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President: Mr. Paul J. F. LUSAKA
(Zambia).

AGENDA ITEM 139

Critical economic situation in Africa (*continued*)

1. Mr. EL-FATTAL (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic is participating in this debate because we believe that the item is one of the most important on the agenda of this session. A study of the relevant documents shows the importance attached by Member States and the various specialized agencies of the United Nations, as well as the Economic and Social Council, to the critical situation in many African countries caused by various problems, some imposed upon them, others fortuitous, others inherited and yet others due to natural causes. At present science does not know the reason for these last and cannot predict how long they will continue. I am referring to desertification and drought which form part of climatic changes that have been recorded in history in various parts of the world for centuries. If today it is possible to control such scourges and to foresee and avert natural dangers, the studies submitted to us in United Nations documents nevertheless show that drought is a serious problem which we have to face and cope with through international co-operation.

2. Drought and desertification are one thing, and the question of what the General Assembly can do to limit their devastating consequences and save the lives of millions of human beings is another. The international community, in an interdependent world that believes in solidarity, cannot stand aloof from this tragedy of Africa. Therefore the United Nations and its Member States must study this issue now before us not only because it is an emergency situation which requires an immediate collective response, but also because efforts must be made to establish a more just international economic order. If such a system existed today the international community would be able to solve this problem, through mechanisms and criteria and system which the United Nations does not at present have. The warning given by the tragic news and heart-rending pictures showing the sufferings of the African peoples could perhaps open up an opportunity for a new international effort to fulfil the commitments and promises relating to the restructuring of the international economic order to make it compatible with the new reality, and that reality is interdependence built on the common destiny of the world, whether we like it or not.

3. We are pleased to note that at their last meeting the Foreign Ministers of the States members of the Group of 77 drew the attention of the entire world to the fact that the critical economic situation in Africa should be given priority and treated with two non-contradictory aspects in mind: the imbalanced international economic situation on the one hand, and, on the other, the emergency action required to alleviate the suffering from, and overcome the consequences of, the natural disasters of persistent drought and desertification and other disasters to which the third world has been subjected.

4. Having given priority to the most urgent African questions, the Ministers expressed serious concern at the critical situation of the world economy. They emphasized that the developing countries face a hostile economic environment, while the developed countries have reached various levels of economic recovery. The Ministers noted once again that the gap between the developed and the developing countries is basically the result of inequalities inherent in the present international system. They stated that the crisis is not a cyclical phenomenon but a symptom of structural imbalances.

5. The Secretary-General has emphasized in his report that

“It will now be necessary to move forward from reflection to concrete action. In this transition, Africa should not stand alone; its economy is still too fragile to withstand the enormous stresses and strains of moving from crisis to reconstruction and development.” [A/39/594, para. 207.]

The General Assembly must make a positive response to the appeal by the Secretary-General.

6. Because of the historical and fraternal ties that we have with the suffering peoples in Africa, and on the basis of the principles and requirements of Arab-African co-operation, we believe that at this session the General Assembly must give the highest priority to this issue and examine it pragmatically and seriously. In fact, those who help Africa are helping themselves. No one is better than anyone else in this interdependent world of today.

7. Hence, the General Assembly has a dual paramount responsibility. First, it must deal with the emergency situation—and the Secretary-General and the specialized agencies have been warning us for some time now that this emergency was coming—so that millions of our African brothers in the countries designated by the Secretary-General in his report may be saved. Secondly, the General Assembly must take parallel action to deal with the economic crisis in Africa within the context of the overall economic crisis engulfing all the developing countries. All the heads of delegations of developing countries referred to this crisis in their statements during the general debate at this session.

8. In this connection, it must be remembered that the imbalance in the economic relationships between the developing and the rich countries, particularly the Western countries, in addition to the present crisis in the world economy—which affects both developing and advanced countries—involves trade, agriculture, finance and the transfer of technology. This imbalance affects the African countries particularly seriously because of the drop in commodity prices. Because of this, they have suffered losses estimated at \$202 billion.

9. In addition, the advanced countries have not lived up to their commitments for official development assistance. On the contrary, these resources fell to \$3.3 billion in 1983, as opposed to \$3.5 billion in 1982. Still worse, however, is the fact that capital flows fell by about half—from \$14.2 billion in 1982 to \$7.8 billion in 1983. This has resulted in an even more burdensome debt for Africa. Indeed, by the end of 1983, the foreign debt of African countries amounted to about \$150 billion. In addition, the present disaster is caused by the increase in interest rates and debt-servicing costs, which have absorbed 25 per cent of African export earnings. Moreover, there has been a reduction in the export of commodities produced by African countries, because of protectionism, quotas and other restrictive trade practices. Had it not been for that deterioration which has affected Africa and other continents, Africa could have—with its resources and thanks to the co-operation among developing countries—coped with the crisis resulting from the drought.

10. It is now for the General Assembly to deal with this critical situation, taking account of the requests of the developing countries for just economic relations and for a global dialogue. It is for the developed countries to resolve the crisis, not merely by a benevolent approach, but also through a scientific and economic approach, on the basis of a principle adopted after the elimination of colonialism—namely, that this interdependent world is responsible for the situation inherited by African and other countries from long centuries of repugnant exploitation, colonialism and enslavement.

11. Regarding the sluggish progress in the global negotiations, it is not surprising to see the Western mass media, especially the American media, and some official circles, claim that responsibility for the crisis in Africa lies with the national policies of Governments of the developing countries. They criticize those Governments for trying to satisfy the basic needs of their peoples by providing free education, following a price control policy, agricultural and industrial planning and giving priority to the public sector. There are those who exploit the famine of the developing countries and the crisis under which Africa is sinking today because of drought such as can afflict all countries, even the richest; they try to create the impression, as the famine is prolonged, that the critical situation is the result of an ideological clash between East and West. By that door they enter, along with the capitalist dragoman, attempting to interfere in the internal affairs of countries which need urgent assistance, medium-term and long-term assistance, rather than advice which serves only to exercise pressure with the purpose of imposing imperialist hegemony on a continent which faces difficulties but which possesses enormous material resources, human potential and the necessary framework to carry out its own economic, social and

cultural policies towards the realization of its own aspirations.

12. In the context of the critical economic situation in Africa, we would like to pay a tribute to the Secretary-General for the statement he addressed to the General Assembly earlier this month [see A/39/627] and also for his repeated appeals to the international community to provide assistance immediately to Ethiopia, where thousands of lives are at risk because of famine, and to find a solution to the critical situation in other countries, such as Chad, Niger, Mali and Angola. These are just examples; there are many other countries at risk. The note of the Secretary-General was clear in defining those priority areas in which international measures should be taken consonant with the extent of the crisis. His proposals are closely linked to the view that the present grave crisis in Africa should prompt the international community to put an end to the imbalance in relations between North and South. The situation in Africa has, indeed, exposed this imbalance which is victimizing thousands upon thousands of human beings, particularly women and children. There is no guarantee that such crises, with their tragic results, will not also occur in other parts of the developing world. Therefore, while the priorities set by the Secretary-General apply primarily to Africa, they also apply to all poor and more seriously affected countries.

13. We also pay a tribute to the Secretary-General for his proposals in regard to the direct responsibility of the United Nations. While they may not be new, for them finally to be implemented a certain financial and administrative flexibility is required, along with joint financing and additional participation. We agree with the Secretary-General that measures should be taken by the United Nations and that they should be addressed primarily to the three fundamental areas that he mentioned in his note and which need not be repeated here.

14. Without doubt the Lagos Plan of Action,¹ as acknowledged by previous speakers here and by the Secretary-General in his note, showed the determination of the African countries to take their own fate firmly in hand. But, as the Secretary-General said, “the peoples of Africa need us: their trials are ours too and it is together that we shall overcome them.” [*Ibid.*, para. 19.]

15. In the wake of that and other appeals, we would like to say to our African brothers once again that despite our limited resources at this time, we will spare no effort, through the United Nations and elsewhere, to help them to move beyond this difficult trial in their struggle to end the crisis through immediate and medium- and long-term efforts.

16. As the African peoples were able to free themselves from colonialism and very soon will be able to eliminate the remaining pockets of racism, and colonialism, we are sure that they will triumph in their second struggle to eliminate all that was inherited from centuries of backwardness imposed on them by colonialism in all its forms.

17. Mrs. KIRKPATRICK (United States of America): The grim images of death from starvation we have recently seen coming out of Africa have moved the compassion of the people in the United States and around the world. The dimensions of Africa's immediate crisis seem almost overwhelming. In addition to the human tragedy in Ethiopia, thirty-six

countries are plagued by abnormal food shortages, and an estimated 150 million are facing hunger and malnutrition. Drought has turned an already critical situation into a major crisis, overshadowing large parts of sub-Saharan Africa. This is why the Secretary-General's initiative on Africa is so timely. We applaud his efforts to focus world attention on this imperilled region of the world.

18. Even as we speak, people around the world are rallying to Africa's side. In my own country, all forms of aid to Africa, and particularly to those hardest hit by repeated cycles of destructive drought, have been rising significantly in the past months. Two weeks ago, my Government announced an additional \$10 million in emergency food aid to Ethiopia. This raises our total aid to that country to \$45 million this year, roughly double our emergency aid of last year.

19. Only last week President Reagan also approved an additional \$45 million in emergency food assistance to the drought-ravaged African nations of Kenya, Mozambique and Mali. All in all, food assistance to Africa increased by 175 per cent this year, and we are still considering other emergency appeal requests. In addition, private citizens in America continue to open their hearts and pocket-books to the devastated peoples of Africa. Private voluntary organizations and United Nations agencies in this country are being swamped by inquiries and contributions. The response has been an affirmation of the special compassionate bond between the peoples of Africa and the people of the United States.

20. Other Western countries are also responding generously to this catastrophic situation. The European Community recently announced an emergency grant of nearly \$22 million for relief efforts, and individual countries are supplementing that assistance. We applaud all these efforts.

21. Clearly, the current mobilization of the world community has been substantial. In fact, the surge in food shipments has begun to strain the region's transportation system. Ships are stacked up in harbours awaiting off-loading. Grain waits on the pier for trucks to transport it to refugee camps and feeding centres. Such situations dramatize the need for careful co-ordination of relief efforts, and they also make clear the obligation of national Governments to make relief efforts their first priority. What is more reprehensible than to find relief for some regions hampered and disrupted for political reasons? What could be more discouraging to the generous impulse of people abroad than reports of corruption among customs or military officials who control the transportation of these crucial food supplies? With this in mind, we should also ask ourselves what impression the General Assembly will leave if we appropriate \$75 million for a grand conference centre in Addis Ababa, while millions starve for lack of food elsewhere in that country. What priorities and preoccupations are reflected in such a decision in such a year?

22. Though the tragic situation in East Africa has only recently focused the world's attention on Africa's economic woes, these problems are not new. They will not be washed away when the rains come once again. The United States has long been co-operating with African countries in efforts to strengthen African development against the inevitable, tragic cycles of climatic and economic change. Our support for international institutions such as

IMF and the World Bank helps African countries meet short-term crises and lays the foundations for long-term development. We are by far the largest contributor to development efforts in the region, through our bilateral aid programmes and voluntary contributions to UNDP, UNICEF, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other multilateral programmes. In the last four years long-term United States bilateral development assistance to Africa has increased some 35 per cent, averaging nearly \$1 billion a year. This figure is over and above the emergency food assistance mentioned earlier. It is twice as much aid to Africa as my country gave only seven years ago. The same trend is mirrored in many other traditional donor countries. Recent years have been marked by a major increase in the share of total official development assistance devoted to low-income, sub-Saharan countries.

23. Despite significant assistance flows, for more than a decade African development has lagged considerably behind that of other developing regions. The recent global recession compounded these long-standing problems, and now renewed drought has driven millions of Africans further into destitution. A stark question confronts us: had African development stumbled before the drought made a terribly difficult situation desperate? State-controlled programmes designed to provide a short cut to development had already resulted in a sharp decline in agricultural output. Many parts of the continent, including areas that previously had been net food exporters, had become dependent on food imports. Coercion failed where market incentives might well have succeeded.

24. Our challenge here today is not only to express our concern for the current plight of African peoples, but also to chart a course for the future which faces and accepts the hard lessons of experience. I am pleased to note that there is a growing consensus on what sort of policies are called for. A joint ECA-African Development Bank report put it very succinctly. "Growth," it declared,

"cannot come simply from increased government spending and intervention in the economic process as in the past. What is necessary at this stage is for governments to act to remove obstacles in the way of individual initiative, eliminate inappropriate prices and subsidies which discourage production, and effectively control waste and mismanagement in the public sector. This entails more reliance on efficient allocation mechanisms and more decentralization of decisions away from central authorities to individual producers and to firms."

Simply put, these two regional institutions recommend that African Governments put their faith in their people. They should do so not for some ideological or political motives but because it works. Market mechanisms and adequate producer incentives have proved to be the most effective engines of economic development. They worked in Europe and North America in the last century, and they are working in South and East Asia today.

25. We believe the qualities required in this crisis are those which have often served us well: compassion, realism, industry and optimism. These are the qualities that transformed the vast wilderness of the New World. We try to make them the basis of our co-operation with countries in today's world which themselves face the same challenges of development.

The United States is ready to put aside every consideration of politics and self-interest in the effort to remove the shadow of death and suffering from men, women and children threatened by starvation. But realism compels us to recognize that in the end the progress which alone consistently averts misery cannot be the gift of compassion. It cannot be the gift of one State to another any more than it can be the gift of an all-powerful State, however enlightened. It cannot be a gift at all. Sustained development and economic growth come only from the initiative, effort and discipline of people themselves, the work of their own hands, heads, hearts and fertile imaginations.

26. The Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations recently observed that "Aid will tend to flow to those who are most sincerely trying to help themselves." This principle lies at the heart of the new United States assistance programme we call the Economic Policy Initiative [EPI] for Africa. I am pleased to be able to announce that only two weeks ago the United States Congress approved over \$75 million in additional aid for fiscal year 1985 to help reinforce the efforts of those African countries we see as successfully tackling their own development problems. We hope with the successful implementation of the EPI to increase our development assistance to Africa over the next five years by an additional \$500 million directly to those countries whose policies encourage the initiative and enterprise of their people.

27. Thus, despite the grim images of woe, despite undeniable errors, failures and setbacks, we have not lost faith in Africa's destiny. We put our faith in the African people and in the freedom which we believe can unleash their virtues, abilities and energies. We put our faith in the growing realism and determination with which many African Governments are charting new and difficult courses, courses that recognize the value of freedom.

28. We should all recall that the desperate gloom with which some view Africa today was mirrored two decades ago by dire predictions for South Asia. Yet, though serious problems have yet to be surmounted, people there now look to the future with justifiable hope. So too can the people of Africa if their Governments have the wisdom to take down the barriers that block the many roads to progress. The future lies in the hands of farming women when they have the incentives to grow the food that will feed their hungry nations. It lies in the ambition of small-scale entrepreneurs when a climate exists to encourage their initiative. It lies in the prudence of Governments that encourage productive private investment from abroad. It lies in the wisdom of leaders who realize that the greatest and most lasting monuments to leadership are the accomplishments of individual people who toil in freedom for a good they have freely chosen as their own.

29. Mr. ADJOYI (Togo) (*interpretation from French*): "Today, developments in science and technology have brought men on our planet closer together and provided developed nations with prodigious means of bringing about spectacular changes in the life of man. But what would be the point of such progress, the fruit of the intelligence and labour of the human community, if one of the primary objectives were not the overall improvement of the human condition?" The words of Gnassingbé Eyadéma, Founder-President of the *Rassemblement*

du peuple togolais and President of the Togolese Republic, are of special significance given the tragic situation in which the African peoples are living.

30. Millions of Africans are currently living in total destitution, unable to satisfy the essential needs of a normal life: sufficient food, a minimum of clothing, drinking water, a roof over their heads, and so on. That is the crisis so bitterly affecting the African continent.

31. Africa is undoubtedly going through the gravest crisis in its recent history. The economic and social crisis in Africa that began towards the middle of the 1970s worsened at the beginning of the 1980s, and towards the end of last year it became truly catastrophic. This explains the anguished appeal which the Secretary-General made to the international community in December 1983 when he called for supplementary assistance to the continent of Africa. Following his journey early this year to certain countries in sub-Saharan Africa particularly affected by the crisis, the Secretary-General renewed his appeal and set up a structure and a strategy to deal with this crisis.

32. The Economic and Social Council, for its part, decided to give high priority to consideration of the critical economic situation in Africa during its second regular session in 1984. After the difficulties experienced during consideration of this question in the Council, my delegation hopes that the present debate in the General Assembly will lead to a collective solution resulting from a greater awareness on the part of the international community of the enormous problems facing the continent of Africa. We are convinced that a better awareness of the situation will make it possible to adopt at this session the urgent measures called for by the critical economic situation in Africa.

33. If effective action is to be taken it is necessary to know something about the causes and effects of the profound crisis now afflicting Africa.

34. The causes are both external and internal. The external cause is basically the worsening of the international economic crisis, which is characterized by the collapse of commodity and raw material prices, the stagnation—indeed, reduction—of official development assistance and of net capital flows and the considerable increase in Africa's external debt and debt servicing resulting primarily from the excessive increase in interest rates and the value of the dollar. Internally, apart from certain political errors, which must be recognized—but the importance of which Africa's detractors, who are frequently those who are themselves the source of such errors, tend to exaggerate to conceal the external causes which lie at their door—the main cause of the critical economic situation in Africa is a generalized, persistent, unprecedented drought. This led the Secretary-General, in his report on the work of the Organization [4/39/1], to state that many African countries were facing crises with the worst drought in the twentieth century.

35. As regards the effects of the crisis in Africa, it should be emphasized that this is a matter of the conjuncture of a multitude of crises, including in particular the following.

36. First, there is a chronic food crisis as a direct result of the serious drought, which is characterized by enormous food shortages, malnutrition and famine. According to studies carried out by FAO

approximately 150 million Africans are suffering from extreme famine or malnutrition, and 24 African countries must meet critical food shortages.

37. Secondly, there is a crushing economic crisis characterized by a fall in export revenue, major balance-of-payments deficits, record indebtedness and the cessation of investments. Furthermore, despite the Lima Plan of Action² and the proclamation in 1980 of the Industrial Development Decade for Africa [*resolution 35/66B*] Africa still produces less than 2 per cent of the world's manufactured goods. In certain countries in Africa the development process has even come to a halt and the problem now is one of economic survival, or just of survival.

38. Finally, there is a grave social crisis resulting from massive movements of people fleeing from zones attacked by drought. This has led to an increase in the number of refugees and a deterioration in public health conditions. At present only one African in four has access to drinking water. Epidemics have broken out everywhere, and infant mortality runs from 100 to 200 deaths per 1,000 live births—one of the highest rates in the world.

39. This is a very brief description of some of the causes and effects of the critical economic situation in Africa. What must be done to remedy this crisis, which has acquired such disturbing dimensions?

40. Various steps have been taken to overcome it. In 1980, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity adopted, at the end of the second extraordinary session devoted to the continent's economic problems, the Lagos Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Monrovia Strategy for the Economic Development of Africa. A year later, in April 1981, the ECA Conference of Ministers adopted a short-term programme for the immediate survival of the continent. However, we have to say that neither the Lagos Plan of Action nor the short-term programme has been implemented, owing to lack of resources. Furthermore, in order to deal with the crisis many African States have implemented structural adjustments, with the assistance of IMF, and programmes for structural improvements, with the participation of the World Bank. In addition, in response to an appeal by the Secretary-General, certain States and international institutions have this year provided supplementary assistance to Africa. I take this opportunity to thank them for the aid they have just given to Africa in its time of trial and to invite them to do even more in view of the scale of the crisis. For the same reason, I also urgently appeal to States that have not yet done so to join in this historic endeavour to save the African continent.

41. The efforts of the African countries themselves and the assistance given them by the international community to resolve the crisis have proved insufficient. Other action by African States and the international community is therefore necessary. For their part, the States of Africa are determined to shoulder their responsibilities. They hope that the international community is also determined to do likewise. Since the crisis is multi-sectoral, it must be fought in every field. Since it is multi-dimensional, the steps to be taken must be directed at resolving not merely the urgent and immediate problems but also the medium-term and long-term problems.

42. In the short term, in my delegation's view, it is necessary to put an end to the food crisis. Apprecia-

ble food aid has already been provided to the countries of Africa by FAO and the bilateral emergency aid bodies of certain donor countries. However, such assistance must be increased, in view of the scale of the food crisis. Nevertheless, this in itself would not be enough to deal with the food crisis, which, as we have emphasized, is the direct consequence of the widespread and persistent drought afflicting Africa. That is why immediate assistance from the international community must also be directed towards the control of water and the provision of production factors which would bring about food self-sufficiency.

43. In the medium term and long term, the steps taken by the international community must be directed at re-establishing the economic and social process in Africa. In this connection, my delegation considers that it is first necessary to increase the export earnings of the countries concerned by stabilizing the prices of their raw materials at remunerative levels. We are convinced that the forthcoming entry into force of the Agreement Establishing the Common Fund for Commodities will make it possible for the Fund to play a considerable role in stabilizing raw material prices. Next, the international community should increase financial assistance to Africa. My delegation strongly supports the proposal by the World Bank to establish a special \$2 billion fund for Africa between 1985 and 1987. It hopes that the consultations that are to take place during this session of the General Assembly will make it possible to overcome the reluctance of some of the main donor countries. My delegation also supports the proposals by the World Bank for increasing bilateral aid and private investment. In this context, it is also vital to increase the resources of multilateral aid institutions, in particular, those of IDA and IFAD.

44. Furthermore, my delegation is very concerned about the increase in the cost of servicing the debt of the African countries, which rose from \$4 billion in 1981 to \$10 billion in 1983. We believe the international community should take special steps to lighten the debt burden of the African countries particularly affected by the crisis. On the one hand, such measures could consist of reducing or even cancelling certain debts, particularly those of the least developed countries, and, on the other hand, limiting the effects of higher interest rates on debt servicing. The creditors of the other debtor countries should agree to negotiate with them the rescheduling of their debts on favourable terms.

45. Lastly, to ensure the recovery and maintenance of growth in the African countries it is vital to facilitate their access to durable goods. Therefore the international community should accord such countries special assistance to sustain their balance of payments and enable them to continue to import the equipment necessary for their economic and social development.

46. The situation now prevailing in Africa cannot be considered the concern of Africans alone. In view of its magnitude, the resolution of this crisis exceeds the capacity of Africa. If the crisis persists it will threaten international peace and security. That is why, in conclusion, my delegation would like to invite the international community to reflect on the thought expressed by the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization:

"In our world of growing economic interdependence, impoverished people faced perpetually with a variety of overwhelming economic and social crises constitute not only a challenge to international conscience, but a threat to international stability as well." [See A/39/1, p. 4.]

47. Mr. BUCCI (Italy): This debate in the General Assembly should help the international community focus its attention on the best ways and means to meet Africa's needs in its present critical situation. We believe that the situation in Africa deserves close attention. The economic and social implications of the present conditions are critical, and the prospects are worrying for the world as a whole.

48. At the centre of the present phase of the crisis are the drought, the food shortages and the problem of the survival of thousands of people. At this very time we are being reminded of these desperate human needs by reports from Ethiopia and by the world public's vast reaction to them. Many countries are responding to the appeal in a constructive manner. It is important that we act urgently and effectively in order to face this emergency, bearing in mind, however, the long-term structural problems which are at its origin and which must also be dealt with.

49. There was some positive thinking at last summer's debate in the Economic and Social Council on the critical economic situation in Africa. That discussion enabled us to emphasize our awareness of the many serious problems afflicting the African continent, as well as the determination of the international community to contribute to their solution. It is now our sincere wish that from the present debate in the General Assembly will emerge a general consensus centred not only on the analysis of the problems at hand but also on the nature and timing of possible solutions.

50. The representative of Ireland, speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States [47th meeting], has already outlined accurately and in depth our perception of the situation and of its causes and the possible remedies. He also pointed out the magnitude of the efforts made in different fields in favour of Africa by the European Community and its member States. We fully support that analysis, to which we should like to add some brief remarks in order to acquaint the Assembly with my country's specific views on some of these issues and to inform it of the action taken by Italy to meet the needs of the African countries in the immediate and medium term. Our reflections on the issue under consideration have been considerably stimulated by the Secretary-General's recent report [A/39/594]. Together with the statement I have just recalled, the report offers a useful, systematic framework for the needs and the action requested of members of the international community.

51. Impetus and co-ordination must be provided by the multilateral system, whose most particular responsibility in this phase is that of ensuring support for the African countries in the delicate task of the assessment of requirements and the distribution of aid. In this respect, we have noted with appreciation the intention of UNDP to reform the round-table system in order to make this important meeting-point for beneficiaries, donor countries and the multilateral system more efficient. In this connection, we have also noted with interest the suggestions

made by the Secretary-General for intensifying the action to be taken in the areas of the development of human resources, the protection of underprivileged groups and the maintenance and repair of production, transport and communication infrastructures. Were it possible to agree upon them, these suggestions could provide the necessary framework for a better co-ordinated effort in the field of development assistance for Africa.

52. Some of the beneficial effects of the recovery at present taking place in a number of Western countries are being felt in Africa, but these positive effects are not and could not be strong enough to enable African countries to overcome the present difficulties and to give an impetus to their development. New initiatives are needed, and the competent forums will have to turn undiminished attention to Africa's problems in the fields of agricultural development, money, finance and trade, where more intensive co-operation must be stimulated.

53. In view of the present situation in Africa, top priority should, however, be given to the mobilization of financial flows, especially those on concessional terms, and to the related issue of external debt and the pressure it exerts on Africa's balance of payments. In this connection, our attention is focused on the World Bank's initiative concerning a special and co-ordinated effort, as outlined in the report prepared for the purpose by the Bank's staff. As we know, the Development Committee has expressed strong support for the proposed programme of action for sub-Saharan Africa and has encouraged the Bank to explore with donors approaches to mobilizing the resources required for its implementation.

54. What is in fact necessary is to stimulate the deployment of all the means which can be quickly mobilized in favour of Africa's needy areas in order to limit, as much and as swiftly as possible, the social and economic deterioration of those countries. This is a most urgent and necessary task. We wonder whether it is advisable to wait for conditions to mature before relaunching IDA and creating other special facilities on which there appears to be little hope of agreement in the near future.

55. As for the issue of external debt, an increase in international liquidity through a limited fresh allocation of special drawing rights should also be considered as a means of supporting the process of adjustment in Africa.

56. In Italy's bilateral aid for development there has been a considerable increase in the share allocated to Africa. In past years, the percentage reserved for that continent has rapidly grown and is now around 50 per cent of the total figure. Accepting the principles of the Lagos Plan of Action in defining with the African authorities the destination of Italy's assistance, our overall aim is to promote self-reliance at the regional, subregional, national and local levels. According to this approach, the centre of attention should be the people, their sufferings and aspirations as well as their potential. This means that adequate priority should be given not only to the fight against starvation and malnutrition but also to the need for providing improved health conditions, education, training and possibilities of productive employment.

57. In emergency aid, awareness of the grave situation in Africa has led the Italian authorities to modify the geographical distribution of such aid

While in 1982 only 35 per cent of this assistance went to Africa, in 1984, 90 per cent of our emergency aid will be channelled towards that continent. Recently, in order to meet pressing needs in some African regions—primarily the Sahel and the Horn of Africa—partly through UNICEF, we pledged a substantial additional financial contribution earmarked for the procurement and transfer, on an emergency basis, of food and of spare parts for motor vehicles.

58. Since the problem of refugees is an aspect of the emergency situation in Africa, may I recall here also that last July at Geneva Italy announced at the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa its intention to earmark \$15 million over the period 1984–1986 to finance projects submitted to the Conference designed to strengthen the structures in the countries of asylum. The implementation of many of those projects has already begun.

59. Italy has also consistently reinforced its financial support for FAO, UNDP and UNICEF, encouraging such organizations to intensify their action in favour of Africa.

60. At the recent UNICEF meeting on the especially difficult situation of African children we were glad to note that, having strengthened its offices on that continent and having improved co-operation with other United Nations agencies and organizations, UNICEF is now well on the way to meeting the challenge posed by the worsening situation of millions of children in that continent by responding in a manner more commensurate with the seriousness of the crisis.

61. Let me mention here that in order to strengthen and streamline its action in the field of emergency aid, and in particular in order to intensify its efforts in the struggle against hunger, the Italian Government has recently decided to establish a new mechanism which will be enabled to act more rapidly. A bill for the setting up of the new administrative structure has already been introduced in Parliament.

62. In conclusion, we accept the challenge which the critical economic situation in Africa presents to us all. We are looking forward to an understanding on common lines of action in favour of the affected African countries. These lines of action will have to deal with the double challenge of survival and development. They should be based on the recognition that primary responsibility for the development of that continent's economy lies with the Governments and the peoples of Africa themselves but that the rest of the international community is under a moral obligation to complement and supplement the individual and collective efforts of the countries concerned. The future direction of Italian aid policy for Africa will be defined, taking fully into account the detailed picture of Africa's needs as it emerges from this debate and the recommendations of the General Assembly.

63. Through you, Mr. President, I wish to assure the African countries that the Italian authorities will continue to give their undivided attention to Africa's serious problems, in the spirit of that constructive relationship between Italy and Africa which history and geography have forged.

64. Mr. DIOP (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): The prolonged crisis in which the world economy has been engulfed in this late twentieth century would seem to be getting worse in the

developing countries, particularly African countries, despite a few indications that there could be some appreciable improvement in the economies of a few industrialized countries. Forced to slow down their development activities because of the collapse of commodity prices and increase in protectionism, most developing countries have seen a considerable reduction in per capita income in the last few years and some of them are on the brink of economic collapse, with disastrous consequences for the economic and social progress of their peoples.

65. The factors that led to and exacerbated the crisis, bringing about the stagnation of, if not an actual reduction in, production, are now quite well known and have been fully described in the report of the Secretary-General. They are, basically: a fall in the real value of official development assistance; monetary instability, with fluctuations in exchange rates and high interest rates; the relentless deterioration in the terms of trade; the near disintegration of the multilateral trade system; and the harsh policies of financial bodies in regard to loans.

66. Africa is the poorest and therefore the most vulnerable continent, and it has certainly been the region most seriously affected by economic recession. From the first oil shock in 1973, and particularly since 1979–1980, there has been a constant and disturbing deterioration in the economic and social situation of African countries. For geographical and historical reasons the continent—and many speakers have made this point—has the sad privilege, according to all the economic indicators, of combining a whole host of negative factors. It has half the landlocked countries, three quarters of the least developed and most seriously affected countries and the greatest concentrations of refugees and displaced persons. Moreover, the literacy rate is lowest in Africa, and 70 per cent of the population are close to or below the threshold of absolute poverty, which explains why the countries of the continent, taken as a whole, have a negligible share of world agricultural production and industrial output and of science and technology for development.

67. To those negative factors has been added for some years now the impact of the inexorable drought and desertification, which not only place millions of individuals in a catastrophic food situation but threaten the very existence of many countries, particularly those of the Sahel, and an increase in the debt burden, which is now the main concern of the countries of our continent.

68. The drought which started in Africa in the late 1960s—although the relentless desertification process had already been noted before independence—is without doubt the most serious in Africa in the twentieth century. The scope of the problem led the international community to set up the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel [CILSS] in 1973 and to convene the United Nations Conference on Desertification at Nairobi in 1977. Despite the efforts made since then, the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, meeting at Nairobi in May 1984, had to express its concern over the few concrete results attained since the launching in 1977 of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification.

69. In view of that situation, the head of State of Senegal, at the meeting of heads of State and Government of the States members of CILSS, held at

Niamey in January 1984, expressed to the world the disquiet, indeed despair, of the Sahelian countries and the 30 million persons living there whose very physical, economic and social existence was threatened. He then took the initiative of convening at Dakar, from 18 to 27 July 1984, a ministerial conference to decide on a policy to combat desertification.

70. The solemn opening of that conference gave President Abdou Diouf an opportunity to define the objectives and strategy to be adopted. He said:

“The significance of this conference will depend on, among other things, the awakening of a high-level, constant awareness of the problems of desertification and drought . . .

“For the struggle against these scourges is not and cannot be a short-term undertaking. It is not something that can be done in one generation; it involves a whole civilization”.

71. The Ministerial Conference took account of these concerns in its conclusions. After reaffirming the political commitment of the participants to take measures of all kinds to cope with this scourge, and after defining a global strategy and a plan of action, the Dakar Declaration, adopted on 27 July, states that the countries subjected to desertification and drought are without any doubt an ecological, climatic and socio-economic entity victim of one of the most serious and pitiless disasters ever witnessed and therefore deserves additional efforts and special arrangements within the context of international solidarity.

72. To turn to the question of indebtedness, this has been a serious problem for some time, but over the past few years it has become particularly acute because of the increases in interest and exchange rates. The continual increases since the beginning of the 1980s that we have been powerless to stop, in addition to the continued sharp and prolonged drop in the prices of the main export products, have ravaged the debtor countries, where the austerity measures already taken were wiped out, just like that, in a most unjust and relentless way.

73. And so the situation has become untenable in the small, poor countries, particularly in Africa, where foreign debt amounts to about \$150 billion. That might seem modest compared to the \$785 billion debt of the third world as a whole at the end of 1983, but it is a very heavy burden for our continent, where debt servicing alone absorbs 25 per cent of export earnings.

74. Thus, although the problem has existed for years, the international community became suddenly aware of the tragic nature of this indebtedness of the third world countries when it realized that the big developing countries were involved, countries whose possible collapse could call into question the existence of the financial institutions of some industrialized countries. But, in the measures taken since then, no special emphasis has been placed on the case of many African countries on the brink of economic strangulation. The Paris Clubs have followed the London Clubs, but the burden of debt servicing continues to get heavier, and it will increase even more over the next few years, when the rescheduled debt falls due. For, in what happened before 1979, there were certainly cases where staggered due-dates for excessive amounts accumulated during a single year, or a series of reschedulings related to a number

of years when there had been too heavy a burden, helped to restore the *status quo ante*.

75. But, alongside these exceptional cases, which were in the minority, there were so many countries where the continued deterioration of the situation made it impossible for them to abide by the reschedulings agreed to at the Paris Club, leading to a further indebtedness crisis and requiring a new appeal to the solidarity of the creditor States. For, while the practice of rescheduling does offer considerable relief for the debtors, it does not provide further support to increase their financing capacity and therefore has rarely made possible—as should have been the case had there been some economic rationality—a recycling of funds, particularly private funds, which could have provided the minimum threshold of investment necessary to ensure the future—including, of course, the servicing of the debt. It is, after all, economic activities that make possible the repayment of debts. But these activities are stagnating in most African countries and can take off again only if there is an injection of new cash flows—not, as we now see, in the passive form of the extension of deadlines, but through real financial assistance that can give new impetus to the economies of the African countries.

76. Of course, we are not calling into question this rescheduling of debt. We are simply suggesting that the techniques, and even the strategy, should be revised so that there may be a little more lucidity in the refinancing, with lenient terms or, in any case, terms not harsher than the loan it would be replacing.

77. Faced by that situation, one can understand why the world economic recession of the past few years has had devastating effects on the economy of the African countries, with repercussions on trade, currency and finance that, together with the effects of the drought and desertification, have worsened what was already a crisis. More than any other region, Africa therefore deserves special attention, and the international community should consider implementing increased efforts of solidarity in order to reverse the inexorable process of disintegration affecting our continent, which nevertheless has considerable economic potential and tremendous natural wealth.

78. Of course, the future and the development of the countries of the third world in general, and of the African countries in particular, are in the first place the responsibility of those countries, which must rely on themselves before turning to others. Revitalized growth necessarily involves a wise national policy. For, even in the most favourable economic environment, nothing can offset, domestically, the absence of conditions basic to growth—that is, the more effective use of a country's own resources, a better selection of investment programmes and good management. But in many low-income countries—and this applies to Africa—the prerequisites for sustained growth do not always exist.

79. In any event, most of the African countries, aware of their responsibility for their own development, on the eve of independence attached top priority in their national development plans to the development of food crops. That political will to attain food self-sufficiency took concrete form in the Lagos Plan of Action for the integrated development of Africa, adopted in 1980. On the same lines, austerity measures in the management of public

property have been applied everywhere. At the same time, co-operation among developing countries has been organized and strengthened. Considerable progress has been made in Africa in the implementation of the Caracas Programme of Action.³

80. But in this era of interdependence, the African countries are aware of their limits, handicapped as they are by the unjust laws of the marketplace and the nearly disintegrating multilateral trade system. All this internal impetus, all these moralizing and austerity efforts to ensure a rational use of resources, can hardly lead to anything so long as an unfavourable economic environment and all sorts of natural disasters systematically break down what has been so laboriously built up.

81. The international community has already done a great deal to offset the suffering of our people. In this regard, I must stress the initiative of the Secretary-General, who in January and February 1984 visited 17 severely affected countries south of the Sahara in order to observe the extent of the crisis there. His report on the critical economic and social situation in Africa⁴ needs no comment on my part.

82. It would be difficult to list here all of the organizations in the United Nations system and development assistance organizations, governmental and non-governmental, that have come to us in Africa. We might leave some out. Many countries have also been involved on the bilateral and multilateral levels in this outburst of solidarity.

83. What I am saying is that the response of the international community has been positive in many respects, particularly with regard to immediate needs, but the task is immense, and the situation is such that almost everything remains to be done. We must tackle the roots of the problem. There has been a diagnosis of the ills afflicting Africa. They are: deterioration in the terms of trade, drought, desertification, indebtedness, a drop in official development assistance and a blockage in the North-South dialogue.

84. To deal with the first two points, the measures to be taken are quite well known. It will suffice just to refer to the Lagos Plan of Action, the Special Memorandum on Africa's Economic and Social Crisis,⁵ adopted by the Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa, the report of the Ministerial Conference at Dakar for a joint policy to combat desertification and to protect nature, and also the report of the Secretary-General.

85. Concerning indebtedness, our analysis of this problem in Africa has at least exposed the structural nature of economic and financial problems which, in some cases, had been hidden in an overall more favourable situation. Between the annual stabilization programmes of IMF and those of the World Bank and its branches, which deal with the long term, generally 15 to 50 years, there has been a hiatus which has been considered only pressure of circumstances, with random and disorderly solutions. No sort of intervention by either institution, much less any joint action by the two, has led to a genuine solution.

86. Each of those two agencies has applied mechanisms that must now be strengthened and harmonized so as better to reintegrate them and refocus their objectives on the essential problems that have now been identified, so as most effectively to help the transfer of real resources to African countries in a

way that will ensure a recovery in their economies and remove the bottlenecks and obstacles that are now impeding them.

87. Lastly, it is quite clear that the North-South dialogue has become bogged down in a complete deadlock at all levels of the United Nations system since the announcement of global negotiations on international economic co-operation contained in General Assembly resolution 34/138, adopted by consensus in 1979. There have been successive failures, from the fifth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD V], the Third General Conference of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization [UNIDO III], the eleventh special session of the General Assembly, UNCTAD VI and UNIDO IV.

88. It is undeniable that the credibility of these organizations has been seriously eroded because of the sterility of important negotiations engaged in under their auspices in the last few years. This has two causes, and there are two attitudes involved. On the one hand, certain developed countries have done their best to pit organizations in the system one against the other, as if discussions on international trade, industrialization and finance, for example at the level of UNCTAD and UNIDO, overlapped the competence of GATT or IMF, whereas in fact the activities of all these organizations are complementary and very closely linked to each other. The position taken by those countries simply reflects their increasingly conspicuous suspicion of multilateralism and their undeniable relegation to a secondary rank of their concern for the problems of underdevelopment. They would prefer to focus on their domestic concerns.

89. As to the third world countries, it must be acknowledged that in always wanting to return to all of their proposals as a whole without taking account of the results of earlier negotiations, they regularly run the risk of seeing the developed countries renege on the concessions that they made *in extremis*, and often against their will, at Belgrade, Rome, Geneva or even in New York.

90. Faced with such a situation which may indeed continue in the present circumstances, with the recovery of the economy in some developed countries, one might ask oneself what must be done to emerge from this impasse. Perhaps we should reflect on the comments made at this session by Mr. Genscher, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany:

"The North-South dialogue will be successful only if it is conducted in awareness of the equal dignity of all the world's cultures . . . The North may be richer than the South, but it is not thereby wiser, more human or more cultivated." [See 8th meeting, para. 67.]

91. Africa in the late twentieth century believes in dialogue and human fraternity. Alongside dry logic and soulless technology we think there is room for a new sensibility. We are willing, because we believe in the human race, to make the maximum effort ourselves, without any bitterness, without excessive optimism and, above all, without any intention to harm anyone, so that we can all work together and find solutions to the dual challenges of survival and development that are created by this most serious economic crisis of Africa, and in which the harmonious development of our countries will play a basic

role. Of course, solutions will require of us tremendous imagination, hard thinking, sacrifices, and, above all, tenacity. But our understanding of life and relations between nations, in which man is the alpha and omega of development, strengthens our hope that we will still be able to play a role in changing our world.

92. Mr. BWAKIRA (Burundi) (*interpretation from French*): The extreme gravity of the economic crisis currently afflicting Africa will undoubtedly dominate the debates at this session of the General Assembly. There is nothing astonishing about this. How could one be indifferent when the survival of millions of human beings is at stake?

93. Africa as a whole is going through the gravest economic and social crisis in its history. If this situation is prolonged, it is certain that the peace, progress and stability in our interdependent world will be seriously threatened.

94. As has been stated emphatically by previous speakers, the present situation in the world economy, which is very unfavourable to developing countries, is worsening the fragile African economies. The prices of raw materials, the sole source of exchange for nearly all African countries, have plummeted. On the other hand, manufactured goods imported from industrialized countries continue to go up in price. Some of these products, such as medicine, agricultural machinery and transportation, laboratory and communications equipment are essential. At the same time, debt service per capita is increasing dangerously. It is in this atmosphere so unfavourable to growth that African countries endorse the harsh remedies and adjustments prescribed for them by reducing their imports and public expenditure. It is easy to understand that this climate makes it impossible to set up real, continuing development programmes capable of generating progress, essentially because of the lack of sufficient, secure financial resources.

95. As if all of these difficulties were not enough in themselves almost to paralyse our economies, the pitiless advance of the desert and an unprecedented drought combine to destroy the agriculture and grazing lands which for centuries have provided food for the majority of the inhabitants of Africa. Burundi, my country, which until now has benefited from relative food sufficiency, has been affected this year by the terrible scourge of drought. The rainy season was too short and the harvests, consequently, very meagre. The next season seems likely to be very poor as well.

96. The Secretary-General's report on this subject states: "In Burundi and Rwanda, recent harvests of cereals and pulses were down 30 per cent and 50 per cent respectively on production last year". [See A/39/594, para. 27.] That was why my country had to seek emergency food aid for the first time in more than 20 years. There is no need to prolong the description of the painful consequences of this state of affairs for the living conditions of our peoples, particularly the most economically disadvantaged. The problems are well known to all.

97. We have to act. The nature and extent of this tragedy call for action on three levels: emergency humanitarian aid, a short-term programme for the development of vital priority sectors such as agriculture and transport, and a long-term plan for the

development of Africa's potential resources on the basis of data listed in the Lagos Plan of Action.

98. Many speakers have vigorously and rightly reaffirmed that the development of Africa is primarily and essentially the responsibility of the Governments and peoples of Africa. They have understood this for a long time. The adoption of the Lagos Plan of Action, the Harare Declaration on the food crisis in Africa, adopted in July by the Thirteenth FAO Regional Conference for Africa, and the Special Memorandum adopted in May by the African Ministers responsible for economic development and planning are very significant political acts in this connection. As in the past, the Governments and peoples of Africa are ready to make all the sacrifices necessary to fulfil their responsibilities.

99. Aware of their complementarity and of the need for the regional economic integration of Africa, our Governments have created economic organizations to enable them to co-ordinate and even at times harmonize their development efforts. The execution of common projects and the securing of financing will thus be facilitated.

100. In this connection, in consonance with the Lagos Plan of Action, African Governments have continued the process of creating economic bodies begun in 1975 with the Economic Community of West African States. In 1976, Burundi, Rwanda and Zaire established the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries. In 1979, the Organization for the Management and Development of the Kagera River Basin was founded as the instrument for co-operation between Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. In 1981, 20 African countries, including Burundi, created a preferential trade area. In 1983, an economic organization comprising 10 Central African States was instituted. These initiatives, which I mention merely as examples, reflect the determination of African countries to co-ordinate their efforts to achieve collective economic autonomy. They require the support and co-operation of the international community in the implementation of the development plans established, taking into account the characteristics of each country.

101. In Burundi we have opted for a policy of rural development in view of the fact that the majority of the population lives in the countryside and practises agriculture and cattle raising. We attach the highest priority to this sector. This policy is reflected in the creation of integrated rural development societies, whose essential task is to get the people to work together to expand crop production. They achieve this through the distribution of selected seeds and the protection of plants. They struggle vigorously against erosion by reforestation and the construction of anti-erosion ditches.

102. Our rural development policy is also directed at combating underemployment and the exodus of young people to the cities. To this end, no effort is spared to develop small rural administrative and commercial centres. In this context, we especially stress road infrastructure, in order to end the isolation of various parts of the country, and the construction of hydroelectric micro-power-stations in order to provide energy for our rural areas. Also for the benefit of the people we strive for the maximum development of preventive medicine by stepping up the provision of health centres throughout the coun-

try. The people co-operate very effectively, making their own contribution.

103. Certain statements have emphasized the fact that the high rate of population growth helps increase the food deficit. This is a very complex problem. There is no easy solution which can be applied in all African countries. It is often forgotten that an abnormally high infant mortality rate, such as one finds in Africa, inevitably results in the desire to have as many children as possible in order to increase the chance of a few survivors whom death will choose to spare.

104. African Governments clearly recognize the need to adopt a suitable policy in connection with demographic questions. Burundi considers that the basis of such a policy must be the education of the people. Thus, we have set out to handle this problem through measures at the level of the very small communities which make up our population.

105. During the round table on foreign aid organized in our capital with the assistance of UNDP in February, there was a constructive dialogue between participants and the Government of Burundi on the various ideas referred to above and on other aspects of our development plan. Encouraging statements were made concerning the financial support we were seeking to carry out this plan. We hope that they will lead to results.

106. One of the major obstacles to the development of our country is undoubtedly its land-locked geography. Burundi lies 1,200 kilometres from the Indian Ocean and 2,000 kilometres from the Atlantic Ocean, and has no rail network.

107. However, we remain optimistic. We are convinced that through hard work and with the co-operation of the international community our country will achieve the well-being and prosperity which we seek.

108. Such is my wish for all the peoples of Africa and of the entire world which are steadfastly struggling for their survival in the midst of indescribable difficulties. If, at the conclusion of the present debate on the economic crisis in Africa, the General Assembly could unanimously adopt a declaration reflecting the political determination of the international community to use all its means to support efforts by African Governments and peoples to overcome this crisis, that would represent a sizeable contribution to the resolution of this human drama.

109. My delegation thanks all countries which, in their statements from this rostrum, have shown their interest in Africa and their determination to participate in emergency operations aimed at assisting African populations threatened by famine and disease.

110. If these emergency measures are to be successful, co-ordination of assistance is indispensable, because to ensure maximum effectiveness we must absolutely avoid any dispersal of efforts. That is why we welcomed the initiative of the Secretary-General earlier this year to sensitize the international community to the economic crisis in Africa. We have also welcomed the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Africa, Mr. Adebayo Adedeji, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, and the creation of a United Nations office in Nairobi in order to follow up and co-ordinate aid going to Africa. We hope that the Nairobi office will be strengthened with an improved

structure. Furthermore, it is indispensable that the measures taken not be stopgap ones and that short- and long-term action be speedily studied.

111. Mr. LEWIS (Canada): This is my first speech in the General Assembly since I had the honour of being appointed the new Canadian Ambassador. I feel privileged almost beyond expression to speak on behalf of Canada and to share this podium with you, my colleagues, who represent the Member States of this international community. And while my knees are not actually knocking, you will understand if I admit to being a trifle disconcerted by the occasion. However, there is in fact no time for self-indulgence. The subject-matter of this debate is of such consuming importance that I shall set aside both qualms and niceties and plunge right in.

112. Late last Thursday evening I happened to be at home with my family in Toronto, watching the national television news. In a sequence that will be familiar to everyone in this Hall there was an extended report on the tragedy in Ethiopia. Most of us, over time, have become steeled to the now commonplace images of violence, oppression and misery. But I cannot remember in my entire adult life scenes of such unendurable human desolation. It was heart-breaking. There is no doubt in my mind that Canadians sat and wept, as we did, and would wish to respond with compassion, generosity, fervour. I witnessed in person, in another part of Africa many years ago, the reality of famine, kwashiorkor and outright starvation, but never in such numbers have I seen the emaciated remnants of a once-vibrant humanity.

113. I sat, as everyone in the Assembly must surely have sat at some point or another over the last several weeks, and asked myself how it was possible that things should come to such a pass in a world that regards itself as fundamentally civilized. No poet, no writer, no artist could adequately capture the horror.

114. I shall not belabour it further. The facts are known. Members need no lectures from Canada. But I note, as other speakers have noted before me, that Ethiopia forms the backdrop to this debate—as do another 125 million people on the African continent who today face drought, food shortages, hunger, malnutrition and worse.

115. Canada has strong and visceral ties with most African nations—ties which go right back to the accession to independence. We share with a great many African countries a common language, heritage and political tradition rooted either in the Commonwealth or *la francophonie*. Canadians rejoiced throughout the period of decolonization and the emergence of dynamic African States. Indeed, if I may be permitted one additional personal observation, I myself, in my post-university days, spent a year and a half teaching and travelling in Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda and Kenya either shortly before or shortly after independence—and then returned on two occasions a decade later. Africa leaves an indelible mark on the mind and spirit. The vitality, the exuberance, the determination, the potential, live with one for a lifetime. Nothing I have ever done or experienced has so shaped my own sense of developing societies, their immense prospects and their sometimes unimaginable adversities.

116. Canadians share that sense of solidarity. We always have; we always will. It is demonstrated by the close relationships, by the development efforts over

the years, by our mutual and uncompromising repugnance for *apartheid* and by our determination, with others, that Namibia shall one day be free. But most of all, that solidarity inevitably comes to the fore when debating a subject like this: the economic crisis in Africa. Last week, on the very matter of this speech, I journeyed to Ottawa to meet with Prime Minister Mulroney. He explicitly asked me to convey to the Assembly the sense of importance that Canada attaches to these deliberations.

117. On 1 November, just five days ago, Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs appointed a prominent and much-respected Canadian as Emergency Co-ordinator for the African food crisis to ensure that all the efforts we undertake are effective in their intended reduction of human suffering. As is well known, transportation and logistical difficulties are of particular concern. It will be part of the Co-ordinator's job to overcome the bottlenecks and to see to it that the assistance is delivered as quickly as possible. Just yesterday—in fact, just last night—the Co-ordinator and the Secretary of State returned to Canada from a trip to Addis Ababa to assess at ground level what might best be done. It was an initiative deliberately designed further to galvanize Canadian public opinion.

118. In the case of Ethiopia, Canada has already contributed between one quarter and one third of all food aid over the last four years, amounting to some 275,000 tons. In the light of the present crisis, we have dramatically increased our food aid to Ethiopia by more than 50 per cent, to a level of \$Can 26 million for 1984-1985. As contributions from individual Canadians and Canadian organizations pour in, we will obviously do more.

119. But as speaker after speaker in this debate has indicated, the response to the emergency is merely the beginning. What must come now is a Herculean effort on the part of all member nations to address those conditions which give rise to the crisis.

120. At the heart of the response lie the efforts of the African nations themselves. They have been and are indomitable in pressing the issues to the world stage. In particular, the ECA Conference of Ministers at Addis Ababa last May analysed the crisis in vivid detail and provided a series of short-, medium- and long-term prescriptions. The Ministers deserve our every support.

121. Indeed, there is a certain *déjà vu* about this very debate. It is right and necessary that there be a culmination to the process that began some time ago, but let us see it as a culmination, given the litany of studies, reports, documents and conferences that have animated United Nations activity on Africa throughout all the intervening months. The Secretary-General alone has released a number of searching and thoughtful papers in 1984. Indeed, it is difficult to underscore adequately the remarkable quality of the Secretary-General's initiatives on Africa. His office has provided focus, momentum and objectives. The Economic and Social Council last July, as everyone knows, engaged in a notable discussion on the problems of the continent. We also have the World Bank's special programme for sub-Saharan Africa and, finally, during the course of this debate, the emergence of a draft declaration on the critical economic situation in Africa.

122. What we are saying is that we have subjected the crisis in Africa to a continuing and remorseless

dissection, and it is now time to act upon the generally shared conclusions. It will have become clear to representatives, having listened carefully to my predecessors in this debate, that every participant country, with varying shades of emphasis, seems committed to the proposition that the crisis of Africa is an international *cause célèbre*, which the collective political will of the United Nations must resolve. Above all, on this kind of fundamental issue we must seek agreement without any of the extraneous immoderation that turns useful debate into spasms of irrationality.

123. That is the position of Canada. But it goes further, into the matters of substance as well.

124. It is now widely recognized that structural impediments to growth, especially in agriculture, have been the source of much of the decline in output. FAO estimates that for agriculture alone per capita output fell in sub-Saharan Africa by an average of 1 per cent per year during the 1970s, and the decline has been even more dramatic in the 1980s. Some would call it catastrophic. Pricing, marketing, investment and income policies have failed to provide adequate incentives to local producers. Governments often did not make food production a priority in terms of public investment. Rapid growth in population—between 3.2 and 4 per cent per annum—has been an additional barrier to self-sufficiency in food, as has the expanding desertification and loss of agricultural land. These tendencies, coupled with an international recession characterized by falling commodity prices, high interest rates, rising energy costs and inflation, have crippled production and economic growth.

125. Just as the immediate crisis cannot be ignored, the deteriorating economic situation in Africa over the last decade can be neither dismissed nor hidden. African nations and the international community must both acknowledge that our past initiatives have failed in whole or in part. For African countries it means a recognition that some of their domestic policies have been ineffective or inappropriate—a recognition, incidentally, which is implicit in the draft declaration. For the international community it means that many of our investments have been misdirected or ill-conceived. We have probably placed too much emphasis on financing new infrastructure and ignored the problems of maintaining it. More of the same is pointless for us all.

126. Canada believes, therefore, that remedies must be simultaneously applied to the short-term crisis and the long-term economic malaise. Our immediate concern, naturally enough, has been relief to the estimated 150 million victims of the drought in the 24 most seriously affected countries and to the 4 million refugees from other natural or man-made disasters. In 1983-1984, Canada provided over \$100 million in various forms of assistance to meet emergency food shortages in Africa.

127. Our commitment will not diminish; it has intensified. In 1984-1985 African countries will receive over \$90 million in bilateral food aid alone, almost doubling last year's allocation. That represents 45 per cent of all such Canadian aid. Another \$14 million will be allocated for international relief organizations. Assistance to Africa through WFP, to which Canada is the second largest donor, which gives us some pride, will be maintained at its current high levels.

128. Furthermore, Canada participated actively in the work of the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, held at Geneva from 9 to 11 July 1984, to establish guidelines for the development of programmes for refugees—guidelines that respect their international legal rights. Canada has indicated an interest in projects with a value of more than \$15 million, destined for at least six countries.

129. Africa will remain a priority for Canadian development co-operation. More than 40 per cent of Canada's bilateral assistance, representing over \$225 million in 1983-1984, is devoted to African countries. In response to the critical balance-of-payments situation of many of Canada's development partners on the African continent, we have made a shift towards programme support as opposed to project support, allowing for more rapid and flexible financial transfers. To maintain existing infrastructures, support is increasingly provided for recurrent costs and maintenance costs. Our financing in sub-Saharan Africa is now primarily in the form of grants. All of these policies will be sustained and improved wherever possible.

130. We all recognize that agriculture is the primary key to Africa's long-term development. Food and agriculture will continue to be the most important sectoral priority for Canadian overseas development assistance during the 1980s. We will continue to direct an increasing volume of resources towards the agricultural sector. In 1983-1984, 38 per cent of the Canadian International Development Agency's bilateral disbursements in Africa went towards the promotion of food security, agricultural production and related infrastructure. However, we recognize that Canada's contribution can only support, rather than substitute for, efforts on the part of recipient Governments to deal with the underlying problems facing food production. It is they who will find the means and devise the strategies to tap Africa's undoubted agricultural potential. As the changes in policies are made, Canada stands committed to further assistance.

131. Improved co-ordination is also essential for domestic and international efforts in the short and long term. The African countries must play a key role in ensuring that all available resources are utilized effectively. Such a policy requires close co-operation with the donors, the World Bank and UNDP to improve co-ordinating mechanisms. There is an indispensable need for an integrated framework. What does that mean? It means that there must be a framework at the country level to guide all donors and that country itself in developing programmes of support for structural adjustment. We have made progress in this area recently, and we salute the willingness of many African countries to respond to this challenge.

132. Moreover, resources are not merely physical and financial; they are obviously human. It is clear to everyone that the human resources potential within Africa itself must be tapped if long-term development in all of these areas is to succeed. The provision of outside experts on a short-term basis is a mere stopgap. In order to maintain the momentum that, we hope, will start with this debate, all the parties involved must pledge themselves to the provision of the necessary education and training for African personnel. In short, human resource development must play a central role in any future African

development. That principle is one of the pillars of Canada's aid programme.

133. All of that leads us irresistibly to the need for what economists call "increased financial flows" or, to put it in the language of the layman, more money. In that regard, it is distressing to note the projected decline in net capital flows identified by the World Bank in its joint programme of action. As the new Canadian Minister of Finance said a mere six weeks ago, "We would urge Bank management to continue active consultations with donor governments with a view to increasing bilateral and multilateral flows to sub-Saharan Africa".

134. I would emphasize that Canada recognizes that greater funding from the developed international community is necessary, and Canada will play its full part in the provision of greater funding for Africa. Indeed, we will also continue to work for adequate funding of IDA, IFAD, UNDP and other organizations that play a key role in channelling concessional moneys towards Africa.

135. In concluding, I should like to return to the draft declaration, since it will undoubtedly serve as the lasting expression of this important debate. Declarations neither feed the hungry nor alleviate human suffering, but they can act as a remarkable catalyst to collective action.

136. This draft declaration, potentially, is a singular document. It is lucid and sensible. It ties all the strands together. It speaks, eloquently, to the immediate human tragedy; it recites, convincingly, the emergency concerning food, water and the ugly encroachment of the desert; it identifies the decline in export earnings, the appalling levels of indebtedness and the stagnation of resources; it asserts the responsibilities of African Governments themselves to fashion development policies in response to the crisis; it confers importance on national food strategies and integrated rural development plans; it acknowledges the primacy of physical and social infrastructure; it stamps with approval the urgent need for co-ordination; and it argues, with irrefutable cogency, the case for a substantial increase in bilateral and multilateral funding.

137. With all of that Canada can agree. On those few points where we may differ, the draft declaration offers a promising basis for mutual accord. One of the primary reasons for this debate is to mobilize international opinion in our respective countries and abroad. A final declaration, adopted by consensus, would go a long way towards that end.

138. When we are finished with the words, there remains the vulnerability of the human condition. Let us get on with the tasks that lie ahead.

139. Mr. LAUTENSCHLAGER (Federal Republic of Germany): During this session of the General Assembly our interest is focused on Africa. The sorrows and hopes of the people of that vast continent, so close to us through our friendly relations, are of concern to us. We want to help to conquer the acute human suffering, but we want also to contribute towards enabling the countries of Africa to look forward to an economically secure future. As the Secretary-General stated in his note of 1 November 1984 [A/39/627], it is not only a matter of overcoming situations of acute distress but also of laying the foundation for a resumption of economic growth and development. Africa is a rich continent; there is no

need for its people to go hungry and to live in poverty.

140. A few days ago [47th meeting] the representative of Ireland set forth for the Assembly the measures that the European Community and its member countries have taken to help to tackle the critical economic situation in Africa. He spoke on our behalf as well. Permit me to add, from the viewpoint of my own country, a few touches which will enlarge and complement the picture given by him.

141. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany, Mr. Genscher, stated from this rostrum on 26 September [8th meeting] that Africa needs international solidarity and the co-ordinated efforts of the international community. Today I should like to assure our African friends: you can bank on my country's solidarity; you are not alone. We fully endorse the Secretary-General's statement in his note: "the peoples of Africa need us: their trials are ours too and it is together that we shall overcome them." [See A/39/627, para. 19.]

142. What have we done so far? What must we do together? My country's development co-operation is focused already on the African continent. Considerably more than 40 per cent of our total aid flows to Africa.

143. My Government's development co-operation is planned, in co-ordination with the national policies of our African partners, with a view to strengthening all the essential elements of the economy—agriculture, mining, industry, transport, communications and energy supply. The high degree of our financial and technical co-operation with Africa devoted to the development of agriculture and rural areas reflects our common adherence to the view that agriculture is the key sector in the development process. We are co-operating bilaterally to implement food strategies which African countries are establishing or already pursuing. We attach special priority to the protection of the environment and natural resources, which includes combating desertification, soil erosion and destruction of tropical forests. Agriculture, however, can assume a leading role in generating growth only if the complementary sectors of industry, transport and communications, as well as energy supply, are developed. I should like to emphasize the importance to agriculture of balanced industrial development.

144. We welcome regional co-operation and promote it wherever possible. One example is the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference, which my Government has provided with special funds to finance expert services and studies in the fields of transport, the training of specialist personnel and the production of seed.

145. In 1983, funds in the order of 2.3 billion deutsche mark were channelled to Africa. In response to the Secretary-General's appeal, we made available a further 50 million deutsche mark for a special food security programme in 1984. Our humanitarian aid, in particular for the drought victims in Africa, has been stepped up by two thirds, now reaching a figure of DM 20 million. Only a few days ago, on 24 October, the Federal Government, motivated by the immense human suffering in Ethiopia, allocated a further amount of DM 20.5 million for food aid and humanitarian aid to conquer the famine in Ethiopia. While we are assembled here, foodstuffs and trucks

to be employed in their distribution are being transported to Ethiopia through an airlift between that country and my own. Experts from the Federal Republic of Germany have been dispatched without delay to Ethiopia in order to discuss with the Ethiopian Government questions concerning methods of organizing the relief measures so as to achieve optimal results. We endeavour to help swiftly, and we try our best.

146. Further, with regard to the form in which we give our aid, Africa occupies a special place in our world-wide co-operation. Thus since 1978 our development assistance to the least developed countries has been rendered on a grant basis, and of the 36 least developed countries in the world 26 are African. We have remitted loans under official development assistance to the least developed countries in Africa in a total amount of approximately DM 2.6 billion, which has resulted in a very appreciable reduction of their foreign debt.

147. The picture I have outlined of my country's efforts would be incomplete unless I also mentioned that we are endeavouring to support the multilateral institutions in their crucial tasks with our contributions. Thus we are the third largest contributor to the World Bank group, having made available more than DM 1 billion in 1983. We support the African Development Bank with a contribution topping DM 170 million, while UNDP receives more than DM 110 million.

148. Within the European Community we account for a contribution under the second Lomé Convention of DM 3.9 billion, equal to more than a quarter of the overall volume, 80 per cent of this amount being allotted for Africa, and we also contribute to other development aid programmes of the European Community, bearing our regular share.

149. Outlining all these official aid measures should not make us forget the extraordinary efforts of the private sector in the Federal Republic of Germany. Business managers from my country render an important contribution towards the economic development of the African continent. Apart from capital, they also transfer technological know-how, thus strengthening Africa's export industries and providing positive impulses for the labour market. The Federal Government in particular has enlarged its promotional offer to small- and medium-sized businesses, the backbone of any sound economy.

150. The problems of desertification, on which we commented at length in the Second Committee, have been receiving our growing attention for some time now. My Government has spent more than DM 300 million since 1974 on projects closely related to desertification control, mainly in Africa. We are prepared to devote a greater share of our development aid to programmes and projects related to desertification control if interest is indicated by our partner countries.

151. To no small degree, our ability to help can always count on a strong response from our population. Appeals by the television networks and the churches have met with an extraordinary reaction recently. In a matter of a few weeks more than DM 70 million have been donated—a further token of the solidarity which the people in my country demonstrate in the face of the burning problems in Africa.

152. I have so far tried to make some concrete statements, to describe facts, and in the process

figures are inevitable. Our contributions, however, often go hand-in-hand with uncommonly courageous restructuring measures by our African friends and partners, and yet there is no reason for complacency. The crisis in Africa is and remains a challenge for us all. In the Secretary-General's words:

"In spite of the measures taken, much remains to be done. The African Governments must continue their courageous efforts to bring about reforms and adjustments. The developed countries must strengthen their support." [See A/39/627, para. 5]

153. As my delegation stated during the summer session of the Economic and Social Council in July of this year, we are prepared within the scope of a dialogue based on partnership, by more effective co-ordination of aid and particularly by continuing our extensive bilateral and multilateral development co-operation, to contribute to overcoming the crisis. The latest report of the World Bank on Africa has reinforced us in our resolve to allocate further funds for Africa in 1985 also. We must by joint action reverse the situation depicted in the Special Memorandum of the ECA Conference of Ministers held at Addis Ababa in May of this year, with the following terms: "We are most anxious that our continent should not continue to be the weakest link in the network of world economic interdependence."⁶ Within the limits of its abilities, my country will endeavour to put Africa in a position which will make it a strong link in world economic interdependence.

154. It is precisely in this context that the Secretary-General in his note rightly launched an appeal to create an international economic environment favourable to sustained growth and development.

155. Our efforts to get our own house in order and the success those efforts have met with, for example, in fighting inflation and reducing budgetary imbalances, can be considered, if viewed from this angle, as a contribution towards a sound and sustained growth of the world economy. In spite of manifold adversities of our own, we face up to adjustment.

156. World economic interdependence means, above all, trade. Only open markets will keep the process of adjustment in the industrialized countries going. Only if there are open markets will the courageous adjustment measures in the developing countries be justified. The value of our imports from the developing countries in the African continent has regularly exceeded our exports to them, resulting in African surpluses of, for example, DM 6.4 billion in 1983 alone.

157. Our relations with Africa are the result of a greater awareness on both sides of the existing and constantly increasing interdependence between North and South. These relations have acquired an unprecedented intensity in the past 20 years. Proceeding from this awareness of interdependence, we jointly build the future. What we need, as the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs stated at the 8th meeting, is a policy rooted in the conviction that the future of one's own country can only be assured if the future of all countries is assured.

158. My country's policy on Africa is part and parcel of our world-wide peace policy. The Federal Government endorses the renunciation of the threat or use of force and the peaceful settlement of all conflicts. It respects the right of all peoples to self-determination and condemns racial discrimination. Its policy is consistent and calculable. Its long-term interests—the economic and social stabilization of its partner States without any outside interference, respect for human rights, unimpeded trade, intensification of the cultural exchange—tally, we are sure, with those of our partners on the African continent. The results of the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, held at Geneva last July, open new perspectives for co-operation in an area of particular concern to us.

159. Let us show solidarity in helping to bring about an economic breakthrough in the history of Africa. The discussions of recent days have demonstrated that the will to achieve this goal exists. What has deeply impressed us during these discussions is the solidarity shown by many developing countries with the African countries.

160. In 1985 we shall celebrate the fortieth anniversary of this Organization, and 1986 will be the International Year of Peace. The Organization was founded "With a view to the creation of conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations", as rather soberly formulated in Article 55 of the Charter of the United Nations.

161. I am firmly convinced that we shall be able to celebrate the International Year of Peace in a meaningful manner, that we shall do justice to its intentions, only if we have done everything in our power to open up to millions of human beings living today a life unworthy of man, the prospect of a better future, or in the words of Pope John Paul II: "Today, development is the name for peace."

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.

NOTES

¹Lagos Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Monrovia Strategy for the Economic Development of Africa, adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of Africa Unity at its second extraordinary session, held at Lagos on 28 and 29 April 1980.

²Lima Declaration and Plan of Action on Industrial Development and Co-operation, adopted by UNIDO at its Second General Conference, held at Lima in March 1975.

³Caracas Programme of Action on economic co-operation among developing countries, adopted at the High Level Conference on Economic Co-operation among Developing Countries held at Caracas from 13 to 19 May 1981.

⁴E/1984/68.

⁵E/1984/110, annex.

⁶*Ibid.*, para. 66.