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PROGRAMME PLANNING

Country and intercountry programmes and projects

THIRD COUNTRY PROGRAMME FOR MAURITANIA

Note by the Administrator

I. PROCESS OF THE PROGRAMMING EXERCISE

1. The proposed programme is the outcome of a programming exercise undertaken jointly by the Government and UNDP. The exercise was carried out concurrently with the preparation of an economic and financial recovery programme, 1985-1988 (PREF). The latter, prepared by the Government in co-operation with the World Bank, is intended to promote financial stabilization and to stimulate economic growth. It was submitted to funding sources at the first meeting of the Consultative Group on Mauritania in November 1985. The programme now proposed reflects the Government's priorities and development strategies as set forth in the economic and financial recovery programme (PREF).

2. The general lines of the programme have been established by the Government and UNDP. The two partners have agreed to seek to avoid any dispersion of resources and to concentrate them in a few areas of critical importance to the development of the country so that the activities selected can contribute to the attainment of basic government objectives. Consultations have been held with various agencies, in particular the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), to identify projects along the lines agreed. International organizations have had or will ultimately have primary responsibility for preparing projects with the Government and UNDP.

3. The representatives of various major donors have been consulted and informed of UNDP's intention to consider the appropriateness of carrying out a NATCAP

(National Technical Co-operation Assessment Programmes) exercise in Mauritania so as to help the Government to identify and establish priorities within its technical assistance needs.

4. The official programming process was begun in February 1985 by a note from the Resident Representative to the Government. An internal assessment of the programme for 1983-1986 was then being prepared, and the following general conclusions emerged:

(a) The programme, as a whole, was well adapted to the country's needs. No major project was found to be unjustified;

(b) Nevertheless, the programme was characterized by a dispersion of projects across a large number of sectors. Some operations, although properly carried out, had had a reduced impact since no follow-up activities had been planned or funded;

(c) It was thus necessary to concentrate resources for the new programme and to provide for adequate funding for the follow-up of activities embarked upon;

(d) Co-operation with other funding sources had permitted substantial expansion of programme activities. The initiation of co-ordination at the project level was one result of such co-operation. That experience indicated that co-operation at the programme and project levels should be sought more actively and systematically in the future. Thus, a list of projects "in the pipeline" has been established in the proposed programme, and a relatively modest part of the programme resources have been earmarked for participation in the costs of the projects;

(e) It was necessary to continue food production and desertification control activities, begun during the current cycle. Even greater concentration on that area had been made necessary by drought, food dependence and the priorities established under the economic and financial recovery programme (PREF).

5. The note by the Resident Representative, previously assessed by headquarters, was accepted by the Government, which, however, wished to expand the scope of the new programme. The identification of projects was to await the finalization of the economic and financial recovery programme (PREF). A series of working meetings was begun in September 1985 between the Ministry of Planning and National Development and the Resident Representative in order to identify projects and prepare the programme document. A preliminary version of the document was submitted to UNDP headquarters in mid-October 1985. It was assessed by the Regional Bureau for Africa, the Technical Advisory Division and, finally, by the UNDP programme Appraisal Committee.

II. THIRD COUNTRY PROGRAMME

6. In the context of the acute crisis being experienced by Mauritania, which is accentuated by persistent drought, the deterioration in the rural economy, the mass exodus of an impoverished population towards the towns and the capital and, finally, the particularly serious food shortage, the formulation of this country

programme reflects the desire to meet these concerns and problems. Thus, the programme will seek to:

- (a) Concentrate resources on the country's major priorities;
- (b) Increase the degree of food self-reliance in order to reduce dependence on external aid and imports;
- (c) Promote the recovery of rural areas which have been seriously affected by drought and desertification; and
- (d) Help the Government to strengthen its economic and social management structures in response to the acute economic crisis.

In this connection, UNDP, together with other donors, will seek to help the Government to meet the challenges confronting it in the most critical areas. In the formulation of the programme for 1987-1991, it was possible to take account of new policies, structures and priorities under the economic and financial recovery programme (PREF) and of the specifics of UNDP's mandate, together with other national and international resources.

7. The increase in the degree of food self-reliance already provided for under the previous programme should absorb 46.5 per cent of the programme resources. Logically, maximum aid should be granted to the country to reduce its dependence on external food assistance. Thus, UNDP contributions largely fall within the complementary measures sought by the Government for the development of agricultural production and fisheries. In most cases they extend existing projects, placing them on new time-scales. Five of the activities selected relate directly to food production: production of improved seeds, expansion of agricultural extension activities, support for rural artisans, development of small plots (programme reserve) and construction and repair of fishing boats.

These five activities account for almost 90 per cent of the resources for this objective. Two other small projects are included under this objective: agricultural statistics and support for the Ministry of Rural Development, which will make a useful contribution to rural development in general.

8. The second objective in order of importance (33.6 per cent) is to promote the recovery of rural areas seriously affected by drought, with three components: desertification control, the development of rural employment, and the planning and management of water resources. UNDP, in co-operation with the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office and other donors, has already played a leading role in the campaign to control desertification in rural areas with a pilot project to fix sand dunes which could quickly be developed into a strategy and a major follow-up programme (with multiple financing). The development of rural employment falls under a very recent government policy aimed at utilizing unemployed labour in public works, mainly in rural areas. Part of the free food distribution would be channelled towards construction projects. There, too, UNDP plays a leading role, owing to two projects in particular (Food for Work and Rural Water Resources). Multiple financing would be available in addition to UNDP funding. As reflected in the economic and financial recovery programme (PREF), the government water

resources policy is very ambitious. UNDP will help to strengthen the Department of Water Resources in the areas of management and planning.

9. The third objective involves the strengthening of economic management capabilities; 11.8 per cent of programme resources are earmarked for that purpose.

UNDP will assist in the implementation of the recovery programme and in the systematic planning of overall technical assistance needs, together with the training and advanced training of professional staff. All these activities will be synchronized with World Bank assistance.

10. A list of projects "in the pipeline" has been prepared, with eight projects, totalling \$10,593,000, which it was not possible to include in the programme. UNDP will endeavour to find additional resources from both within and outside the United Nations system. To this end, a programmed reserve of \$635,000 has been allocated for UNDP participation in the joint financing of these projects.

11. The unprogrammed reserve amounts to 3.5 per cent of the programme total. It will be used to finance activities which are not foreseeable at present.

12. In conclusion, resources have been concentrated on priority objectives with a limited number of projects, some of which comprise a UNDP contribution involving supplementary external financing. It should be noted that the three objectives selected for this country programme appeared already in the previous one, which explains the continuation of various projects in new phases.

III. MANAGEMENT OF THE COUNTRY PROGRAMME

13. The first step will be to prepare and formulate the new projects contained in the proposed programme. Several ongoing projects will have to be assessed before a new phase is prepared. It should be noted that projects "in the pipeline" will also be formulated with the potential co-financiers.

14. The second step will be to mobilize external funds for co-financing for a number of projects under the programme and for all projects "in the pipeline". Interested donors have already been identified for several of these projects, with, in some cases, the assistance of the executing agencies.

15. Annual reviews will be conducted to assess the development of the economic situation, determine project needs and modify the programme as necessary. A mid-term review is scheduled for 1989; this will involve in-depth assessment of the ongoing justification for retaining the programme objectives.

IV. RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

16. The Administrator recommends that the country programme for Mauritania be approved by the Governing Council.