted in the camps and the town of Djibouti by the Government of Djibouti and UNHCR to explain the repatriation programme and its voluntary nature to the refugees and to familiarize them with the relief and rehabilitation components of the programme established in Ethiopia for

returnees. Local officials in both Djibouti and Ethiopia were also informed of their Government's policy decisions and made aware of the provisions of the amnesty proclaimed by the Government of Ethiopia for returnees from Djibouti. By the end of June 1984, some 14,000 refugees had left the camps in Djibouti and returned to Ethiopia where they have registered in the reception centres set up by UNHCR.

III. ASSISTANCE TO DJIBOUTI

7. In the context of the above developments, UNHCR's assistance programme in Djibouti itself has again been mainly directed towards the care of refugees at Ali Sabieh and Dikhil, where continued efforts have been made to improve living conditions. Assistance measures, which have been kept constantly under review, have consisted largely of food distribution, construction of communal facilities, improvements in the supply and storage of potable water and the upgrading of sanitary conditions.
8. The Djibouti Government has continued to act as UNHCR's main implementing partner, through its "Office national d'assistance aux réfugiés et sinistrés" (ONARS). Almost all basic food items are donated through the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the World Food Programme (WFP). A number of voluntary agencies assist UNHCR and ONARS with specific aspects of the assistance programmes, including primary education, vocational training, language classes, adult education, building work at Dikhil and Ali Sabieh, medical care and agricultural activities.
9. In view of conditions in Djibouti and the voluntary repatriation programme which is now under way, it was not deemed feasible to present projects relating to the local integration of refugees to the second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, held in July 1984. It is, nevertheless, expected that the Government of Djibouti will look into the development of project proposals relating to the strengthening of infrastructure in areas affected by the presence of refugees. Such projects, however, are outside the scope of the description of assistance requirements outlined below.
10. A description of assistance provided by UNHCR in 1983 in the various sectors follows, along with projected requirements for 1984 and 1985. For further details, see document A/AC.96/639.

Food

11. As at September 1984, CRS plans to terminate its programme of food aid to refugees and WFP will meet the entire needs for the remaining months of 1984 and for 1985. As was reported last year, there was a shortfall of cereals among the basic commodities provided to the refugees; emergency supplies of 620 tons of rice and 7,500 litres of edible oil were procured to overcome this shortfall. In 1983, therefore, \$350,000 were obligated partly to cover these purchases and partly to cover the cost of supplementary protein-rich foods for vulnerable groups. At the time of writing, it was estimated that only a provisional amount of \$10,000 would be needed in 1984 to cover the purchase of fresh foodstuffs and cereals and a similar amount has been proposed for 1985.

Domestic items

12. An amount of \$235,000 was obligated for the purchase of blankets, sleeping mats, kitchen utensils, cooking stoves and soap during 1983. Such purchases are continuing in the current year from an allocation of \$175,000, and \$75,000 is budgeted for 1985 to replace used items and to purchase tents for classrooms.

Health

13. Since 1981, medical teams fielded by "Dienste in Ubersee", a voluntary agency from the Federal Republic of Germany, have provided preventive and curative health services in both camps. During 1983, a health education programme was launched and emphasis has since been placed on preventive measures. As a result, the sanitation and environmental conditions in the camps have improved considerably. A special programme for monitoring the health of children under 5 years of age has been established and other vulnerable groups are also included. Detection and control of tuberculosis has also been introduced. Assistance was provided for the purchase of medical supplies and equipment and \$198,446 were obligated during 1983. An amount of \$190,300 has been proposed for 1984 and the estimate for 1985 is \$100,000.

Communal construction

14. An amount of \$247,885 was obligated during 1983 to complete the construction of communal buildings which had been started prior to the voluntary repatriation operation. Thus, two market places, two slaughter houses, workshops for handicrafts and improvements to the dispensaries were completed. This project was implemented by the "Association française des volontaires du progrès". In view of the ongoing voluntary repatriation movements, no construction has been undertaken in the current year and none is foreseen for 1985 at the time of writing.

Primary education

15. The organization of primary education classes in the two camps was completed in early 1983 and the number of beneficiaries increased from 1,000 to 2,100. A team from the World University Service implements this project. An amount of \$134,459 obligated in 1983 included the transport costs of 141 students to schools in Djibouti town; slightly higher amounts are foreseen for 1984 and 1985 for the same purpose.

Lower secondary education

16. An amount of \$40,000 was obligated in 1983 for 20 students to continue their studies at local French schools in Djibouti and for five students to attend English schools abroad. Similar assistance is continuing in 1984 and 1985, for which \$20,000 and \$15,000 have been budgeted respectively for a smaller number of beneficiaries.

Vocational training centre

17. This Centre is in its second year of operation. As was reported last year, the Agency for Personal Services Overseas (APSO) from Ireland provides the teaching

staff and 240 students (of whom 30 per cent are Djibouti nationals) are trained in auto mechanics and basic electricity. The teaching staff includes refugees and nationals. After initial delays in the delivery of equipment and its installation, the Centre is now fully operational and ways were being sought at the time of writing to bring the level of instruction up to that of a national vocational training centre. The first group of 120 students graduated in June 1984 and placement of these students either in employment or further training was being explored at the time of writing. An amount of \$484,047 was obligated for 1983 to cover the running costs of the Centre. For 1984, a total of \$567,000 has been budgeted and \$500,000 is estimated for 1985. These amounts include partial costs of APSO's nine-member team at the Centre.

Agriculture

18. A sum of \$87,100 was obligated during 1983 to assist some 40 families to cultivate four plots of land. Success has been hampered by the difficulties of water supply. Only one of the four plots is yielding sufficient quantities of vegetables to be marketed. It is expected that these gardens could render the families self-sufficient in two years. The budget remains at \$100,000 for both 1984 and 1985.

Handicrafts

19. This programme has been implemented since 1982 with the co-operation of Rädde Barnen of Sweden, Afro-Art of Norway and the Danish and Norwegian Refugee Councils. The quality of the products in fibrecraft and tailoring reached a high standard during 1983 and efforts are now needed to systematize their marketing. The total number of women beneficiaries under this project is 673, including about 100 Djibouti nationals. Blacksmithery and some leathercraft were also developed. An amount of \$80,997 was obligated during 1983; during 1984, the budget is estimated at \$57,900 and \$29,000 has been proposed for 1985. Project implementation is scheduled to be handed over to the "Union Nationale des Femmes de Djibouti" in the course of 1984.

Support to refugee services

20. For 1983, the allocation for this sector included allowances for personnel involved in the refugee programme, costs of handling, storage and distribution of provisions and supplies and three experts in accountancy, logistics and vehicle maintenance. The obligation for 1983 amounted to \$902,467; \$498,000 is needed for 1984, plus an additional \$275,800 for transport and running costs. In 1985, an amount of \$326,000 is projected plus \$160,000 for transport and maintenance.

Counselling and other social services

21. The presence in Djibouti of some 2,000 to 3,000 refugees of urban background (and of new asylum-seekers who are screened on arrival) has required the provision of counselling services on such matters as training in Djibouti, educational placement in other countries, resettlement and medical care. Self-help groups and activities have been organized in Dikhil. Social services personnel have provided

technical assistance to voluntary agencies in the planning and implementation of the community health education programme, primary education and other services. For 1983, \$307,979 was obligated; the allocation for 1984 is \$276,500 and \$307,000 are proposed for 1985.

Legal assistance

22. The "Bureau d'Eligibilité" was moved to Dikhil during 1982 and \$80,804 was obligated in 1983 towards the running costs of this unit. Dossiers for all asylum-seekers are prepared by the Bureau with UNHCR's assistance and submitted to the National Eligibility Commission. A UNHCR representative also participates, in an advisory capacity, in the meetings of the Commission. During 1983 a total of 615 individuals registered applications for asylum with the Bureau. Another 157 asylum-seekers were registered during the first two months of 1984. In view of the replacement of the international legal secretary by a national counterpart who received on-the-job training during 1982-1983, the requirements for 1984 and 1985 are only \$40,000 annually.

Voluntary repatriation

23. The voluntary repatriation operation which commenced on 19 September 1983 is expected to continue until the end of the current year. An amount of \$373,112 was obligated for 1983 and for 1984 an allocation of \$566,000 covers expenditure related to registration and UNHCR monitoring of the programme. A provisional amount of \$20,000 has been proposed for 1985 to assist any families who may decide to repatriate at that time.

Supplementary aid

24. The amount of \$80,000 obligated during 1983 benefited 3,245 individuals and covered varied assistance primarily to urban asylum-seekers. The amounts for 1984 and 1985 will remain the same.

Other assistance measures

25. An amount of \$21,522 was obligated in 1983 for various miscellaneous community services. In 1984 and 1985, projected needs are \$70,000 and \$100,000 respectively.

26. Modest amounts were also obligated with respect to the resettlement of 41 individuals in 1983, assistance to handicapped refugees and a small number of scholarships and contributions in kind.
