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REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Humanitarian assistance to refugees in Djibouti

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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* A/40/150.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 39/107 of 14 December 1984 on humanitarian assistance to refugees in Djibouti, requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to mobilize the necessary resources to implement lasting solutions in respect of the refugees in Djibouti. It further requested the High Commissioner, in co-operation with the Secretary-General, to report to the Assembly at its fortieth session on the implementation of the resolution.

2. At the time of writing last year's report (A/39/444), the Government of Djibouti had not presented projects relating to the local integration of refugees to the second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa, held in July 1984. Subsequently, however, such projects were proposed and it was hoped that they were an indication of a new trend leading towards the integration of the refugees remaining in Djibouti.

II. GENERAL SITUATION AND RECENT TRENDS

3. A census in June 1984 showed that there were 14,231 refugees in Djibouti, most of them of pastoral background. With the exception of a group of 200 housed in Belbella, outside Djibouti town, and some 2,000 refugees of urban background scattered in various locations, virtually all the refugees in Djibouti live in camps in the districts of Ali Sabieh and Dikhil.

4. The limited water supply, which has been further diminished by the drought, has hindered the planning of local integration for rural refugees. As resettlement placement has not kept pace with demand, voluntary repatriation has remained the most viable of the standard durable solutions promoted by UNHCR.

5. As was reported last year, a Tripartite Commission, comprising the Governments of Djibouti and Ethiopia and UNHCR, was constituted to study and promote the voluntary return of refugees to their country of origin. The final meeting of the Commission took place in Djibouti in November 1984. The three parties concerned agreed to end the organized repatriation programme at the end of 1984 and to close the Ali Sabieh camp. From September 1983 to December 1984, there were 24 organized repatriation movements by rail. A total of 2,005 families were voluntarily repatriated and many others returned on their own initiative.

III. ASSISTANCE TO DJIBOUTI

6. In the context of these developments, UNHCR assistance programme in Djibouti itself has again been directed mainly towards the care of refugees at Ali Sabieh and Dikhil, where efforts to improve living conditions are continued. Assistance measures, which have been kept constantly under review, have consisted largely of food distribution, improvements in the supply and storage of potable water and the upgrading of sanitary conditions.

7. The Djibouti Government has continued to act as UNHCR's main implementing partner, through its "Office national d'assistance aux réfugiés et sinistrés" (ONARS). All basic food items were donated through the Catholic Relief Services and the World Food Programme (WFP). A number of voluntary agencies assist UNHCR and ONARS with specific aspects of the assistance programmes, including primary education, vocational training, language classes, adult education, medical care and agricultural activities.

8. A detailed description of assistance provided by UNHCR in 1984 in the various sectors follows, along with projected requirements for 1985 and 1986. For further details, see document A/AC.96/657.

Food

9. As of September 1984, the Catholic Relief Services terminated its programme of food aid to refugees and WFP has met the entire needs for the remaining months of 1984 and for 1985. In 1984, \$38,053 was obligated for the purchase of supplementary protein-enriched foods for vulnerable groups and for the feeding programme for asylum-seekers. At the time of writing, it was estimated that \$10,000 would be needed in 1985 to cover the purchase of fresh foodstuffs and cereals and an amount of \$17,000 has been proposed for 1986.

Domestic items

10. An amount of \$175,000 was obligated for the purchase of blankets, sleeping mats, kitchen utensils, cooking stoves and soap during 1984. Such purchases are continuing in the current year from an allocation of \$75,000 and the same amount is budgeted for 1986 to replace used items and purchase tents for classrooms.

Health

11. Since 1981, medical teams fielded by "Dienste in Uebersee", an agency from the Federal Republic of Germany, has provided preventive and curative health services in both camps. The health education programme launched in 1983 continued and emphasis has been placed on preventive measures. As a result, the sanitation and environmental conditions in the camps have improved considerably. A special programme for monitoring the health of children under five years of age and of pregnant women was established. Detection and control of tuberculosis have also been monitored. Assistance was provided for the purchase of medical supplies and equipment, for which \$182,885 was obligated during 1984. An amount of \$100,000 has been proposed for 1985 and the estimate for 1986 is \$120,900.

Primary education

12. Primary schools established in 1983 continued in 1984 under the supervision of World University Service. The Ali Sabieh school, which had 450 pupils, was closed in December as the closure of the camp was foreseen. The Dikhil school had 538 pupils. Text books from Kenya, the Sudan and Zimbabwe are used as instruction is in English. An amount of \$181,779 obligated in 1984 included transport costs for students attending schools in Djibouti town; for 1985, an allocation of \$150,000 was foreseen and in 1986 it is estimated that \$171,958 will be needed.

Lower secondary education

13. An amount of \$30,495 was obligated in 1984 for 23 students to continue their studies at local French schools in Djibouti and to attend English schools abroad. Similar assistance is continuing in 1985 and 1986, for which \$13,000 have been budgeted each year, for a smaller number of beneficiaries.

Vocational Training Centre

14. As reported last year, the Centre offers a two-year course in auto-mechanics and electricity to 240 students (30 per cent of whom are Djibouti nationals). The teaching staff includes refugees, nationals and personnel of the Irish Agency for Personal Services Overseas. The Centre is fully operational and ways were being sought to bring the level of instruction up to that of a national vocational training centre. The first group of 120 students graduated in June 1984 and 54 students have been placed, either in jobs or for further training. An amount of \$440,000 was obligated for 1984 to cover the costs of running the Centre. For 1985, a total of \$500,000 has been budgeted and \$282,736 is estimated for 1986. The reduction in funding is due to the fact that no new students are foreseen for September 1985. It is intended to hand over the Centre to the Government in June 1986 and, at the time of writing, plans for its future use were not yet finalized.

Agriculture

15. A sum of \$100,000 was obligated during 1984 to assist some 40 families to cultivate four plots of land. Success has been hampered by the drought. Only one of the four plots is yielding vegetables in sufficient quantities to be marketed. It is expected that, if the drought does not persist, these gardens could render the families self-sufficient in two years. The budget remains at \$100,000 for both 1985 and 1986.

Handicrafts

16. This programme has been implemented since 1982 with the co-operation of Radda Barnen of Sweden, Afro-Art of Norway and the Danish and Norwegian Refugee Councils. The quality of the products in fibrecraft and tailoring reached a high standard and efforts are now needed to rationalize their marketing. There were over 400 women beneficiaries under this project, including over 69 Djibouti nationals. Blacksmithery and some leathercrafts were also developed. An amount of \$57,927 was obligated during 1984; during 1985, the budget is estimated at \$29,000 and \$10,000 has been proposed for 1986. Project implementation was scheduled to be handed over to the "Union nationale des femmes de Djibouti" in the course of 1984, but this has been delayed.

Support to refugee services

17. In 1984, the allocation for this sector included allowances for personnel involved in the refugee programme, costs of handling, storage and distribution of provisions and supplies and three experts in accountancy, logistics and vehicle maintenance. The obligation for 1984 amounted to \$497,599; a further \$326,000 is

needed for 1985, plus an additional \$160,000 for transport and running costs. In 1986, an amount of \$258,405 is projected plus \$160,000 for transport and maintenance.

Counselling and other social services

18. The presence in Djibouti of some 2,000 refugees of urban background (and of new asylum-seekers who are screened on arrival) has required the provision of counselling services on such matters as training opportunities in Djibouti, educational placement in other countries, resettlement and medical care. Self-help groups and activities have been organized in Dikhil. Social services personnel have provided technical assistance to voluntary agencies in the planning and implementation of the community health education programme, primary education and other services. In 1984, \$278,910 was obligated for these purposes and in 1985 and 1986, \$360,000 and \$374,000 have been earmarked respectively.

Legal assistance

19. An amount of \$50,699 was obligated in 1984 towards the "Bureau d'Eligibilité" in Dikhil. Dossiers for all asylum-seekers are prepared by the "Bureau d'Eligibilité" with UNHCR assistance and are submitted to the National Eligibility Commission. A UNHCR representative also participates, in an advisory capacity, in the meetings of the Commission. During 1984, a total of 1,119 individuals registered applications for asylum with the Bureau. In view of the replacement of the international legal secretary by a national counterpart who received on-the-job training during 1982-1983, the requirements for 1985 and 1986 are only \$40,000 annually.

Voluntary repatriation

20. The voluntary repatriation operation which commenced on 19 September 1983 continued until the end of 1984. An amount of \$472,699 was obligated for 1984. A provisional amount of \$10,000 has been proposed for 1985 to assist any families who may decide to repatriate in the course of the year and \$10,000 is proposed for 1986.

Supplementary aid

21. The amount of \$84,383 obligated during 1984 benefited some 3,000 individuals and covered various types of assistance, primarily to urban asylum-seekers. The amounts for 1985 and 1986 are \$60,000 and \$70,000 respectively.

Other assistance measures

22. An amount of \$225,221 was obligated in 1984 for various community services. In 1985 and 1986, projected needs are \$201,000 and \$53,000 respectively.

23. Modest amounts were also obligated to resettle 66 individuals in 1984, to support a small number of scholarships and for contributions in kind.