

REPORT

Marrakech,
Morocco,
11-15 June
1990

Sixteenth FAO Regional Conference for Africa



**Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations**

FAO Member Nations in the Africa region (as at May 1990)

Algeria	Gambia	Niger
Angola	Ghana	Nigeria
Benin	Guinea	Rwanda
Botswana	Guinea-Bissau	Sao Tome and Principe
Burkina Faso	Kenya	Senegal
Burundi	Lesotho	Seychelles
Cameroon	Liberia	Sierra Leone
Cape Verde	Libya	Sudan
Central African Republic	Madagascar	Swaziland
Chad	Malawi	Tanzania
Comoros	Mali	Togo
Congo	Mauritania	Tunisia
Côte d'Ivoire	Mauritius	Uganda
Equatorial Guinea	Morocco	Zaire
Ethiopia	Mozambique	Zambia
Gabon	Namibia	Zimbabwe

Date and place of FAO Regional Conferences for Africa

First	— Lagos, Nigeria, 3-12 November 1960
Second	— Tunis, Tunisia, 1-10 November 1962
Third	— Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 3-15 September 1964
Fourth	— Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 9-19 November 1966
Fifth	— Kampala, Uganda, 18-29 November 1968
Sixth	— Algiers, Algeria, 17 September - 3 October 1970
Seventh	— Libreville, Gabon, 14-30 September 1972
Eighth	— Rose Hill, Mauritius, 1-17 August 1974
Ninth	— Freetown, Sierra Leone, 2-12 November 1976
Tenth	— Arusha, Tanzania, 18-28 September 1978
Eleventh	— Lomé, Togo, 16-27 June 1980
Twelfth	— Algiers, Algeria, 22 September - 2 October 1982
Thirteenth	— Harare, Zimbabwe, 16-25 July 1984
Fourteenth	— Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, 2-11 September 1986
Fifteenth	— Moka, Mauritius, 26 April - 4 May 1988
Sixteenth	— Marrakech, Morocco, 11-15 June 1990

Report of the

SIXTEENTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR AFRICA

Marrakech, Morocco, 11 - 15 June 1990

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Rome, 1990

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SUMMARY OF THE MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

Country Statements and General Debate

For the Attention of Governments

The Conference,

1. expressed its grave concern over the recent appearance of the screwworm fly in Libya, which was a potential threat to European and African livestock production unless effective control measures were taken on an emergency basis, and appealed to donor countries to contribute the necessary resources to the trust fund created by FAO for the campaign to eradicate this scourge (paras 23 and 46).
2. congratulated FAO for its role in coordinating the locust control campaign, and in the control of the major livestock diseases (para 23).
3. underscored the need to take new and meaningful debt relief measures (para 25).
4. expressing its satisfaction with the recent improvement in big power political relations and the relinquishing of confrontation in favour of cooperation and a joint effort for development, expressed its concern about a possible retargeting of financial resources to Eastern Europe to the detriment of Africa (paras 26 and 38).
5. stressed the need to improve infrastructures (transport and communication networks, storage facilities), support, credit and marketing services, and intra-African trade (para 29).
6. again urged those member countries which had not yet settled their regular contributions to pay their arrears so that the Programme of FAO approved by the Twenty-fifth Conference of FAO could be implemented fully and without delay (paras 30 and 45).

For the Attention of FAO

The Conference,

7. acclaimed the measures taken by the Director-General of FAO to control the screwworm fly, including the establishment of a Screwworm Emergency Centre for North Africa and of a trust fund, and asked that the efforts coordinated by FAO be pursued with the support of the donor community in collaboration with the other international organizations concerned (paras 23 and 46).
8. supported the efforts of the Director-General for increased FAO participation and involvement in the formulation of structural adjustment strategies (para 27).

9. acknowledged the importance of maintaining and reinforcing FAO's Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP), which allowed FAO to cope with both the needs of Member Nations and emergency situations (para 31).

Report on FAO Activities in the Region 1988-89

For the Attention of Governments

The Conference,

10. was of the opinion that all changes in the responsibility of the CFA should be accompanied by a more balanced representation within this Committee (para 40).
11. hoped that emergency food aid would continue to be granted without any political strings (para 40).
12. regretted the initiatives taken by certain delegations during the discussions on the Programme of Work and Budget 1990-91 with a view to influencing the use of and reducing TCP resources, to the detriment of the developing countries (para 41).

For the Attention of FAO

The Conference,

13. expressed the hope that in view of decisions on proposed changes in reimbursement of UNDP project-related costs, the existing complementarity between UNDP and FAO would be reinforced (para 39).
14. recommended that the FAO Regional Office in Africa be strengthened and more responsibility delegated to it in order to effectively promote regional and subregional cooperation, in close partnership with the various regional and subregional bodies. It likewise recommended that the FAO country offices be strengthened (para 42).
15. appealed to the Director-General to explore ways and means to increase cooperation with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in the analysis and formulation of future structural adjustment programmes (para 43).
16. recommended that a comprehensive follow-up programme of the various studies, field investigations and recommendations emanating from the various authorities be prepared and that FAO intensify its support to research at the national, regional and international levels (para 44).

Strategies for Combatting Malnutrition in Africa

For the Attention of Governments

The Conference,

17. stressed that the underlying principle of a long-term strategy to improve food and nutrition in the Region should be to make nutrition an integral component of economic development plans in general and agricultural development plans in particular (para 51).

18. recommended that top priority be given to training qualified people to review the food and nutrition situation and to formulate short, medium and long-term strategies (para 52).
19. stressed the urgent need to strengthen African regional and subregional cooperation, particularly in the fields of food technology, marketing and storage, in order to guarantee food quality and stable supplies (para 53).
20. recommended measures to promote greater productivity and higher incomes for women, particularly through access to improved plant and animal species, the right training, and for specific assistance from the specialized home economics and extension services (para 55).
21. underscored the significant role which nutrition education systems tailored to local situations played in improving nutrition through the carefully planned utilization of household resources, and in avoiding the appearance of aberrant dietary behaviour (para 57).
22. stressed the need to develop teaching materials in local languages and to make use of modern media to get across the message about a healthy diet to the mass of the population. Rural radio had proven highly effective in this context, particularly among illiterate populations (para 57).
23. appealed to donors to finance the quality control and staff training infrastructures necessary to allow member countries to meet import standards for their commodities (para 58).

For the Attention of FAO

The Conference,

24. approved the incorporation of a nutritional component into early warning programmes; it also approved the utilization of nutritional indicators as part of a proposed global nutrition surveillance system (para 56).
25. recommended that its conclusions and recommendations on strategies to improve the food and nutrition situation in Africa be duly taken into account in the preparatory work for the International Conference on Nutrition (para 59).

The Conservation and Rehabilitation of African Lands: An International Scheme

For the Attention of Governments

The Conference,

26. supported the recommendations of the Scheme and endorsed it as a whole while asking FAO to take the necessary steps to implement it (para 74).

27. emphasized the need for a new approach mobilizing the land users themselves, whose active and involved participation was essential to the success of any land conservation and rehabilitation activity (para 76).
28. invited nations to share the burden of the work and to pool their knowledge and experience of land conservation (para 81).
29. recognized the value of the ongoing technical cooperation between some industrialized countries and FAO on the subject of soil conservation. One example, the recent French initiative "Observatoire du Sahara et du Sahel" might constitute a useful adjunct to the Scheme under discussion (para 84).

For the Attention of FAO

The Conference,

30. endorsed the Scheme as a whole while asking FAO to take the necessary steps to implement it (para 74).
31. hoped that FAO would provide leadership and coordination in the field of land conservation and rehabilitation in Africa, given the fact that the problems of land degradation transcend national boundaries (para 81).
32. expressed the wish for an international conference to provide the opportunity to review these problems and arrive at the necessary solutions (para 82).

Representation of the Region in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

For the Attention of Governments

The Conference,

33. elected the Kingdom of Morocco (Mr H. Faraj, Director of the Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique) to represent the Region in the CGIAR from 1991 to 1994 (para 86).

Follow-up on Aid-in-Kind

For the Attention of Governments

The Conference,

34. endorsed the analysis and recommendations of the Study, which were truly relevant to Africa's needs (para 88).
35. appealed to the donor community for greater support to this form of assistance (para 89).

For the Attention of FAO

The Conference,

36. requested that FAO strengthen its efforts to gain donor acceptance for expanded aid-in-kind under the conditions recommended by the Study, and for expansion of the relevant training programmes (para 89).
37. requested that FAO continue to keep the Conference informed of progress and in due course undertake a more detailed evaluation of donor and recipient responses (para 89).

Report on the Locust Control Campaign

For the Attention of Governments

The Conference,

38. stressed that a medium- and long-term strategy capable of checking any upsurge of locusts in the Region had to be based on preventive control of the desert locust in its permanent habitats (para 94).
39. recommended that locust research be granted top priority in order to advance knowledge and understanding of all aspects of locust control (para 95).
40. recommended the pursuit of efforts underway in this area to find acceptable alternatives to the utilization of pesticides to control locusts (para 96).

For the Attention of FAO

The Conference,

41. expressed satisfaction with FAO's various operations and actions in the area of locust control, undertaken in close cooperation with the countries concerned and the international community. It called upon FAO to pursue its collaboration with the countries concerned and with IFAD for the purpose of finalizing the regional project for long-term prevention and control, and coordinating the mobilization of the financial resources necessary to execute the project (para 98).

Implementation of the Programme of Action of the World Conference
on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development

For the Attention of Governments

The Conference,

42. generally approved FAO's proposal that the Seventeenth FAO Regional Conference for Africa have as a major theme the review of progress in agrarian reform and rural development (para 102).

For the Attention of FAO

The Conference,

43. adopted the proposal that agrarian reform be a major theme of the Seventeenth FAO Regional Conference for Africa (para 102).

Date and place of the Seventeenth Regional Conference for Africa

For the Attention of FAO

The Conference,

44. took note of Ghana's second invitation and Rwanda's offer to host the Seventeenth FAO Regional Conference for Africa, and asked that the Director-General review these invitations with the member countries concerned and set the date and place of the forthcoming Conference in accordance with the usual procedure (para 103).

INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

Organization of the Conference

1. The Sixteenth FAO Regional Conference for Africa was held in the Conference Hall of Hotel Atlas Asni, Marrakech (Morocco) from 11 to 15 June 1990.
2. Delegates from 43 Member Nations of the Region, including 28 countries represented at ministerial level, as well as observers from countries outside of the Region, the Permanent Observer from the Holy See, an observer from the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and observers from intergovernmental organizations attended the Conference. A list of participants is given Appendix B; while Appendix C contains a list of Conference documents.
3. The independent Chairman of the Council of FAO attended the Conference.

Inaugural Ceremony

4. In his opening statement, Mr. Edouard Saouma, Director-General of FAO, thanked the Government of His Majesty the King of Morocco for his warm hospitality and for the excellent facilities made available to the Conference. He then invited the Moroccan Prime Minister, His Excellency Azzedine Laraki, to take the floor.
5. In his opening statement, the Prime Minister welcomed Delegates on behalf of His Majesty, King Hassan II. He paid special tribute to FAO under the able leadership of Edouard Saouma who had spearheaded the development of world agriculture, particularly in Africa. He pointed out that in most countries in Africa, per capita income averaged about US\$ 400, that population growth easily outstripped domestic production, and that the dominance of the agricultural sector in African economies remained unchallenged.
6. He regretted that despite Africa's considerable natural resources the economic situation of the Continent remained precarious under the effect of factors such as: malnutrition, natural and manmade disasters, pests and diseases, the increasingly heavy debt burden, and the continued decline of the terms of trade.
7. The Prime Minister also referred to changes in international economic relations, particularly in the context of the multilateral trade negotiations of the General Agreement on Trades and Tariffs (GATT), and the recent political changes in Eastern Europe. He expressed the hope that these changes would result in better world economic relations, particularly through improved access to developed country markets and better terms of trade. The Prime Minister exhorted the African countries to greater vigilance and closer cooperation. He urged FAO to intensify its assistance to African agriculture, particularly through the preparation of sectorial research and studies, and to help in the preparation and execution of projects, with particular attention to environmental protection and efforts to control desertification, locusts and the major livestock diseases. He

then outlined the development plans approved by His Majesty's Government to modernize Moroccan agriculture, particularly in the sectors of irrigation, training, research, environmental protection, the response to natural disasters, and economic incentives.

Election of the Chairman, Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur

8. At its first working session, the Conference unanimously elected His Excellency, Othmane Demnati, Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform of the Kingdom of Morocco, Chairman of the Conference. In a short address, His Excellency Othmane Demnati welcomed Delegates to Morocco and thanked them for having confided the guidance of the Conference to him. Requesting the support and cooperation of the delegations, he wished the Conference full success in its deliberations.

9. The Conference then elected Mr Joao Pereira Silva, Minister for Rural Development and Fisheries, Cape Verde, as First Vice-Chairman, and Mr A.L. Thoahlane, Minister of Health, Lesotho, as Second Vice-Chairman. Mr M.J. Tchicaya, Ambassador of Congo in Italy and Permanent Representative to FAO, was elected Rapporteur.

Adoption of the Agenda and Timetable

10. The Conference adopted the Agenda and Timetable. The Agenda is reproduced in Appendix A.

Statement by the Director-General of FAO

11. In his opening address, Mr Edouard Saouma, Director-General of FAO, paid tribute to His Majesty, King Hassan II and thanked the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco for its generous hospitality.

12. The Director-General then referred to the present situation in Africa, which was and basically remained a supplier of raw materials. Not only had non-renewable resources been virtually mined, the overexploitation of renewable resources increasingly outstripped their natural capacity to regenerate.

13. The Director-General drew the attention of the Conference to the growing gap between the high annual population growth rate of 3 percent and the correspondingly smaller increase in agricultural production; an annual 2 percent. He recalled that Africa's physical resources were limited; only 20 percent of the land was suitable for agriculture. Nevertheless, 10 million km² of land currently unproductive due to disease vectors could be cultivated if reclaimed. Natural or manmade disasters, the resurgence of diseases and plagues old and new, recurrent drought and civil strife, which had decimated millions of Africans, continued to hamstring the development of African agriculture. The Director-General informed the Conference that there were currently no less than 20 African countries experiencing situations of emergency.

14. The Director-General also referred to the unfavourable economic climate: declining demand, skidding prices - which perpetuated the Continent's state of dependency, agricultural export prices being set outside the Region.

15. Internal difficulties were aggravated by external constraints: declining terms of trade, the debt burden, the adverse world economic situation - entailing a regression in world markets. To surmount these difficulties, the Director-General recommended a series of measures, especially debt relief, which had so far given rise to initiatives which, though praiseworthy, were simply not enough. He recommended setting remunerative and stable prices for Africa's raw material exports and the implementation of realistic domestic strategies tailored to the specific circumstances and requirements of individual countries.

16. The Director-General appealed to the Conference for a critical reappraisal of the impact of food aid, particularly its influence on agricultural development. He asked for a thorough analysis of aid-in-kind in the form of agricultural inputs, and for the tireless pursuit of its objectives. He also mentioned the need for regional cooperation in order to develop South-South trade in Africa. He underscored the need for manpower training - the vital human capital essential to development.

17. As one encouraging sign, the Director-General mentioned Namibia's achievement of political independence and informed the Conference that he had already opened an FAO Office in Namibia. He also mentioned the recent advent of political détente in South Africa, which hopefully would lead to the complete and definitive disappearance of apartheid.

18. The Director-General also referred to FAO's work in Africa, making special mention of the threat to livestock from screwworm fly. Concerning this, FAO had established a special unit modelled on the Emergency Centre for Locust Operations (ECLLO), responsible for mobilizing financial resources and coordinating operations. He regretted, however, that current financial difficulties hampered the work of the Organization and asked delegations to add their voices in an appeal to countries in arrears with their contributions to the Organization to honour their obligations.

19. Before concluding his statement, the Director-General referred to two items on the Conference Agenda, i.e., combatting malnutrition and land degradation. He drew the attention of the Conference to the deleterious impact of malnutrition on human health and welfare, and recommended the adoption of measures and mechanisms to reduce malnutrition and environmental degradation. A full text of the Director-General's address is attached as Appendix D.

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

Country Statements and General Debate on the Food and Agriculture Situation in Africa

20. Country Statements were presented by Delegates from the following 31 countries (in order of presentation): Nigeria, Malawi, Niger, Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, Mali, Benin, Togo, Mauritania, Cameroon, Zaire, Lesotho, Guinea, Angola, Liberia, Congo, Zambia, Tunisia, Madagascar, Côte d'Ivoire, Sudan, Ethiopia, Algeria, Tanzania, Gabon, Libya, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Rwanda and Morocco. The Country Statement of the Delegation of the Central African Republic was filed with the Regional Conference.

21. The Independent Chairman of the Council of FAO addressed the Conference. Statements were also made by Representatives of the Organization of African Unity, France, the United States of America and Egypt.

22. The Conference expressed concern with the aggravation of hunger, malnutrition and poverty on the Continent. The structural weaknesses of African economies had not made it possible to tackle these problems to date.

23. The vagaries of climate and changes in the environment also had a decisive impact. Drought had become increasingly frequent and devastating desertification had accelerated. The steady decline in soil fertility and the proliferation of plant and animal diseases had further exacerbated the situation on the Continent. In this connection, the Conference expressed its profound concern with the recent appearance of screwworm fly in Libya, which represented a danger to African and European livestock unless effective control measures were taken on an emergency basis. The Conference therefore acknowledged, with appreciation, action taken by Libya to control this scourge. The Conference also acclaimed the measures taken by the Director-General of FAO, including the establishment of a Trust Fund and a Screwworm Emergency Centre for North Africa. The Conference appealed to donor countries to contribute enough funds to this campaign to eradicate the scourge. FAO was also commended for its role in coordinating the locust control campaign and in controlling the major livestock diseases.

24. Steadily increasing population pressure on the land, the consequent expansion of people towards more vulnerable marginal areas and the encroachment of forest resources were the cause of an accelerated degradation of land and plant cover. Rural/urban population shifts and the aging of the present population remaining on the land had an adverse effect on agricultural production.

25. These difficulties were compounded by an unfavourable international economic climate (low export prices, high import prices, soaring indebtedness, high international interest rates). The Conference therefore underscored the need to take new and meaningful debt relief measures.

26. Other factors hampering economic recovery were the flight of capital and exorbitant debt servicing. At the same time, the Continent needed substantial new resources to obviate the land and water degradation jeopardizing its future. The Conference expressed its satisfaction with the recent improvement in big power political relations, and the relinquishing of confrontation in favour of cooperation and a joint effort toward development. The Conference, however was concerned about a possible retargetting of financial resources to Eastern Europe, to Africa's detriment.

27. The Conference mentioned the potential negative impact of structural adjustment programmes on agricultural production and the rural population. It supported the efforts of the Director-General for increased FAO participation and involvement in the formulation of structural adjustment policies.

28. Population growth made agricultural intensification imperative, and this included intensified use of agricultural inputs and improved and more effective reduction systems.

29. The Conference stressed the need to improve infrastructures (communication and transport networks, storage facilities) and services for support, credit and marketing, and to increase intra-African trade.

30. The Conference welcomed FAO's unflagging support to countries in their efforts to develop their agriculture. Nonetheless, the Conference noted that some Member States had still not settled their regular contributions. The Conference therefore again urged these countries to pay their arrears and settle their regular contribution so as to avoid new cuts in FAO's programmes.

31. The Conference particularly acknowledged the importance of maintaining and reinforcing FAO's Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP), which allowed FAO to confront the requirements of Member Nations as well as emergency situations.

32. In the Country Statements many delegations stressed the scope of national efforts in the following areas: rational utilization of natural resources; conservation and rehabilitation of degraded lands; environmental protection; preparation of the Tropical Forestry Action Plan; reforestation; erosion control; protection and conservation of fishery resources; and the role of women in development. The details of these interventions appear in the respective items of the Agenda.

Report of FAO Activities in the Region 1988-89 ¹

33. The Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Africa presented the Report on FAO Activities in the Region in 1988-89. He briefly described the general trends of the situation in the Region, especially agricultural and food production, and summarized FAO's activities.

34. He particularly stressed the increasingly uncertain climate, population growth, increasing soil degradation, the decline of plant cover, the various natural and other disasters (locust infestations, local droughts, political strife), the persistent decline in the terms of trade, onerous debt-servicing, and the reduced flow of funds to Africa. He reported to the Conference on FAO's reduction of its activities in Africa as a result of the financial crisis due to the non-payment of statutory contributions by some Member Nations. He pointed out that despite this unprecedented financial crisis, the Director-General had continued to give Africa real priority in the budgets and programmes of FAO.

35. Good rains had boosted agricultural production in the Region, and led to a larger number of countries with food surpluses. Average per capita food production, on the other hand, had not improved.

36. The Regional Representative then summarized FAO's activities in the Region in each sector (natural resources, crops, livestock, research and technology, food and nutrition, agricultural censuses and statistics, the Global Information and Early Warning System, food and agricultural policies, fisheries and forestry development, technical cooperation among developing countries and special programmes).

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37. During the general discussion, the Conference commended FAO for having carried out a wide range of activities despite the current severe financial austerity. The Conference acknowledged that the 1988-89 biennium had been a difficult period and prospects for the future remained bleak, a situation aggravated by the withholding of assessed contributions by some big contributors and delays in clearing arrears of payments. The Conference expressed concern that failure to honour obligations had resulted in the Organization's deferring the implementation of some important programmes.

38. In the discussion on financial matters, the Conference expressed the fear that recent political changes in eastern European countries might result in cuts of financial resources traditionally approved for Africa.

39. The Conference sought clarification on proposed changes in reimbursement of UNDP project-related costs to specialized agencies. Concerning this, the Conference was informed that the matter was on the agenda of the UNDP Governing Council meeting in Geneva and that no concrete decision had yet been taken. The Conference hoped, however, that FAO and UNDP's complementary roles would be reinforced.

40. Given the role of food aid in economic development and agricultural production in African countries, the Conference hoped that emergency food aid would continue to be granted without any political strings. Concerning relations between the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes (CFA) and ECOSOC on the one hand, and the Council of FAO on the other, the Conference was of the opinion that any change in the responsibility of CFA ~~should~~ be accompanied by more equally balanced representation within this body.

41. The Conference recalled that during the discussion for the 1990-91 Programme of Work and Budget, some delegations from major contributor countries had challenged the budget levels of the Technical Cooperation Programme, and complained of lack of transparency with regard to the allocation of TCP budgetary resources. The Conference deplored these moves as a way of influencing the use of and reducing TCP resources, to the detriment of the developing countries.

42. It was acknowledged that the FAO Regional Conferences for Africa had afforded African Ministers of Agriculture a distinct opportunity to exchange experiences and harmonize their views on agricultural development. It was recommended that the Regional Office be strengthened and more responsibility delegated to it in order to more effectively promote regional and subregional cooperation, in close partnership with the various regional and subregional bodies. It was likewise recommended that the FAO country offices be strengthened.

43. The Conference re-echoed its concern at the social costs of macro-economic adjustment, and regretted that FAO was not involved in the design of the first generation of structural adjustment programmes. It appealed to the Director-General to explore ways and means to increase cooperation with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in the analysis and formulation of future structural adjustment programmes.

44. The Conference recommended that the Organization prepare a comprehensive follow-up programme concerning the range of studies, field investigations, and recommendations emanating from the various activities. This could be accomplished effectively if the absorptive capacity of member

countries was improved, through, for instance, the training of trainers (extension workers), to better implement the recommendation. It was also suggested that FAO intensify its support to research at national, regional and international levels.

45. The Conference urged any Member Nations who had not yet done so to settle their statutory contributions to FAO for the current year without delay, and recalled the compelling need for member countries in arrears to meet their obligations so that the Programme of FAO approved by the Twenty-fifth Conference of FAO in 1988 could be implemented fully and without delay.

46. The Conference expressed grave concern with the threat which screwworm fly, recently identified in Libya, posed to domestic animals, wildlife and even people. The Conference commended FAO for the action already undertaken to confront this scourge and asked it to promote and coordinate an eradication programme in collaboration with the other international organizations concerned and backed by the donor community.

Strategies for Combatting Malnutrition in Africa ²

47. The Director of the Food Policy and Nutrition Division introduced this agenda item. He stated that the increase in dietary energy supply (DES) throughout the Region had been very slight in the last thirty years, statistics indicating a virtual stagnation of dietary energy availability in all subregions. The daily per capita DES in 1986 was 2 158 kcal compared to an estimated average energy requirement of 2 112 kcal, too narrow a margin to lower the rate of malnutrition in the Region. In fact, at least one African in three was not getting enough to eat and the trend in recent years had made Africa the part of the world where the nutrition situation gave the greatest cause for concern. The alarming economic and social impact of this situation constituted a severe handicap to the development process in the countries concerned.

48. Strategies to improve Africa's food and nutrition situation and action and measures implemented by governments and international agencies to tackle the issue were reviewed, and the Conference was asked to express its thoughts and put forth proposals on a clear, coherent strategy which could apply region-wide. These proposals might eventually become part of the contribution by the Region's governments to the preparation of the International Conference on Nutrition to be held in Rome in December 1992.

49. The Assistant Director-General and personal representative of the Regional Director for Africa of the World Health Organization also made a statement. After commending the long and productive partnership between the two agencies in the area of food and nutrition, he went on to underscore the importance of the forthcoming International Conference on Nutrition as an occasion to draw attention to malnutrition in the world today. This Conference would also highlight the diseases of affluence which were a major cause of morbidity and mortality in the industrialized countries, and in the developing countries as well. With regard to the African Continent, he emphasized that 10 - 20 percent of Africa's children had a birth weight of under 2.5 kg. An estimated minimum of 60 million children under the age of five were chronically undernourished: 10 million children acutely so. Vitamin A deficiency affected over 50 million people, and iodine deficiency over 150 million, causing cretinism among many. Nutritional anaemia was

widespread among women. To combat these ills, a special Interagency African Regional Taskforce on food and nutrition development had recently been formed, as had an FAO/Unicef/WHO Technical Group on Nutrition. Furthermore, the WHO Regional Committee for Africa adopted a resolution in September 1989 to establish an International Decade on Food and Nutrition in the African Region, of which the main thrust would be the formulation of medium-term national plans of action for food and nutrition.

50. The Conference noted with concern that the food and nutrition situation in the Region had continued to decline and that this had severely handicapped development strategies in recent decades. The nutritional diseases and disorders present in Africa ranged from severe undernourishment through micro-nutrient deficiency diseases to diseases of affluence. This situation was attributable to low agricultural production, inadequate communication and marketing networks, low purchasing power, substandard sanitary conditions and inappropriate patterns of diet.

51. The Conference stressed that the underlying principle of a long-term strategy to improve food and nutrition in the Region should be to make nutrition an integral component of economic development plans, especially those concerning agricultural development. It was equally essential to make nutritional considerations part and parcel of rural development programmes and projects, as of forestry and fishery activities. The resources of the Region were frequently underutilized: programmes to improve both quality and yield through new agricultural research orientations were needed.

52. Acknowledging the lack of trained manpower as a major constraint to an analysis of the food and nutrition situation and the formulation of short-, medium- and long-term strategies, the Conference recommended that top priority be given to remedying this lack. The Conference stressed the importance of appropriate institutional mechanisms for genuine multisectoral action, as for ensuring the participation of qualified staff in the design of appropriate strategies and interventions, their implementation, and evaluation of the results. The Conference also stressed that any review of nutrition issues needed to pay due attention to the relation between "macro" and "micro" levels, so as to be able to appraise the impact of national policies on households.

53. The Conference acknowledged that the Region had substantial agro-pastoral potential but little control over the market. National production strategies therefore needed to be incorporated into subregional food security networks. The Conference stressed the urgent need to strengthen African regional and subregional cooperation, particularly in the fields of food technology, marketing and storage, in order to guarantee food quality and stable supplies.

54. The Conference affirmed that nutrition strategies in the Region were uniformly based on the achievement of household food security, and that the application of this strategy at district level provided an effective, flexible guarantee of household food security. In this context, the Conference declared that traditional peasant agriculture had to move from subsistence farming into the higher-performance sphere of market-economy agriculture.

55. The Conference stressed that any African nutritional strategy needed to address the key role played by women in nutrition and recommended measures to promote greater productivity and a higher income for women through access to improved plant and animal species, the right training, and

specific assistance from the specialized home economics and extension services. The Conference noted that people were not sufficiently aware of the nutritional properties of traditional African foods, and that efforts were needed to promote the cultivation and consumption of these foods to make people aware of their value.

56. The Conference noted with satisfaction that nutrition was now a component of existing and future early warning programmes. The Conference also noted that the nutritional indicators developed by FAO were being used in programmes designed to measure the social dimension of adjustment policies from the outset. The Conference approved the expansion of these techniques as part of a proposed global nutrition surveillance system designed to identify problems, target interventions and evaluate results.

57. The Conference underscored the significant role played by nutrition education systems tailored to local situations in improving nutrition through the carefully planned utilization of household resources and the avoidance of aberrant dietary behaviour. The Conference stressed the need to develop teaching materials in local languages and to make use of modern media to get the message about a healthy diet across to the mass of the population. Rural radio had proved highly effective in this context, particularly among illiterate populations.

58. The Conference noted with satisfaction that progress had been made in upgrading the quality of street foods. The rapid urbanization underway in the Region had considerably increased the intake of street foods by urban dwellers, a fact which mandated measures to control the preparation, sale and safety of these foods. Concerning this, the Conference appealed to donors to finance the quality control and staff training infrastructures necessary to allow member countries to meet import standards for their commodities.

59. The Conference expressed its satisfaction with the participation of WHO at the Regional Conference. The Conference commended the exemplary cooperation in nutrition between FAO and WHO, and fully supported their joint initiative to convene an International Conference on Nutrition. The Conference therefore recommended that its conclusions and recommendations on strategies to improve the food and nutrition situation in Africa be duly taken into account in the preparatory work for the International Conference on Nutrition. Concerning this, the Conference hoped that full use would be made of existing inter-agency mechanisms in Africa, such as the African Regional Taskforce and the FAO/Unicef/WHO Technical Group on Nutrition, in the preparatory and follow-up work of the forthcoming International Conference.

The Conservation and Rehabilitation of African Lands: An International Scheme

60. The Regional Soil Resources Officer introduced this paper which had been developed with the assistance of African experts, following the recommendations of the Fourteenth FAO Regional Conference in Yamoussoukro (Côte d'Ivoire) in 1986.

61. The document pointed out that Africa had considerable agricultural potential, which over the past centuries African farmers had conserved through systems of agriculture such as shifting cultivation and nomadic grazing. But with rapidly increasing populations, these traditional land use and conservation systems were unable to adapt in time to the increased demand for production and the outcome had been widespread land degradation.

62. Although some countries had started soil conservation activities more than 50 years ago, the results had been mixed with some successes interspersed with many failures. In general, soil conservation programmes had proved very expensive and not very effective because farmers had generally not been involved from the start and had not accepted or maintained the structures built.

63. A new approach to land conservation and rehabilitation was therefore needed, with governments still taking overall responsibility, and at the same time promoting the participation and initiatives of rural people in finding economically feasible and socially acceptable solutions and practices.

64. Fortunately, such solutions existed, combining soil conservation with increased productivity. Some were based on maintaining permanent plant cover, others on barriers designed to retain soil and runoff water for use by the crops.

65. Africa is such a vast continent that it would be impossible to produce a single blueprint applicable throughout, but a framework for action was possible. This would comprise three major lines of action that could be followed in any country wishing to develop an effective programme to conserve and rehabilitate its land resources. These were: improving land use, encouraging the participation of land users, and developing institutions.

66. Improving land use involved an inventory of the land resources which would identify their potential, aptitudes, and degraded areas. The causes for their misuse could then be identified in order to treat the root causes rather than the symptoms.

67. The land users would need to plan and implement their own solutions in accordance with their own interests, with governments helping to identify their problems, whilst encouraging and assisting them and helping to strengthen back-up services. Start-up food assistance might well help farmers but longer-term aid would lessen their interest in maintaining the results.

68. A high-level committee could guide the formulation of a local, provincial and national conservation strategy, as well as policy development, coordination and monitoring. Besides national activities, each country could benefit from regional and subregional cooperation network programmes, sharing experiences and costs - particularly in research and training.

69. The formidable task of a full-scale conservation and rehabilitation programme would, for many countries, require international assistance and effective international coordination. The provision of such assistance was the responsibility of governments and financing institutions, donors, technical assistance agencies and NGOs, working closely together to develop long-term programmes.

70. The proposed scheme would begin with a review mission, at government request, including national experts and representatives of interested international agencies. This mission would assess conditions and produce a set of draft land conservation and rehabilitation policies, carefully harmonized with the national development plan and other ongoing sectorial plans within the country, such as the Tropical Forestry Action Plan.

71. Based on this assessment, the government could then elaborate an action plan for the conservation and rehabilitation of the nation's land. Within this framework, projects could then be identified and formulated for the priority areas designated by the government. It could request technical participation of FAO, other institutions, and potentially interested donors. A round-table meeting with all relevant donor and technical assistance agencies could then study the proposed projects and their financing.

72. Such an approach would allow governments to develop and guide long-term plans and programmes suited to their requirements. It would associate technical assistance and donor agencies with all planning and implementation phases, and would provide a means to supply long-term assistance and select projects in a systematic way.

73. All in all, the proposed programme would concentrate mainly on the cultivated lands and pastures where degradation was particularly severe and directly threatened agricultural production, whereas watershed and forest land conservation would generally come under activities developed by TFAP and the national forestry institutions. Nonetheless, the latter activities should be coordinated within the national policies and programmes developed under the present scheme.

74. During the discussions, all delegates commended the quality of the document, its clear presentation and the audio-visual introduction. They supported the recommendations of the Scheme and endorsed it as a whole while asking FAO to take the necessary steps to implement it.

75. Several delegations highlighted the seriousness and extent of the various kinds of land degradation, pointing out that it was affecting productivity and destroying the livelihood of the people to the point where some were forced to emigrate. The delegates indicated the work already done in their countries, the vast sums spent on different projects, for example, for gully control, and the rarity of success.

76. The Conference emphasized the need for a new approach, mobilizing the land users themselves, whose active and involved participation was essential to the success of any land conservation and rehabilitation activity.

77. It was recognized that the Scheme provided a framework within which countries would be able to define their own policies and plans, in accordance with their specific environmental and socio-economic conditions.

78. A meaningful basis for planning would require natural resource assessment and land evaluation.

79. Excessive pressure on the environment could be decreased in some cases through stimulating non-agricultural employment, and facilitating, where possible, migration to carefully chosen areas. Proper land management, integration of livestock in farming systems, and the adoption of integrated plant nutrition systems, including the optimal use of nitrogen-fixing crops, could help increase yields and conserve soil fertility.

80. The Conference recognized that African countries as a whole faced severe financial constraints and lacked trained workers and the means of acquiring agricultural inputs, thus inhibiting them from undertaking programmes on the scale required.

81. Because the problems of land degradation transcended national boundaries, the Conference hoped that FAO would provide leadership and coordination in this field, inviting nations to share the burden of the work and to pool their knowledge and experience. Land degradation was a long-term problem calling for long-term solutions, dealing with the root causes rather than just the symptoms.

82. The delegates expressed the wish for an international conference to discuss the problems and arrive at the necessary solutions. They hoped for international participation in this programme. The Conference recognized the severe shortage of soil conservation experts and middle-level extension agents. This shortage demanded a major training effort which would enable countries to manage their agricultural development on a lasting basis.

83. While the procedure for coordinating international action was considered generally sound, the delegates pointed out that, in some cases, the procedure could well be speeded up if elements were already in place. The Conference considered integration of the Scheme with other programmes, such as Aid-in-Kind, most desirable.

84. The Conference recognized the value of the ongoing technical cooperation between some industrialized countries and FAO on the subject of soil conservation. One example was the recent French initiative "Observatoire du Sahara et du Sahel", which could become a useful adjunct to the Scheme under discussion.

OTHER MATTERS

Representation of the Region in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

85. The Assistant Director-General and FAO Regional Representative for Africa introduced this agenda item, reviewing the role and structure of the CGIAR and the rules of regional representation in the Group. He then invited the Conference to elect a new country to represent Africa south of the Sahel for a four-year term to replace Zambia. The Head of the Zambian Delegation presented a report and briefly reviewed the execution of his term of office.

86. The Conference then elected the Kingdom of Morocco (Mr H. Faraj, Director of the Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique) to represent the Region in the CGIAR for the next four years (1991-1994).

Follow-up on Aid-in-Kind ⁵

87. The introduction to the Information Note on the Aid-in-Kind Study by the Senior Policy and Planning Coordinator of the Agriculture Department placed the Study in the context of the Director-General's proposals for a Programme of Action for African Agriculture, endorsed by the Fourteenth Regional Conference for Africa in Yamoussoukro in 1986 in response to the FAO study "African Agriculture: the next 25 years". The Aid-in-Kind Study's findings underlined the widening gap between input supply and demand at the national level and the need for an appropriate mix of three approaches to close the gap. These were: boosting national production of inputs, supporting intraregional trade, and increasing imports from outside the Region; and the need to avoid past mistakes regarding the provision of aid-in-kind. The Study's recommendations concerned action at the policy and operational level to expand and improve aid-in-kind, and in particular, the development of an agreed policy framework for such aid; the adoption of pluri-annual commitments, and the provision of input aid only when the needs have been well-defined by the recipients. Finally, a number of follow-up activities were outlined, i.e., greater support to countries in the development of their input policies, in the local production of inputs, in the adoption of triangular transactions and in the use of aid-in-kind for inputs-for-work.

88. The Conference agreed with the analysis and recommendations of the Study which were increasingly relevant to African needs. It pointed out that pressures from international financial institutions in the context of structural adjustment programmes were forcing many African governments to remove subsidies from fertilizers and other production inputs, and to undertake other measures that raised the cost of inputs to farmers. The delegations considered that such pressures were particularly serious in countries where people were being forced to cultivate marginal lands without access to appropriate mineral or organic fertilizers, or again in landlocked countries where this factor had a considerable and negative bearing on the transport costs of inputs. The Conference emphasized that intensive forms of production could only be adopted and sustained if fertilizers and other modern inputs were available to complement traditional inputs such as livestock manure, since neither of them alone was sufficient in most circumstances to achieve food security.

89. The Conference asked FAO to strengthen its efforts to gain wider donor acceptance for expanded aid-in-kind, under the conditions recommended by the Study, and to expand its relevant training programmes. It urged FAO to explore ways of increasing aid-in-kind and appealed to the donor community for greater support to this form of assistance. Finally, FAO was requested to keep the Conference informed of progress, and in due course to undertake a more detailed evaluation of donor and recipient responses.

Report on Desert Locust Control ⁶

90. The Plant Protection Service Officer who outlined the locust control situation in the Region pointed out that locust control was an important link in the chain of FAO's activities. From the time the last major plague appeared in 1950, barely more than five years after the Organization began, FAO set itself the task of operating in close coordination with affected

5 ARC/90/INF/4

6 ARC/90/INF/7

countries on control campaigns and to sensitize the international community, and oversaw the coordination and follow-up of its array of actions to tackle grasshopper invasions in the Sahel and desert locust infestations in a number of African countries.

91. FAO's role had been confirmed and reinforced by the numerous resolutions adopted by the international community in various bodies, particularly Resolution 41/185 adopted by the UN General Assembly during its July 1987 session. The ministerial-level meeting of the Economic Commission for Africa in April 1988 and the European Parliament both underscored the importance of this mandate and its execution.

92. Reviewing the various stages of locust outbreaks in Africa, which had exposed a number of countries in the Region to severe hardship, the speaker gave an overview of the factors which had contributed to the collapse of the invasions and the return to a period of relative calm in the Region, and reviewed the paramount role played by FAO/ECLC during the course of the latest campaign.

93. The Conference noted with concern that the present period of calm was only relative and that there could be a resurgence of the scourge at any time in the invasion area despite the impressive efforts deployed by FAO, the countries concerned and international assistance. The countries at risk and the international community should in no way demobilize the human and material resources harnessed to cope with such an eventuality: hence the need for constant vigilance in the high-risk areas.

94. The Conference stressed that a medium- and long-term strategy capable of checking any upsurge of locusts in the Region had to be based on preventive control of the desert locust in its permanent habitats.

95. Acknowledging that technical and scientific mastery of the locust scourge was not imminent, despite major advances in the understanding of locust behaviour in nature, the Conference recommended that locust research be granted top priority in order to advance our knowledge and understanding in all aspects of locust control.

96. The Conference recognized that locust-infested countries were currently using pesticides to control locusts. Aware of the dangers to people, animals and the environment posed by these toxic products, the Conference recommended the pursuit of efforts underway in this domain to find acceptable alternatives.

97. The Conference stated that the substantial stocks of pesticides remaining from the proceeding campaign posed a serious problem in several countries. Their storage under precarious conditions entailed the risk of certain damage to people and to the environment. In this context, the Conference recommended the preparation and urgent establishment of one regional project, or a number of subregional projects, embracing all aspects of the problem with a view to finding a lasting solution.

98. The Conference expressed satisfaction with the various locust control operations and actions carried out by FAO in close cooperation with the international community and the countries concerned. It called upon FAO to pursue its collaboration with IFAD for the purpose of finalizing, together with the countries concerned, the long-term prevention and control project in West and North-western Africa and for the mobilization of the financial resources needed to implement the project.

Implementation of the Programme of Action of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development

99. The Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Africa, reminding the Conference that the bulk of the African population are rural dwellers, reiterated the priority attached by FAO to rural development, in accordance with the decision of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCCARD), organized by FAO in 1979. A programme of action adopted at this Conference has since guided the Organization in its work of promoting rural development.

100. Three governmental consultations had taken place since the Conference: 1983 Arusha (United Republic of Tanzania), 1987 in Harare (Republic of Zimbabwe), and 1989 in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia). In accordance with WCCARD's recommendation, FAO had centred its efforts on (i) people's participation in rural development projects; (ii) the study of land tenure dynamics, rural poverty and measures to relieve it; and (iii) evaluation of the impact of macro-economic adjustment on food production and consumption. The Organization had also helped member countries draw up progress reports on rural development, summaries of which were presented to the Conference of FAO in 1983 and 1987. A similar progress report would be prepared for the 1991 Conference of FAO.

101. Furthermore, African Ministers of Social Affairs adopted, in 1979 and then again in early 1990, a Resolution on the transformation of rural structures and development in Africa. Subsequently, the Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), held in May 1990 in Tripoli, Libya, expressed the hope that FAO would consider that the Seventeenth FAO Regional Conference for Africa, to be held in 1992, constituted the most appropriate Pan-African body for a detailed review of progress in agrarian reform. The Director-General of FAO proposed that the 1992 FAO Regional Conference for Africa revolve around the theme of assessing progress in agrarian reform and rural development.

102. The Conference, whilst generally approving this proposal, stressed that in preparing the forthcoming Conference, it needed to be remembered that rural development was a multidisciplinary process not confined to the agricultural sector alone. The Conference then adopted the proposal that agrarian reform be a major theme of the Seventeenth Regional Conference.

Date and Place of the Seventeenth FAO Regional Conference for Africa

103. The delegation of Ghana, issuing a second invitation to host the Seventeenth FAO Regional Conference for Africa, sincerely regretted not having been in a position to honour its first invitation, for the country had had a prior commitment to host the Conference of the Foreign Ministers of Non-aligned States. The delegation of Rwanda also expressed its desire to host the Seventeenth FAO Regional Conference for Africa. The Conference warmly thanked these delegations for their kind invitations. These invitations would be reviewed by the Director-General in consultation with the Member Nations concerned, in accordance with the usual procedure.

Adoption of the Report

104. The Conference considered the report presented by the Rapporteur, made certain amendments, and adopted the report.

Closure of the Conference

105. Speaking briefly on behalf of the Director-General of FAO, the Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Africa expressed apology on behalf of the Director-General who had been unable to attend the closure of the Conference as he had had to be in Rabat for an audience with His Majesty, King Hassan II.

106. The Regional Representative expressed satisfaction with the success of the Conference, which had been attended by 43 countries of the Region, including 28 ministerial-level delegations and 27 observers. The discussions had afforded a full exchange of views on a number of basic issues of concern to the Region, and had produced major decisions, primarily in the areas of land conservation and rehabilitation and combatting malnutrition.

107. He thanked the Conference for the firm support expressed by delegations to FAO in the current situation of financial crisis, and for its highly positive appraisal of FAO's programme in Africa, particularly its work on screwworm fly and desert locust control. Lastly, he paid warm tribute to His Majesty, King Hassan II for the excellent material and moral support given to the Conference by Morocco.

108. On behalf of His Majesty the King, the Minister of Marine Fisheries and of the Merchant Marine of the Kingdom of Morocco, His Excellency Bensalem Smili stated he was honoured and pleased to have been able to take part in the closing ceremony.

109. The Minister then stressed the importance of strengthening regional cooperation, which could facilitate a solution to the difficult problem of food that continued to afflict Africa.

110. The Minister commended the Conference for its thorough review of the food and agriculture situation in Africa and for the recommendations adopted, and stressed the need for diligent implementation of these recommendations.

111. The Minister paid tribute to the Director-General of FAO for his dynamic leadership and expressed appreciation for FAO's assistance to Morocco and Africa.

112. On behalf of all participants at the Conference, the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries of Guinea, His Excellency Abdourahmane Diallo, proceeded to read a vote of thanks to His Majesty, King Hassan II.

The Vote of Thanks is attached as Appendix E.

APPENDIX A

AGENDA

I. INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1. Inaugural Ceremony
2. Election of the Chairman, Vice-Chairmen and Rapporteur
3. Adoption of Agenda and Timetable

II. STATEMENTS

4. Statement of the Director-General of FAO
5. Country Statements and General Debate on the Food and Agriculture Situation in Africa
6. Report on FAO Activities in the Region 1988-89
7. Strategies for Combatting Malnutrition in Africa
8. The Conservation and Rehabilitation of African Lands: an International Scheme
9. Representation of the Region in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

III. CONCLUDING ITEMS

10. Any other Business
11. Date and Place of the Seventeenth FAO Regional Conference for Africa
12. Adoption of the Conference Report
13. Closure of the Conference

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LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS

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Vice-Chairmen	:	João PEREIRA SILVA (Cap-Vert)
Vice-Présidents	:	Abel Leshele THOAELE (Lesotho)
Rapporteur	:	Joseph TCHICAYA (Congo)
Independent Chairman of the Council	:	
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APPENDIX C

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

ARC/90/1	Provisional Annotated Agenda
ARC/90/2	Report on FAO Activities in the Region 1988-89
ARC/90/3	Strategies for Combatting Malnutrition
ARC/90/4	The Conservation and Rehabilitation of African Lands: an International Scheme
ARC/90/5	Representation of the Region on the CGIAR

INF Series

ARC/90/INF/1	Information Note
ARC/90/INF/2	Provisional Timetable
ARC/90/INF/3	Provisional List of Documents
ARC/90/INF/4	Information Note on Aid-In-Kind
ARC/90/INF/5	Action taken on main recommendations of the Fifteenth Regional Conference
ARC/90/INF/6	Ministerial Conference on Fisheries Cooperation among African States bordering the Atlantic Ocean: Outcome of the Follow-up Committee Meeting (Rabat 24-26 April 1990)
ARC/90/INF/7	Update Report on Desert Locust Control Campaign
ARC/90/INF/8	Statement by the Director-General
ARC/90/INF/9	List of Participants

OD Series

ARC/90/OD/1 to ARC/90/OD/5	Orders of the Day
ARC/90/REP	Report of the Sixteenth FAO Regional Conference for Africa

APPENDIX D

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

Mr Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Introduction

The work of the Sixteenth FAO Regional Conference for Africa could not have opened under better auspices: our host country and our surroundings alike inspire our confidence as we set out to tackle the problems facing the Region, severe as these may be.

Morocco, Africa's northernmost point, nearly touching Europe, is truly pivotal to both the Mediterranean and the Atlantic spheres. Its domain spans mountains, plains and sea; a diversity mirrored in its population. Its sectors of activity are myriad: agriculture, husbandry and fisheries, as well as mining, trade, industry and tourism. The history of Morocco exemplifies the way this at once ancient and modern nation opens onto the world, beginning with the founding of the trading-port of Lixus on the Atlantic coast by the Phoenicians more than one thousand years before our time, especially memorable to me as a Lebanese. Morocco today, despite countless obstacles, is particularly successful in the sectors of agriculture and fisheries; a victory which constitutes an encouragement for all of Africa. This success has been wrought mainly by the skills and energy of the Moroccan people, spurred by the political will and clear-sightedness of His Majesty King Hassan II. May I be permitted on your behalf to render homage to this great friend of our Organization, and thank him for the generous hospitality he has extended us in the purest tradition of Moroccan generosity.

Nothing could better illustrate the nobility and thoughtful courtesy underlying this hospitality than the choice of the city where we meet today: fabulous Marrakech, capital of the Almoravides, in whose marvellous setting rise stunningly beautiful ancient monuments and buildings. Such historical grandeur, such a wealth of culture, and such a magnificent welcome cannot fail to stimulate the discussions of your Conference. And so I take particular pleasure in welcoming you to this summit of African agriculture.

As this meeting opens, the world economic situation remains fraught with problems, dramatic ones. A lucid analysis, bowing neither to complacency nor the fatalistic acceptance of disaster, is the first step towards solving them. It is not easy to dissect and weigh the principal and overlapping components of the problems of such a massive, diverse continent. As you know, I feel your anxieties and concerns most deeply. I should thus like to intervene briefly in your discussions to say how I perceive the situation in your Region.

Africa, supplier of raw materials

The first and perhaps the most fundamental point which comes to mind is that Africa has been and essentially remains a supplier of raw materials -- resources which have been literally mined for centuries. This is true of the non-renewable natural mineral resources from the most common to the most rare: iron, bauxite, copper, manganese, gold and diamonds. But also and above all, and I say this without cynicism, it is true of Africa's most precious resource: people. Only yesterday the slave merchants plunged their hands into this immense manpower reserve and came up with a guarantee for the wealth and development of other nations. Today, poverty forces thousands and thousands of Africans to emigrate, as if dire poverty had taken over the reins from the slave traders. Another living resource is mined as well: the forests, whose quintessential role in soil protection, climate, hydrography and people's lives is increasingly jeopardized. Then there are the exports of African agriculture: basically tropical primary commodities -- coffee, cacao, tea, oilseeds, cotton and the like, whose prices, set outside the Region, are in free fall.

Even renewable resources degrade faster than they can regenerate when they are mined, which is why the situation I have just described represents an extremely serious threat of accelerated, continent-wide, environmental decline with the inevitable outcome in the long term of total depletion. The symptoms are already only too evident.

Production and population

The second key point is the persistent and indeed widening gap between agricultural production and population. It seems that overall annual production in the last decade increased by 2 percent whereas the population grew at a rate of 3 percent. Contrary to what might be expected, emigration fails to attenuate the impact of this disproportionate difference, as it mainly drains off the most dynamic and productive elements of the population. The effects can only be absorbed by simultaneously intensifying production and harnessing population growth.

Limited physical resources

Now, and this is my third point, the possibilities for massive production development in Africa are constrained by the physical conditions. The preconception that this immense continent is teeming with land resources and that a little human effort is all that is needed to turn luxuriant natural vegetation into bumper harvests cannot be too strongly refuted. Nothing could be further from the truth: beyond the wild mountains and boundless deserts of the Sahara and the Kalahari lies a vast expanse of 10 million km² of tropical vegetation in which livestock and crop farming are ruled out by the presence of tsetse. The climate in fully half of the African continent is too dry to support rainfed crops.

Indeed, only 20 percent of the land in Africa is suitable for farming. There again, this is most often fragile land unsuitable for mechanized cultivation -- which would in any case be very expensive for a non-industrial region forced to import virtually all its machinery. Irrigation costs more here than elsewhere and fertilizer prices are becoming prohibitive, even though only 5 or 6 percent of the farmland is now irrigated and average fertilizer applications do not exceed 8 kg per hectare. How could one reasonably expect spectacular progress in yields under such conditions?

Natural and man-made disasters

Add to that an appalling number of natural or man-made disasters and plagues, which seem to make Africa a truly accursed continent: drought and famine; infestations of locusts and grasshoppers ... Today, just when the combined efforts of the countries under locust attack and international donors, spurred by FAO, seem to have checked the locust invasion and contained the damage, a fearsome insect, hitherto confined to the western hemisphere, makes its debut on the African continent. I refer to the screw-worm fly, which the Italians rightly call the "killer fly", for it attacks people as well as herds and wildlife. This menace, although circumscribed, threatens to spread rapidly and we are doing our utmost to mobilize donors and to launch the imperative wide-scale action. As if nature's cruel whims were not enough, man adds his share to Africa's ills. What are the untold ravages of the many civil wars and conflicts which rage the length and breadth of the continent: destruction; millions of refugees for whom exodus means the loss of land and belongings, an end to any productive activity, hunger, disease and death; immense outlays for military expenditure which drain the last drop from slim budgets. At least 20 African countries are currently experiencing situations of emergency.

I am happy to announce that I have just opened a special account with the Banca Commerciale Italiana for contributions from donor countries to finance a screwworm fly control programme. This action, scheduled to last two years, will cost about 90 million dollars.

I have also established an Emergency Screwworm Fly Control Centre along the lines of the Emergency Desert Locust Control Centre which, as you know, played a vital role in the control of this scourge, and mobilized nearly 300 million dollars from 1986 onwards. The new Centre will be called SECNA and will be directed by Mr Lucas Brader, Director of the Plant Production Division, who directed the ECLO. SECNA will deal directly with donors, countries at risk and the organizations concerned.

I have delegated to Dr Brader all necessary powers for quick decision-making concerning screwworm fly control.

Unfavourable economic climate

This complex mix of negative factors is reinforced by the worst imaginable economic climate: stagnating demand, skidding prices, an array of barriers to African exports. The Region's share of world trade dwindles even as costs rise for the imports Africa cannot do without. Under such circumstances the debt burden can only grow heavier and more than one country has now been pushed to the ropes. At this point the management of a country's economy can easily pass into the hands of external agencies who all too often impose severe recovery and structural adjustment policies which fall most heavily on the poorest and most vulnerable sectors of the population. The countries of Africa, trapped between a population growth rate which has outstripped production and a receding share of the world market, throttled by debt, remain in a position of welfare dependency.

Some key solutions

- Lighten the debt

In addition to food aid, which Africa could not presently do without, the international community has taken a number of steps. In particular, some creditors have agreed to ease debt servicing or even, in some cases, written off debts entirely. There have been discernible efforts in some developed countries to open the market to African commodities. Admittedly, however, these initiatives remain sporadic and highly inadequate in light of the scope and severity of Africa's problems. Any real progress is predicated on very different requirements and far more extensive, better-coordinated action.

- Higher prices for raw materials

First of all, the prices for African raw materials would need to be both stable and remunerative. We are fervently hoping for a change in this direction and are following the deliberations of the Uruguay Round, from which we may expect some concrete results, with the greatest interest. In a striking development, statesmen recently charged by the United Nations with important special missions (I am thinking of Mr Craxi on the question of international indebtedness or, again, Mr Menzie) have given careful study to the situation of African raw materials.

- Development strategies

The next necessary step is to hammer out realistic development strategies tailored to the circumstances and requirements of individual countries. Africa has suffered far too much from those giant-size, high-cost, futile or even harmful projects, generally designed outside the continent, which we derisively term "white elephants". Thankfully, we are more reasonable now. It is apparent today that both considerable funds and substantial aid-in-kind will be required for a lift-off of African agriculture and the African economy.

- Food aid

Aid-in-kind involves two main components, I believe. The first is the food aid which Africa still absolutely needs, as I was just saying. In the light of experience, I think the modalities of food aid need to be reviewed. As administered so far, it has certainly enabled a great many lives to be saved. The value of and need for emergency operations is also beyond doubt. That food aid has had a positive influence on agricultural development seems less clear. The subject is open to question, and I think that only a thorough analysis can resolve this question and, if necessary, suggest new directions. In any case, the African countries must rely mainly on themselves to gradually obviate the need for such aid.

- Inputs supply

The second main component of aid-in-kind is agricultural inputs, to which, at the request of your Fourteenth Regional Conference, we devoted an in-depth study containing specific proposals which was submitted to the 1987 Conference of FAO. We talked about it again in Mauritius in 1988, and I think there is little point in my elaborating on the subject anew. Up to now, despite the favourable judgements of our governing bodies, this initiative has admittedly failed to arouse the enthusiasm of donors. We are

not throwing in the towel, however. With the support of the African countries, who are those most directly affected, we shall tirelessly pursue our efforts to give the necessary scope to this kind of aid, which we believe to be of fundamental importance.

- Regional cooperation

Africa also needs regional economic bodies in order to develop South-South trade, particularly within the Region. African countries have made several attempts to establish regional and sub-regional economic integration bodies. Let us be frank: a number of constraints -- especially the existence of national borders set by former colonial powers with no regard for human and geographical situations, have so far made performance fall short of both expectations and efforts. This is not a reason to lose heart. Perhaps what is needed is to try to define more specific objectives, coordinate the work of various existing bodies, and, eventually, federate them.

- Education and training

I would like to add education and training to this inevitably incomplete list of keys to a long-term solution. The problems I have just cited can only be solved if the men and women of Africa are trained to make the best possible use of both the Region's own resources and whatever assistance the international community can provide. The development of Africa's most valuable asset, human resources, is crucial and must have top priority. An encouraging example is furnished by some Asian countries who, with fewer natural resources than Africa, have nonetheless achieved stunning economic successes because they have been able to develop and utilize their population potential. I have in mind Singapore and Korea, in particular. In your own Region, countries such as Mauritius, having taken the same path, are now making remarkable strides toward prosperity and well-being.

Encouraging signs

Despite all these obstacles, Africa is lucky in some ways. Its considerable natural resources, fragile and degraded as they may be, could be much more intensively developed than they have been. Africa's sons and daughters, poor as they may be, are its most precious resource. Hopeful, reassuring events do take place amidst the most painful circumstances and tragic perils. I shall mention only two: the accession to independence of Namibia, whom I am proud and happy to welcome here today (we have just opened an office in Namibia); and the advent in South Africa of an atmosphere of détente and better understanding which will hopefully soon lead to the complete and definitive disappearance of apartheid. Needless to say we are following developments in the situation with keen interest. Recently, there seems to be a more active manifestation of solidarity towards Africa on the part of the international community. Seeing that, it seems clear that the peoples and governments of Africa must make the most of their luck and show that they are determined to take their destiny into their own hands. There can be no other solution.

FAO's work in Africa

In this self-help effort, Africa can count on a steadfast ally whose devotion to Africa's cause has never wavered; FAO. This is the Region which receives the main thrust of our action and the lion's share of our resources and work. As you know, we did a highly elaborate study on the future of

African agriculture. It was a gargantuan task. The point now would be to translate this potential corner-stone of agricultural development in Africa into concrete action. FAO's presence in Africa is more substantial than in any other part of the world: 60 percent of our country offices are in the Region, which nonetheless contains no more than 10 to 12 percent of the world's population. More than half of our projects, experts, and activities are concentrated in Africa. In 1989, for instance, over 40 percent of the activities of our Investment Centre concerned Africa south of the Sahara. If North Africa is added, the number of projects approved totals 18, and the total investment tops one billion dollars. I should like at this point to underscore the cordial and fruitful cooperation which our Investment Centre is pursuing with the African Development Bank.

I believe I have shown another mark of our devotion to the African cause in the choice of Mr Robert Tiebile N'Daw as FAO's Representative to the Region. Mr N'Daw, a citizen of Mali, geological engineer from Nancy, and several times minister, has a solid background in several regional agencies. One is the Organization for the Development of the Senegal River. He also has extensive experience of the UN system, having worked with FAO, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, UNDP and UNEP. This choice alone is emblematic of the importance which we, and I personally, attach to anything and everything which can most effectively serve Africa.

Our action in the Region is unfortunately held in check by a constraint over which we have no power: our own lack of resources. I shall not reiterate the causes and consequences of a financial situation with which you are only too familiar. Given the harmful impact of this shortfall on the work of agricultural development in Africa, I simply urge you to add your voice to ours in an appeal to those rich countries who are in arrears with their contributions to the Organization.

In this context, I should now like to briefly touch upon the two major items on your agenda, namely Strategies for Combating Malnutrition in Africa and the International Scheme for the Conservation and Rehabilitation of African Lands. The first item was written into your agenda in accordance with a decision by the Conference of FAO inviting the Regional Conferences to review the issue and thus contribute to the preparation of the upcoming 1992 International Conference on Nutrition. The second item issues from a recommendation adopted by your Fourteenth Regional Conference in the wake of our major study "African Agriculture: the Next 25 Years". This is what underlay the preparation of the two background documents you have before you.

Combating malnutrition

As you know only too well, hunger and malnutrition continue to afflict Africa on an appallingly large scale. There is of course a downward trend in the percentage of undernourished people, despite an upward surge in 1983-85 as a result of the terrible and unforgettable years of drought. Nonetheless, nearly 30 percent of the people, one African in three, are not getting the necessary food. As for the absolute number of hunger's victims, rapid population growth and slow progress in food supplies continue to drive up the figure and today it easily exceeds 140 million. Paradoxically, rural people, who produce food, are harder-hit than urban people. Malnutrition not only affects individual health, it severely compromises prospects for future development. Hence the urgency of implementing effective strategies targeted specifically at protecting vulnerable and low-income groups.

A first step might be to introduce concrete measures such as home vegetable gardens or highly nutritious plant varieties, and to adopt social programmes to reinforce food security. A longer-term prospect would be to include a nutritional component in all agricultural and rural development programmes, and establish nutritional surveillance systems. The document before you includes proposals targeted at reinforcing FAO's food and nutrition programmes in the Region in cooperation with other United Nations organizations. I am confident that the ideas and experiences you are about to exchange will enrich the potential for effective action in this domain.

Land reclamation and conservation

Good nutrition is predicated on sustained agricultural production, which in turn demands land resources whose productivity is not degraded. However, as the study "African Agriculture: the Next 25 Years" underscored, degradation is a severe threat to the Region's cropland, grazing land and forests. A strategy to conserve and rehabilitate African lands must be targeted at the continent as a whole.

In earlier times there were traditional systems in many parts of Africa which could guarantee good land conservation so long as the delicate balance was not tipped by population pressure. In later years, various and vast programmes, often drawn up by colonial administrations or foreign engineers, attempted to carry on the task of conservation. For a number of reasons, usually involving unfamiliarity with the geographical and human environment, these plans failed. This is why we were so insistent on having the cooperation and opinions of African experts in preparing the Scheme we are presenting here.

The ambition of our Scheme is to provide a framework for African countries to draw up national programmes to control land degradation tailored to their specific needs. It calls for improved land use, encouraging peasant participation and developing national institutions. On the regional level, the Scheme entails data, training and research exchange networks. At the international level, the plan looks at realistic and effective ways to coordinate projects and policies for world-wide mobilization of the essential financial and technical resources.

Conclusion

We shall be listening attentively to the thoughts and proposals which emerge from your discussions on these items and others, and we shall give them the fullest possible consideration in targeting our future work in the service of the Region. Indeed, future cooperation in food and agricultural development among the wider African community is largely dependent on you and your discussions here. You are thus called upon to play a prominent role in putting into practice the oft-stated will and determination of the African people and their leaders to take their destiny firmly into their own hands.

Africa's skies are still dark with threatening clouds. But the light is piercing through here and there, and there is real hope that the sun's benign rays will one day shine on all of this immense continent. The only force which can dispel the blackest of these clouds is the will and determination just cited: the blend of calm strength and wisdom which from time immemorial has let the African peasant survive despite countless trials and obstacles.

In your battle to achieve dignity and well-being, which is one of man's finest battles, you know that FAO stands beside you, determined to do its utmost to help you emerge victorious. Fired by this hope, I extend my warmest wishes for the full success of your work.

Thank you.

APPENDIX E

VOTE OF THANKS

MESSAGE ADDRESSED TO HIS MAJESTY, HASSAN II OF MOROCCO

Your Majesty,

At the close of the work of the Sixteenth FAO Regional Conference for Africa, held in Marrakech from 11-15 June 1990, the governmental delegations of 43 African countries (28 headed by ministers), 27 observers representing countries and regional and international organizations, the Director-General of FAO and the Chairman of the Council of FAO, are singally honoured to express to Your Majesty their sincere appreciation for the quality, warmth and generosity of the welcome extended them by the Moroccan authorities, the range of facilities placed at their disposal and the flawless organization of this Conference.

They seize this occasion to express to Your Majesty their admiration for Morocco's exemplary efforts to develop national agriculture and ensure national food self-sufficiency and rural prosperity, and for the remarkable accomplishments, under your leadership, in the domains of land and water development and investments in agricultural production, all emblematic of a genuinely African approach to development equal to the challenge of taking on the vagaries of climate and the uncertainties of the world market.

They most sincerely wish health, happiness and prosperity to Your Majesty and his people.

Done in Marrakech, 15 June 1990

The Conference

