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(viii) LAND LOCKED AND ISLAND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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Main developments since UNCTAD V

The two resolutions adopted at UNCTAD V on the above are:

- 111 (V) : specific action related to particular needs and problems of island developing countries;
- 123 (V) : specific action related to the particular needs and problems of land-locked developing countries.

In resolution 111 (V), a number of specific measures in favour of island developing countries were made. These include: provision of assistance by international organizations in the development of infrastructures through identification financing and execution to varied levels of relevant projects. In addition, UNCTAD was to continue to implement assistance to these countries to co-operate in specific areas with other agencies including UN regional economic commissions. Furthermore UNCTAD, was also required to undertake in-depth studies on problems of island countries to form a basis for follow-up action.

The progress, so far made in implementing elements contained in UNCTAD resolutions 111(V) and 98(IV) before it, is summarized in a number of UNCTAD reports including TD/B/811 of July 1981.

On the whole, however, since UNCTAD V the problems of the least developed countries have absorbed the attention of international community proportionately more than those of island developing countries. The African island developing states have repeatedly drawn the attention of the international community to the grave situation they experience and the failure of international community at least to respond to the decisions contained in the relevant resolutions.

In respect of resolution 123(V) the specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of land-locked developing countries fall in eight categories. These are: flows of external resources; co-operation between land-locked countries and transit countries, integrated planning approach, integrated, regional and sub-regional transport planning, priority areas for action and assistance, restructuring and diversification of the economies of land-locked developing countries, United Nations special fund for land-locked developing countries and further action to be undertaken particularly by UNCTAD.

Paragraph 10 of UNCTAD resolution 123(V) requests the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to continue further to implement the Work Programme of UNCTAD in relation to the special problems of land-locked developing countries. In Africa, UNCTAD work has been pursued through three regional projects supported by UNDP

and implemented with the assistance of the ECA. The first project (RAF/77/017 Assistance to Transit-Transport for the Land-Locked Southern African Subregion) commenced in June 1980 and concentrated on activities related to the improvements in existing transit-transport facilities. The second project (RAF/78/015 - Assistance to Transit-Transport for the Land-Locked subregion of East-Central involved the transit-transport corridors affecting Burundi, Rwanda and the Kivu region of Eastern Zaire and has been implemented with the participation of the two main transit countries in the region (Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania).

The specific project activities have involved the analysis and assessment of, inter-alia, present and prospective demands placed upon each existing or potential transit route both by the land-locked and the transit countries; the quality of facilities, management and maintenance for each transit route, and the problems encountered in their use. A comprehensive analysis of the transit system along the Southern corridor (i.e the route from Dar es Salaam serving Burundi and the South of Kivu) has been completed and major attention is now being given to the northern route from Mombassa.

The third project (RAF/78/038 - Transit-Transport for Land-Locked Developing countries of Western and Central Africa) involved the transit-transport corridors affecting the Central African Republic, Chad, Mali, Niger and Upper Volta and aimed at reviewing the transit-transport difficulties of these land-locked countries.

It should be pointed out that specific assistance to the land-locked countries of Western and Central Africa in improving the maritime transport of their foreign trade has been given through the implementation of two projects; RAF/79/103 - Feasibility study of the creation of a joint fleet of the CEAO States and RAF/78/011 - Study on maritime transport costs in West and Central Africa.

Problems as seen from an African standpoint

The specific problems faced by island developing countries include inter alia handicaps in transport and communications, great distances from market centres, highly limited internal markets, lack of marketing expertise, low resource, lack of natural resources, heavy dependence on a few commodity for export and foreign exchange earnings, shortage of administrative personnel and heavy financial indebtedness.

While these problems have been generally studied and been under consideration, for a long time for international action, there are, however, a number of important elements which still need re-examination and hence proper re-evaluation by the international community. Some of the problem area include preparedness to deal with disasters which periodically strike the S₂ countries the development and full utilization of ports and airports for both international shipping and aviation to mutual advantage and the fact that the international aid flow and investment generally ignore the special needs of island developing countries.

Most of the land-locked developing countries are least developed countries as well. Some countries though touching the oceans for all practical purposes experience same problems as land-locked countries. Furthermore, their lack of territorial access to the sea, aggravated by great distances to seaports, by the difficulties and costs of their international transport services constitute a major impediment to their foreign trade and one of the major constraints to their economic and social development. This group of countries lack physical facilities along the transit routes and in the seaports; many land-locked and transit countries have yet to develop a comprehensive co-operation programme to overcome these transit burdens; yet, the international community, on bilateral or multilateral basis has failed to provide increased financial and technical assistance to these particular countries to offset at least, to some extent, these various handicaps and constraints.

Suggested measures

The African countries should reiterate their commitment to both resolutions all the more so as they were to a large extent, based on the proposals contained in the Arusha Programme for collective self-reliance and framework for negotiations and further call on the international community to seriously redouble their efforts at implementing action and decisions called for therein.

Considering the inadequate level of understanding of the problems of island developing states much more needs to be done for them particularly in the African region. There is therefore a need to strengthen the units dealing with island developing countries both in UNCTAD and the regional economic commissions serving developing countries.

The UNCTAD secretariat, in close collaboration with the United Nations regional economic commissions should be requested to continue to execute UNDP financed projects on assistance to land-locked countries to solve their transit-transport problems. UNDP should continue to provide increased financial support in this particular area.

Furthermore, developed countries and developing countries in a position to do should be requested to pledge substantial contributions to the special Fund for land-locked developing countries, which is currently administered by the UNDP in close collaboration with the Secretary-General of UNCTAD.

Finally the attention of donors and relevant multilateral financial institutions should be drawn in particular to the need for their programmes to give particular emphasis to the solution of transit-transport bottlenecks.