



GOVERNING COUNCIL

Twenty-seventh session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 691st MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 12 June 1980, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. POPESCU (Romania)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

OTHER FUNDS AND PROGRAMMES (agenda item 7) (continued)

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

(i) UNITED NATIONS SUDANO-SAHELIAN OFFICE

(a) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MEDIUM-TERM AND LONG-TERM RECOVERY PROGRAMME IN THE SUDANO-SAHELIAN REGION (DP/486; DP/GC/XXVII/CRP.7)

(b) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION IN THE SUDANO-SAHELIAN REGION (DP/455, 494; DP/GC/XXVII/CRP.6)

(ii) ASSISTANCE TO THE DROUGHT STRICKEN COUNTRIES IN AFRICA (DP/450)

1. Mr. ADANDE (Observer for Benin) said that the neighbours of the African countries suffering from the effects of drought and desertification sympathized with those countries in their plight and considered that UNDP needed to provide them with greater assistance. Food aid and financial assistance were not enough: the drought had become endemic, and further environmental and ecological measures were needed to protect those countries against further damage in the future. More resources should therefore be devoted to studies of methods of combating desertification and to the promotion of such measures as reafforestation and the development of water resources. In addition, measures of drought control should be extended to countries other than those immediately concerned in order to help them to combat the advance of the drought.

2. His delegation hoped the additional sum of \$216 million required to finance the 107 projects submitted by the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) could be quickly found. It also supported the inclusion of Djibouti, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau among the countries eligible to receive assistance through UNSO in implementing the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification.

3. He endorsed the remarks made by the representative of Senegal and others with respect to document DP/494, particularly the proposal in paragraph 7 (b).

4. Mr. ACEMAH (Uganda) said that the situation in the Sudano-Sahelian region was very alarming but it was gratifying to note that sufficient scientific knowledge and technology were available to halt and even reverse the process of desertification. What was needed were additional resources and the will to apply the knowledge and technology. In that connexion, his delegation endorsed the appeal by the Director of UNSO for additional resources to implement the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification.

5. The drought which had affected the north-eastern region of Uganda during the last two years had been aggravated by other factors and, in view of the serious situation, his delegation wished to urge UNSO to send a planning and programming mission to Uganda as soon as possible to assess the problem and the needs of the area with a view to preparing a comprehensive programme for recovery and

rehabilitation. The UNDP resident representative in Kampala had already visited the area, and his Government was grateful for the emergency relief aid which the United Nations and other organizations and individual countries were providing. Assistance, however, fell far short of the minimum requirements for the area. He endorsed the appeal by the Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa to all donor countries for assistance to Uganda, and hoped that specific action would follow in the very near future.

6. Mr. NIYIBIZI (Rwanda) said that the critical situation facing certain African countries as a result of drought in the Sudano-Sahelian region and more recently in the eastern part of the continent deserved prompt attention from the international community. The list of African countries affected by drought was growing, and his own country was now threatened. Since 1975 rainfall had been irregular and, as a result of the subsequent drought, many people in Rwanda were facing starvation.

7. At the beginning of 1980 the Government of Rwanda had alerted the World Food Programme (WFP) to the problem and requested emergency assistance. WFP had now promised to provide emergency food and other assistance, for which his delegation expressed its thanks. The regions most seriously affected by the drought were Kibuye in the west, Gitarama in the centre, Butare in the south and Gikongoro in the south-west. Those areas were also experiencing famine. In addition, Gikongoro was facing the problem of desertification. With the assistance of FAO and WFP, the Government of Rwanda was making every endeavour to combat that process through a variety of projects, including the intensification of agriculture. Rwanda was densely populated and arable land was becoming increasingly scarce and infertile because of soil erosion and the impossibility of letting the land lie fallow.

8. Rwanda was currently assessing its requirements for foodstuffs, medical supplies and other emergency aid to combat famine. Clearly the assistance promised by WFP was appreciable but it was very small in comparison with the needs of the two and a half million people affected. Further international efforts were needed to help Rwanda, which belonged to the categories of most seriously affected countries, least developed countries and land-locked countries. It was experiencing the same situation as its immediate neighbours, Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya, which had been mentioned in the statement by the Regional Director of the Bureau for Africa. He appealed to the international community to give the necessary attention to the problems of the countries affected by the disaster now facing a large part of the African continent.

9. Mr. AL-IBRAHIMI (Kuwait) said that a delegation from UNSO had recently visited Kuwait, which was prepared to share its experience in combating desertification within the framework of TCDC. Kuwait looked forward to fruitful collaboration with UNSO and the countries concerned. Kuwait had also recently hosted a meeting attended by the Heads of State of Senegal and Mali and the Prime Minister of Mauritius in order to discuss Kuwait's participation in building two dams in the African region. Those two projects would help to solve the energy problem and would bring economic benefits to the countries of the region, especially in the matter of irrigation and agriculture. In November 1980, Kuwait would host a meeting of the member countries of the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), which it intended to help in any way it could.

10. According to a report in The Times of London, in the first quarter of 1980 Kuwait had provided the lion's share of 47 loans to 30 developing countries, totalling \$404 million. He hoped that that information met some of the apprehensions voiced with respect to oil-exporting countries.

11. Finally, he wished to express his Government's sympathy with the people of Japan in the loss of its Prime Minister, Mr. Ohira.

12. Ms. PHAN Thi Minh (observer for Viet Nam) expressed her delegation's full support for an international plan of action designed to help African countries to combat desertification and drought and thus eliminate the chronic famine which threatened several of them. Since that was a large-scale, long-term undertaking calling for extensive and sustained efforts in the financial technical, scientific and social field, her delegation welcomed the creation of appropriate bodies to mobilize the necessary resources and inform world public opinion of the situation. It sincerely hoped UNDP would make the broadest possible contribution both to the mobilization of funds and the co-ordination of the appropriate technology. The clear and precise information provided by the countries concerned had greatly helped in the establishment of integrated programmes, specific projects and the setting of long - and short-term targets.

13. Her own country, a companion in misfortune, was unfortunately unable to provide anything but moral support. It had however, noted that the disaster threatening the survival of a whole continent was occurring in countries which had long suffered from colonization. That process had left them without adequate defences against drought and consequently vulnerable to all natural disasters. Her delegation therefore proposed that the former colonial Powers and the countries with economic interests in the region should make special contributions to the joint effort and appealed to all other countries able to do so to co-operate in a humanitarian spirit.

14. Her delegation suggested that, pending the completion of long-term programmes aimed at eliminating the causes of the disaster, small and medium-scale projects such as the search for underground water sources should be undertaken to prevent human beings and animals from dying of hunger and thirst. In that connexion, several developing countries could contribute their experience, expert knowledge and to a certain extent specialized labour. Viet Nam, despite its very limited resources, could provide countries with some skilled personnel for the upkeep of basic health and education networks. It was also prepared to share its extensive experience in mobilizing the population to make the best use of any resources in a disaster situation.

15. Mr. CZARKOWSKI (Poland) expressed concern that the spreading desertification of the Sudano-Sahelian region was having an increasing impact on the environment and food supply in other regions also. In view of the magnitude of the problem in Africa, country and intercountry programmes and projects should lay special emphasis on long-term measures designed to provide a radical solution. Pending such a long-term solution, however, full support should be given to assistance by UNDP and the other United Nations agencies for the purpose of alleviating the losses of individual countries, particularly in the Sahelian sub-region.

16. Mr. LIPTAV (Federal Republic of Germany) said that the item under discussion was one of the most important on the Council's agenda because it affected all aspects of the life of the population of the region. The Sudano-Sahelian region was accorded high priority in his country's bilateral co-operation scheme, as well as in its multilateral assistance. His Government had had fruitful discussions with the Director of UNSO during his recent visit to Bonn and was giving serious consideration to the possibility of intensifying its efforts to contribute to the fight against desertification. In addition to successful negotiations with UNEP, it was considering co-operating with the respective countries and CILSS on the adjustment of relevant on-going technical assistance activities with a view to meeting current needs more satisfactorily. It also had substantial food security programmes in that area.
17. The problem of desertification was so vast that it was likely to remain on the Council's agenda for several years. More extensive and speedier efforts would be needed to ensure that satisfactory progress could be made in the drought-stricken areas.
18. Mr. BA-ISSA (Democratic Yemen) expressed his country's concern at the serious food situation in the Sudano-Sahelian region, which was affecting an increasing number of countries. Democratic Yemen fully understood those countries' need for increased international aid, since it had similar climatic and ecological conditions and, on a limited scale, had experienced the far-reaching effects of drought and their disruptive impact not only on the economy but on the life and stability of the people.
19. His delegation hoped that the timely assistance given by UNDP and other United Nations agencies to the drought-stricken countries would be continued and increased at the bilateral and multilateral levels and would be directed towards a long-term recovery programme. In view of the limited resources of the countries concerned and the diminishing value of assistance in real terms, international technical and financial assistance were essential to supplement their national efforts and especially to help them to become self-supporting with respect to food.
20. Mr. HODY (Belgium) said that his delegation would have preferred that assistance to the peoples of the Sahel should, from the beginning, have been furnished direct through CILSS. Belgium had supported a number of specific United Nations projects in the Sahel and was also providing bilateral assistance to the Governments of the countries concerned. His country had undertaken to provide long-term financial support on a multi-bilateral and as well as on a bilateral basis.
21. Where the food needs of the Sahelian population were concerned, his delegation appreciated the work done by WFP and FAO, in particular, through the organization of an advance warning system, which had proved to be of considerable help in the making of decisions on food aid.
22. Requests for supplementary funds for UNSO should be referred to the Budgetary and Finance Committee.
23. Mr. DOO KINGUE (Assistant Administrator and Director, Regional Bureau for Africa,) replying to points raised during the debate said that UNDP would take into account the experience of individual countries in the continuing struggle against drought and desertification. The recent conference of African Government Experts on technical co-operation between African countries, held at Nairobi, had proposed that the developing countries should co-operate more closely on those two problems.

24. The representatives of the Gambia, Kenya and Rwanda had expressed regret that the information given on their countries had been inadequate. UNDP was kept fully informed of the situation in those countries by the reports of resident representatives; information could not, however, be included in an official report unless it had been officially approved by the Government. In fact, there were more drought-stricken countries than those he had mentioned in his statement, but the Governments of the countries not so mentioned had considered that their situation was less serious and that they did not need to appeal to the international community. That was not true, however, of the Gambia, Kenya and Rwanda.

25. The representative of Egypt had suggested that a special programme should be initiated for drought-stricken African countries and to combat desertification. It was UNDP's intention to launch a special regional programme in 1982-1986 for the purpose of minimizing the impact of drought and desertification on the threatened countries. He hoped that other sources of aid, both bilateral and multilateral, would be associated with UNDP in that programme.

26. Mr. MAGDI (Director, United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office) said that he appreciated the suggestions made by representatives as well as the offers of co-operation from countries with experience; those would serve to govern UNSO's future actions. Relations between Governments, UNSO and CILSS had always been close and would be further strengthened in the future.

27. With regard to the financing of the administrative costs of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in the Sudano-Sahelian region (DP/494), the Governing Council had agreed in 1979 that the UNDP contribution to the UNDP/UNEP joint venture was, from the administrative as well as the operational standpoint, intended to support UNSO in carrying out its desertification control mandate. It did not apply to the over-all UNSO effort relating to the Sahelian rehabilitation programme, but only to the UNDP/UNEP joint venture. As suggested by a number of speakers, the question of the source of funds for the UNDP contribution was being submitted to the Budgetary and Finance Committee. The UNDP and UNEP shares would be equal. Information on the financial implications of the possible inclusion of Djibouti, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau in the list of countries eligible for assistance by UNSO was ready for submission to the Budgetary and Finance Committee.

28. The representative of Uganda had referred to the possibility of a planning and programming mission being sent to that country. UNSO had already made contact with the Government on that question.

29. Mr. MUWALIBA (Malawi), speaking on behalf of the African group, introduced the draft decision submitted by his delegation on the implementation of the medium-term and long-term recovery and rehabilitation programme in the Sudano-Sahelian region (DP/GC/XXVII/CRP.7).

30. The draft decision reflected the on-going nature of the programme and the need for the continuing involvement of the international community. It would request the Administrator "to continue to enhance the capacity of UNSO to respond effectively to the priority requirements of the States members of CILSS through the use of resources available in the Programme". It would only be possible for the Administrator to comply positively with that request if the international community not only supported the Programme but made resources available to it. The text expressed not only Africa's determination to encourage every form of co-operative effort but also the commitment of the Sudano-Sahelian peoples

to an all-out war against the effects of the devastating drought by stressing the need for the continued implementation and expansion of the priority medium-term and long-term recovery and rehabilitation programme adopted by the States members of CILSS and for mobilization of the necessary financial resources for priority projects.

31. His delegation considered that the immediate halting of such an economic hazard should be the preoccupation of the entire international community. He therefore urged that the matter be given the international priority it merited. Moreover, the successful implementation of the programme would undoubtedly revolutionize the economy of the entire region.

32. Mr. BLAIN (Gambia), introducing the draft decision submitted by his delegation on implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in the Sudano-Sahelian region (DP/GC/XXVII/CRP.6), said that the draft specifically reiterated the need for immediate implementation of the Plan of Action as an integral part of the general effort to promote the economic and social development of the Sudano-Sahelian region. It commended the Administrator for the results achieved by UNSC within the terms of its mandate to assist the countries of the region. It also endorsed the decision of the Governing Council of UNEP to add Djibouti, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau to the list of countries eligible for assistance by UNSO in the implementation of their programmes. It also urged Governments, international agencies and intergovernmental organizations to intensify their assistance, both bilateral and multilateral, through UNSO, in response to the priority requirements of the Sudano-Sahelian region.

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC PLANNING OF SIERRA LEONE

33. Mr. BANYA (Sierra Leone) said that the sixth and seventh special sessions of the United Nations General Assembly and the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States constituted the framework for a new international economic order.

34. The goals that had been set during the first and second development decades had contained a number of unrealistic targets. Progress had certainly been made in such areas as technical co-operation among developing countries, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and the United Nations Conference on Application of Science and Technology for Development, but over-all performance had been limited, because global efforts had lagged behind. There was a clear need for a global multilateral effort if the world economic system was to be restructured to ensure a just and equitable economic relationship between States. The cumulative efforts of UNDP in helping the international community in restructuring the world economic order had earned appreciation. The Programme covered the entire spectrum of economic and social effort and was particularly geared to enhancing the capacity of developing countries to develop. Its largest single effort was in agriculture, a sector which was of paramount importance in assisting the economic take-off of developing countries. The country programmes of UNDP served as a frame of reference for operational activities carried out and financed by other United Nations organizations. International funds to the value of some \$1.2 billion flowed through UNDP each year, quite apart from funds contributed locally to projects by Governments of developing countries.

35. His delegation was gratified that specific measures had been taken to remedy a number of shortcomings in the Programme and to improve its organization, planning and co-ordination. The decision on new dimensions in technical co-operation would further enhance the effectiveness of UNDP.



43. Recent developments in international economic relations seemed to indicate that the salvation of the developing countries lay principally in their own efforts. With 140 nations in the South, it was only by solidarity and the common perception of their interest that they would improve their bargaining power. However, despite the fact that UNDP's objective was supposed to be the promotion of collective self-reliance, there had been no serious effort to finance regional economic integration in Africa. The regional framework must be developed in order to control the excessive outflow of resources from Africa.

44. The problem in Africa was not a lack of resources, but the availability of those resources in a form suitable for inter-African trade, and that in turn depended on the extent to which leakages could be controlled. UNDP, through its multilateral technical co-operation activities, could help African States to meet some of the challenges facing them in establishing control over their own resources.

45. The priorities to be set for the third development decade should include the development of efficient transport and communications systems in developing countries as a means of promoting their collective self-reliance. He therefore noted with satisfaction that the main volume of investment follow-up had been concentrated during 1979 in the transport and communications sector (DP/460, para. 24). UNDP was expected to play a key role in financing the multi-agency study of each sector envisaged in the transport and communication strategy for Africa, and it was for that reason that a decision by the Governing Council to allocate 8 per cent of the regional IPF to the United Nations Decade for Transport and Communications in Africa would be greatly appreciated.

46. The fact that pledges for 1980 were only 4 per cent higher than for 1979 (DP/460, para. 31) and were thus well short of the 14 per cent target, led to the conclusion that when considering the contribution of resources, the relative capacity of various countries to contribute must be recognized, because although one country might be contributing more than another in absolute terms, the situation might well be different if their relative economic capacities were compared. The highest rate of contribution was therefore to be expected from the countries with the highest rates of economic growth and a new classification of developing countries should be made which would recognize their different levels of development and different resource potential.

47. However, progress towards multi-year pledging - a policy which he warmly supported - and towards a more equitable basis for financing was slow, so that the least-developed countries had to support alternative ways of acquiring additional resources, rather than continuing to rely on loans with their heavy repayment burdens. In particular, there had been over the years an increase in the application of bilateral aid through various multilateral trust funds by countries whose assistance was to be expected in the name of solidarity. Clearly, therefore, if the Council agreed that any individual country's IPF should not be lower than in the second programming cycle, then countries which could contribute more to the programme resources should do so voluntarily. He therefore noted with some dismay that 35 recipient countries with a per capita GNP exceeding \$1,500 had contributed an average of only \$20 million during the period 1977-1980, while receiving an annual level of \$44 million of IPF's. Even more disappointing was the fact that in 1980 the contribution from that group of countries would be \$18.5 million, which was far below the four-year average and, moreover, a significant part of that contribution would be made in non-convertible countries.

48. Countries at the upper end of the per capita GNP scale should voluntarily surrender their country IPF's or avail themselves of UNDP resources on a fully reimbursable basis, and he acknowledged the magnanimity already displayed by some countries in that respect. Moreover, as many countries as possible should become net contributors to the programme; he would support further moves to enter into consultations with those countries regarding the establishment of a voluntary basis for increasing contributions, so that they would become net contributors by 1986.

49. The Governing Council's decision on the allocation of resources should support the need for a dynamic redistribution. The Programme should certainly maintain its universal character but the more developed countries should show greater solidarity with the less fortunate countries, and a greater understanding of their problems. He hoped that sustained negotiations to that end would result in a convergence of views so that issues could be resolved without fundamental objections and reservations.

COUNTRY AND INTERCOUNTRY PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS (agenda item 6)

(a) RELEVANT TRENDS AND PROBLEMS IN THE COUNTRY PROGRAMMES (DP/478)

50. Mr. MORSE (Administrator) said that, at the Council's request, UNDP had for the past three years provided an analysis of trends and problems in connexion with the country programmes proposed for approval by the Council during the session. The current year's analysis (DP/478) supported the findings of the country programme study (DP/454), but it should be treated with some caution, since it covered only a small number of programmes which happened to be submitted at the same time but could not be regarded as representative. If they had one common characteristic, it was that most of them were hiatus programmes between the second and third programming cycles, because of the fact that, as he had pointed out at a previous meeting, many Governments had used the 1981-1982 cut-off point for the second cycle as the point for terminating their second-cycle programmes, with the idea of preparing a full-term third cycle programme. As a result, over half the programmes submitted were for three years or less, including in most cases one year of retroactive programming and two or three future years. Obviously, the bridging nature of those programmes had also affected the proportion of new to ongoing activities in a manner which was not typical.

51. In considering the information which the Council wished to receive in order to monitor country level activities effectively, the Council might wish to bear in mind the various sources through which that information was at present provided. That was particularly important if the Council should decide to examine selected periodic country review reports in addition to the material at present provided, namely, the country programmes, notes on those programmes, the periodic overview paper and independent information on evaluation and investment follow-up action relevant to the field programme.

52. The PRESIDENT said that some aspects of the Council's work on agenda items 4(b) (Evaluation) and 5(b) (Programme planning) might have financial implications which could not be absorbed and he therefore suggested referring the relevant documents to the Budgetary and Finance Committee.

53. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.