



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

AGENDA ITEM 139

Critical economic situation in Africa (continued)

1. Mr. DOMÍNGUEZ RAMÍREZ (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): In the clearest and most objective terms, appropriate to a rigorous analysis, the representatives of various Member States and the most qualified United Nations officials have agreed unequivocally in recognizing the prevailing situation in Africa as a terrible disaster and a heart-rending social and human tragedy.

2. The Mexican delegation comes to this forum at this crucial time for the African continent to reaffirm its solidarity with the African nations. In the heart of Africa at this time we find vividly and dramatically expressed the most urgent claims of peoples who for many years have been struggling for their self-determination and development and against implacable natural adversities, exploitation and injustice.

3. The international community has been moved by the grievous facts—among them the fact that more than 150 million human beings are suffering from progressive desertification and persistent drought and that now in Ethiopia alone almost a million persons, incredible as this might seem at the threshold of the twenty-first century, are facing imminent death from hunger. The enormous human dimensions of the problem and the social and economic damage affecting a number of the nations of Africa have brought about a regression to underdevelopment. The facts are unquestionable. Today, with a much greater demographic component and with basic needs which have multiplied, several countries have regressed 25 years as far as their quality of life is concerned. Their present indicators have fallen to the levels of 1960.

4. In view of these circumstances and recognizing, as we do, the extraordinarily serious nature of the situation in Africa, it is imperative to avoid illusions and fallacies and to appreciate the facts for what they are. The crisis in Africa has not appeared suddenly; nor is it an isolated or transitory phenomenon. On the contrary, it is an impressive indication of the problems of survival faced by nations which, since the elimination of colonialism, have been emerging to independent political life and struggling to build the bases for their economic self-sufficiency and viability in an increasingly unfavourable and hostile international context.

5. The African crisis today is a multifaceted, multi-sectoral crisis—in other words, an almost total crisis. It is not only food, health, housing and habitat on which the crisis is having its greatest impact, but also on the overall production of necessities, manpower training, transportation, communications, the external sector and all the resources for economic and social life. All of these are threatened and distorted by the crisis. In these circumstances, it is not merely the sending today, or for a year, or for five years of ships or aircraft laden with food, clothing and medicines that will ultimately bring about the rehabilitation of Africa. No one doubts that these forms of assistance are and will continue to be absolutely vital if a total collapse is to be avoided, and it is also undeniable that the flow of such aid is a first sign of the understanding and solidarity which various nations feel towards the countries devastated by hunger.

6. However, we must recognize more than the circumstantial and possibly transitory seriousness of some of the manifestations of the crisis, especially as regards food and health, the fight against which could save for the moment the lives of many people. It is not only assistance for survival that Africa requires and is demanding. The concerted and continuous action required by Africa is action that would bring about structural changes in its own economy and in the international environment capable of averting once and for all the imminent danger of a recurrence of this tragedy. Economic development and social progress are the only effective antidotes to future catastrophe. That is the profound significance which the entire world should see in the commitment to solidarity which is being made in our deliberations in this United Nations forum.

7. In this context the essential pre-condition of the success of our undertakings is a thorough understanding of the profound structural nature of the crisis in Africa as certainly one of the major manifestations of the world economic crisis.

8. The time has come for solidarity and action. This Organization was established for two all-important, historic purposes: to preserve peace among nations and to strive for the development of the peoples. There is no other or better forum to which the countries of Africa can come to seek and find the support they need to face and overcome their present difficulties. This is the appropriate forum, here in the common house of the nations.

9. The situation we are facing could, paradoxically, constitute an exceptional opportunity for the community of Member States to show their exemplary adherence to the principles of the Charter. The time has come for the United Nations, on the eve of its fortieth anniversary, to revive a genuine spirit of multilateralism by acting in solidarity.

10. To that end, we must recognize that our common formula of action must go beyond the mere notion of assistance, important and spectacular as that might be. In this context it is essential to recognize and respect the inalienable right of the African nations themselves to define the terms and to take on the direct responsibility for the rehabilitation of their economies.

11. As part of the thorough, permanent and scrupulous exercise of that responsibility, many initiatives have been undertaken and many appeals have been made by representatives of African countries with a view to overcoming the crisis and meeting the challenges of their development. There are regional plans to combat the effects of desertification and drought; the Lagos Plan of Action;¹ proposals for decades of industrial development and of transport and communications; the Nairobi Programme of Action for the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy;² the Substantial New Programme of Action for the 1980s for the Least Developed Countries;³ the Addis Ababa Declaration on Africa's External Indebtedness;⁴ the Harare Declaration on the food crisis in Africa, adopted in July by the Thirteenth FAO Regional Conference for Africa; the tenth meeting of the Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa and its Special Memorandum;⁵ and the World Bank programme for sub-Saharan Africa.

12. Thus the countries of the continent have brought before the international community with full clarity the priority areas and the time-frames for action to resolve the crisis. The first essential is to attack immediately the problems of the food deficit and restore the essential minimum of health to millions of persons affected by malnutrition and disease—in brief, to save lives. But immediately following that, and as soon as possible, we shall have to ensure the resumption of the economic growth and development of the region.

13. The Secretary-General, in the note on the critical economic situation in Africa [A/39/627] addressed to this session, has suggested that concerted action taken with urgency by the international community, based on identification of the priorities by the African countries, could have immediate, decisive importance and an impact on the prevailing situation. These measures include, through the immediate re-establishment of net financial flows: arresting the haemorrhaging of capital brought about by the external debt; urgently increasing commodity export earnings through a drastic change in exchange rates; the establishment of the Common Fund for Commodities; the increase of agricultural production for internal consumption; and the intensification of the struggle against desertification. These are all fundamental measures to which all States should formally commit themselves in order that the economic rehabilitation of Africa may begin as soon as possible.

14. The international community was warned from this very rostrum about the bleak prospects that threatened to cancel the future for many nations of the African continent if we did not formulate and implement our commitment to its cause, to ensure the existence and development of its countries. Over and above any political or ideological system, such a possibility is intolerable and inadmissible for any signatory of the Charter that governs the world Organization. That is why we find it truly promising

that States Members of the United Nations are now discussing in the Assembly, under your personal leadership, Mr. President, formulas capable of mobilizing the political will at the basis of the mechanisms of multilateral and bilateral co-operation.

15. The aim of the true solidarity required of us in these exceptional circumstances is, without any doubt, to make our contributions and co-operate with the countries of Africa to ensure the speedy attainment of their just rights and their aspirations to accede without delay to the sovereign, independent and full development of their peoples in order that they may once again have full control over their destiny, in freedom and justice.

16. For the pursuit of those lofty purposes, Mexico expresses once again today its firm solidarity. It is prepared to offer co-operation and assistance to the countries of Africa to the fullest extent possible in order to ensure the attainment of these purposes.

17. Mr. ZUMBADO JIMÉNEZ (Costa Rica) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Discussions about the economic crisis in the third world in recent years have frequently centred on the problem of its external debt. This is especially true of Latin America. Emphasis on this aspect of the problem is mainly the result of the danger which that indebtedness poses to the private banking system of the more developed countries and, consequently, to the stability of the international monetary system. But the fundamental problem of the Latin American countries, as of the other developing countries, is not "the debt"; that is only the most obvious manifestation of a crisis. It is not an exaggeration to say that had it not been for the deterioration in the terms of trade, too great an increase in interest rates and the unprecedented contraction of capital flows, the problem of debt would practically not exist as such.

18. But, while Latin America is the victim of international economic relations that penalize weakness and exacerbate the vulnerability of the poorest countries, the situation in Africa is much more disquieting. The African continent not only has been the victim of prolonged drought and an accelerated process of desertification, but also has suffered from a deterioration in its terms of trade that is much greater than that experienced by the other developing countries. With a very low income level and very large food deficits, there is no margin for reduction: the slightest economic setback directly threatens the survival of millions of human beings. Thus, while Latin America is struggling to maintain standards of living attained during a process of growth that was practically uninterrupted for 20 years, millions of Africans are struggling between hunger and death.

19. Despite the dramatic differences in degree, however, the fundamental causes of the problems we face are the same, and we must continue to join our efforts in the quest for an international economic order that is more just, rational and equitable.

20. An objective on which our interests obviously converge is the attainment of an international division of labour that will allow us to diversify our productive machinery. The recent deterioration in the terms of trade has been the result more of a precipitous fall in the prices of our exports than of an increase in the prices of our imports. Furthermore, it is expected that in the future there will be a downward pressure in the prices of primary com-

modities, in view of a protracted downward trend in the consumption of those commodities. We therefore have a fundamental need to diversify our production and our exports in order to reduce the risk and minimize the impact of that possibility. However, all too frequently the efforts to diversify our economies come up against protectionist barriers in the developed countries, which thereby attempt to preserve their supremacy in the production of goods—both agricultural and industrial—in which they no longer have a comparative advantage. Unless those countries proceed to adjust their own productive structures and centre their activities on those areas where they do have a comparative advantage, they not only will perpetuate an inefficient allocation of resources but also will block the legitimate aspirations of developing countries to diversify their economies and reduce their external vulnerability.

21. Another area that we must stress is strengthening the agricultural sector and food security. It is a fact that all the nations industrialized today experienced an agricultural revolution before their industrial revolution. As the Secretary-General points out in his note on the economic situation in Africa [A/39/627], it is vital to give priority to increasing agricultural production in that continent, not only for exports but, above all, for the elimination of the terrible food deficit that characterizes the situation there. This is a particularly complex problem that must be solved, for, in addition to the impact of drought, as the Secretary-General points out, it involves “[price and credit policies, investment distribution], research and development efforts and food security strategies” [*ibid.*, para. 10].

22. On 19 October, during the commemoration of World Food Day, we had an opportunity to hear, in this Hall, Professor John Kenneth Galbraith on the subject of the agricultural system and the mistakes that had been made in the transfer of policies or ideologies of whatever sort that did not necessarily adapt themselves to the circumstances of the development level of the nations that had attained their independence only recently. In particular, he pointed out the danger of transferring to agriculture ideological concepts that are rather more relevant to a more industrially mature world. Professor Galbraith placed special emphasis on the agricultural system's having a basic design that meets the requirements of stability and economic efficiency; in that design the farmer who owns his land is a key element.

23. Indeed, the small landowner, established on his own parcel, is one of the common characteristics of successful agricultural systems. The experience of my own country at the beginning of its independent life is relevant in this respect. It is an accepted historical fact that the basis for Costa Rican democracy is the economic democracy that characterized the ownership relationships at the beginning of the colonial period. In Costa Rica there were no major landholdings during the colonial era. We did not have masses that could be exploited as labour. Those who came to that poor colony had to work the land with their own hands, limiting their space to what could take care of one family. Today we consider that the defence of this distribution of land ownership is one of the most important challenges for the survival of Costa Rican democracy.

24. We are not here to try to build a case against the role of the State or against planning in the process of development. The role of the owner-farmer as an

agent of development in agricultural societies must be respected in market economies as well as in those countries which attach a much greater importance to planning. Large holdings, whether private or collective, have very often been a serious obstacle to the achievement of the desire of peoples to overcome their underdeveloped condition and have frequently been a source of political and social instability.

25. Very often we lose ourselves in a morass of statistics. Economic indicators at times are a distraction that makes it difficult to set our sights on what really matters: the consequences of economic problems on the lives of people. Nowhere in the world are these problems more tragic than on the African continent.

26. In a rich country recession implies a decrease in consumption, particularly of products that are not essential or are even superfluous. In a poor country—and the poorer, the more tragic—the crisis means hunger, the death of women, children and men, the impossibility of human beings realizing a large part of their potential.

27. In the note on the economic situation in Africa to which I have referred, the Secretary-General proposes a series of actions by the United Nations based on the priorities defined by the countries of the region. My Government fully shares the position of the Secretary-General. In this context, we should like to mention especially the measures proposed for paying more attention to the needs of the most vulnerable sector of the African population, the children. The international community must respond to the appeal to facilitate a revolution to benefit children. Nowhere on our planet is this effort more necessary than in Africa, especially the countries of that continent which are the neediest and the most affected by the international crisis and by hunger. This revolution is possible from the technological standpoint and is essential to protect what we value most in our societies from the harshness and irrationality of fluctuations in the international economy or climatic changes.

28. Willy Brandt, in *Common Crisis*, published in 1983, said:

“We too often forget that even today the depth of human suffering is immense. Every two seconds this year a child will die of hunger or disease. And no statistic can express what it is like to see even one child die.”⁶

29. Perhaps by focusing our attention on the tragic future facing the members of African societies who represent the future, we should, in addition to satisfying with urgency their most vital needs, contribute to establishing a climate wherein political wills can bring about the necessary changes so that underdevelopment may become just a part of the history of our peoples and not the harsh reality it now is.

30. Mr. XIE (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): In view of the critical economic situation in Africa, the current session of the General Assembly has included this item in its agenda and accorded it a prominent place, which is absolutely necessary and most timely. We sincerely hope that the deliberations will yield positive results which will meet the earnest expectations of the African peoples.

31. Since the Secretary-General's initiatives on the African situation in January this year we have had more opportunities to understand Africa's critical

economic situation. Just a few days ago we received the report [A/39/594] and note [A/39/627] by the Secretary-General on this subject, which presented a shocking and alarming picture of the current social and economic conditions in Africa and at the same time contained useful proposals on how to solve the difficulties of African countries. This will help us to gain a better understanding of the situation and to take necessary actions.

32. Vast areas of the African continent south of the Sahara are now mired in profound social and economic crises, whose causes are multifaceted. The majority of the African countries have won their independence and national liberation after arduous struggles and have achieved some progress on the path of national economic development. However, prolonged colonialist rule resulted in serious structural problems in their economies, and the present international economic system imposes numerous obstacles to their development. Therefore, they find it difficult to extricate themselves in a short time from the dependence on developed market economies, a legacy of history, and even less are they capable of resisting the vicissitudes of the international economy.

33. The economic crisis of the Western developed countries in the early 1980s brought severe damage to the fragile economies in Africa, which became the main victim. The decline in the prices of primary products and the deterioration in their terms of trade led to a drastic drop in their export earnings. The fall in the real value of official development assistance flows as well as other capital inflows has resulted in a serious shortage of funds for their development. High interest rates have added substantially to their debt burdens. Adverse external factors, compounded by successive years of serious drought and other natural calamities, including worsening desertification, have stalled economic growth, with poor harvests in agriculture and under-utilization of industrial capacity. As a result, the per capita income has decreased and food shortages prevail, with well over 100 million people being tormented by starvation and malnutrition, while in some cases there is even the tragedy of widespread famine. Sub-Saharan Africa is struggling hard for survival.

34. The African countries have made tremendous efforts to change the present economic situation by relying on their own efforts. The Monrovia Declaration of Commitment, as well as the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos, adopted after the Declaration, have demonstrated the foresight and determination of the African countries to achieve self-sufficiency and economic development through collective self-reliance. However, the difficulties faced by the African countries, given their seriousness and magnitude, can hardly be overcome through the efforts of Africa alone. They call urgently for the all-out support of the international community.

35. The critical economic situation in Africa has been receiving increasing international attention since the Secretary-General made the appeal for resolution of the questions and for a concerted international response. The second regular session of 1984 of the Economic and Social Council included this question in its agenda as a priority item and held extensive consultations on the subject. FAO, UNDP, the World Bank and other related organs and organizations of the United Nations system have already taken or are taking actions in this regard. Bilateral

donors have also contributed or are preparing to make contributions to redress the situation. We have noted that the international community is gradually reaching a common understanding of the seriousness and urgency of the situation and its possible political and social consequences. A general consensus is being formed on the need and scope of the measures to be taken and their priorities.

36. First, as was pointed out in the Special Memorandum on Africa's Economic and Social Crisis,⁵ adopted at the tenth meeting of the Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa, Africa is facing a twofold challenge. It is beset with urgent problems requiring an immediate solution, as well as with immediate and long-term development problems which also need to be tackled. At present, there is an urgent need for food and financial aid, an increase in official development assistance and interest-free or low-interest loans to alleviate the situation with regard to the food and water supply, primary health care, energy supply and transportation services, all of which are vital to national life. While taking emergency actions, we must not neglect the need to give strong support to the immediate and long-term development of Africa. Special efforts should be made to help the African countries overcome external unfavourable factors and create an international environment favourable to the development of their economies. Only in such circumstances can they make progress in the development of agriculture, industry, infrastructure and human resources and in improving, step by step, their basic economic structure, so that they will stand ready for economic development through self-reliance and to cope with situations of crisis.

37. Secondly, we are of the view that aid programmes at the international level should be both co-ordinated and somewhat flexible. It is desirable to convene international, regional and national round tables to co-ordinate the activities among the international organizations, donors and recipients. However, in view of the varied circumstances and development needs of different countries, programmes at the international level should be based on development plans at regional and, particularly, national levels, so that the specific needs of each country can be met flexibly by priority programmes and resources can be rationally exploited in order to achieve the maximum possible effect of the assistance.

38. Thirdly, the role of the African countries is most essential in making policies for their economic development. We have noted that quite a number of African countries, while formulating development plans to solve their respective actual problems, are making efforts to adjust their policies, which is commendable. Certain policy adjustments are often unavoidable if difficulties are to be effectively overcome for the development of the economy. International organizations and donor countries may also, drawing upon their own knowledge and experience, put forward reasonable proposals for adjustments to the African countries, which might help them achieve quicker and better results in their adjustment process. However, it must be pointed out that it is eventually up to the African countries themselves to decide their policies in light of the conditions of their respective countries. The international community should render them active material and technical assistance in their efforts to improve policies and realize their national development programmes. It

will be counterproductive and inconsistent with the norms governing international relations if domestic policy adjustments of the African countries are over-emphasized or if those countries are indiscriminately asked to adopt certain policy reforms regardless of their economic, political and social consequences, or if the aid to them is even made conditional on such reforms.

39. A number of suggestions have been made and various programmes proposed with regard to the critical economic situation in Africa. It is needless to say that these suggestions and programmes are important. What is more important, however, is to promptly take effective and practical actions. Otherwise, they will be worth no more than a scrap of paper. It is our hope that at the current session the General Assembly will reach a decision on this issue without delay. We appeal to all countries capable of rendering assistance, particularly the developed countries, to explicitly commit themselves to active and generous assistance to Africa.

40. The Chinese people and the African people share a similar bitter past and are faced with the same task of developing their economies and building up their countries. They have always sympathized with and supported each other. They have a common destiny and share the same sentiments. Although China is a low-income country with an underdeveloped economy, it has always tried its best, despite its own difficulties, to assist and support the African countries. On a bilateral basis, China has provided assistance to quite a number of African countries in farmland and irrigation projects and such infrastructural constructions as roads and bridges, as well as medical and health care services. China is engaged in close economic co-operation with many African countries. In view of Africa's current situation, China this year has increased its bilateral aid to some African countries and has provided them with new emergency food donations. China will continue to make its contributions within its capabilities.

41. The African continent is inhabited by an industrious population and is endowed with rich natural resources. It has tremendous prospects for development. We believe that with the support of the international community, and through their own efforts, the African countries and peoples will be able to overcome the difficulties confronting them now and tap their economic potential to create an African economy based on self-reliance and imbued with vigour and vitality.

42. Mr. NATORF (Poland): For the first time in the history of the Organization we face the unprecedented destruction of the economy of a whole continent. The situation, which threatens not only the present but also the future of the African people, speaks for itself. In searching for the roots of this phenomenon, we find it beyond doubt that the present situation cannot be termed an unexpected course of events that has developed only recently.

43. We share the view presented by the Secretary-General in the report on the critical social and economic situation in Africa that

"The current economic and social crisis in Africa reflects the cumulative impact of a variety of internal and external factors: inadequate resources, slow economic growth, structural weaknesses, global economic recession, strife and adverse climatic conditions."

Already prior to 1980 the economic problems facing this continent had been manifested in sluggish economic growth, rising inflation rates and widening deficits in the balance of payments. In most cases, drought and desertification, resulting mainly from adverse climatic conditions, had completed the dim picture. Since then, the world economic recession has further aggravated the unfavourable impact of different factors. Africa has been affected more severely than any other region by the deterioration in the terms of trade. Excessive foreign borrowing as a result of a diminishing inflow of assistance in real terms, high interest rates and fluctuating exchange rates have led to a dramatic increase in the external debt, which has now reached \$150 billion. In sub-Saharan Africa, where the situation is extremely critical, per capita food production has been falling by roughly 1 per cent a year for more than a decade. More than 150 million are faced with hunger and malnutrition. Even now, despite some positive developments in the world economy, the prospects for most African countries for 1984 and beyond have not improved. The tragic situation that has recently developed in Ethiopia confirms this assessment.

44. However, this is only one aspect of the sources of the disastrous situation in Africa. The crisis on the African continent must also be viewed against the background of the overall political climate. For some years the international political environment, characterized by a general deterioration of the political situation, growing tension and an atmosphere of confrontation, accompanied by an accelerated arms race and a climate of distrust and suspicion, has offered nothing but diminishing opportunities for solving acute economic problems. The case of Africa clearly demonstrates that attempts to divert attention from the main threats to international life by highlighting only some of its aspects and artificially separating them are fairly naïve and do not bring about lasting solutions.

45. Last, but not least, the colonial past of the continent, in conjunction with the present neo-colonialism, constitutes one of the principal reasons for the present difficulties and the general backwardness of Africa. The former colonial Powers, which ruined many regions of the world, cannot now feel released from their immense responsibility for the current situation in Africa. Moreover, the neo-colonial policies they have been pursuing since the political decolonization of Africa and other continents aggravate the already difficult political and economic situation in many developing regions. It is because of this unfavourable political environment that many armed conflicts have taken place in Africa, thus undermining further the political and economic stability of the countries of the region and placing on the weak African economies a heavy burden of increased military expenditure. Only a reversal of the trends jeopardizing world peace and security could create conditions conducive to the achievement of lasting and advantageous solutions of crucial socio-economic problems of development, including those of Africa.

46. But, at the same time, Poland recognizes that the scope and gravity of the economic and social crisis in Africa demand that it be given immediate treatment. Therefore we welcomed the initiative of the African countries to ensure that special attention be devoted to their tragedy in the course of this session of the General Assembly. It is regrettable that

owing to the position of some Western countries it was not possible to work out an agreement on this matter of great urgency at the July session of the Economic and Social Council.

47. Poland highly appreciates the leading role the African Governments have themselves assumed in order to cope with the economic and social crisis in Africa. The Lagos Plan of Action provides a useful framework for their individual and joint activities. We fully recognize and support their inalienable right to implement the Plan in conformity with the basic needs and priorities of their respective nations. It should be recalled that the Special Memorandum on Africa's Economic and Social Crisis, adopted at the tenth meeting of the Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa and the nineteenth session of the Commission stated, *inter alia*:

"the primary responsibility for the development of . . . economies rests with . . . governments and . . . peoples . . . However, because of the scale and complexity of the problem, there is an urgent need for massive assistance from the international community to complement and supplement . . . individual and collective efforts in dealing with the crisis."⁸

48. Since the outbreak of the crisis the actions of the United Nations system have been in the forefront of activities undertaken by the international community to cope with its effects. Nevertheless, the input of ECA, FAO, UNDP, UNIDO, WHO and many others—which we highly value—should not be limited to providing immediate assistance to African countries in need but should also promote and coordinate, when appropriate, multilateral actions aimed at restructuring the existing economic structures and mechanisms and creating a new and just international economic order. We sincerely hope that the General Assembly will not fail to find out the real origins of the critical situation in Africa and to map out a comprehensive programme of activities to combat its consequences in both the short-term and the long-term perspective. We should spare no effort to contribute to this responsible task. We cannot allow such a potentially rich continent to lag far behind in the course of development because of past colonial occupation and domination. Let us help Africa regain its place in the process of co-operation among nations. We fully subscribe to the opinion expressed by the Secretary-General in the report which I mentioned earlier:

"The development of human resources is a key priority for Africa. There is an immediate requirement for trained personnel to formulate and implement emergency programmes. The long-term implications are even more important in terms of developing necessary administrative and managerial capacity . . . as well as technicians, scientists and skilled labour. Unless the countries of Africa fully develop and utilize their own human resources, they will remain dependent on the external world."⁹

49. Poland, for its part, continues to assist African countries through various forms of training, including education at all levels. African students figure prominently among 2,500 fellows from developing countries enrolled in our universities. Approximately 3,000 highly qualified Polish specialists are employed in the developing countries, many of them in Africa.

50. Trade and co-operation with Africa have contributed largely to the expansion of our co-operation and trade with developing countries. Their share in our turnover is rising. I would like to mention here that as much as 47 per cent of Polish exports to the developing world is directed to African countries, while imports from them have become one of the most dynamic trade flows in the 1980s in our overall turnover with the developing countries. I wish to add that in Poland a new scheme of tariff preferences for the developing countries has been in operation since the beginning of 1981, enhancing the export opportunities of African countries in their trade with Poland. Under the scheme, all products originating in and imported directly from the 30 least developed countries have been granted duty-free treatment. Poland has developed fruitful co-operation with many countries of the region, including those from sub-Saharan Africa, and especially with the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Angola, Benin, Ethiopia and many others.

51. In conclusion, I would like to state that despite our own economic problems and difficulties we are ready to participate in many United Nations actions aimed at easing the situation in Africa as well as further to expand our bilateral co-operation and trade with African countries.

52. Mr. GOLOB (Yugoslavia): At its second regular session last July the Economic and Social Council, fully and without any reservation, supported by all its members, decided to consider on a priority basis all problems stemming from the critical economic situation in Africa. Yugoslavia, which took part in that debate, believes that such a decision was fully justified. We believe that the international community is fully aware that the crisis besetting African countries has assumed dimensions that can no longer be tolerated, not only for economic, social and political reasons, but because for many countries and peoples the eradication of hunger and malnutrition is a fundamental need. When the sheer survival and life of people are threatened, this is and must be the first and utmost concern.

53. The Economic and Social Council made great efforts to translate initiatives for giving urgent relief and adequate assistance to African countries into concrete measures and actions. It is to be hoped that those efforts were not in vain. It is now up to the General Assembly to do its best effectively to contribute to overcoming this critical situation and helping the peoples and countries of the African continent to embark upon the road of economic and social development, a road that would lead to stability.

54. I should like to express again our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his efforts to focus the attention of the international community on these critical issues. His statement and the reports he submitted to the General Assembly only confirm that any delay in taking indispensable action would have most tragic consequences for the countries and the population of the African continent and the international community at large.

55. The reports of the Secretary-General note that many African countries suffer from structural defects. However, at the same time it is said that their precarious position is largely the result of an unfavourable international economic environment. The African countries, as well as other developing countries that find themselves in a similarly difficult

position, have no influence on those factors—hence the responsibility of the developed countries, above all, to undertake the elimination of those factors.

56. Without entering into numerous and abundant data, it would suffice to draw attention to the threatening consequences of the fact that the per capita income of African countries has consistently declined since 1980, at an average annual rate of 4.1 per cent. In 1983 exports showed the largest annual decrease since 1974. External debt reached the staggering sum of \$150 billion, and concessional financing decreased in real terms. All these overwhelming factors, together with the devastating consequences of the drought and other natural disasters, have undermined the fundamental conditions for the life and survival of peoples in those countries. In spite of all their efforts, they will not be able to overcome these great difficulties by themselves. A positive response from the General Assembly to the appeals for assistance and co-operation is therefore a political, economic and humanitarian responsibility of the highest priority, and there is no alternative to it.

57. Yugoslavia, as a non-aligned, developing country, fully comprehends the problems facing the African countries. Although itself confronted with considerable economic difficulties, it is assisting the majority of African countries and is developing co-operation with them within the limits of its possibilities. Economic assistance includes assistance in food, agricultural machinery, manufacturing equipment, prefabricated housing and other materials. In the last five years that assistance amounted to \$36 million. In addition, we have rendered humanitarian assistance to the extent of over \$3 million.

58. Scientific and technical assistance is being conducted through research and study projects, and to date about 3,000 Yugoslav experts have participated in their realization. Today there are over 1,000 Yugoslav experts in African countries. So far about 3,000 students from African countries have studied in Yugoslavia. The scholarships given by the Yugoslav Government are today enjoyed by about 400 African students.

59. In our view, an important aspect of co-operation has been achieved through granting credits under concessional terms for the import of capital goods and ships and for other investment projects.

60. Yugoslavia is making special efforts to give assistance through multilateral channels as well—that is, through the United Nations and in the framework of co-operation between the developing countries. Yugoslavia will continue to do its best to contribute to the overall action of the international community, aimed at alleviating and overcoming the critical economic situation in Africa.

61. Mr. AHOYO (Benin) (*interpretation from French*): Today we are discussing what we have agreed to call euphemistically the "Critical economic situation in Africa", while the desperate appeals that we have constantly made to the international community have continued to receive no response. It is a euphemism because neither the stark words nor the moving statements made from this rostrum can describe the full catastrophic extent of the plight of Africa today.

62. What is involved today is not a matter of trying to allocate blame—that is, the blame of Africa itself and also, much more serious, that of the rich, who,

selfishly or parsimoniously, have meanly measured out their assistance to us. The situation is too serious for that.

63. What is needed today is a clear analysis of the economic and social crisis of Africa, so that we may have an increased awareness of the situation. What is needed, above all, is the adoption of effective measures so that this crisis, which is basically due to circumstantial causes, does not irremediably destroy the still fragile structures of the African economies.

64. Today the crisis in Africa, the least developed continent, where 26 of the 36 least developed countries of the world are located, calls for a new approach, the main guideline of which should be to increase the ability of the African countries to offset the adverse impact of the crisis. What in fact is needed is to define, to sustain and to implement a comprehensive economic policy and good management. The assistance of donors and United Nations agencies is essential. The efforts of the African countries themselves and the members of the international community are needed. Such actions, my delegation believes, have two aspects, relating to emergency situations and to medium-term and long-term needs and problems.

65. Critical or emergency situations have existed in the countries of each of the five subregions of Africa since 1983. That is the case in 1984 and will be the case in 1985. These emergency situations are mainly the result of persistent drought and continuing desertification. The inevitable consequences are food shortages and the threat of famine, lack of water, the decimation of livestock, increased malnutrition, massive food imports and massive displacements of the affected population and livestock. Emergency situations have been noted in 36 African countries during the period under consideration.

66. It is appropriate here to acknowledge the efforts made, particularly by the donor agencies and countries, to cope with the situations which now persist in East Africa and, most tragically, in Ethiopia. The international community, in agreement with the recipient countries, must improve the emergency intervention operations so that the assistance actually reaches the people affected. What is required is a determined effort to increase the intervention capacity of the systems that exist at present.

67. The countries of Africa, confronted with the world economic crisis, which has continued because of the lack of political will and the selfishness of certain countries, find themselves defenceless against its harsh effects. They feel the effects of the economic crisis severely because of the remote and recent consequences of a historical past which has made a deep imprint on the continent at the political, human and ecological levels.

68. Thus the world economic crisis has serious implications for the economy of the entire continent. All the economic indicators show that Africa is suffering from very serious economic ills: a constant lowering of the gross national product, a deterioration in the terms of trade, a drop in exports, an increase in external debt, inflation, unemployment and the lack of capital due to the difficulty of obtaining access to international financial markets.

69. The economic situation in Africa is also affected by the degradation and loss of agricultural land, the destruction of grazing land, the lack of ground

water and the deforestation which is now typical of western Africa.

70. This brief account of the economic situation of the African countries shows clearly that a multisectoral approach is needed.

71. First of all action must be taken in respect of those sectors most seriously affected by the crisis, namely, food, agriculture, water supply, transport, storage, distribution, population displacement, sanitation problems, energy and the environment. I would draw attention to the importance of orderly and co-ordinated planning in all emergency situations so that their development can be followed in the medium and long term. All the African Governments, the bilateral donors and the multilateral agencies are concerned in this planning, which is essential for improved co-ordination of assistance to the countries concerned.

72. Another important aspect of the crisis concerns foreign debt and debt servicing, the requests by third-world countries for debt relief and the question of the review or modification of the conditions of multilateral debts.

73. The donor countries and the African countries must give special attention to long-term structural needs. The recent report of the World Bank, entitled *Toward Sustained Development in sub-Saharan Africa: A Joint Program of Action*, constitutes a useful framework for concerted action.

74. In any case, as has been quite rightly emphasized in the note by the Secretary-General, "Whatever the nature of the action to be taken, the . . . need for concerted and co-operated efforts permeates all the responses to be made to the African crisis." [*See A/39/627, para. 18.*]

75. Mr. KIILU (Kenya): My delegation welcomes the decision by the General Assembly to include the critical economic situation in Africa in the agenda of its thirty-ninth session as an item for discussion in plenary. The importance of this item cannot be over-emphasized. The consideration of the matter by the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1984, in July this year, is still very fresh in our minds.

76. Mr. President, let me express the appreciation of my delegation to you personally for the interest you have shown in the critical economic situation in Africa. As a true son of Africa, you are well aware of the problems caused by the crisis for the fragile economies of the African countries and its effects on the very fabric of the social life of our countries. I am confident that, under your statesmanlike guidance, we shall find solutions at this session to arrest the crisis.

77. I wish to commend the Secretary-General for the interest he has shown in the present economic plight of Africa since he assumed office and for his timely initiative early this year to alert the international community to the rapidly deteriorating economic and social conditions in Africa. We appreciated his visit to 17 African countries south of the Sahara between January 1983 and February 1984 to assess for himself the magnitude of the crisis. We recall with appreciation also that since then the Secretary-General has established an advisory group of senior officials, chaired by the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, at United Nations Headquarters. The appointment of the Executive Secretary of ECA as

his Special Representative and the setting-up of a temporary office in Nairobi to co-ordinate activities to deal with emergency aspects of the crisis are clear demonstrations of his commitment to dealing with the grave situation prevailing in the African countries.

78. The economic and social crisis we are facing in Africa today can be traced back to the crisis of the mid-1970s. We would recall that after the crisis of 1973-1974 many African countries, like other oil-importing developing countries, continued to be faced with growing balance-of-payments problems, unfavourable terms of trade, debt problems, high interest rates, foreign exchange shortages, high rates of inflation, rapidly rising unemployment and a host of other economic ills. In addition, population growth in Africa has continued to increase rapidly, by some 3 per cent or more annually, making it difficult for African Governments to provide the people with food, health care and other essential services. As a result Africa, in particular sub-Saharan Africa, has become a region where malnutrition, disease and poverty are rampant. The problems I have mentioned have been further exacerbated by the global recession of 1980-1983, the continuing deterioration in international economic relations and the persistent drought affecting the majority of the African countries.

79. The current drought in Africa is the severest the continent has experienced in recent years. It is widespread and persistent. The drought has compelled African Governments to divert their scarce resources from development to the importation of food and other preventive measures. As a result, many African Governments have had to curtail their development drastically in order to be able to concentrate on emergency measures to provide food for the people. The food situation in sub-Saharan Africa is serious and calls for concerted international action. Since food is a basic need, my delegation appeals to the international community to respond positively to Africa's emergency food requirements in order to save the lives of millions of people who are now threatened by starvation and possible death.

80. To this end, the matter of increased food aid calls for immediate and co-ordinated action. My delegation appreciates that this matter is receiving attention through various bilateral and multilateral arrangements. We are confident that it will also receive the attention it deserves during this session of the General Assembly. However, such aid is essentially a short-term measure. For long-term solutions we need to mobilize, on a national, subregional, regional and international basis, the necessary resources and technology to accelerate the achievement of higher agricultural production in Africa and to extend rural farming based on more extensive irrigation and land reclamation. In Kenya, for example, we have carried out extensive research on types of maize and beans that grow quickly under conditions of very low rainfall. We have also made efforts in connection with irrigation to produce rice, horticultural crops and cotton. But our resources are limited and, like all other African countries, we require additional financial and technical training facilities from international sources to increase our agricultural productivity. We also require resources to assist us in our afforestation programmes and efforts to combat desertification.

81. The continued reliance of African countries on external trade makes them open to disturbances in the global economic environment. The countries of sub-Saharan Africa are dependent upon the export of a limited number of primary commodities for their export earnings. This makes them prone to price fluctuations in the international markets. For this reason the fragile economies of these countries have been seriously hit by the recent recession, particularly the collapse of commodity prices in 1980. We would recall that the prices of the main export commodities, such as cocoa, coffee, copper, groundnut oil and sugar, declined significantly in that year. By 1983 the prices were still below their 1979 levels. The loss of foreign exchange resulting from the decline was aggravated further by the outflow of resources for imports and debt servicing. This has led to serious balance-of-payments deficits and is a major factor contributing to the present crisis facing Africa.

82. The loss of foreign exchange because of deteriorating terms of trade was further worsened by the stagnation and decline in the flow of official development assistance in real terms and the decrease in net capital flows to the African countries. This trend has compelled the African countries to resort to commercial borrowing at a time when interest rates in the international money markets have continued to rise. The terms of borrowing have also continued to deteriorate.

83. In the meantime the external indebtedness of African countries has continued to mount, reaching a record figure of about \$150 billion at the end of 1983. Africa's total external debt increased fivefold in the last decade. The overall debt service ratio trebled during the period. My delegation feels, therefore, that the African countries will be on the verge of bankruptcy unless the international community comes to their rescue. We welcome recent initiatives by certain States Members of the Organization in response to the plight of the African countries. We also welcome the World Bank's new action programme for Africa, calling for the creation of an annual facility of \$2 billion to support reform programmes in our region.

84. As in the area of food and agriculture, the deteriorating terms of trade, the widening balance-of-payments deficits and the mounting debt burden in Africa call for a concerted approach in order to find solutions on an emergency, short-, medium- and long-term basis. To this end my delegation wishes to draw the attention of the Assembly to the suggestions contained in the Special Memorandum on Africa's Economic and Social Crisis⁵ adopted by the ECA Conference of Ministers responsible for economic development and planning at the nineteenth session of the Commission, held at Addis Ababa in May 1984, and the Addis Ababa Declaration on Africa's External Indebtedness,⁴ adopted by the African Ministers of Finance in June 1984. My delegation supports the two documents and feels that they should form the basis for discussion of the subject before us. What we need is political will, flexibility and accommodation in finding urgent solutions to save the lives of millions of people in Africa who are threatened by the crisis, as well as the African countries which are on the verge of collapse.

85. The African Governments have assumed the primary responsibility for instituting measures to cope with the crisis. In my own country, Kenya, the Government has mobilized all the resources in its

power to cope with the effects of the drought. The Government has set up a famine relief fund to mobilize resources from all sources and has also allocated a substantial portion of its budget for food imports. The Kenyan Government appreciates the positive response of the international community to our call for emergency assistance.

86. At the subregional level Kenya, together with other countries of eastern and southern Africa, concluded a treaty in Lusaka in December 1981 establishing a preferential trade area for the subregion. The preferential trade area, which has a potential membership of 20 countries, is already in operation. It is intended to mobilize available potential and co-operation in trade, agriculture, industrialization, transport and communications. We call upon the international community to extend bilateral and multilateral assistance on concessionary terms to the member States of the preferential trade area individually and collectively in order to boost the different areas of subregional co-operation.

87. We see the Lagos Plan of Action, which was adopted by the African heads of State and Government in Lagos in April 1980, as the blueprint for African development. In their attempt to implement the Lagos Plan of Action, the African Governments have initiated measures at all levels to deal with the present grave economic and social crisis. But the scale and complexity of the crisis is such that they cannot cope with it without massive assistance from the international community. To this end, we urge donor countries, and all others in a position to do so, to extend all possible assistance to African countries irrespective of the background of the crisis. The African Governments require urgent bilateral and multilateral assistance on a reliable, predictable and continuous basis to complement and supplement their individual and collective efforts to deal with the crisis. We propose that such assistance be aimed at boosting growth in all vital sectors of the economies of the African countries.

88. Since most of the problems facing African countries are the result of drought or structural maladjustments or have external causes, any meaningful recommendations should be intended to achieve long-term solutions in all the vital sectors in order to resume growth. My delegation therefore proposes that the Assembly adopt a framework of action-oriented recommendations and measures for arresting the current economic crisis in Africa. Kenya is willing to participate fully with other delegations in this endeavour.

89. Mr. MIZERE (Malawi): As you know, Sir, my delegation is participating for the first time in the debates in plenary meetings of the current session and, therefore, I should like to plead for your unfailing indulgence in allowing me to seize this opportunity to congratulate you most sincerely on your unanimous election as President of the thirtieth session of the General Assembly. It gives my delegation singular pleasure to see you in this lofty position. We are confident that your reservoir of experience and unshakeable devotion to duty, and your commitment to fair games in a world where peace and security are threatened from time to time, will continue to guide you in the discharge of your responsibilities. Your country and mine are immediate neighbours and enjoy close, brotherly and friendly relations. They share a common culture and are exposed to the same influences of history and

geography which forced the two countries in 1953 to be controlled politically and exploited economically by a despicable federal system in the name of the now defunct Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

90. My delegation would like to associate itself with the warm congratulations extended by other delegations to your predecessor, Jorge Illueca, on the admirable and efficient way he conducted the deliberations of the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

91. Malawi welcomes Brunei Darussalam most sincerely and whole-heartedly as the 159th Member of the United Nations.

92. The critical economic situation prevailing in Africa has been ably and comprehensively described by the Secretary-General in his report [A/39/594]. With his unfailing deep-rooted concern for Africa and his wide vision for humanity, and endowed with foresight, the Secretary-General warned the world in his report to the Economic and Social Council that

“the economic survival of many countries in Africa is now at stake. Unless the international community responds urgently and adequately, there will be serious consequences, not only for Africa, but for the whole world.”¹⁰

93. Secondly, the World Bank has observed in its 1984 Annual Report that the countries of sub-Saharan Africa have been severely affected by the worsening economic climate, characterized by a slowdown in trade, falling export prices and rising debt-service commitments, and that the stagnating levels of official development assistance have combined to undermine attempts by Governments to pursue politically difficult reforms. The Bank has pointed out that increased external assistance, especially assistance on concessionary terms, is critical to the process of policy reforms. It has expressed regret, however, that such increases in assistance have not been forthcoming.

94. Thirdly, in a report entitled “The Debt Crisis and the World Economy”, a Commonwealth Group of Experts has placed considerable emphasis on the economic difficulties experienced by the developing countries in general and on the economic needs of the African continent in particular.

95. Fourthly, IFAD has pointed out in its 1983 Annual Report that

“Africa is characterized by a falling trend of per capita food production. In recent years, the region has also been suffering from a marked decline in export earnings from primary commodities. On the other hand, the import of foodgrains—in particular, of commodities such as wheat for which the region’s own productive capacity is still very limited—has been rising. This, together with the increasing demand for foreign exchange for industry and the maintenance of the economy, has strained the balance of payments prospects of a large number of countries in the region.”

96. Finally, the statements delivered in the plenary meetings by some representatives last week endorse the seriousness of the economic problems faced by Africa.

97. When the four authoritative reports are considered together with representatives’ statements, my delegation discerns a genuine consensus emerging in three forms: the need for emergency assistance; long-term assistance for the continent; and the role the

African States themselves should play in order to arrest the downward trend detected in most of their economies. One dimension frequently mentioned in plenary meetings is food production, distribution and conservation and the need to establish strategies to handle climatic imponderables.

98. It is against this gloomy and perhaps disturbing picture of Africa that I should like to refer to my own country, which is a member of the Group of Southern African States at the United Nations.

99. Malawi, as the Assembly knows, is land-locked and lacks in minerals that can be economically exploited. Its principal exports are tobacco, tea, sugar, groundnuts and cotton. Despite its sole dependence on agriculture, Malawi has managed to generate economic growth and to have a food surplus because of a favourable climate and no shortage of hard-working people who believe in unity, loyalty, obedience and discipline. Moreover, the economic policies of the Government of Malawi have made it possible for the people of Malawi to procure their basic needs—food, shelter and clothing. In February this year the Malawi Government told the world:

“The primary goal of Malawi’s development policies is to continue to raise the standard of living of the entire population on the basis of full participation in the development process and equitable distribution of the benefits therefrom. With this objective in mind, the people of Malawi firmly believe that they bear the primary responsibility of successfully undertaking the envisaged development programme.”

100. It will be noted that the Malawi Government’s priority is the improvement of the living standards of the people in the rural areas. Since the majority of the population is rural, Malawi has made every effort to encourage development in those areas and to improve the standard of living of the inhabitants. The primary objective is to spread economic and social benefits more widely among the rural people, extending the economic and social infrastructure and involving the people more directly in the monetary economy. A basic approach has been adopted which depends to a large extent on the aspirations of the rural communities and their willingness to contribute their own labour and resources to self-help projects. The development of rural skills is encouraged by the provision of training facilities needed for self-reliance. District committees and voluntary organizations are already active in promoting self-help projects to improve the living standards of rural people while the Malawi Government encourages their efforts by allocating funds and providing technical assistance.

101. It is against this background that the World Bank reported that Malawi posted a gross domestic product growth of 3 per cent or higher in 1983 and has a food surplus which it sells to its neighbours or to other States in Africa. Moreover, the Secretary-General confirmed in his report that Malawi has a food surplus.

102. My country faces, however, transportation bottlenecks aggravated by the fact that it is land-locked, as aforesaid, and therefore needs a substantial injection of foreign funds to maintain the momentum of development in the rural areas, to improve the existing infrastructure, especially transport, to train Malawians in various fields like medicine, engineering, architecture and accountancy, and

to implement a stabilization programme agreed upon with IMF and a structural adjustment credit with the World Bank.

103. There is a broad consensus in Africa that development aid is to help African States to master their own economic problems. But to do so, Africa needs financial and technical assistance bilaterally from the industrialized countries and multilaterally from international institutions like the World Bank and its specialized agencies, the European Economic Community and so forth.

104. It may be taken for granted that in the corridors of the United Nations, in the Main Committees and sub-committees, in the Security Council and in other group gatherings at the United Nations, Member States may speak in terms of ideological concurrence, continental affiliations, regional loyalty and cultural affinity. There is, however, one common denominator that cements us together, and that is that "we are made for each other" and share one destiny. To use Africa's economic plea as an occasion for recrimination or condemnation is counterproductive, but to bury our diverse interests in favour of a common goal to assist Africa is magnanimous. It is with this plea in mind that my delegation would like to associate itself with the appeals made in this Assembly to assist Africa. Specific proposals made so far may be summarized as follows:

105. First, despite their well-known reservations, the industrialized countries may still wish to co-ordinate their efforts and arrange to increase their contributions to IDA, whose terms and conditions of assistance are reasonable.

106. Secondly, my delegation is pleased to note that reference has been made to the Economic Declaration issued in London in June this year [A/39/304, annex] by the seven industrialized countries—Canada, France, Japan, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States. We have no doubt in our minds that the contents of the Declaration will be further examined in the light of the present economic situation in Africa and that most, if not all, of the recommendations will be implemented.

107. Thirdly, the world community should look into the possibility of rendering technical assistance in order to arrest desertification and to give food to drought-stricken countries and to the millions of refugees in Africa.

108. Fourthly, creditor countries are requested to consider the possibility of converting official development assistance into grants.

109. Fifthly, the land-locked and least developed countries appeal to the world at large to assist in establishing small rural industries in order to process their raw materials for local use or for export, and to share their technological know-how. Coastal States should endeavour to facilitate the transportation of the exports and imports of the land-locked countries.

110. Sixthly, industrialized countries are asked to render supportive and co-operative action in order to revitalize world trade by reducing protectionist policies or measures likely to impede the growth of the African economies.

111. Finally, my delegation would like to draw attention to the need of the industrialized countries in particular and of the international community in general to examine the report of the Commonwealth Group of Experts, which states that priority must be

given to a special set of measures for assisting low-income developing countries, especially in Africa. Some of their recommendations may be summarized as follows. The IMF Trust Fund and interest subsidy account should be reactivated to promote medium-term, low-interest balance of payments finance for low-income countries which have great difficulty in using high-conditionality short-term IMF finance at normal interest rates. It must be recognized that while IMF lending of an appropriate kind is desirable, the essentially long-term, structural nature of adjustment required in most low-income countries calls for a central role in external financing for adjustment to be played by the World Bank, in conjunction with regional banks. Substantial real increases in official development assistance are needed, with a larger proportion going to poorer countries, and a greater role for programme lending. In this connection, attention must urgently be given to providing supplementary resources to IDA to avert a significant reduction in multilateral flows to low-income countries. The commitment to official development assistance debt write-offs for the poorest countries and substantial relief for other low-income developing countries should be fully implemented. There should be substantial relief of the official debt of low-income countries through longer maturities and grace periods, lower interest and multi-year rescheduling in Paris Club restructuring. Official debt rescheduling procedures should be reformed to give greater attention to new financial flows, in particular a co-ordinated approach to support rescheduling with new concessional flows and to ensure that insurance cover for export credit is promptly restored. Finally, domestic management, in particular debt management, should be improved. International agencies can play a useful role by providing technical assistance to develop debt management systems in low-income countries.

112. My delegation is aware that there are many discernible economic, social, cultural and political differences among Member States. To some observers, Africa may represent a mere vision compounded and separated by distance of time or space on the far side of the rivers, lakes and seas of the world and the deep waters of the Indian, Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. But to the delegates in the plenary meeting, Africa is an interdependent member of the international economic family which badly needs assistance from potential and traditional donors. All of us here this morning share a common concern, yes, a common wish to help Africa to realize its financial needs, to open world markets to Africa's exports, to reduce the intolerable burden of international debts, to give food to the refugees and the victims of drought, to arrest desertification, to improve Africa's transport difficulties and to eradicate or to bring under control the three deadly enemies of the developing countries, namely, poverty, ignorance and disease.

113. In conclusion, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to thank the several countries represented here today which have sent food to the hungry in Africa and those which have sympathetically helped and continue to help my country to implement its development programmes, thereby translating political independence into economic growth from which Malawi, as a people, as a Government and as a nation, has benefited.

114. It is my delegation's observation that the States Members of the United Nations are made for

greater things and are committed to the service of humanity. We appeal to all potential and traditional donors for assistance to Africa. It is our conviction that where there is a political will to give, sympathy to accommodate, patience to discern and determination to succeed, the world community is capable of rendering generous assistance to Africa in this hour of food shortages in some parts of the continent, financial hardship, balance-of-payments disequilibrium, ravaging drought, hunger, desertification, transport problems and shortage of medicines for the sick.

115. Mr. BENJELLOUN (Morocco) (*interpretation from French*): For the first time in the history of the Organization, the General Assembly has decided to include as a main item in its agenda consideration of the critical economic situation in Africa. The international community quite properly notes the fact that the African tragedy has to be considered at the level of the plenary meeting of the Assembly, and Japan, in the person of Mr. Kobayashi, has been appointed as co-ordinator of the working group on the economic situation in Africa.

116. The General Assembly had already recognized in the past that Africa was the most underprivileged of the developing continents. Our debate today shows clearly that Africa, which at present is experiencing the most serious economic and social crisis of the world today, has entered into a pernicious process of accelerated underdevelopment. The conjunction of particularly serious natural disasters, the consequences of an historical inheritance, the devastating effects of the international environment and specific endogenous causes has made of our region a thoroughly victimized continent.

117. The scourges of drought and desertification which have ravaged the Saharan regions of western Africa and the Sudano-Sahelian area, in addition to eastern and southern Africa, are unprecedented in the history of the twentieth century. Vast regions of our continent have thus been dragged into a spiralling decline in economic activity, accelerated desertification and self-sustaining famine, in which people's lives have been reduced to a desperate struggle simply to survive in almost total deprivation. Naturally, in these circumstances, the struggle for economic and social development does not proceed naturally or normally in the case of populations living in sub-human conditions and in such a precarious manner that it defies the imagination.

118. The international community now recognizes that despite its considerable economic potential, Africa is still not only the most under-analysed and the most under-equipped continent, but also the most underdeveloped continent on the planet. For Africa contains three quarters of the least developed countries of the world and more than two thirds of the land-locked developing countries, while four fifths of its countries are affected by drought and desertification.

119. In addition, more than half of the countries in Africa face critical food shortages, to such an extent that 150 million Africans are suffering from extreme famine, malnutrition and often serious shortages of drinking water and are afflicted by those epidemics that in Africa have occurred so devastatingly.

120. Africa is the least industrialized part of the world, with the lowest outputs of the world's metallurgical and technological industries and trade in manufactured goods. The ECA has considered that in

most African countries industry is still a partially foreign and partially urban enclave in a vast ocean of rural backwardness. This industry is made up of a vast heterogeneous collection of burdensome units that have often become a veritable source of haemorrhage in currency.

121. At the same time, Africa has the ominous world record in refugees and displaced persons, one of the lowest literacy and training levels in the world and the most rudimentary structures in the fields of health and housing. Consequently, it has the highest infant mortality rate and the most precarious conditions for the vulnerable categories among the affected populations. According to a human resources study published in 1983 by UNDP, 80 per cent of Africans have no access to modern medical facilities, 91 per cent of the rural population have no drinking water near their homes, 71 per cent of persons over the age of 25 have never had any education and 45 per cent of Africans are unemployed or have only part-time work.

122. In addition, the action of African Governments, despite the courageous reforms they have carried out to improve their economies, has been hampered by the extent of their debt servicing, which currently accounts for an average of approximately 25 per cent of their export earnings and even 50 per cent in some cases. Our efforts have also been discouraged by the unsustainable proportions of the general deterioration in terms of trade and a sharp collapse in commodity prices unprecedented in the last 40 years. Finally, official development assistance to Africa has declined in real terms in the 1980s, while private foreign investment has remained practically negligible in the continent as a whole.

123. The devastating figures I have just mentioned show how easy it is to give up on Africa when the real cause and harsh realities of the situation are unknown or misunderstood.

124. In emphasizing the many aspects of the profound crisis engulfing our continent I am not trying to show that this is an unavoidable fate, nor am I trying to justify a simple redeployment of existing aid to the detriment of other developing regions. On the contrary, I wish to highlight the need for a lasting and co-ordinated comprehensive approach with a view to providing emergency help to the affected African populations and preventing further worsening of the situation, laying the bases for economic growth by taking action in respect of the negative factors of the international environment and beginning the process of the development of Africa, especially the sub-Saharan part, by paying special attention to the least developed countries in the continent.

125. In this connection, the Kingdom of Morocco considers that the best way to bring together national policies, assistance from the international community and the contribution of the United Nations system to enhance the value of the resources of Africa is to give effect to the Lagos Plan of Action, which is the best possible framework for the economic and social development of Africa as a whole.

126. Indeed, everyone knows that the lands and the seas of Africa, which represent more than a quarter of the world's surface, contain huge natural and human resources which, obviously, offer considerable economic potential for international co-operation. Everyone knows that in Africa a very small proportion of the existing fish resources are being

exploited at present, a laughable percentage of the hydraulic potential is being used and the continent's mineral resources are out of all proportion to the local ability to make use of it. As for agricultural potential in Africa, it is recognized that the existing food production and soil fertilization technologies, the elimination of internal institutional constraints and the mobilization of the necessary resources by the international community would make it possible to achieve food self-sufficiency in Africa in a very short space of time and would thus contribute greatly to eliminating hunger from the world by the end of this century.

127. In this connection, I think it is useful to recall that in order to ease the critical economic situation of Africa, long-term activities which take into account the dimensions of this unprecedented challenge must go beyond emergency assistance and a few scattered projects, even if they are properly designed and correctly implemented.

128. In addition, the solidarity of the entire international community and the United Nations system is needed urgently to assist African countries, without distinction as to economic and social systems. If it is true that there is no difference between scarcity here and famine there, yet we must distinguish between those who use the African crisis as a pretext for exacerbating the quarrels that usually disturb our world and those who rise above all differences and express their solidarity through action on the ground.

129. We are seeing an increasing marginalization of Africa, especially the sub-Saharan part, *vis-à-vis* economic life and international co-operation. That marginalization is in danger of increasing throughout this decade, and there are good grounds for fearing that, unless there is some large-scale structural action at the international level, this region that is already so sorely afflicted economically is doomed to a politically chaotic future with serious social tension. That is why it is urgently necessary to pay special attention during this session to Africa and its least developed regions, so as to reverse the threat looming over our continent of its progressive exclusion from the world economic process.

130. Africa is already suffering from the indescribable evil of *apartheid*, the political *apartheid* that has been rampant for too long in the south of our continent. It would be intolerable if Africa had to endure another kind of *apartheid* in the near future, an economic kind, with a continental dimension.

131. Africa stands united and will propose to the Assembly, with the support of the members of the Group of 77, an action-oriented declaration on the economic situation in Africa that will be characterized by realism and by the acute sense of responsibility that inspires it. The international community will be acting in keeping with the ideals reflected in the Charter of the United Nations if it adopts the declaration unanimously and implements it completely, so as to sweep away this disaster of international scope. We have great hope of seeing the human race as a whole take up one of the greatest challenges of our time, for we believe that the developed world could not accept the guilt for not helping a continent in danger.

132. Mr. NETANYAHU (Israel): When, more than a century and a half ago, Thomas Malthus published his grim observations on population growth outrunning the supply of food, he was worried about the end

of mankind. We know now that Malthus was, in the full sense, wrong. Mankind will endure. But this offers us little comfort, for what we must deal with is the real, immediate, concrete misery of hundreds of millions of men, women and children.

133. Every day 500 million people, 14 per cent of the world's population, have to endure not what we here can so easily refer to as hunger or, if we want a ready adjective, gnawing hunger, but the kind of hunger that makes physical movement and mental activity a virtual impossibility; a hunger whose victims exist in a limbo of death-in-life, where every waking moment is devoted solely to obtaining the next morsel.

134. Now we are faced with an immediate problem in Africa. But the crisis which has received such attention has in fact been developing over several years. With the astronomical rise in the cost of energy over the last decade, food production in Africa has actually dropped by 15 per cent. The mortality rate for children is 10 times that of the developed world. Life expectancy is no longer rising. More and more resources have to be devoted simply to keeping people alive at the barest level of subsistence. Even so, many, many thousands starve to death every week.

135. The only way to bring about some measure of immediate relief is through shipment of food from elsewhere. Over the short run there is no other way to reduce the suffering. Today I can state that my Government has prepared a shipment of protein foodstuffs, vitamins and medicine to be sent at once to Ethiopia and other famine-stricken areas in Africa. Secondly, the Red Shield of David, the Israeli counterpart of such organizations as the Red Cross, is about to embark on a public campaign to raise funds in Israel for food, clothing and medicine for Africa's hungry. We believe that both kinds of aid, public and private, should be enlisted in this campaign and that it should come from as many countries as possible, even from those experiencing economic difficulties.

136. But what about measures beyond the immediate? For after this year, there will be next year, and the food situation is unlikely to get any better. It will probably get worse. Many more people, millions of them, could die.

137. Beyond sending the immediate shipments, what can be done now to ensure that such disasters do not become a permanent feature of African life, gradually—and horribly—accepted with a fatalistic shrug? Even for the middle-term effort, there really is not time for more conferences, more resolutions, more expressions of compassion. There must be action.

138. What is to be done? Many valuable proposals have been made from this rostrum in recent days. Many have been made in the context of the demographic and macro-economic forces, such as the enormous international debt and the depressed commodity prices, which have made the problem so acute in recent years in Africa. I shall not attempt to go over the same ground which has been so well covered here. I should like briefly to focus on the practical measures to ensure both greater food production and a more efficient use of what is produced in the coming years.

139. The Israeli Ministry of Agriculture recently prepared a study entitled "The Challenge of World

Food Production". That study notes that if current rates of population growth continue, we shall need at least 60 per cent more food by the year 2000. This is not a century away, but a mere decade and a half. But the study also notes that with a very modest improvement of farming methods, twice the world's 1975 population could be fed by that time and that with a moderate level of improvement four times the population could be fed. Several critical problems must be addressed, however, before this can come about.

140. First, we must stop soil erosion and the encroachment of the deserts on once-arable land. We must disseminate information about the harmful effects of certain farming methods and the destruction of forests and undergrowth.

141. Secondly, we should promote the double-crop method of farming, in which land used for non-food crops, such as cotton, is used again for food crops. This can be greatly enhanced by recent advances in organic and artificial fertilizers.

142. Thirdly, we must address the problem of post-harvest loss. This often accounts for 30 per cent to 40 per cent of total losses. Imperfect and lengthy storage of grain and other foodstuffs subjects them to the twin evils of rodents and rot. This waste can be reduced by adopting simple refrigeration and pest-control techniques and also by giving the highest priority to the rapid transport of crops from field to market.

143. Fourthly, we must address the problem of water, not only by encouraging new methods of irrigation, such as the drip method, but also by developing new sources of water through improved geological surveys and the adoption, wherever possible, of desalinization.

144. Fifthly, rural societies must be encouraged to grow crops with an eye towards markets, not only for local consumption but also for export. This may mean exchanging traditional crops for non-traditional ones that may be more profitable. Production cannot be successfully sustained in a void, without customers for what is produced.

145. Sixthly, we must restore to the farmer his once honoured place in society, so that those now abandoning the land and flocking to the cities may remain on the land and, instead of rejecting farming, view it with renewed respect.

146. We need a full-scale campaign, and not merely sporadic attention—a campaign supported by Governments, which, whatever their differences over politics and ideology, should subsume those differences in this effort. This will require a grinding attention to detail and to all the humble acts of incremental amelioration that will mean in the end the difference between success and failure.

147. Ultimately, the indispensable resource for making progress is more people trained in more effective methods of farming. Countries which have had the experience of mastering these techniques have a duty to share such knowledge with others, both by sending their own experts abroad and by helping to train those who come to them for training.

148. I represent a small country, devoid of natural resources. One of our major problems has been precisely that of food production. Because of the

semi-arid nature of our land, we have had to learn to make the maximum use of irrigation and even to develop new methods. Plant geneticists have attempted, with success, to develop new strains that will produce more crops in a given area. Our scientists are now working on the development of protein-enriched grain products which could supplement diets in regions where protein is scarce.

149. In the past we have eagerly shared the fruits of our knowledge and experience with others, particularly with the nations of Africa. We are doing so again. Israel is now co-operating with close to 50 countries around the world in agriculture and in such related fields as water resources, rural development and public health. Our experience of turning semi-arid land into productive farm land is still fresh. It is not centuries, or even decades, old, but of recent memory, and it is still continuing. We believe that it may be useful not only for those countries stricken with famine, but also for the industrialized donor countries, the value of whose generous material aid might be enhanced by working with us.

150. Above all, we should like to share our experience with those who think such co-operation would be directly useful to them. We offer to share with any country, whatever its political relationship with us, the fruits of our own efforts in food production. We are prepared to establish immediate contacts with such countries to investigate their specific problems relating to famine and drought.

151. No one can any longer claim ignorance of the deepening tragedy of global hunger. Nor can it be said, as was maintained during other tragedies earlier in this century, that "nothing can be done". The fact that difficulties are great does not mean that they are insuperable. We must be wary of a fatalism that becomes acceptance. Compassion is simply not enough. What is now required is a determination to act, a determination to transcend for this cause all that divides us.

The meeting rose at 1.15 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 African Unity at its second extraordinary session, held at Lagos on 28 and 29 April 1980.

²*Report of the United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy, Nairobi, 10-21 August 1981* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.81.I.24), chap. I, sect. A.

³*Report of the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Paris, 1-14 September 1981* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.82.I.8), part one, sect. A.

⁴E/1984/110/Add.1, annex.

⁵E/1984/110, annex.

⁶*Common Crisis North-South: Cooperation for world recovery*, The Brandt Commission 1983 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press), pp. 9-10.

⁷See E/1984/68, para. 7.

⁸See E/1984/110, annex, para. 3.

⁹E/1984/68, para. 36.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, para. 6.