ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Sixth meeting of the Technical Preparatory Committee of the Whole

Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, 15-22 April 1985

Item 11 of the provisional agenda*

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Twentieth session of the Commission/
Eleventh meeting of the Conference of Ministers

Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, 25-29 April 1985

Item 11 of the provisional agenda*

RESOLUTIONS AND DECISIONS ADOPTED BY THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL AT ITS SECOND REGULAR SESSION OF 1984 AND BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS THIRTY-NINTH SESSION IN THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SECTORS THAT ARE OF INTEREST TO AFRICA

*E/ECA/TPCM.6/1/Rev.1
E/ECA/CM.11/1/Rev.1
1. The objective of the present document is to report to the Technical Preparatory Committee of the Whole and through it to the Conference of Ministers (a) on the action taken by the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1984 on the resolutions adopted by the Conference of Ministers at its tenth meeting addressed to the Council; (b) on the decisions adopted by the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session on the recommendation of the Council concerning these resolutions; and (c) on other resolutions and decisions of the Council and the General Assembly in the economic and social sectors which are of interest to Africa.

2. At its tenth meeting, which was also the nineteenth session of the Commission, held at Addis Ababa from 24 to 28 May 1984, the Conference of Ministers adopted 43 resolutions, 10 of which were addressed to the Economic and Social Council because they called for action by the Council. These are: United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa [resolution 487 (XIX)]; development of the African Remote Sensing Programme [resolution 488 (XIX)]; implementation of the programme for the Industrial Development Decade for Africa [resolution 481 (XIX)]; International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace [resolution 494 (XIX)]; Water Resources Development and Follow-up to the 'Vár del Plata Action Plan [resolution 497 (XIX)]; Strengthening ECA as an Executing Agency [resolution 505 (XIX)]; Europe-Africa Permanent Link through the Strait of Gibraltar [resolution 507 (XIX)]; Biennial Report of the Executive Secretary [resolution 508 (XIX)]; Women and Development in Africa; Mobilization of Human and Financial Resources for the ECA Women's Programme beyond the United Nations Decade [resolution 512 (XIX)].

3. In addition to the resolutions mentioned above, the Conference of Ministers also adopted a Special Memorandum on Africa's Economic and Social Crisis as a conclusion to its deliberations on this specific item on its agenda. The Special Memorandum was also submitted to the Economic and Social Council for action.

4. The second regular session of the Economic and Social Council was held at Geneva from 4 to 27 July 1984 and had on its agenda, in addition to the item on regional co-operation under which the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions report on the activities of their respective commissions, a separate item on the critical economic situation in Africa. This was a follow-up to the Council's decision taken at its organizational session of February 1984 to give priority consideration to the African crisis at its second regular session of 1984, as a response to the United Nations Secretary-General's initiative to sensitize the international community to the plight of the continent.

5. At the opening of the session, African delegations hoped for concrete proposals on the critical economic situation in Africa since the Secretary-General, in his address to the opening meeting, devoted a large part of his statement to the origin and magnitude of the crisis, and recalled the appeal he launched for an additional and more concerted effort by the international community to support African Governments' own attempts to overcome the crisis. There was a need for the international community, the Secretary-General said, to respond urgently to the need for food aid and related emergency assistance to overcome the immediate problems of hunger; to provide additional financial
resources to meet the balance-of-payments requirements of a large number of countries; to consider various measures to alleviate the debt problems of many countries; to make additional long-term development finance available, especially to the agricultural sector; and to expedite action on stabilizing and strengthening commodity markets and earnings. The special debate on the critical economic situation in Africa was scheduled to take place from 12 to 17 July 1983.

6. Meanwhile, during the consideration by the Council of the item on regional co-operation, the Executive Secretary had to explain the reasons behind the poor performance of the African economies, as seen by ECA. In general, he said, the economic crisis in Africa was characterized by a persistent drop in the rate of growth of overall output of goods and services over the years. Among the factors which played havoc with the development efforts of African countries were: the effects of the severe world recession in 1982 and 1983 on their productive capacity and their consequent inability to earn the required foreign exchange to purchase raw materials and imported factor inputs; the rising interest rates which had compounded the debt problem; the decline, in real terms, of official development assistance and net capital inflows; and the generally slack world commodity market. He expressed the hope that the international community would come to the rescue of the African economies before it was too late. It was in recognition of the seriousness of the situation that the ECA Conference of Ministers, at its tenth meeting, had adopted 43 resolutions which took into consideration all the continent's preoccupations in the economic, social and humanitarian sectors. To be fully implemented, he added, 10 of these resolutions needed the full support of the Council, of the General Assembly, indeed, of the international community.

7. However, when considering ECA's 10 resolutions submitted to it for action, the First (Economic) Committee of the Council was not at all sensitive to the arguments presented by the Secretary-General, the Executive Secretary and the African delegations in favour of special treatment for Africa. With the exception of the resolutions on the United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa and the Industrial Development Decade for Africa, the resolutions were adopted only on the understanding that they would have no financial implications. For this reason, amendments were introduced in the operative paragraphs requesting additional resources from the General Assembly. There were arguments that in these times of budgetary constraint, regional commissions should "review their programmes with a view to reallocating resources".

8. With the efforts being concentrated on the critical economic situation in Africa and the African countries were expecting a strong declaration from the Council as the outcome of its debate, it was felt that pressing for additional resources for the implementation of the other resolutions would be anti-climactic. The draft declaration being negotiated among the various regional groups in the Council was a comprehensive text which addressed itself to all the problem areas responsible for Africa's backwardness in socio-economic development. It was, therefore, with great disappointment in the dying minutes of the session that African delegations learnt that the Council could not reach consensus on the draft declaration and had to refer the whole matter to the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session. (A brief report on the special debate on the critical economic situation in Africa by the Economic and Social Council is submitted under item 4 of the agenda of the present meeting of the Technical Preparatory Committee of the Whole (TEPCOW).
9. The thirty-ninth session of the General Assembly, the first part of which was held from 12 September to 19 December 1984, included in its agenda an item on the critical economic situation in Africa. As an account of the debate is being submitted under item 1 of the agenda of Tenth Committee, it might be sufficient here to say that the Assembly, in concluding its debate on this subject, adopted resolution 39/29 on the critical economic situation in Africa, the annex of which contains a Declaration on the situation. Before analyzing the Declaration, let us observe that the international community could not have remained indifferent to the crisis situation in Africa. There was a dramatic change in the situation between July 1984, when the Economic and Social Council failed to respond favourably to the hopes of African Governments, and December 1984 when the Declaration was adopted. In the mean time, the crisis had assumed alarming proportions. The death toll from famine and starvation in many African countries was soaring high, with children, women and old people accounting for most of the victims. Thanks to the media in the Western European and North American countries, which started publishing reports on the drama unfolding day after day in the drought-stricken African countries, the world became aware of the seriousness of the crisis situation in Africa.

10. The Declaration opens with the following words: "We the States Members of the United Nations express our deep concern at the profound economic and social crisis that Africa is experiencing..." It goes on to say: "We are alarmed by the spectre of widespread famine hanging over many African countries..." Alarming shortages in food and water supplies and the denudation of livestock have led to the displacement of millions of people within and across borders.

11. After trying to understand the causes of the crisis, the Declaration spells out some measures aimed at alleviating the situation. It recognized that emergency relief aid on a massive scale was urgently needed in the following areas: additional food aid and other emergency supplies, together with the technical and financial assistance necessary for their transportation, storage and distribution to the affected populations; improvement of water supplies; improvement of health and nutrition, particularly for vulnerable groups, including refugees and displaced persons; safeguarding national nuclei of herds of livestock; establishment of income-generating projects and promotion of new and renewable energy projects, particularly in rural areas. The Declaration also recognized that, in view of the high priority attached by African countries to food and agriculture, the first urgent task was the early attainment of national and collective self-reliance in food production. Also important was the need to undertake urgent action to speed up and support the recovery and rehabilitation process in African countries, especially of the agricultural and industrial sectors and physical and social infrastructure. The Declaration called for increased resources for rapid implementation of the Industrial Development Decade for Africa and the United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa. The Declaration contains the commitment of the States Members of the United Nations to give due consideration to other matters associated with the present economic crisis of Africa such as debt problems, the decrease in concessional financial flows and official development assistance, the implementation of the Substantial New Programme of Action for the 1980s for the Least Developed Countries, the stabilization of commodity prices on long-term trends and the increase in the use of compensatory financing arrangements for export earnings shortfalls.
12. The 27-paragraph long Declaration concludes with the following words: "We are convinced that unless urgent action is taken, the rapidly deteriorating situation in Africa may well lead to disaster. We are, therefore, fully committed to supporting the efforts of African countries to meet the dual challenge of survival and development by taking concerted and urgent measures commensurate with the needs outlined in the present Declaration." In operative paragraph 2 of resolution 39/29, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to take appropriate measures for the full and speedy implementation of the objectives contained in the Declaration.

13. The other resolutions of direct concern to Africa adopted by the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session are the following:

Resolution 39/165: Critical Situation of Food and Agriculture in Africa

As in previous years, in this resolution the General Assembly expressed concern at the dramatic deterioration in food and agricultural production in Africa, as a result of which there has been an alarming increase in the number of people exposed to hunger, malnutrition and even starvation. The Assembly also noted its awareness of the fact that Africa's food and agriculture crisis was exacerbated by the adverse impact of prolonged drought and accelerating desertification. Moreover, African countries have been hit by adverse external forces, including falling trade earnings resulting from the global economic recession, worsening terms of trade and the debt crisis. Consequently, the General Assembly urged the international community, in view of the continued critical food-supply situation in a large number of African countries, to sustain and increase its efforts to provide the additional food aid required on an emergency basis, as well as technical and other forms of assistance needed in that connexion. The Assembly also called upon the international community to continue to support efforts by African countries at the national, subregional and regional levels to increase food production through, inter alia, the provision, on a priority and long-term basis, of additional financial and technical assistance to Africa by organizations of the United Nations system, such as IFAD, UNDP and other organizations involved in the financing of agricultural development, and through an increase in lending by the World Bank to the agricultural sector in Africa.

Resolution 39/230: United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa

As a follow-up to its previous resolutions on the Transport and Communications Decade, the General Assembly adopted resolution 39/230 by which it endorsed the programme for the second phase (1984-1988) of the Decade approved by the Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa and invited all Governments, particularly those of the developed countries, and international financial institutions to increase substantially their financial support for the programme for the second phase of the Decade, to accord particular attention to the financing and implementation of transport and communications projects of the land-locked countries; to participate fully and positively in the scheduled technical consultative meetings; and to provide financial and technical resources on liberal terms to African countries for the implementation of the programme for the second phase of the Decade. The resolution also appealed to the international community and
international financial institutions to provide the Economic Commission for
Africa with experts for short terms who would carry out specialized activities
in the programme for the Decade, including the preparation of project documents,
and to UNDP to continue to provide ECA with funds during the next programming
cycle. Finally, the Secretary-General was requested to provide ECA with adequate
financial resources from the regular budget of the United Nations to enable it
to fully implement the activities previously mandated in paragraph 9 of General
Assembly resolution 38/150, to ensure the preparation of relevant financial and
technical documents of selected projects for the programme for the second phase
of the Decade, and to ensure prompt follow-up on interest expressed by govern-
ments and international financial institutions in financing Decade projects during
technical consultative meetings.

Resolution 39/233: Industrial Development Decade for Africa

16. Because of the low level of the industrialization process in Africa and
because of the importance of the role of the manufacturing sector in the develop-
ment process, the General Assembly, by its resolution 35/668 of 15 December 1980,
proclaimed the 1980s as the Industrial Development Decade for Africa. Follow-up
resolutions adopted at subsequent sessions of the Assembly have invariably called
for full implementation of the Decade. In its most recent such resolution,
adopted on 18 December 1984, the Assembly after considering that the provision of
adequate levels of resources by donor countries will contribute immensely to
promoting the accelerated industrial development of African countries, endorsed
the appeal made by the seventh Conference of African Ministers of Industry, held
at Addis Ababa from 26 to 28 March 1984, for the allocation of at least $5 million,
on a permanent annual basis, from the regular budget of the United Nations in
order to enable the United Nations Industrial Development Organization to assist
the African countries and the intergovernmental organizations concerned in the
implementation of the programme for the Decade. Unfortunately, the request made
by the Conference of African Ministers of Industry, endorsed by the ECA Conference
of Ministers in its resolution 491 (XIX) for a similar arrangement to be made for
ECA to enable it and its UNDP/Cs to assist member States at subregional level in
their consultations, negotiations and investment promotion of multicity projects
has not received a favourable response from the General Assembly. However, the
Assembly urged the international community, in particular the developed countries
and international financial institutions, to intensify and increase their technical
and financial assistance to African countries for the implementation of programmes
and the execution of projects at the national, subregional and regional levels,
in the context of the Decade.

Resolution 39/174: Implementation of the Substantial New Programme of Action
for the 1980s for the Least Developed Countries

17. The reason why this resolution is of direct concern to Africa is obvious:
out of the world's 36 least developed countries, 26 are to be found in Africa.
In this resolution, the General Assembly emphasized that, in view of their
deteriorating socio-economic situation, the least developed countries need the
urgent and special attention of the international community and its large-scale
support on a continuous basis to enable them to progress towards self-reliant development; consistent with the plans and programmes of each least developed country. The Assembly reaffirmed the commitment of the international community to the Substantial New Programme of Action and urged all countries, international institutions and others concerned to implement fully and effectively their commitments under the Programme. It decided to convene a high-level meeting of the Intergovernmental Group on the Least Developed Countries of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development from 30 September to 11 October 1985 to carry out, inter alia, the mid-term global review of the implementation of SNDA and readjust, as appropriate, the programme for the second half of the 1980s in order to ensure its full implementation. The resolution requested the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, in conformity with paragraph 123 of SNDA, to continue, in close collaboration with the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, the executive secretaries of the regional commissions and the lead agencies for the aid consultative groups, to ensure at the secretariat level the full mobilization and co-ordination and follow-up of SNDA, taking into account, in particular, the mid-term global review.

Resolutions on "special assistance to African countries"


Resolution 39/236: Section III: Conference facilities of the Economic Commission for Africa at Addis Ababa

19. In section III of its resolution 39/236, the General Assembly approved, in principle, the project on expansion of conference facilities of ECA at an estimated cost of $73,501,000 (excluding the cost of the Planning Unit at ECA), and decided
that the appropriation of $3,120,000 approved for the biennium 1984-1985 in order to formulate detailed designs should be placed in a construction account and any unexpended balance carried forward until the completion of the project.

Other resolutions

20. Member States may wish to note the following resolutions which are of general interest to developing countries and which are not reviewed in this paper because they do not require any specific action from the Commission:

39/175: Immediate measures in favour of the developing countries;
39/208: Countries stricken by desertification and drought;
39/209: Specific action related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries;
39/210: Economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries;
39/216: Activities of the United Nations system in support of economic co-operation among developing countries;
39/228: International Conference on Population, 1984;
39/22: International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace;
39/25: Question of Aging;
39/126: Improvement of the situation of women in rural areas;
39/127: Senior women's programme officers posts at the regional commissions.

(Personal commissions should note this last resolution by which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the executive secretaries of the regional commission, to reassess all individual work programmes with a view to incorporating women's concerns at all levels in the overall programmes of work of each commission, and to allocate sufficient budgetary resources to staff, including where possible, by redeployment, within the context of the 1986-1987 programme budget to regularize all temporary and permanent senior women's programme officer posts at the regional commissions before the end of the Decade, in order to allow for the integration of policies and programmes concerning women).

39/128: Integration of women in all aspects of development;