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PROGRESS REPORT ON MEASURES TAKEN IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES
AFFECTED BY DROUGHT (APRIL 1974)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. As forecast, the 1973/74 rains were inadequate throughout the Sahelian zone, resulting in further crop failures, accentuating famine and the loss of human life and animals and creating further breakdowns in the economic and social order. In some countries, including Niger, Mali, Upper Volta, Mauritania and Chad, the magnitude of the problem has reached unprecedented dimensions. In addition, partial crop failures and localized disasters have been reported from Ethiopia, Sudan, Nigeria, Cameroon and Dahomey. Reports of rain shortages and crop failures have been confirmed south of the equator in Kenya and Tanzania.
2. Relief programmes have been hampered by the rapid depletion of world food reserves and the consequential trend of more food products being channelled to world trade than to aid. Famine relief programmes have been further handicapped by problems of logistics, especially in the fields of shipping, transport and distribution. In recipient countries, various problems, including institutional and administrative obstacles have reduced the effectiveness and impact of the aid which has been received. Thus, at both the national and international levels, greatly increased efforts and resources are essential if the cumulative losses caused by the drought are to be minimized.
3. The general situation has become so desperate and grave that the United Nations Secretary-General and the FAO Director-General have made special visits to the countries of the Sahel. They both made very strong appeals to the international community for increased efforts toward relief and rehabilitation. During the last six months representatives of over fifteen institutions have visited ECA in order to seek information and hold consultations on ways and means of contributing to an effective and permanent solution to the problems of the African countries affected by drought. This has given grounds for optimism, but the assistance provided is still far below the critical minimum requirement, especially with regard to food aid. Out of the total target of one million tons of food required for the Sahel, it is estimated that not more than 300,000-400,000 tons have been firmly pledged.
4. In Ethiopia a recent official statement revealed that three million people are affected by drought in seven out of the country's fourteen provinces. The areas affected by drought are relatively more densely populated than the typical Sahelian country. This, added to other structural constraints pertaining to agrarian as well as socio-institutional and administrative problems, have caused more serious losses and dislocation than in the Sahelian countries. Ethiopia's surplus-producing regions have also had little to contribute to the national and international effort to alleviate the disaster.

II. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

5. The Director-General of FAO and the Executive Director of the World Food Programme responded promptly to the Executive Committee's resolution relating to Ethiopia and, in co-operation with ECA, embarked on a programme for the supply of seeds and other farm inputs for the sowing season, which commenced in March 1974. This programme included the provision of storage facilities at an estimated cost of \$US 5 million. UNDP and other United Nations agencies have also taken a

series of practical steps to improve the situation. Ethiopia has also benefited from donations from a wider group of donors and voluntary agencies. Recent developments in the country have also stimulated, inter alia, national fund raising and self-help campaigns.

6. The persistence of the drought in Africa and its spread over a wider geographic and ecological area have confirmed the need for a long-term strategy and a carefully formulated development programme. Indeed, the secretariat has continued to emphasize, define and elaborate such a strategy and it is encouraging to report that considerable progress has been made within the United Nations system in this respect. The secretariat made use of the opportunity offered by the special meeting in Bamako in March 1974 to make an appeal for the strengthening of the Permanent Inter-State Committee for the Fight against the Drought in the Sahel, in order to enable it to carry out the important function of co-ordination.

7. The secretariat has participated in the preparation and improvement of the "Project Compendium", initiated by the Inter-State Committee and co-ordinated by the United Nations Special Sahelian Office. The Compendium covers national and regional projects with recovery and medium-term development objectives and deals with the entire range of infrastructural, production and institutional measures. It includes about 130 projects with an estimated total cost of almost \$US 1,000 million. The Compendium was the basic document before the international meeting convened by the Inter-State Committee in Bamako in March 1974 with the objective of maintaining the dialogue on development aid to the Sahel and stimulating the donors' interest in the recovery and medium-term development projects.

8. Practical and continued interest by donors and investors can only be sustained through the formulation and proper presentation of viable and well defined projects and programmes within the framework of an overall long-term development plan as undertaken under this "Project Compendium". A reasonable number of the projects and programmes, if implemented in a timely and effective manner, will help to prepare the ground for long-term development. It is also evident, on the basis of the general and macro-economic data which already exist, that a good proportion of the project proposals can be brought immediately into the implementation phase. In fact, some of the bilateral development agencies which have already indicated their interest in some specific sectors or programmes can immediately take up several of the projects. In this respect, early action on projects and programmes aimed at broadening and strengthening long-term development capacity, such as training and infrastructural development, is particularly desirable.

9. Meanwhile, and as these action programmes get under way, the fundamental work on macro-economic analysis, which is the basis for an integrated regional development plan, is making satisfactory progress and is also being co-ordinated by the Special Sahelian Office. The ECA secretariat is satisfied with the analytical framework prepared by UNCTAD as a component of the macro-economic exercise. In that analysis, the basic structural defects which have contributed to the perpetual economic and social stagnation and impeded development in the Sahel are systematically exposed and analysed. It is from this analysis that the basic elements of a long-term development strategy emerge.

10. The most logical element of the strategy indicated by the analysis is the need for a radical and planned transformation of the Sahelian economy. Long-term development and the widening of the economic base will inevitably have to depend on agriculture for a long time to come. The agricultural sector should be restructured and equipped to play its full role in the process of transformation, and account should be taken of the possible elements of complementarity and linkages with the mining and the industrial sectors. Although the proposed UNCTAD study is mainly trade-orientated, it underlines the importance of progressively reducing dependence on rain as well as the measures to raise agricultural productivity and expand food production as a basis for sustained economic growth and dynamic development.

11. On the other hand, it is the responsibility of the Governments of the affected countries, individually and collectively, to prepare the ground for effective development and investment. First and foremost, the Governments are expected to take the necessary steps to strengthen and rationalize their planning machinery and methods, to prepare themselves economically, administratively and politically for the gradual but radical transformation of their economies, to plan for the systematic elimination of wasteful consumption, especially of imported luxury goods, in favour of productive investment and to show their readiness, in practice, to make short-term sacrifices for the sake of permanent long-term gains through multinational co-operation, which is now a recognized element that can contribute, especially under conditions such as those prevailing in the Sahel, to dynamic and balanced economic growth.

12. The secretariat is involved in specialized sectoral studies within the framework and objectives of the long-term development strategy. Together with UNICEF, it undertook a mission to the Sahelian countries for the purpose of assessing the movement of the population affected by drought and their requirements in terms of UNICEF assistance. It is also committed to a joint mission with UNCTAD scheduled to visit the Sahelian countries soon with the objective of undertaking an in-depth analysis of trade in the drought-affected countries, with particular reference to the relationship of trade to expanding agricultural and food production.

13. The secretariat has also just completed the field phase of a pilot study in West Africa on Trade and intra-regional co-operation as a basis for agricultural development, which includes one of the Sahelian countries, with a view to examining in-depth the economic relationships among and elements of development strategy for coastal countries and a typical land-locked Sahelian country. The preliminary report of the study, which will be considered by the forthcoming FAO Regional Conference, has indicated several aspects of and prospects for economic complementarity between these two groups of countries, and the final recommendations and conclusions will undoubtedly contribute towards the definition of a long-term development strategy for the Sahelian zone.

14. The secretariat has also prepared, following a special request received from the African Group at the European Economic Community, an inventory of viable regional projects with special reference to the development requirements of the Sahel. It is understood that the inventory would form the basis for negotiations between the Group and the European Economic Community for long-term development financing.

15. Some progress has been made in recruiting the experts for the Niamey UNDAT, most of the resources of which have been committed to the work on drought in the Sahel. In fact, an agreement has been reached between the ECA secretariat and the President of the Inter-State Committee that the Niamey UNDAT experts will work in close collaboration with the Committee and, under its guidance, in all activities related to project and programme formulation, including design and operational planning. In response to a request by the Inter-State Committee, the secretariat sent a representative to Ouagadougou in December 1973 to help in providing a briefing and professional support for a USAID/IIT mission which has recently begun work on a \$US 1 million contract for defining a long-term development strategy for the Sahel based on an "alternative policies" approach and benefiting from the introduction of modern technology, the latest data collected by satellites and information on geophysics and ecology.

16. UNDP has taken the initiative and has revised the regional and country programmes so as to give special emphasis to programmes that will lead to an alleviation of the drought situation. The secretariat is also proposing the establishment of an Arid Zone Development Institute which should undertake research and experimentation on the development problems of the arid zone with particular reference to the Sahelian and other drought affected areas of the region.

17. Concern has been aroused for the drought victims, and both the United Nations system and the bilateral aid donors have taken positive steps to ameliorate the situation, but even the immediate problem of relief for the victims has not yet been solved. Co-ordinated and sustained action is necessary for combating both the immediate and the longer term problems. It is the expectation of the secretariat that the United Nations system, the bilateral aid donors and the Governments concerned will redouble their efforts to provide an effective solution to this problem, which has affected no less than eleven African countries.