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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 34th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. HARLAND (New Zealand)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 83: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE: (continued)
(A/39/3 (Parts I and II); A/39/133; A/39/236; A/39/581; A/C.2/39/5)

- (a) OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DISASTER RELIEF CO-ORDINATOR: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/39/267 and Corr.1 and Add.1 and 2)
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- (c) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MEDIUM-TERM AND LONG-TERM RECOVERY AND REHABILITATION PROGRAMME IN THE SUDANO-SAHELIAN REGION: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/39/211 and Add.1).

1. Mr. ESSAAFI (United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator) said that the report contained in document A/39/267 showed how generously and more effectively developed countries were responding to appeals for humanitarian assistance. Clearly, there was a general trend in that direction throughout the world, for increasing attention was being paid to the misery of peoples struggling for survival against a nature that was often hostile. The situation caused by the drought in more than half of the African countries south of the Sahara was aggravated by desert encroachment, which each year reduced thousands of hectares of land to desert and which might be partly responsible for the persistence of drought in the region. The growing awareness of human suffering resulting from that situation and the determination to allay it had combined to produce strong empathy in the North towards the South, although the praiseworthy efforts made were still inadequate to resolve the problem.

2. At the time the report had been prepared, his Office (UNDRO) had been compelled to draw upon the very limited reserves brought forward from previous years in order to continue at the necessary level those of its efforts - which still represented one third of all its activities - which were financed from voluntary contributions to the UNDRO Trust Fund. At the end of the report, the Secretary-General emphasized (para. 105) that the necessary resources would have to be provided, and in recent months, it had been encouraging to see a reversal of the downward trend which had prevailed in voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund. In particular, the Governments of Australia, Canada, Italy and Norway had made generous donations and he trusted that other Governments would soon be able to follow their example. That kind of support was very important because relief activities had increased not only as a result of the greater number of disasters for which international help had been requested, but also because of the greater volume of resources delivered to the countries affected, most of which were least developed countries.

3. He wished to stress the considerable needs of the countries affected by the drought in Africa, which had been of concern to UNDRO for many months and required an ever-increasing volume of international aid. In many international

(Mr. Essaafi)

organizations, and in the United Nations itself, the drought had been accorded the priority it deserved, and in recent months concerted relief plans had been prepared, inter alia, for Botswana, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique and Rwanda, which had thus far received \$US 160 million in cash contributions, in addition to substantial donations of food-stuffs and other assistance in kind. One common feature of all those programmes had been the emphasis on the need for support for the transport and distribution of relief supplies.

4. In addition to the countries referred to, UNDRO activities had been directed at others affected by sudden disasters, such as Portugal and Turkey in Europe; Guinea, Madagascar and Swaziland in Africa; Ecuador and Peru in Latin America; Burma, Indonesia and the Philippines in Asia; and Papua New Guinea in Oceania. UNDRO wished to acknowledge the assistance of the United Nations specialized agencies, the European Economic Community, the main non-governmental organizations, in particular the International Red Cross, and other international and national voluntary organizations.

5. UNDRO had not neglected its role in regard to disaster preparedness and prevention, and its activities in that area were described in paragraphs 32 to 78 of document A/39/267. National disaster preparedness structures had been established in those countries, at their request, and activities at the regional and subregional levels had been continued in the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean, southern Asia and the Pacific. In the area of prevention, a number of projects relating to earthquakes, floods and volcanic eruptions were in progress, and increasing use was being made of modern techniques in monitoring situations which might develop into emergencies. As could be seen from paragraph 94 of the report, UNDRO had significantly strengthened its information service, which was an essential instrument for liaison and co-operation with all the agencies in the United Nations system and other humanitarian organizations.

6. The special report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/39/267/Add.1 was of fundamental importance because it was the result of three years of work and consultations pursuant to General Assembly resolution 36/225. The report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/38/202, which had been submitted to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session, had been the first response to that resolution. On that occasion the General Assembly, in its resolution 38/202, had requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with Governments of both donor and recipient countries, as well as with appropriate agencies, to submit specific proposals for the implementation of his recommendations. The report now before the Committee contained a series of specific proposals which had met with the almost unanimous agreement and support of Governments and interested organizations, and which had been received with profound satisfaction by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1984/60. The proposals recommended, inter alia, making greater use of inter-agency meetings and missions to assess urgent relief needs; the submission to donors of concerted relief programmes, with the relevant financial implications; identification of logistic and transport requirements as essential factors; the reduction of delays; the adoption of special administrative procedures; a survey of the available human

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(Mr. Essaafi)

resources, including training capabilities; the availability of a general-purpose fund for emergency relief which would also act as a revolving fund guaranteeing the advance of sums required; continuous evaluation of relief operations; smooth transition from the relief phase to the rehabilitation and reconstruction phase; and the strengthening of disaster preparedness and prevention activities. The implementation of those proposals would make a decisive contribution to the improvement of the capacity of the United Nations system and of the international community as a whole to deal with the effects of natural disasters and other emergencies through joint relief activities.

7. Document A/39/267/Add.2 contained a draft convention on expediting the delivery of emergency relief prepared in response to resolution 2102 (LXIII) of the Economic and Social Council, which had considered it at its second regular session in 1984 and, by decision 1984/175, had transmitted it to the General Assembly for consideration; the General Assembly was to take a decision on the Secretary-General's recommendation that the draft be referred for examination to a body of intra-governmental experts. It was to be hoped that those experts would also take into account the views of voluntary organizations which played a major role in relief operations. UNDR0 had completed the task entrusted to it by the Economic and Social Council in that regard and it was now for the representatives of Governments to decide what measures should be adopted.

8. Turning, in conclusion, to General Assembly resolution 38/217 on special assistance for Honduras and Nicaragua because of the 1982 floods and other subsequent natural disasters, he said that UNDR0, through the UNDP representatives in those countries, had made an offer to the Governments concerned of technical assistance in the form of the services of experts in pre-disaster planning. Since the Nicaraguan Government had already taken vigorous measures to modernize storm water disposal systems and to resettle the population of the areas worst hit by the floods of May 1982, it had requested technical assistance directed towards earthquake and volcanic prediction, and the selection of an appropriate expert was currently in progress in consultation with the Government. In response to a similar offer made to the Government of Honduras, the specific areas in which assistance was required had been defined and a technical co-operation mission was currently being organized.

9. Mr. PEQUENO (Sao Tome and Principe) said that the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 31/187 had demonstrated the will of the international community to share in his country's efforts to overcome the constraints to its development. Unfortunately, despite the progress that had been made, Sao Tome's development still faced the same limits as before, namely, isolation, a one-crop economy based on cocoa, a lack of manpower, infrastructure and means needed to ensure the smooth operation of its institutions. That situation was due to a complex of historical and external factors which, over the years, had helped to intensify the special difficulties of a young country forced to try to deal with several priorities at once.

(Mr. Pequeno, Sao Tome and Principe)

10. The most recent problems were connected with world markets, where the steady deterioration in the world economy had been reflected in a drop of more than 60 per cent in the price of cocoa, Sao Tome and Principe's main export product. At the same time, production had declined because of the aging of plantations and it was impossible to find the money needed to remedy the situation. In addition, an unusual drought had reduced cocoa production to only two thirds of that of previous years. The drought had also affected food crops and meat production and African swine fever had wiped out the country's pigs. The climatic conditions obtaining throughout the year had also had other adverse consequences.

11. To provide for the population's food needs and for the normal operation of other sectors of national activity, Sao Tome and Principe depended almost exclusively on imports. The decline in export receipts and the increase in import prices had caused grave shortages, particularly in regard to food, which only the assistance of the international community had made it possible to relieve temporarily. He expressed his country's gratitude for the aid given by FAO, WFP, the EEC, and the Governments of Algeria, France, Japan, the United States of America, the USSR, China, the Congo, Angola and Sweden.

12. International solidarity was vital and constituted an important adjunct to the country's development efforts, but it was obvious that the problems facing Sao Tome and Principe demanded medium-term and long-term responses, and that their solution was primarily the country's own responsibility. The Government was preparing a national development plan with the aim of establishing a framework within which efforts to overcome the current constraints would be developed.

13. Through a round table to be organized in 1985 with UNDP assistance, Sao Tome and Principe proposed to engage in a dialogue and in concerted action with current and potential donor countries with a view to obtaining increased and more diversified and integrated external financing for the attainment of its national development goals. In particular, priority would be given to the implementation of projects requiring little foreign exchange, projects that would tap underexploited national resources, such as forestry and fishing, vocational and cultural training projects that would enable future generations to use the necessary technologies without having to resort to costly outside assistance, and projects designed to remedy the country's isolation. He appealed to the international organizations and Member States to lend the round-table meeting the necessary support and to help in implementing the projects that would be worked out there.

14. During the first years of its independence, Sao Tome and Principe had been unable to make full use of the benefits of international co-operation but, given the steps that had been taken for the improved co-ordination of international assistance and the greater interest that had been aroused in the problems of island least developed countries, it hoped to be in a position to meet the challenge of its current situation.

15. Mr. GIBSON (New Zealand) said that, given the gravity and scale of the problems in Africa, it was only right that UNDRO should focus its attention there. Many African countries had had to face drought, famine, diseases and civil strife, which had undermined living conditions and threatened the survival of whole communities. In many other countries, the current emergency was overwhelming the hard-won development efforts of various decades. It was all the more vital, therefore, that a co-ordinated response should be forthcoming from the international community. In that connection, the special relief agencies of the United Nations, and particularly UNDRO, had an important role to play in the humanitarian relief process. For their part, many donors with substantial programmes of development co-operation in Africa had already moved to consolidate their assistance, and multilateral agencies, the development finance institutions, United Nations agencies and non-governmental groups had begun to adjust their priorities to meet those new needs.

16. New Zealand welcomed those initiatives to assist Africa, as was shown by its response to the joint FAO/World Food Programme appeal in February and the appeal of the UNHCR in July. Recently the Prime Minister of New Zealand had announced a second special grant to WFP to help the people of drought-stricken countries.

17. Although the situation was most pressing in Africa, there were other parts of the world with special assistance needs, including the South Pacific region. As one of Vanuatu's development partners, New Zealand commended to the international community's attention the Secretary-General's report on the special assistance needs of that country, which, like other small island States of the South Pacific, shared many of the problems faced by the least developed countries. In addition those States had their own special difficulties: isolation and distance from population centres and markets, transport and communications problems and, owing to their location in the hurricane belt, the increased vulnerability of most of their economies.

18. New Zealand was pleased that, in accordance with resolution 1984/58 of the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General would be reporting to the Council on the special development needs of Tuvalu and Kiribati. It also welcomed the fact that consideration would be given to the eligibility of Vanuatu, Tuvalu and Kiribati for least-developed status. New Zealand also hoped that UNDRO would pursue its activities in the South Pacific, especially in disaster-preparedness programmes.

19. Various studies had pointed up some serious shortcomings in the ability of the United Nations to respond to disaster relief situations, principally owing to a lack of co-ordination of effort. General Assembly resolutions 36/225 and 37/144, on that question and on the role of UNDRO, had not perhaps met the expectations of all Member States in that connection but they had established a framework for a co-ordinated response to disaster situations and the UNDRO function in it. Although proposals to strengthen UNDRO would have to be considered in the context of the United Nations budget, it was important to strengthen the Office's capacity to respond to disaster situations. In particular, New Zealand hoped that UNDRO would increase its activities in the South Pacific, especially in regard to

(Mr. Gibson, New Zealand)

disaster preparedness. When conditions permitted, UNDRO should develop its capacity to co-ordinate the separate programmes of the United Nations agencies and to assist in the co-ordination of the relief activities of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations on a global scale.

20. Ms. ERIKSSON (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the five Nordic countries, said that the situation in many African countries was extremely critical, mainly because of the long drought. That was the case in Ethiopia, where hunger and other factors were currently causing the death of large numbers of people. In other parts of the world, floods, hurricanes and earthquakes, in combination with underdevelopment and poverty, continued to take a heavy toll of human life and to affect the social environment. To break that trend, it was now more necessary than ever to co-ordinate multilateral and bilateral disaster relief activities, and to prevent disasters. The demands on UNDRO had therefore grown. Her delegation welcomed the fact that the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, in his short time in office, had been able to improve significantly the performance of his organization.

21. The key factor in co-ordination was information, because it was the prerequisite for well-planned relief operations. As the quality of the information provided by UNDRO could be no better than that received from the affected countries and donors, the latter should do their utmost to provide reliable data. In the field of co-ordination, action should be taken on the suggestion that, at the end of any emergency phase, the experience and knowledge gained by UNDRO should be readily transferred to the relevant agencies and donors (A/39/267/Add.1, para. 42). The Nordic countries also felt that in order to attack the root of the problem, more vigorous action was needed in the area of preparation for and prevention of disasters - activities for which there was generally limited interest in donor and disaster-prone countries.

22. The Secretary-General's report (A/39/267) stressed that various UNDRO activities, including part of its staffing, depended on voluntary contributions and that additional funds were needed for the Office to maintain its current level of work. Governments would have a clearer picture of the activities and plans of UNDRO if it could submit a programme of activities for financing by donor countries, rather than asking donors to contribute to a relatively unspecified trust fund.

23. Lastly, the Nordic countries felt that, in view of the complexity of the draft convention on expediting the delivery of emergency relief (A/39/267/Add.2), more time was needed to study the proposal, and that the question should be discussed at a later stage.

24. Mr. ISAAC (Uganda), referring to the measures which his country, one of the recipients under the special economic assistance programmes, had taken to rehabilitate its economy, said that in 1981 Uganda had introduced a series of policy reforms to stabilize the economy and promote investments and production through the adoption of floating exchange rates, elimination of price controls and rationalization of the tax and monetary structure. In 1982, it had drawn up a

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(Mr. Isaac, Uganda)

two-year recovery programme subject to periodic review. As a result of the first review, in October 1983, a revised recovery programme had been launched whose basic theme was continuity, since the implementation of some of the projects included would not be completed until 1988. The primary objectives of the revised programme were modernization and growth of the agricultural sector, broadening of the economic base to reduce dependence on the agricultural sector, diversification of the export sector and improvement in security.

25. Since the implementation of the revised programme had begun, Uganda's economy had recorded growth in all sectors. There had been a notable increase in food production, a sector in which Uganda currently was self-sufficient and had the capacity to export a substantial surplus, especially of maize. There was no shortage of essential consumer goods, since the goods produced domestically were supplemented by imports. In 1983, the real gross domestic product had grown by 7.3 per cent, and the balance of payments position had improved, registering a surplus of \$US 32 million in 1983/1984, compared with a deficit of \$US 92 million in 1982/1983. Uganda had accumulated reserves equivalent to 3.3 months' imports, which had reduced the need for support from the International Monetary Fund. Despite those gains, the real terms of trade had declined because of the drop in the prices of coffee and other non-oil primary products on which Uganda's economy depended. In the period 1978-1982, the purchasing power of Uganda's export earnings had fallen by 38 per cent.

26. Despite all the problems confronting it, Uganda was committed to undertaking further policy adjustments, and as part of those efforts it had established a joint co-ordination committee on external resources, which brought together representatives of the Government and donor missions. Uganda expressed its gratitude for the aid provided by various countries, the United Nations and other international agencies, and hoped that the donors would study the possibility of sustaining and increasing the momentum of recovery and growth achieved thus far.

27. Mr. BINDANG (Equatorial Guinea) said that, although it was true that the current international economic crisis had affected the developing countries in general, in order to understand fully Equatorial Guinea's need for economic assistance for reconstruction, rehabilitation and development, the causes of its current situation must be analysed.

28. From the time Equatorial Guinea had attained independence from Spain, on 12 October 1968, until 3 August 1979, it had been under a bloody and dictatorial régime which had adversely affected all aspects of its socio-economic development. In that period, characterized by murder, stealing, intimidation, arbitrary arrest, persecution of religious groups and the fomenting of hatred against intellectuals, there had been a mass exodus of nationals and foreigners. Ministries, schools, hospitals and other basic institutions had been closed or barely functioning. The régime had plunged the country into an indescribably chaotic situation, and during that period it had remained isolated from the international community.

(Mr. Bindang, Equatorial Guinea)

29. Since Mr. Mbasogo had become Head of State, in August 1979, much progress had been made towards the socio-economic development of Equatorial Guinea. Government administration had been reorganized by creating and rehabilitating ministries and other national institutions, human rights had been restored and democratization had been promoted in all fields. What the country now needed was economic assistance for its reconstruction, rehabilitation and development.

30. In 1982, the International Conference of Donors for the Economic Reactivation and Development of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, in which the President had personally participated, had been held in Geneva under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). At that Conference, projects had been submitted for financing in the following fields: projects in the directly productive sector (agriculture, livestock-raising, fishing, forestry and industry); human resources projects (health, education, employment and social development); basic economic infrastructure projects (energy, transport, water and sanitation, housing and urban development and communications) and public administration projects. The Government of Equatorial Guinea hoped that the international community would help it to finance those projects in collaboration with UNDP or directly.

31. The lack of a convertible currency was creating serious obstacles to the country's economy, and especially to attracting investments from foreign private and public enterprises, and it was therefore important that Equatorial Guinea had been accepted as a member of the Bank of Central African States (BEAC) and the Central African Customs and Economic Union (UDEAC). As a member country of the CFA franc zone, at the beginning of 1985 Equatorial Guinea would have a new convertible currency which would not only be legal tender in the national territory but would also be internationally valid. The Government of Equatorial Guinea thanked the Governments of Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Congo, Chad, Gabon and France and the experts of UDEAC and BEAC for making it possible for Equatorial Guinea to become a member of those economic and financial institutions, which were of vital importance for the country's socio-economic development.

32. His delegation raised an objection with regard to the wording of paragraph 183 of document A/39/392 because it contained information which conflicted with article 7 of the Constitution of Equatorial Guinea, which read: "The territory of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea is made up of the continental zone called Rio Muni and the islands of Bioko, Annobón Corisco, Elobey Grande, Elobey Chico, small adjacent islands, fluvial waters, territorial seas and continental shelf determined by the law and air space which covers it ...".

33. Lastly, his delegation expressed appreciation to all Governments and international organizations which had provided economic assistance for the reconstruction, rehabilitation and development of the country and hoped that they would continue to provide generous aid in the future. He also expressed appreciation to the Secretary-General for his persistent efforts to solve the problems of Equatorial Guinea.

34. Mr. KORDS (German Democratic Republic) said that special assistance to countries in emergency situations was and would continue to be a task for international co-operation. His country therefore supported the appeals for increased bilateral and multilateral efforts to promote the welfare of the populations in disaster-stricken areas. The report of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (A/39/267) showed that the activities of the Office in co-ordinating disaster assistance had been useful and that important measures had been taken to increase disaster preparedness.

35. The impact of natural disasters was more extensive and complicated in the poorest countries, which were the victims of colonial and neo-colonial exploitation. In addition to emergency assistance, however, those countries should receive support enabling them to achieve their national development goals. That was the only way in which the causes of such situations could be eliminated. In that connection, his delegation reaffirmed the views which it had expressed when General Assembly resolutions 36/225, 37/144 and 38/202 had been adopted, namely, that all United Nations relief assistance should be mobilized and provided on the basis of strict respect for the sovereignty of the States affected by emergency situations.

36. His delegation supported the co-ordinating measures implemented by UNDR0 in accordance with its mandate. In future, the most efficient and cost-effective forms of co-operation with other United Nations organs should be sought for the provision of immediate and effective assistance to the countries concerned. Nevertheless, his delegation doubted the expediency and necessity of the inter-agency missions for an assessment of the situation in sovereign States (A/39/267/Add.1, paras. 7 to 9) because, in addition to the enormous cost which they involved, such activities touched upon questions which came under the sovereignty and exclusive competence of the States concerned.

37. His delegation also reiterated its doubts about the usefulness of elaborating a convention on expediting the delivery of emergency relief (A/39/267/Add.2). It was understandable that disaster-stricken States should wish to expedite the delivery of emergency relief and eliminate the legal, technical and other obstacles to rapid execution, but it should be stressed that the extension of existing bilateral and multilateral co-operation sufficed to improve the effectiveness of emergency relief in natural disasters and emergency situations. A prerequisite for that was that certain States should cease to use emergency relief as a coercive measure against the progressive policies of the States concerned. Such manoeuvres were particularly reprehensible when it was a question of supplying urgently needed food.

38. Solidarity with the peoples striving to achieve economic and social progress was an essential part of the political activities of the German Democratic Republic. In 1983/1984, his country had provided emergency assistance to the victims of national disasters in Mozambique, Angola, Mali and Ethiopia. Relief shipments had been sent to Tanzania, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, Benin, Viet Nam, Nicaragua and Laos (urgently needed equipment, blankets, tents, teaching aids and medicine). His country had provided immediate assistance

(Mr. Kords, German Democratic Republic)

amounting to 20 million marks to combat the effects of the drought in Ethiopia (2,700 tons of food, medicine worth 2.4 million marks and 35 trucks). Furthermore, his Government had decided to place four transport planes with crews at the disposal of Ethiopia for immediate in-land use in the transport of relief supplies.

39. His country had been one of the sponsors of General Assembly resolution 38/223 on assistance to Nicaragua because it supported the struggle waged by the people of Nicaragua against imperialist attacks and favoured the establishment of a peaceful and independent society which could achieve social progress. In recent years, his country had contributed approximately 40 million marks to reconstruction work in Nicaragua. The Solidarity Committee of the German Democratic Republic had also provided humanitarian assistance to the PLO, SWAPO and the ANC.

40. His country supported the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America in their struggle against colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism and all forms of imperialist oppression. The strengthening of genuinely equitable and mutually beneficial co-operation, particularly in the economic and scientific and technological fields, would promote the growth of the industrial and agricultural capacities of those countries and the creation of a potential of qualified national specialists. At the same time, that would help them create the necessary conditions for dealing with emergency situations by their own means. The German Democratic Republic would continue its activities of solidarity in support of those countries within the limits of its possibilities.

AGENDA ITEM 80: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION (continued)

(d) INDUSTRIALIZATION (continued)

(g) ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

41. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there was no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to extend the time-limit for the submission of draft resolutions on agenda item 80 (d) and (g) until Friday, 9 November.

42. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.