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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
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agenda**
COUNTRIES STRICKEN BY
DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT

Countries stricken by desertification and drought

Preliminary report of the Secretary-General

1. The present report is submitted in accordance with paragraph 13 of General Assembly resolution 39/208 of 17 December 1984 on countries stricken by desertification and drought, by which the Secretary-General was requested to take all necessary steps to ensure the implementation of various activities concerning countries stricken by desertification and drought and to report to the General Assembly, at its fortieth session, through the Economic and Social Council, on the evolution of the situation in those countries, and to formulate proposals for specific, co-ordinated action.
2. The subject of countries stricken by desertification and drought was introduced as an additional item in the agenda of the thirty-ninth session of the General Assembly on the proposal of the Government of Senegal, acting on behalf of the Ministerial Conference on Desertification, which was held at Dakar from 18 to 27 July 1984 (see A/39/242 and Add.1).
3. At the thirty-ninth session, General Assembly resolution 39/208 was adopted following an extensive debate on countries stricken by desertification and drought, particularly those in Africa. In the resolution, the General Assembly requested the appropriate organs and organizations of the United Nations system to provide

* A/40/50/Rev.1.

** E/1985/100.

Table 1. Countries stricken by drought and desertification

Region	Country
Africa south of the Sahara	Angola
	Benin <u>a/</u>
	Botswana <u>a/</u>
	Burkina Faso <u>a/</u>
	Burundi <u>a/</u>
	Cameroon
	Cape Verde <u>a/</u>
	Chad <u>a/</u>
	Djibouti <u>a/</u>
	Ethiopia <u>a/</u>
	Gambia <u>a/</u>
	Ghana
	Guinea <u>a/</u> <u>b/</u>
	Guinea-Bissau <u>a/</u> <u>b/</u>
Ivory Coast <u>b/</u>	
Kenya	
Lesotho <u>a/</u>	
Liberia	
Madaqascar	
Malawi <u>a/</u>	
Mali <u>a/</u>	
Mauritania	
Mozambique	
Niger <u>a/</u>	
Nigeria	
Rwanda	
Senegal	
Somalia <u>a/</u>	
Sudan <u>a/</u>	
Swaziland <u>a/</u>	
Togo <u>a/</u>	
Uganda <u>a/</u>	
United Republic of Tanzania <u>a/</u>	
Zambia	
Zimbabwe	
North Africa	Algeria
	Egypt
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Morocco	
	Tunisia
Middle East	Bahrain
	Democratic Yemen
	Iraq
	Kuwait
	Lebanon
Oman	
Qatar	
Saudi Arabia	
Syrian Arab Republic	
Turkey	
United Arab Emirates	
Yemen <u>a/</u>	
Asia	Afghanistan <u>a/</u>
	China
	India
	Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Mongolia	
Pakistan	
Latin America	Argentina
	Bolivia
	Brazil
	Chile
	Colombia
	Ecuador
Mexico	
Paraguay	
Peru	
Venezuela	
Europe	Spain
	Portugal
Other developed countries	Australia
	Israel
	United States of America
	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Others	Namibia
	South Africa

Note: Antarctica and parts of Canada are considered "cold" deserts and are excluded from the classification of countries subject to desertification.

a/ Least developed countries.

b/ Stricken by drought but not currently affected by desertification.

12. Only warm ecosystems have been included, following the criteria used at the Conference, which excluded cold desert regions, such as Antarctica and parts of Canada. One characteristic of arid climates is not only low rainfall but also variable rainfall. The coefficient of variation in the Sahelian zone, for example, is 30 to 50 per cent, compared to 15 per cent or less in the wet Guinean zone and the tropical rainforests of central Africa. Because arid lands are subject to frequent droughts, there is a tendency for desertification to accelerate in the absence of means to cope with the droughts.

13. It is also important to note in assessing the evolution of the current situation that the present African drought, the manifestations of which were discerned most acutely between 1968 and 1973, has in fact persisted with certain variations for the past 17 years. It has been characterized by short-lived respites or by intensifications with disastrous consequences. The drought has even extended to normally forested regions of Africa, attaining proportions that some climatologists have called a continental drought.

14. Despite the length of the drought, the weight of scientific opinion is that there is no evidence of a long-term change in the climate of Africa, as the United Nations Conference on Desertification and the World Climate Conference had already concluded. More recently, computerized simulations of 500-year weather patterns were prepared for the Scientific Round Table on the climatic situation and drought in Africa, which was held at Addis Ababa in February 1984, under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Africa, UNEP, the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) and WMO. These simulations indicate that the present African drought is, although the worst in this century, within a normal range of variability. The logical, if disturbing, conclusion that must be drawn is that drought is a recurrent phenomenon that the drought-stricken countries, especially of Africa, must learn to live with.

15. The combination of drought and desertification has had far-reaching and disastrous consequences on economic and social life in the countries affected, especially in Africa. In late 1983 and early 1984, more than 150 million people were facing extreme hunger, malnutrition and in many cases shortages of potable water. Irregular or insufficient rainfall resulted in major crop and livestock losses, and by April 1985 the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) could identify 21 African countries facing critical food shortages. By that time, massive movements of people within and between countries from drought-stricken to more favourable areas had started, causing additional strains on limited resources and aggravating environmental conditions. The prolonged drought has also lowered water tables in rivers, lakes, aquifers and dams, with serious implications for countries that are developing their hydroelectrical potential to lessen dependence on oil imports. In several African countries, the lowering of the water table has had serious repercussions for productive capacities and basic social services. At present, it is estimated that about 30 million people are at risk and that drought-induced population displacements could reach well over 10 million people.

16. The 36 least developed countries, the list of which was established by the General Assembly in accordance with criteria applied by the Committee for

Development Planning, are the object of special attention by the international community. These countries, most of which are stricken by drought and desertification, are in a state of extreme deprivation. There are, however, a large number of other countries which, although not classified as least developed countries, are currently affected by drought and desertification. These countries are listed in table 2. Among the countries listed, there is of course room for selectivity, since the internal capacity of countries for combating desertification and coping with drought depends to a large extent on their natural resources and the state of their economic development. Many of the countries listed in table 2 have extensive financial resources, emanating from abundant natural resources and/or industrialized economies.

17. Since the General Assembly will be considering, at its fortieth session, the item on countries stricken by desertification and drought for the second time only, the Secretary-General would appreciate guidance and direction from the Assembly on ways and means to proceed with the implementation of programmes for drought rehabilitation and desertification control. In the meantime, the Secretary-General, in concert with the executive heads of the United Nations organizations concerned, continues to keep all aspects related to the question of drought and desertification under active review and will be prepared to present more specific recommendations on action to be taken by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly in accordance with any decisions they may take.

Table 2. Countries stricken by drought and desertification but which are not least developed countries

Region	Country
Africa	Angola
	Cameroon
	Ghana
	Ivory Coast <u>a/</u>
	Kenya
North Africa	Algeria
	Egypt
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Middle East	Bahrain
	Iraq
	Kuwait
	Lebanon
	Oman
Asia	China
	India
	Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Latin America	Argentina
	Bolivia
	Brazil
	Chile
	Colombia
Europe	Spain
	Portugal
Other developed countries	Australia
	Israel
	United States of America
	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Others	Namibia
	South Africa

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