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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION
TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

Report of the Executive Director

Addendum

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION
IN THE SUDANO-SAHELIAN REGION

Summary

The present report is submitted in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 39/168 B of 17 December 1984, in which the Assembly requested the Governing Council to make the necessary arrangements at each session for submitting a report to it, through the Economic and Social Council, on the implementation of the Plan of Action in the Sudano-Sahelian region. It is intended to serve as the basis for such a report to the Assembly at its fortieth session. It describes the implementation of the Plan in the Sudano-Sahelian region during 1984.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

Suggested action on this report is contained in the main report on this item (UNEP/GC.13/7).

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The year 1984 saw a severe intensification of the Sudano-Sahelian drought, now 17 years old, causing extensive hardship in various countries, including famine in Chad, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger and the Sudan and severe food shortages in the other countries of the region. These events painfully illustrated the fragility of the Sudano-Sahelian ecosystem and its vulnerability to drought and desertification. In parallel with ongoing emergency relief operations, the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) helped carry out rehabilitation and medium-to-long-term programmes aimed, inter alia, at mitigating the effect of the drought and preventing similar disasters in the future. It also intensified its desertification control activities.

2. Between its inception in 1979 and the end of 1984, UNSO had mobilized a total of \$77.9 million for desertification control; of this amount, \$56.2 million was mobilized under the United Nations Trust Fund for Sudano-Sahelian Activities. During 1984, UNSO mobilized and allocated a record total of \$19 million under this Trust Fund (excluding joint venture contributions by UNEP and UNDP) for desertification control activities. Although this \$19 million level surpassed the \$12.9 million mobilized in 1983, the lack of sufficient financing continued to be one of the principal constraints on the effective implementation of the Plan of Action in the region, and a considerable number of projects identified and formulated by UNSO still await financing.

II. MAIN FEATURES OF DESERTIFICATION CONTROL OPERATIONS IN THE SUDANO-SAHELIAN REGION

3. The main thrust of UNSO anti-desertification operations continued to be in the areas of deforestation control, range management, water resources management, soil protection and sand dune fixation, and planning and co-ordination, with emphasis on Government execution and popular participation.

Combating deforestation

4. To combat deforestation, UNSO supported activities in reforestation, the development of alternative sources of energy to fuelwood, and the promotion of fuel-efficient stoves. As part of its reforestation programme, UNSO obtained the agreement of the Government of the Netherlands to finance the second phase of a highly successful project for restocking the "gum belt" in the Kordofan region of the Sudan, which involves afforestation of degraded land by farmers with drought-resistant Acacia senegal, the source of gum arabic. The second phase of the project will extend until 1989, at a cost of \$2.1 million (7.2 million guilders). UNSO also allocated funds for Acacia senegal afforestation in the Darfur region of the Sudan with a \$400,000 contribution from the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND) and complementary financing from UNDP and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Other activities involving Acacia senegal included a national seminar on gum arabic in Mali in early 1984, followed by a project formulation mission in November 1984.

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5. A joint mission of UNSO and the Finnish International Development Agency visited Somalia in November and December and formulated a project involving community forestry in 10 villages in the Lower Shabelli region, silvicultural and species trials and the expansion of training facilities at Agfoi centre, and a forest inventory and the formulation of a forestry policy programme and management plan for the Lower Shabelli region. The project will cost \$2.9 million, of which \$1.8 million is expected to be channelled through UNSO and \$1.1 million under direct bilateral arrangements. In Burkina Faso, UNSO sent a formulation mission for the growing of *Acacia albida*, which, with its deep tap-roots, is drought-resistant, does not compete with food crops, improves the fertility of the soil through its nitrogen-fixing qualities and provides fodder and shade for livestock. UNSO is actively negotiating the financing of the project with a potential donor. In Kenya, the Government and UNSO formulated a series of interrelated projects for agroforestry development in the Kerio Valley.

6. Another means of combating deforestation that UNSO has been pursuing is the design, development and production of fuel-efficient cooking stoves to help reduce the demand for fuelwood. In Mali and the Niger in the western Sahel, UNSO provided assistance for seminars on the evaluation of different types of improved stoves and the selection of prototypes. In eastern Africa, UNSO completed the formulation of a regional programme of stove development and production in Kenya, Somalia and the Sudan. The programme, with an estimated cost of \$2.4 million, will be presented for financing to the fifth session of the Consultative Group for Desertification Control.

7. For Senegal, UNSO obtained the agreement of the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) to provide \$800,000 through the Trust Fund for a project for the exploitation and use of peat as fuel. For Somalia, DANIDA agreed to provide \$2.8 million through UNSO for the installation of wind turbines to provide electricity in Mogadiscio and in rural areas. Finally, for the Sudan, DANIDA agreed to contribute \$700,000 through UNSO for the establishment of pilot fuel briquette production plants and the promotion of improved cooking stoves. Over a 40-month period, the project will establish a pilot plant to manufacture ground-nut shell briquettes, determine the feasibility of using Sudan cotton stalks as a household fuel and, if feasible, also establish a plant for the production of cotton stalk briquettes. These projects, by decreasing the demand for wood-based fuels, should help reduce wood cutting and the consequent deforestation and desertification of the countryside.

Range management

8. UNSO and DANIDA actively discussed a possible \$2.7 million contribution from DANIDA through the Trust Fund to support a Centre for Ecological Monitoring in Senegal. The Centre monitors livestock activities and desertification processes with a view to developing more effective anti-desertification programmes. In the Sudan, UNSO launched a major programming mission to investigate the possibilities of increasing agropastoral production in three different locations of Darfur. UNDP has agreed to finance directly the recommended work in range management and production in the Wadi Abu Sunt area, at an estimated cost of approximately \$2.4 million over a three-year period.

Water resources management

9. UNSO obtained the agreement of the Italian Government to contribute a total of \$2.6 million to the Trust Fund for a project in the northern part of Cameroon. The project is designed to establish a general programme of environmental protection for the region; to reinforce the regional planning body in charge of environmental issues; to institute a programme of reforestation; and to develop and manage a water catchment basin in an integrated manner, with a view to demonstrating desertification control techniques. Project activities are scheduled to commence in 1985. In Mauritania, UNSO obtained the agreement of the Government of Norway to contribute \$880,000 (7.8 million kroner) to extend a programme for the rehabilitation and construction of earthen dams to help supplement - or substitute for - rainfall in various agricultural areas. For Guinea, UNSO also obtained a contribution of \$5.9 million to the Trust Fund from the Government of Italy for the construction of small earthen dams.

10. As a follow-up to an UNSO-led planning and programming mission that visited Benin in May 1984, UNSO fielded a formulation mission in October 1984 to complete a project proposal for small earthen dams and hydrogeological studies. In Niger, a formulation mission prepared a similar project for the construction of small earthen dams.

Soil protection and sand dune fixation

11. UNSO received approximately \$1.5 million (10.5 million kroner) through the Trust Fund from the Government of Norway for stopping sand encroachment in the Bilma region of the Niger. A start-up mission was fielded in July and August 1984 to launch the project. For Cape Verde, UNSO obtained a contribution from Norway of \$560,000 (4.9 million kroner) to continue desertification control activities in the Sao Joao Baptista valley involving reforestation, erosion control and water management operations. The Government of Norway also contributed \$777,000 (6.8 million kroner) to the Trust Fund for sand dune stabilization in Senegal. For Somalia, UNSO obtained a contribution of \$400,000 from AGFUND to expand ongoing sand dune fixation activities to include the town and vicinity of Adale, north of Mogadiscio.

12. In the Sudan, UNDP is planning to finance UNSO-formulated projects for the establishment of shelter-belts for the protection of irrigated lands in the northern region, and for the improvement and utilization of hard gardud soils (soils whose surface has hardened as a result of the combined effect of rainfall impact and wind erosion), which would relieve the pressure on less fertile lands. For the Niger, UNSO obtained a \$2.1 million (\$6.2 million guilder) contribution from the Government of the Netherlands to the Trust Fund for a research, production and training project for the utilization of appropriate agricultural equipment under Sahelian conditions. The project aims at improving agricultural techniques, especially in small irrigated and low-lying areas that act as water catchments, in the department of Tahoua.

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For Mali, UNSO obtained a contribution of \$120,000 from the Government of Italy for the installation of 150 manual pumps on existing wells, and is negotiating for a possible extension of the project to include the installation of additional pumps, at a cost of approximately \$1.3 million. An UNSO consultant also prepared a preliminary feasibility study for rehabilitation of the hydroelectric system and efforts to combat sand encroachment in Lake Faguibine.

Planning and co-ordination

13. In the Niger, UNSO supported a national debate on combating desertification as a step towards the formulation of a national plan of action. An UNSO/FAO mission visited Benin to initiate preparations for a seminar to formulate a national plan of action. In the Sudan, UNSO agreed to support the extension and reorganization of assistance to the National Desertification Control Co-ordination Unit: the Unit, which has been given an additional drought-related mandate in view of the severe drought that has stricken the Sudan, has prepared and is expanding a draft national plan to combat desertification, with UNSO assistance.

14. At the regional level, UNSO assisted, at the invitation of the Government of Senegal, in the preparation of a regional ministerial conference on desertification which was held in Dakar in July. The conference was attended by representatives of 22 countries, both north and south of the Sahara, as well as by various donors and United Nations and other international bodies, including UNDP, UNEP, FAO, the World Bank and the European Economic Community. It was a landmark in that for the first time it brought together countries from different subregions of Africa most affected by desertification, providing a unique opportunity for dialogue. Among the results of the conference was the decision to propose a special item, "Countries stricken by desertification and drought", for inclusion in the agenda of the thirty-ninth session of the General Assembly. Subsequently, the General Assembly, in resolution 39/208 of 17 December 1984, called for various actions by the international community to assist in the fight against desertification and drought.

15. Following the adoption of Governing Council decision 12/10 of 28 May 1984, by which Ghana and Togo were included in the desertification control mandate of UNSO, a preliminary mission was sent to Ghana in November to formulate a project for the growing of *Acacia albida* in the northern part of the country. Arrangements were made for the fielding of full-scale planning and programming missions to Ghana and Togo in early 1985, during the dry season when the manifestations of desertification are most evident.

16. UNSO also participated in a special UNDP mission to Ethiopia in December, and is helping to design a rehabilitation programme and plans to cope with future droughts and desertification, as a complementary measure to the current emergency assistance programme.
