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ASSISTANCE IN CASES OF NATURAL DISASTER

Report of the Third Committee (part II)

Rapporteur: Mr. Yahya MAHMASSANI (Lebanon)

Addendum

1. The Third Committee resumed consideration of the item entitled "Assistance in cases of natural disaster" at its 1643rd meeting, on 16 December 1968. The Committee had before it the report of the Economic and Social Council [A/7203 and Add.1 (part II)] and a note by the Secretary-General (A/7244 and Add.1). The addendum to the note by the Secretary-General contained a draft resolution recommended by the Economic and Social Council for adoption by the General Assembly which read as follows:

"The General Assembly,

"Recalling its resolution 2034 (XX) of 7 December 1965 on assistance to Governments in cases of natural disasters and its decision to review at its twenty-third session the experimental arrangements provided for in paragraph 5 of that resolution,

"Having noted the views of the Economic and Social Council on the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations family of organizations in connexion with natural disasters, 1/

"Noting with satisfaction that the arrangements provided for in General Assembly resolution 2034 (XX) and the assistance extended to Governments by the Secretary-General under that resolution have contributed towards relieving the distress and hardships which follow natural disasters,

1/ E/4544.

"Noting with appreciation the co-operation and assistance offered by certain Governments and provided by various United Nations bodies and the specialized agencies, as well as by the League of Red Cross Societies and other voluntary organizations, in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 2034 (XX),

"Having considered the view of the Secretary-General that United Nations assistance under General Assembly resolution 2034 (XX) would be of considerably wider use and benefit to the developing countries subject to natural disasters if its conditions were broadened,

"Recognizing the importance of scientific research and modern technology in reducing the impact of natural disasters on man and society,

"Reiterating the importance it attaches to adequate pre-disaster planning by Member States, in order to mitigate the effects of natural disasters,

"1. Invites Governments which have not already done so, to make national preparations to meet natural disasters, including administrative arrangements and such measures as training of relief personnel, stockpiling of supplies needed for disaster relief, earmarking of means of transportation, the development of warning systems and of means of speedy communication;

"2. Invites Governments and organizations of the United Nations system, as well as other organizations concerned, to give full recognition to the need to promote scientific research regarding the causes and early manifestations of impending disasters, to ascertain and assess areas and places of high vulnerability, and to encourage preventive and protective measures, such as the construction of disaster resistant housing;

"3. Urges the Secretary-General, in co-operation with the organizations of the United Nations system as well as the League of Red Cross Societies and other organizations concerned, to consider ways of expanding assistance to Governments in the fields referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 above;

"4. Requests the Secretary-General to give early consideration to the strengthening of staff arrangements within the United Nations Secretariat for dealing with natural disasters, including the establishment of a co-ordinating group whose members would be drawn, as appropriate, from the existing staff of the Secretariat;

"5. Appeals to States Members of the United Nations and members of the specialized agencies to consider offering, through the United Nations or otherwise, emergency assistance to meet natural disasters, including stand-by disaster relief units or the earmarking of similar units for service in foreign countries, and requests the Secretary-General to consult States Members of the United Nations and members of the specialized agencies on the types of emergency assistance they should be in a position to offer;

"6. Requests the Secretary-General to complete at an early date the study undertaken by the Secretariat concerning the legal status of disaster relief units made available through the United Nations, and in this connexion to consult, as appropriate, States Members of the United Nations and members of the specialized agencies;

"7. Decides to extend for another three years the authority given to the Secretary-General in General Assembly resolution 2034 (XX), namely, to draw on the Working Capital Fund in the amount of \$100,000 in any one year for emergency aid in connexion with natural disasters, with a normal ceiling of \$20,000 per country in the case of any one disaster;

"8. Decides, if funds are left from the amount of \$100,000 referred to in paragraph 7 above, to authorize the Secretary-General, as an interim measure, to expend up to \$10,000 per country for assistance to Governments, at their request, in co-operation with the organizations of the United Nations system and the League of Red Cross Societies, in the elaboration of national preparations to meet natural disasters, it being understood that consideration will be given to obtaining, in the future, the necessary funds for such assistance from other sources;

"9. Requests the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination to review periodically programmes and projects throughout the United Nations system which relate to natural disasters, and to include appropriate recommendations thereon in its report to the Economic and Social Council;

"10. Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the Economic and Social Council an interim report on the implementation of the present resolution at the latest at one of its sessions to be held in 1970, and a comprehensive report at the fifty-first session of the Council;

"11. Decides to review at its twenty-sixth session, on the basis of the comprehensive report referred to in paragraph 10 above and the recommendations thereon by the Economic and Social Council, all aspects of the activities of the United Nations family of organizations in connexion with natural disasters."

2. The Committee also had before it a statement of the administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution proposed by the Economic and Social Council (A/C.3/L.1653).

3. Speakers in the debate unanimously endorsed the purposes of the proposal of the Economic and Social Council. It was suggested that, in the long run, the work of the United Nations family in connexion with natural disasters might need to be extended to cover not merely natural disasters but also civilian disasters, and that the political and legal framework for international relief assistance might have to be re-examined. In addition, more support was required

for international relief operations following disasters and the co-ordination of international activities in connexion with disasters. Speakers in the debate supported the idea that post-disaster assistance should continue to be financed, as under General Assembly resolution 2034 (XX), up to a maximum of \$100,000 per year, from the Working Capital Fund. However, some delegations expressed reservations concerning the desirability of financing pre-disaster assistance from that fund, the possibility of which was envisaged in the proposal of the Economic and Social Council. In the long run, the United Nations Development Programme was seen as the logical source for such financing.

4. The delegations of India, Iran, Mexico, the Philippines, Turkey, Sweden, and the United States of America orally proposed an amendment, based on a suggestion in the Secretary-General's statement of administrative and financial implications, to revise paragraph 8 of the resolution to read as follows:

"Decides, as an interim measure, to the extent that it does not prove necessary in any one year to make advances from the Working Capital Fund up to the maximum amount of \$100,000 for the purposes referred to in the preceding paragraph, to authorize the Secretary-General to advance the balance from the same source in the following year, in amounts not exceeding \$10,000 per country, for assistance to Governments, at their request, in co-operation with the organizations of the United Nations system and the League of Red Cross Societies, in the elaboration of national preparations to meet natural disasters, it being understood that consideration will be given to obtaining, in the future, the necessary funds for such assistance from other sources."

5. The delegation of Trinidad and Tobago proposed an amendment to the seven-Power amendment to paragraph 8 to add the phrase "where appropriate" after the phrase "and the League of Red Cross Societies". This amendment was accepted by the sponsors of the seven-Power proposal.

6. The Committee then voted on the draft resolution and the amendment thereto as follows:

(a) The seven-Power amendment, as revised by the sponsors to take into account the proposal of Trinidad and Tobago, was adopted by 72 votes to none, with 4 abstentions;

(b) The draft resolution, as amended, was approved unanimously.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE

7. The Third Committee therefore recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 2034 (XX) of 7 December 1965 on assistance to Governments in cases of natural disaster and its decision to review at its twenty-third session the experimental arrangements provided for in paragraph 5 of that resolution,

Having noted the views of the Economic and Social Council on the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations family of organizations in connexion with natural disasters,^{2/}

Noting with satisfaction that the arrangements provided for in General Assembly resolution 2034 (XX) and the assistance extended to Governments by the Secretary-General under that resolution have contributed towards relieving the distress and hardships which follow natural disasters,

Noting with appreciation the co-operation and assistance offered by certain Governments and provided by various United Nations bodies and the specialized agencies, as well as by the League of Red Cross Societies and other voluntary organizations, in the implementation of resolution 2034 (XX),

Having considered the view of the Secretary-General that United Nations assistance under General Assembly resolution 2034 (XX) would be of considerably wider use and benefit to the developing countries subject to natural disasters if its conditions were broadened,

Recognizing the importance of scientific research and modern technology in reducing the impact of natural disasters on man and society,

Reiterating the importance it attaches to adequate pre-disaster planning by Member States, in order to mitigate the effects of natural disasters,

1. Invites Governments which have not already done so, to make national preparations to meet natural disasters, including administrative arrangements and such measures as training of relief personnel, stockpiling of supplies needed for disaster relief, earmarking of means of transportation and the development of warning systems and of means of speedy communication;

2. Invites Governments and organizations of the United Nations system, as well as other organizations concerned, to give full recognition to the need to promote scientific research regarding the causes and early manifestations of impending disasters, to ascertain and assess areas and places of high vulnerability, and to encourage preventive and protective measures, such as the construction of disaster-resistant housing;

3. Urges the Secretary-General, in co-operation with the organizations of the United Nations system as well as the League of Red Cross Societies and other organizations concerned, to consider ways of expanding assistance to Governments in the fields referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 above;

4. Requests the Secretary-General to give early consideration to the strengthening of staff arrangements within the United Nations Secretariat for dealing with natural disasters, including the establishment of a co-ordinating group whose members would be drawn, as appropriate, from the existing staff of the Secretariat;

5. Appeals to States Members of the United Nations and members of the specialized agencies to consider offering, through the United Nations or otherwise, emergency assistance to meet natural disasters, including stand-by disaster relief units or the earmarking of similar units for service in foreign countries, and requests the Secretary-General to consult States Members of the United Nations and members of the specialized agencies on the types of emergency assistance they should be in a position to offer;

6. Requests the Secretary-General to complete at an early date the study undertaken by the Secretariat concerning the legal status of disaster relief units made available through the United Nations and in this connexion to consult, as appropriate, States Members of the United Nations and members of the specialized agencies;

7. Decides to extend for another three years the authority given to the Secretary-General in General Assembly resolution 2034 (XX), namely, to draw on the Working Capital Fund in the amount of \$100,000 in any one year for emergency aid in connexion with natural disasters, with a normal ceiling of \$20,000 per country in the case of any one disaster;

8. Decides, as an interim measure, to the extent that it does not prove necessary in any one year to make advances from the Working Capital Fund up to the maximum amount of \$100,000 for the purposes referred to in the preceding paragraph, to authorize the Secretary-General to advance the balance from the same source in the following year, in amounts not exceeding \$10,000 per country, for assistance to Governments, at their request, in co-operation with the organizations of the United Nations system and the League of Red Cross Societies where appropriate, in the elaboration of national preparations to meet natural disasters, it being understood that consideration will be given to obtaining, in the future, the necessary funds for such assistance from other sources;

9. Requests the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination to review periodically programmes and projects throughout the United Nations system which relate to natural disasters, and to include appropriate recommendations thereon in its report to the Economic and Social Council;

10. Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the Economic and Social Council an interim report on the implementation of the present resolution, at the latest at one of its sessions to be held in 1970, and a comprehensive report to the Council at its fifty-first session;

11. Decides to review at its twenty-sixth session, on the basis of the comprehensive report referred to in paragraph 10 above and the recommendations thereon by the Economic and Social Council, all aspects of the activities of the United Nations family of organizations in connexion with natural disasters.
