Resolution 856 (1986)[1]

African food crisis

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Recalling its attachment to the Euro-African dialogue &mdash also mentioned by President Mubarak in his speech to the Parliamentary Assembly on 28 January 1986 &mdsah which should be intensified to enable the member states of the Council of Europe and the African states to devise, on an equal footing, forms of economic, scientific, technical and cultural cooperation aimed at setting the African peoples on the road towards greater social and economic justice combined with observance of human rights and of the principles of parliamentary democracy ;

2. Recalling in particular the Lisbon Declaration adopted at the Assembly's Conference "North-South : Europe's Role" in 1984, and its Resolutions 838 (1985), on the famine in Africa, and 843 (1985), on the follow-up to the Lisbon Declaration ;

3. Alarmed at the fate of millions of Africans during the continent-wide drought of 1984 and 1985, resulting in appalling human tragedies, life-long impairment to the health of children in particular, and the uprooting of entire populations ;

4. Conscious that, although recent rains have temporarily reduced the scope of the famine, the long-term outlook for Africa's food supply is bleak, due to rapid population growth and the grave misuse of land leading to deforestation and the spread of deserts ;

5. Appalled that much of the food aid is not reaching the starving people because of hold-ups at the ports of entry ;

6. Aware that infrastructure such as road and rail transport facilities are extremely poor ;

7. Concerned that the situation is aggravated by a number of factors such as the imposition by industrial countries of inappropriate models of development, the neglect on the part of certain African governments of the agricultural sector as opposed to industry, to the detriment of rural areas, collectivist experiments for which agriculture is particularly ill-suited, excessive imports of food, even in periods of normality, which undercut domestic production, corruption and warfare, and a growing debt burden in relation to industrialised countries ;

8. Worried by worsening health problems in African countries caused by the dietary changes that have followed from Western food imports, and perturbed by the increase in birth rates in refugee camps ;

9. Believing however that, since most of the above developments are provoked by man, man can also redress the situation, as witnessed in a few countries which show foresight in their agricultural and economic policies ;

10. Welcoming in this connection the rehabilitation and revival plan for the African countries most seriously affected by the drought, adopted in October 1985 by the Commission of the European Communities ;

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1. Assembly debate on 30 January 1986 (26th Sitting) (see Doc. 5504, report of the Committee on Agriculture, and Doc. 5509, report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development). Text adopted by the Assembly on 30 January 1986 (26th Sitting).

11. Regretting that the volume of development aid to the African countries most affected by the food crisis is small in comparison with the need and remains far below the target of 0,15% of GNP to be achieved by 1985, adopted in 1981 at the Paris Conference on the least developed countries ;

12. Considering that development policies should give greater priority to the development of human resources, to the reduction of illiteracy, to the integration of women in the development process, and to health, nutrition and population policies with a view to strengthening a self-reliant and self-sustaining social economic development,

13. Calls on the governments of Council of Europe member states :

a. to reinforce their assistance to Africa, both for the overcoming of emergencies and for long-term agricultural, forestry and fisheries development ;

b. to give greater priority to helping African countries to increase their economic growth and diversify their economies, by further facilitating access of their products to European markets, granting debt relief facilities and strengthening the existing multilateral mechanisms for the stabilisation of export revenues ;

c. to increase their contributions both to the World Bank in favour of its special programme for sub-Saharan Africa, and to UN agencies such as UNDP, FAO and the World Food Programme &mdash especially to allow early shipment of food to, or pre-positioning of stocks in, countries where famine might occur at short notice or where long-term food aid is required ;

d. to use to this end more of the huge and costly-to-store surpluses produced in Europe, for example by mixing them with local supplies as part of "food-for-work" programmes, while ensuring that they do not destabilise local food markets or production ;

e. to ensure effective co-ordination of aid, so as to avoid duplication of effort or excessive strain on the resources of the recipient country, preferably by arranging regular meetings involving aid agencies and donor countries ;

f. to step up their support for non-governmental organisations &mdash notably through co-financing schemes &mdash which play a very important role in promoting rural reform and human development in Africa ;

g. to emphasise assistance which stimulates local food production and incites recipient governments to introduce price policies which give sufficient reward to farmers ;

h. to strengthen programmes of rural reform, agricultural training and the construction of an infrastructure favourable to farming, in particular roads, railways and systems for irrigation ;

i. to give particular priority to projects aimed at replanting forests, regenerating damaged farmland, and to implementing supra-regional action programmes in co-operation with the countries concerned to stop the spread of deserts and ecological deterioration, and to reclaiming desert areas already formed by making use of new technologies such as improved machinery and artificial fertilisers ;

j. to intensify efforts to improve health care and hygienic conditions ;

k. to consider population planning as a central issue in development strategies and plans, and to step up multilateral and bilateral aid to population planning programmes, particularly within the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) ;

l. to help African countries to promote the protection of human rights, and to this effect observe the principles laid down in the Third Lomé Convention, as well as in Recommendation 962 of the Parliamentary Assembly, on development co-operation and human rights, and in the Committee of Ministers' reply thereto.