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ASSISTANCE IN CASES OF NATURAL DISASTER AND OTHER DISASTER SITUATIONS

Report of the Second Committee (Part I)

Rapporteur: Mr. Luis LASCARRO (Colombia)

1. The General Assembly, at its 2237th plenary meeting on 21 September 1974, allocated to the Second Committee agenda item 60, entitled:

"Assistance in cases of natural disaster and other disaster situations:

"(a) Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator: report of the Secretary-General;

"(b) Aid to the Sudano-Sahelian populations threatened with famine: report of the Secretary-General".

2. The Second Committee considered subitem (a) at its 1620th to 1624th meetings, between 30 October and 6 November 1974. An account of the discussions of the Committee on this subitem is contained in the relevant summary records (A/C.2/SR.1620 to 1624).

3. For its consideration of the subitem, the Committee had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (A/9637) and chapter VI, section E, of the report of the Economic and Social Council. 1/

4. At the 1620th meeting, on 30 October, the Committee heard an introductory statement by the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator.

5. The Committee considered three draft resolutions, as set forth in sections I, II and III below.

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 3 (A/9603).

I

6. At the 1621st meeting, on 31 October, the representative of Guatemala, on behalf of Argentina, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, the Congo, Costa Rica, Cyprus, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Uruguay and Venezuela, introduced a draft resolution (A/C.2/L.1363) entitled "Economic and social assistance for Honduras". Subsequently, the Central African Republic, Cuba, Ghana, Indonesia, Iran, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago and the United Arab Emirates joined in sponsoring the draft resolution.

7. At the 1623rd meeting, on 4 November, the Committee adopted the draft resolution (A/C.2/L.1363) without a vote (see para. 13 below, draft resolution I).

II

8. At the 1623rd meeting, on 4 November, the representative of the United States of America introduced on behalf of Bangladesh, Bolivia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, Honduras, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Peru, the Philippines, Sweden, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, a draft resolution (A/C.2/L.1364) entitled "Strengthening of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator". Subsequently, Cyprus, Grenada, Guyana and Mali joined in sponsoring the draft resolution.

9. At the 1624th meeting, on 6 November, following consultations, the representative of the United States of America, on behalf of the sponsors, orally revised the text of the draft resolution by replacing, in the second preambular paragraph, the words "Further recalling" by the word "Endorsing". Subsequently, Ethiopia, the Niger, Senegal and the Upper Volta joined in sponsoring the draft resolution as orally revised.

10. At the same meeting, following a statement by the representative of the Office of Financial Services on the administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution, the Committee adopted the draft resolution (A/C.2/L.1364), as orally revised, without a vote (see para. 13 below, draft resolution II).

III

11. At the 1623rd meeting, on 4 November, the representative of Algeria, on behalf of Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Bahrain, Bhutan, Botswana, Brazil, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Cyprus, Dahomey, Democratic Yemen, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Greece, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, the Libyan Arab Republic, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Morocco, Nepal, the Netherlands, the Niger, Peru, the Philippines, Romania, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United States of America, the

the Upper Volta, Venezuela and Yugoslavia, introduced a draft resolution (A/C.2/L.1367) and orally revised it by: (a) replacing, in operative paragraph 3, the words "respond urgently" by the words "give urgent consideration"; and (b) replacing, in operative paragraph 4, the words "sympathetically consider and urgently respond" by the words "give urgent and sympathetic consideration". Subsequently, Australia, Japan and New Zealand joined in sponsoring the draft resolution, as orally revised.

12. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted the draft resolution (A/C.2/L.1367) without a vote (see para. 13 below, draft resolution III).

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SECOND COMMITTEE

13. The Second Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

DRAFT RESOLUTION I

Economic and social assistance for Honduras

The General Assembly,

Noting that the Committee of the Whole of the Economic Commission for Latin America held its ninth extraordinary session at United Nations Headquarters on 21 and 22 October 1974 for the purpose of considering the short-term, medium-term and long-term international co-operation which, within the framework of the United Nations, could be given to Honduras for the reconstruction of the country following the disaster which struck it between 18 and 20 September 1974,

Bearing in mind the report on the magnitude of the economic and social impact of the destruction suffered by Honduras, 2/ prepared by the secretariat of the Economic Commission for Latin America in co-operation with the United Nations Development Programme,

Also bearing in mind the report on the ninth extraordinary session of the Committee of the Whole of the Economic Commission for Latin America, 3/

Recognizing the urgency and importance of implementing the measures which the Committee of the Whole of the Economic Commission for Latin America unanimously recommends in resolution 343 (AC.67) of 22 October 1974, entitled "International co-operation to deal with the natural disaster which occurred in Honduras during the period 18 to 20 September 1974",

1. Conveys to the people and Government of Honduras its feelings of solidarity in the face of the tragedy they have suffered;
2. Endorses resolution 343 (AC.67), adopted by the Committee of the Whole of the Economic Commission for Latin America at its ninth extraordinary session;
3. Requests the Secretary-General and the international organizations of the United Nations system to ensure the dedicated and prompt execution of the recommendations contained in resolution 343 (AC.67).

2/ E/CEPAL/AC.67/2 and Corr.1.

3/ E/CEPAL/AC.67/5.

DRAFT RESOLUTION II

Strengthening of the Office of the United Nations
Disaster Relief Co-ordinator

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 2816 (XXVI) of 14 December 1971 by which it created the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator and established its primary functions of co-ordinating disaster relief, especially through its role as an information clearing-house, and of assisting in disaster prevention and preparedness,

Endorsing Economic and Social Council resolution 1891 (LVII) of 31 July 1974, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to investigate the feasibility of measures to strengthen the disaster prevention, pre-disaster planning and co-ordinating roles of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator and to submit his findings to the Council at its fifty-ninth session, and in which the Council recommended that the General Assembly, at its twenty-ninth session, should reconsider the proposals of the Secretary-General for additional staff resources,

Taking note with appreciation of the report of the Secretary-General on assistance in cases of natural disaster and other disaster situations, 4/ and of the statement made to the Second Committee by the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator on the activities of his Office, 5/

Noting in particular the statements in the Secretary-General's report that, while some progress has been made in the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator in establishing its assigned function of mobilizing and co-ordinating relief, the lack of staff and facilities, combined with the frequency, duration and simultaneity of disaster situations, has seriously impaired the effectiveness of the Office in discharging these and other responsibilities,

Concerned that lack of adequate co-ordination on a world-wide basis results, in some cases, in lapses in meeting priority needs and, in others, in costly duplication and in the supply of unneeded assistance,

Convinced that the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator is in a unique position, given adequate staff and facilities, to provide a world-

4/ A/9637.

5/ See A/C.2/SR.1620.

wide system of mobilizing and co-ordinating disaster relief, including the collection and dissemination of information on disaster assessment, priority needs and donor assistance,

Convinced further that this capability should be strengthened, as a matter of priority and urgency and without prejudice to the disaster prevention and disaster preparedness roles assigned to the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator,

Convinced that disaster prevention and pre-disaster planning should form an integral part of the international development policy of Governments and of international organizations,

1. Calls upon the Secretary-General to provide sufficient staff, equipment and facilities to strengthen the capacity of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator to provide an efficient and effective world-wide service of mobilizing and co-ordinating disaster relief, including particularly the collection and dissemination of information on disaster assessment, priority needs and donor assistance;

2. Decides that the additional costs of providing this strengthened capability should be met by voluntary contributions during the first year, commencing as soon as possible, and during the 1976-1977 biennium, at which time the method of financing for succeeding periods shall be subject to review in the light of experience, with the understanding that the additional resources made available under the terms of the present resolution should be concentrated on strengthening the co-ordinating capability of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, but without prejudice to any improvements that can be made in the roles of that Office in disaster prevention and in pre-disaster planning within the resources otherwise available to it;

3. Requests the Secretary-General to take appropriate measures, drawing upon the aforementioned voluntary funds, to prepare a plan and budget for this increased capability, and to proceed with its immediate implementation;

4. Requests the Secretary-General, as called for in Economic and Social Council resolution 1891 (LVII), to continue to investigate the feasibility of measures to strengthen the United Nations machinery with regard to disaster prevention and pre-disaster planning;

5. Requests the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the present resolution to the Economic and Social Council at its fifty-ninth session and to the General Assembly at its thirtieth session.

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DRAFT RESOLUTION III

Measures to assist Bangladesh following severe flood disaster

The General Assembly,

Noting with concern that vast areas of Bangladesh have recently been ravaged by floods of an unprecedented magnitude, causing serious loss of life, property and near famine conditions in that country,

Recognizing that natural disasters constitute a development problem of great magnitude for disaster-prone countries like Bangladesh, where the cost of damage wrought by natural disasters often exceeds the net inflow of development assistance,

Recalling the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council on assistance in cases of natural disasters, particularly Assembly resolutions 2816 (XXVI) of 14 December 1971, 2959 (XXVII) of 12 December 1972 and 3152 (XXVIII) of 14 December 1973 and Council resolution 1891 (LVII) of 31 July 1974,

Recalling further General Assembly resolution 3202 (S-VI) of 1 May 1974 concerning the Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order, particularly section X thereof regarding the Special Programme of emergency measures to mitigate the difficulties of developing countries most seriously affected by the economic crisis,

Bearing in mind that assistance extended to Member States that have suffered natural disasters of such magnitude is an expression of the principle of international solidarity embodied in the Charter of the United Nations,

Noting with appreciation the assistance provided to Bangladesh by many Governments, the United Nations system, other international organizations, voluntary agencies and private individuals, including the measures taken by the Secretary-General and the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator,

Noting further the strenuous efforts of the Government of Bangladesh to alleviate the hardships suffered by the victims of the flood and, in particular, its efforts to secure critical supplies of food-grains during the last quarter of 1974,

1. Expresses its profound sympathy to the people and Government of Bangladesh on the loss of life and severe damage caused to the economy in the recent flood disaster;

2. Urges all Member States in a position to do so to continue and, if possible, to intensify their efforts and co-operation for immediate relief operations and also to help implement medium-term and long-term measures for rehabilitation and reconstruction of the flood-affected areas;

3. Invites all international organizations and voluntary agencies, particularly those most directly concerned, to continue to give their fullest support and assistance within their respective programmes to all endeavours made by the Secretary-General and the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator in mobilizing relief assistance and also to give urgent consideration to any request made by the Government of Bangladesh for assistance in the rehabilitation and reconstruction phase, taking into account the Special Programme of emergency measures adopted by the General Assembly at its sixth special session;

4. Expresses its desire that the United Nations Development Programme, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and all other international financial institutions should give urgent and sympathetic consideration to any requests for assistance that the Government of Bangladesh might submit in connexion with its rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes and to requests for assistance with regard to measures within its development framework for pre-disaster preparedness and prevention programmes.
