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COUNTRIES STRICKEN BY DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT

Letter dated 26 September 1984 from the Permanent Representative of
Senegal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of the final resolution adopted at the end of the Ministerial Conference for a joint policy in the CILSS, ECOWAS and Maghreb countries and in Egypt and the Sudan.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of this resolution circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 141.

(Signed) Massamba SARRE

ANNEX

Final resolution adopted by the Ministerial Conference for a joint policy to combat desertification in the CILSS, ECOWAS and Maghreb countries and in Egypt and the Sudan, held at Dakar from 18 to 27 July 1984

The Conference for a policy to combat desertification in the CILSS, ECOWAS and Maghreb countries and in Egypt and the Sudan convened by His Excellency Mr. Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic of Senegal, met from 18 to 28 July 1984 at Dakar.

This initiative was very much welcomed by the States members of the region, in view of the extent and severity of the desertification problems which they are experiencing.

With the worsening and the spread of drought and desertification in the region it has become clear that there is a need for vigorous and expanded joint action, for greater awareness and for a firm political commitment in order to adopt the measures called for by the situation, in particular:

Considering drought and desertification issues in greater depth;

Stepping up exchanges of experience, information and documentation;

Establishing strategies, programmes and perspectives on a broader geographical basis;

Identifying items and potential areas for co-operation.

The Conference brought together the delegations of 21 countries: Cape Verde, Chad, the Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger, Senegal and the Upper Volta (members of CILSS); Benin, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, the Ivory Coast, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo (members of ECOWAS); Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia (the Maghreb); and the Sudan.

The following were invited to and participated in the Conference:

Delegations from friendly countries: Canada, France, the Federal Republic of Germany and Italy;

AIPLF;

Delegations from regional co-operation organizations: CILSS, the Senegalese-Gambian Confederation, the Liptako-Gourma Authority, OMVG, OMVS, PANA and CEAO;

Delegations from development assistance organizations: ACCT, CIDA, Club du Sahel, EEC, IDB, IIB, the Italo-African Institute of Rome and USAID;

United Nations organizations and specialized agencies: ECA, UNDP, UNEP, UNSO, FAO, UNESCO and ILO;

Non-governmental organizations:

ASAFED;

ENDA;

John Paul II Foundation for the Sahel;

ICRAF;

SOS/Sahel International;

IUCN/WWF.

The Conference considered the reports of the meeting of experts held prior to its session and, after introducing amendments, adopted them.

It listened with interest to the statements made by delegations, which constituted a useful contribution to its work.

Following the discussions and the productive exchange of views that took place at the various meetings, the Conference was of the opinion that future action, if it was to deal effectively with desertification problems, must be based on the principles and policies laid down in the present document.

I. POLITICAL COMMITMENT

The Conference, having taken note of the outcome of the various discussions and, in particular, of the willingness to help of bilateral, multilateral and international co-operation partners,

AFFIRMS that political commitment is indeed present in the States of the subregion as a result, in particular of the establishment more than a decade ago of ecological-political bodies for co-operation to combat desertification and for carrying out studies, research and planning;

REAFFIRMS solemnly the political will of the States concerned to adopt in an appropriate time-frame and with the requisite forcefulness measures of all types (laws and regulations, financial and technical measures and social provisions) calculated to deal effectively with the scourge of desertification;

UNDERTAKES solemnly at the national, regional and international levels to work more energetically and more systematically towards achieving the main goals set by the Dakar Conference. The Conference undertakes to do everything within its power to improve the approach, strategy and planning adopted for combating desertification and to integrate as soon as possible into both national and

regional planning the new elements set forth in the present resolution, which are in keeping with the deeply-felt aspirations of the population of the subregion, particularly the poorest people in the rural areas.

DECIDES TO LAUNCH AND CARRY OUT new initiatives for regional co-operation and for the reorganization and revitalization of the relevant infrastructure in the area concerned, which consists of:

The Sahelian core,

The adjacent forest countries of West Africa,

The countries of the Maghreb, and the Sudan,

AND LATER, TO INVITE the countries of East Africa to participate.

II. STRATEGY AND PLANNING

The Conference,

Bearing in mind the varied experience potentially available in the subregion covered by the Dakar Conference,

Bearing in mind the numerous studies and the research already undertaken, in particular in the Maghreb and the Sahel,

Bearing in mind the sectoral planning exercises (plan guidelines and evaluation) in the Sahelian region in particular,

Bearing in mind the national debates or seminars already held (discussions at Maradi, Niger; National Council of the Union Démocratique du Peuple Malien, Bamako, 28 February-1 March; Council on the Parti socialiste desertification and reforestation, Senegal, April 1984) or being prepared (at Saint-Louis, Senegal, and in the Upper Volta and Benin).

AFFIRMS the urgent need to draw up strategies to combat desertification;

RECOMMENDS

That each State work out or consolidate a strategy and a national plan to combat desertification the contents of which shall be considered a permanent and essential element of national economic and social development plans.

In this context, member States are urged

(a) To establish, if they have not already done so, a body to co-ordinate and evaluate desertification control activities with the powers and resources to take all necessary measures for the implementation of a national plan;

(b) To conduct at all levels (educational, cultural, social) a systematic campaign for public information, awareness and mobilization.

In drawing up the strategy, the following principles should be borne in mind:

The objective of the strategy is the economic and social development of the communities of the region: nations, districts and small localities;

The participation of the population is vital and every means of securing maximum grass-roots involvement should be employed;

PROPOSES TO PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION IN THE STRATEGIES TO BE DEFINED SUBSEQUENTLY TO THE FOLLOWING FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENTS:

GLOBAL AWARENESS AND MONITORING of desertification and drought, using, inter alia, the tools identified in the experts' report and recommendations;

VEGETATION, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO:

Maintenance

Diversification

Reconstitution;

WATER, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO:

Knowledge of local and regional water resources

The initiation of integrated development to the extent that water resources permit

The necessity of making the best use of all water resources, in particular run-off

The harnessing of large rivers;

FOOD SECURITY, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO:

Development of the cereals best suited to each area (e.g. millet and sorghum in the Sahel)

Development of grazing;

SOIL RESOURCES AND THEIR PROTECTION;

ENERGY FROM ALL SOURCES, BUT WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO:

Firewood

Substitute sources of energy

Economical conversion methods.

THE CONSERVATION OF COMMON ECOSYSTEMS THAT PLAY A FUNDAMENTAL ECOLOGICAL ROLE IN THE REGION:

Large lakes

Rivers

High plateau and high catchment areas;

ENCOURAGES the organization of national seminars to assist the elaboration of national plans of action to combat desertification;

ENCOURAGES the establishment of associations for the protection of nature and the extension to them of the status of associations of public interest.

III. SUBREGIONAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

Convinced that desertification is a phenomenon that affects vast interdependent geographical areas;

Considering that co-operation should be based on national will and achievements in the first place, and on regional and international will and achievements thereafter;

Considering the substantial results already obtained through regional co-operation:

ENCOURAGES South-South co-operation in drawing up and carrying out programmes to combat desertification in view of the interdependence of the factors involved;

DECIDES to propose that any new initiative to promote co-operation should comply with the following principles:

First principle: local and regional institutions already established and functioning should be reinforced and consolidated and should backstop any new co-operation;

Second principle: subregional programmes already established and functioning should be maintained and reinforced;

Third principle: regional co-operation should henceforth focus on:

The drawing up of strategies and plans;

The elaboration, planning and execution of major projects;

The setting up and joint use of operational facilities (meteorological information centres, data bases, seed banks, etc.).

Fourth principle: facilities already established by the United Nations system (the Economic Commission for Africa and its new capability to deal with drought problems, the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office, etc.) to assist the countries of the region in combating desertification should feature in any new co-operation model, following a broadening of the terms of reference where appropriate.

IV. FINANCIAL CO-OPERATION

The Conference, aware that primary responsibility for action to combat desertification lies with the countries of the region,

EMPHASIZES the fundamental importance of pursuing all forms of South-South co-operation in financing and executing programmes;

REALIZES, however, that the prompt action necessitated by the extent and severity of desertification calls for a financial effort which would exceed the capacities of the countries concerned;

WOULD APPRECIATE, in the circumstances, greater participation by agencies of the United Nations system whose terms of reference cover the activities relating to the formulation and implementation of the regional co-operation programme in accordance with the guidelines elaborated by the Conference;

BEARING IN MIND the economic interdependence of the developed countries and the countries stricken by drought and desertification and also the adverse effects of those phenomena on the economies of the developed countries;

CONSIDERS it essential to evoke the principle of increased participation by the wealthy countries in this endeavour of international solidarity;

BELIEVING that action to combat desertification is an essential element in the development of the countries concerned;

RECOMMENDS that a portion of the development aid programmes of the wealthy countries should be devoted to the action to combat desertification, in keeping with the scope of the problem.

V. FUTURE SESSIONS OF THE CONFERENCE

The Conference,

INTENDS to organize periodically, every two years, a conference at the ministerial level for the purpose of assessing and reviewing the joint strategy, monitoring jointly-implemented co-operation activities and making organizational proposals to improve co-ordination and co-operation;

RECOMMENDS that the President of this Conference be empowered:

To maintain the necessary contacts and liaison until the next Conference;

To prepare the final summary document of the present Conference;

To prepare a summary of all the recommendations of the participating countries as a draft platform for joint action for the next Conference to be convened, exceptionally, in one year's time at Dakar;

To thus enable Senegal to mobilize the resources which it deems necessary to ensure continuity of the undertaking begun on the initiative of President Abdou Diouf.

Done at Dakar, on 27 July 1984.

THE CONFERENCE
