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Agenda item 83 (b)SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE:
SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCEAssistance to drought-stricken areas in Djibouti,
Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, the Sudan and UgandaNote by the Secretary-General

1. At its thirty-fifth session, the General Assembly, in resolution 35/90 of 5 December 1980, noted with concern the grave effects in Djibouti, Somalia, the Sudan and Uganda of successive years of drought and the resulting shortage of foodstuffs, livestock, fodder, and water, and, inter alia, (a) recommended that the Governments of the drought-stricken countries of the region should consider the establishment of an intergovernmental body with the responsibility for co-ordinating and supporting the countries' efforts to combat the effects of drought and other natural disasters and to deal with the problem of medium-term and long-term recovery and rehabilitation, and (b) requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other organizations concerned within the United Nations system, to assign, as early as possible, the responsibility for assisting those countries in the region to the appropriate body, within the system, which would be funded from voluntary contributions, would be responsible for the co-ordination of the activities of the United Nations system in support of the recovery and rehabilitation efforts of the countries concerned and would also provide direct assistance to the Governments of those countries in co-ordinating inputs from donor sources and in strengthening their national and regional capabilities to mitigate the effects of future droughts and promote sustained economic and social development.

2. At its thirty-sixth session, the General Assembly, in resolution 36/221 of 17 December 1981, dealing with assistance to the drought-stricken areas in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, the Sudan and Uganda, inter alia, (a) urged the Governments of drought-stricken countries of the region to continue their consultations and to finalize the necessary arrangements for the establishment of an intergovernmental body with the responsibility for co-ordinating and supporting

each country's efforts to combat the effects of drought and other natural disasters and to deal with the problem of medium-term and long-term recovery and rehabilitation, (b) invited the Secretary-General, in close co-operation with the Administrator of UNDP, and within existing resources, to assist those countries in the establishment of the proposed intergovernmental body. The Assembly also noted that arrangements had been made by the Secretary-General for a unit within UNDP to be established when funds were made available through voluntary contributions and to be assigned responsibility for assisting the countries of the region.

3. At its thirty-seventh and thirty-eight sessions, in its resolutions 37/147 of 17 December 1982 and 38/216 of 20 December 1983, the General Assembly took note of the ongoing consultations between the Governments concerned on the establishment of the intergovernmental body to combat the effects of drought and other natural disasters and urged them to finalize, as as soon as possible, the necessary arrangements for the establishment of that body. In addition, in its resolution 37/147, the Assembly noted that the Secretary-General had made arrangements with the Administrator of UNDP, subject to the availability of funds, for a unit within the programmes administered by the Administrator to be assigned responsibility for assisting the affected countries in the region and for co-ordinating the activities of the United Nations system in support of recovery and rehabilitation in those countries. In both resolutions, the General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General, in close co-ordination with the Administrator of UNDP and the appropriate specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system, to assist the Governments of the region, at their request, in establishing or improving national machinery to combat the effects of drought and other natural disasters.

4. The present note is submitted in accordance with paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 38/216, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to apprise the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1984 and to report to the Assembly at its thirty-ninth session on the progress achieved in the implementation of the resolution.

5. During 1983 and in 1984, most regions of the East African countries once again experienced severe and extended drought; the problem of drought is put into the context of the overall situation in Africa in the report of the Secretary-General on the critical social and economic situation in Africa (E/1984/68 and Add.1). Additional information on the question is contained in particular in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the medium-term and long-term recovery and rehabilitation programme in the Sudano-Sahelian region (A/39/211-E/1984/58) and in the note by the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification and its annexes dealing with the overall implementation of the Plan of Action and the implementation of the Plan in the Sudano-Sahelian region (A/39/433).

6. While arrangements were not finalized in 1983 and the first half of 1984 between the Governments concerned for the establishment of an intergovernmental body in East Africa to combat the effects of drought and other natural disasters, the Secretary-General, on his part, undertook measures listed in the above-mentioned report (E/1984/68 and Add.1) to increase the effectiveness of existing instruments and channels and to achieve a better co-ordinated approach in dealing

with the present situation in Africa. Among others, in order to facilitate contacts with Governments and to ensure the quick resolution of problems that required attention, the Secretary-General appointed Mr. Adebayo Adedeji, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), as his Special Representative on the present African crisis. In addition, in view of the large number of African States affected by the current situation and taking into account the situation of transport and communications in the continent, a small temporary office staffed by seconded United Nations personnel has been established in Nairobi to provide the Special Representative with the necessary support.

7. In connection with the efforts of African countries to combat the effects of drought and work out the necessary institutional arrangements within the United Nations system, the Secretary-General wishes also to recall the decision of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), adopted at its eleventh session in May 1983, in which the Council invited the General Assembly to consider expanding the mandate of the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) into the area of dealing with the environmental consequences of drought, in addition to those of desertification, in the Sudano-Sahelian region as a whole and working out appropriate institutional and other relevant arrangements which would enable UNSO to be charged with such an additional responsibility. 1/ The Assembly has not yet acted on the invitation of the Governing Council.

8. Concern for an adequate response to the severe and continuing drought in Africa was also reflected in discussions during the nineteenth session of the Economic Commission on Africa and at the tenth meeting of the Conference of Ministers, held at Addis Ababa in May 1984. At that time, the Conference of Ministers adopted resolution 496 (XIX), in which it urged the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly to consider seriously expanding the scope of UNSO so as to enable it to assist the States members of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) in combating desertification and drought, in the same way that UNSO was assisting the States members of the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS).

9. In response, the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1984, adopted resolution 1984/72 of 27 July 1984, in which it urged the General Assembly to consider seriously (a) the inclusion of reference to the United Republic of Tanzania in the terms of reference of UNSO in order to enable that country to receive assistance in the implementation of programmes for combating desertification and (b) the expansion of the scope of the work of UNSO so as to enable it to assist the States members of SADCC in implementing the recommendations of UNEP on combating desertification and drought, in the same way as the Office was currently assisting the States members of the CILSS.

10. While that resolution does not address the countries of East Africa discussed in the present note, it indicates the widespread concern in the region and within the United Nations family for concerted and co-ordinated action to combat the effects of drought and desertification in Africa.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-eight Session, Supplement No. 25 (A/38/25), annex, decision 11/7, part seven B.