

UNITED NATIONS  
DEVELOPMENT  
PROGRAMME



**UNDP**

Distr.  
GENERAL

DP/494  
22 April 1980

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GOVERNING COUNCIL  
Twenty-seventh session  
June 1980, Geneva  
Agenda item 7(f)(i)(b)

ASSISTANCE TO DROUGHT-STRICKEN COUNTRIES IN AFRICA AND FOLLOW-UP  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON DESERTIFICATION

UNITED NATIONS SUDANO-SAHELIAN OFFICE

Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in the  
Sudano-Sahelian Region: Financing of Administrative Cost

Report of the Administrator

Summary

In its decision to designate UNSO as the mechanism to co-ordinate the United Nations effort to assist in the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in the 15 countries of the Sudano-Sahelian Region, the Governing Council also authorized the financing of the UNDP share of the Administrative costs of this joint venture with the United Nations Environment Programme from programme funds. Certain difficulties have been encountered in attempting to carry out this decision of the Council and the Administrator reports on these difficulties, as well as on the available options for settling the issues involved.

1. The General Assembly, on 15 December 1978, adopted resolution 33/88 on Measures to be taken for the benefit of the Sudano-Sahelian region. The resolution set forth, inter alia, the parameters which should govern the provision of support to the joint venture. Operative paragraphs 2 and 3 are quoted below (underlining supplied):

"2. Decides to designate the United Nations Sahelian Office, in addition to its current functions, as the arm of the United Nations to be responsible for assisting, on behalf of the United Nations Environment Programme, the efforts of the fifteen countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region situated south of the Sahara and north of the equator 5/ to implement the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification;

"3. Authorizes, to that end, the organizational enlargement of the United Nations Sahelian Office and its regional office at Ouagadougou, without prejudice to the work undertaken in implementation of the recovery and rehabilitation programme in the Sudano-Sahelian region in conformity with the functions of the United Nations Office as defined in paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 3054 (XXVIII), this process, in accordance with paragraph 1 above, to be the joint responsibility of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme;"

5/ Cape Verde, Chad, Ethiopia, Gambia, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda, United Republic of Cameroon and Upper Volta.

2. Further, by resolution 34/187 adopted on 18 December 1979, the General Assembly requested "the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Development Programme to continue to provide support to the joint venture with a view to helping ensure that the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office continues to carry out its additional responsibilities at a level commensurate with the pressing needs of the region".

3. General Assembly resolution 33/88 followed the decision adopted by the UNEP Governing Council on 22 May 1978 regarding the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, as well as the related decision, 25/10, adopted by the UNDP Governing Council in June 1978. In this decision, the UNDP Governing Council authorized the Administrator:

". . . to finance the UNDP share of the administrative costs of the joint UNDP/UNEP venture from the appropriate programme funds until funding from the normal sources of the United Nations Sahelian Office is forthcoming." (E/1978/53/Rev.1, chapter XX).

4. In that the Council's use of the phrase "appropriate programme funds" in connexion with the UNDP share of the administrative costs of the joint UNDP/UNEP venture was general, the Administrator held consultations with his senior colleagues to determine the specific source for funding the UNDP share. The possibility and desirability of using a number of sources of funding were explored, including the use of resources available to UNSO, and the utilization of the regional indicative planning figures (IPF). On the basis of the options available, the Administrator concluded that, for 1978 and 1979, UNDP's share of the administrative costs of the joint UNDP/UNEP venture would be financed from the Regional IPF for Africa. This was done even though the expenditure was intended for administrative, and not for substantive, activities. The Administrator used these IPF funds for administrative purposes, as an exceptional matter, in view of the specific decision of the Council authorizing the use of "appropriate programme funds" for this purpose.

5. The UNDP Governing Council at its twenty-sixth session in June 1979, upon review of the progress achieved in the efforts to combat desertification, dealt again with the financing of the UNDP share of the administrative costs of the joint venture for 1980 and 1981. The specific decisions of the Council on financing are as follows:

Administrative Funds - UNSO

"5. Authorizes the Administrator to continue to finance from the appropriate funds of the Programme the UNDP share of the administrative costs of UNSO relating to the UNDP/UNEP joint venture." (Section H, decision 79/20, II, operative para. 5).

Administrative Funds - Administrative Budget

"9(a) Takes note of the 1980-1981 budget in the amount of \$1,371,000 gross proposed by the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office for the UNDP/UNEP joint venture, institutional support of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification as authorized by the Council in decision 25/10, section II, paragraph 4, and approves the amount of \$685,500 gross, the half-share of the joint venture, to be allocated from:

- (i) The normal resources of the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office;
- (ii) Only should the source of funding in (i) above not be feasible, the appropriate UNDP programme funds;"

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"(b) Resolves that income estimates in an amount of \$70,850, being half of joint venture income of \$141,700, shall be used to offset the gross budget in subparagraph 9(a) above, resulting in a net allocation of \$614,650 as the half-share to be financed under subparagraph 9(a)(i) or (ii) above; The net over-all budget for the joint venture is noted as \$1,229,300." (E/1979/40, section N, decision 79/44, operative para. 9).

6. As the decision of the Council did not specify precisely the source of funds to be used for the administrative costs of the joint venture, the Administrator reviewed again the options for the financing of this expenditure. The following options have been studied:

- (a) The Programme Reserve;
- (b) UNDP Programme Support and Administrative Services Budget;
- (c) Interregional and Global IPF Funds;
- (d) Regional Programme IPF of the Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA) and the Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS);
- (e) Interest income on UNSO Investments.

Option (a) - Programme Reserve: This option is not considered suitable as this type of expenditure is not compatible with the authority granted by the Council for the use of the Programme Reserve funds.

Option (b) - UNDP Programme Support and Administrative Services Budget: No provisions have been made in this budget for such expenditure, nor is it likely that savings could be available in 1980-1981 for this purpose. However, this option is not entirely ruled out, subject to further review by the Governing Council as specified in paragraph 7 below.

Option (c) - Interregional and Global IPF Funds: Apart from the fact that the IPF for these sources is heavily committed, expenditure under this source of fund would require specific Governing Council approval.

Option (d) - Regional Programme IPF of RBA and RBAS: Funds from these sources could perhaps be available for this purpose as was done for 1978-1979. The Administrator, however, is of the opinion that the continued use of IPF funds for financing administrative activities not related directly to IPF activities in the region is not entirely compatible with the mandate for the use of such funds. This consideration is separate from the following two additional factors: (a) the regional IPFs for the two regions concerned are already heavily committed; and (b) the Governing Council, at its twenty-sixth session, decided also to allocate funds from the appropriate Programme sources for ongoing operational activities of the desertification programme. The Governing Council's authorization is for the use of \$330,000 for 1980 and \$368,000 for 1981. (Chapter XX, section H, 79/20 para. 6). These amounts will be provided for from the regional IPFs of the two related regions.

Option (e) - Interest income on UNSO Investments: Whereas the Administrator is ready in principle to consider such earnings as "the normal resources of the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office", it is noted that the resources of the UNSO Trust Fund, from which the interest earnings are generated, result from contributions by donors whose contributions are provided for a smaller group of countries than the one covered under the desertification programme and in the context of a different mandate. It would therefore be questionable whether earnings from such UNSO funds should be made available for the desertification programme.

7. The Administrator therefore requires the Governing Council's guidance as to the specific source of financing to be used for budgeting the administrative support costs of the joint UNDP/UNEP venture. The Administrator is of the opinion that of the options listed above, only two should be further considered for this purpose:

(a) The use of the regional funds of RBA and RBAS. While such action is feasible in principle, it is not recommended for the reasons listed in paragraph 6, option (d), above;

(b) The use of the UNDP programme support and administrative services budget. Should the Council wish the Administrator to use this source of funds for financing the above-mentioned activities, an additional budgetary appropriation for 1980-1981 amounting to \$614,650 net should be authorized. In such a case, the Administrator would propose the identification of such an expenditure under a separate budget item, similar to the budget item for sectoral support. This will ensure that identification of this budget appropriation will be specific and distinct from the UNDP administrative budget requirements.

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