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U.S./MULTILATERAL RESPONSES

TO

THE DROUGHT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

TESTIMONY BEFORE

THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICAN AFFAIRS

OF THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

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RESPONDING TO THE DROUGHT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

The tragic irony of the current crisis brought about by the prolonged drought in southern Africa is that it is ultimately a human problem. From the beginning of time, man has been challenged by both the scarcity and abundance of the living environment. Drought is no stranger to Africa - what is new has been the gradual weakening of the ability to perceive the linkages, at both the personal and institutional levels, between lifestyle and or policy objectives, and their economic, environmental and political consequences.

The continuing drought in southern Africa poses a serious threat to both the economies and the security of the region. According to recent Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)/World Food Programme (WFP) Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission in cooperation with the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), the aggregate cereal production of the 10 drought-affected SADCC countries has fallen to 6 million metric tons - roughly half of the normal production. Based on the region's cereal requirements for the 1992-'93 marketing year, the cereal import requirement of these countries is estimated to be approximately 6.1 million metric tons compared with less than 2 million metric tons in non-drought years.

In all, 18 million people are reported to be at risk from starvation and disease. Conditions in Malawi and Mozambique are particularly desperate where 4.7mm and 3mm people are facing drought related famine. The full dimension of the emerging crisis will unfold as drought impacted rural populations migrate to urban areas in search of food and water bringing squalor and disease in their wake. Medical officials report a sharp increase in the number of reported cases of measles, tuberculosis, malaria, and cholera.

BACKGROUND:

Numerous factors contribute to its current severity and impact:

1. Population doubling every twenty years.
2. Land management, cropping patterns, and settlement practices contributing to the loss of ground cover and water retention resulting in soil erosion, declining productivity, and persistence of drought conditions.
3. Single purpose (narrowly reflecting national or sectoral preferences) as opposed to multi-purpose - integrated approaches to the development of national or shared international water resources.
4. Understaffed, underequipped, underfunded and demoralized national hydrological services.
5. Inadequate data on national and regional water resources and the absence of a truly representative framework for regional planning, collaboration and decision-making on the development of water resources.

6. Infrastructure deficiencies affecting the delivery of local food production or emergency supplies of grain.

A recent UNDP sponsored Hydrological Assessment Study for the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa projects that by the year 2025, 21 African countries will be in the high water scarcity group. This would include the entire SADCC region, as well as Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, and Malawi. These latter are said to be beyond the water barrier by 2025. That is, these countries will be consuming in excess of 100% of sustainable utilization of known water supplies.

Thus, in the absence of a framework to facilitate international collaboration in the planning and development of national and regional water resources - regional tensions will rise as increased industrialization, adoption of sanitation schemes, expansion of irrigation, rising demands for electricity, deforestation and catchment degradation, inter-basin water transfers and other developments affecting water quality and quantity compound existing pressures on shared water resources.

In January 1990, SADCC launched the Zambezi River Action Plan (ZACPLAN). The plan is divided into a number of distinct programme areas (ZAPROS) with the objective of developing a plan for the integrated development of the Zambezi river basin. Briefly, the implementation of this plan which included hydro-meteorological data gathering and analysis, training, sectoral studies, project planning and execution has been delayed partly due to funding hurdles and partly due to the lack of political will.

The impact of the continuing drought has transformed discretion into necessity. Political and economic necessity now require the attention of decision-makers at the highest levels in the creation of an enabling environment for the integrated planning and development of the region's water resources.

The Elements of Response:

A. Emergency Relief:

As can be seen from the terms of the Consolidated UN-SADCC Appeal, there is an accelerating demand for programme food aid, targeted food assistance, medical supplies to contain epidemics, and improvements in transport infrastructure to ameliorate bottlenecks in relief distribution. This approach together with the scheduled Disaster Management Training Exercise to be conducted in a number of drought-affected countries are an important first step in any U.S./Multilateral response to the crisis.

However, in contemplating additional measures or approaches to the current situation, it is perhaps useful to ask oneself the question: " Is African Drought synonymous with African Famine -- can resource constraints (i.e. water) ever act as a spur, rather than a deterrent to development?"

B: Capacity Building For The Planning Of Sustainable Water Resource Development In Southern Africa:

The principal objective of this programme being executed by the Water Resources Branch of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Development (formerly UNDTCD), funded by the UNDP and UNEP is the strengthening of national capacities for integrated planning in water related sectors within the following countries: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The coordinated planning, assessment, investment, and training inherent in this approach are intended to provide long term benefits to the countries of the region by way of drought protection, and sustainable development initiatives.

Linked to this objective would be the inclusion of three capacity building elements:

- o. the creation of an enabling environment with appropriate policy and legal frameworks.
- o. institutional development, including community participation.
- o. human resources development and strengthening of managerial systems.

The output would be a programme to establish procedures for regional co-ordination of planning and management for water resource development.

In order to develop a methodology to guide capacity building initiatives, a number of water sector assessments will be undertaken -centered on the group of river basins in southern Africa which are facing a severe drought and disastrous famine.

The continuing delays in implementing sub-regional development programmes are largely attributable to the lack of an agreed mechanism for sub-regional co-ordination in the water resources field. Prior to the persistent drought, the pressure for irrigation withdrawals by the Zambezi riparians was minimal, thus allowing the single purpose development of the Zambezi for hydropower to continue largely unchallenged.

Conditions brought about by the drought are likely to alter this situation as national options for water resource development converge on shared water resources:

o. Botswana is likely to either reassess its controversial plan to expand irrigated agriculture by tapping water from the Okavango Swamp, an ecological treasure, the Chobe River, and or perhaps the Zambezi. South Africa, a non Zambezi riparian, has also been pondering a scheme to transfer water from the Okavango wetlands and the Zambezi via canal to provide irrigation and potable water for Botswana and Pretoria when supplies from the Lesotho Highland scheme are eventually absorbed.

o. The city of Bulawayo in southwestern Zimbabwe is the country's second largest city and major industrial center, credited with 25% of industrial output - has put forward a plan to construct a 215 km pipeline from the Zambezi river to fill the city's reservoirs now nearing empty.

o. Local (i.e. Matabeleland) politicians have called for the diversion of some of the pipeline's water for irrigation purposes. There is strong political pressure on the Mugabe regime to expand the resettlement program. However, without substantial investment in extension training, economic and physical infrastructure, rural credit-accelerated resettlement may run counter to the objective of food security and could contribute to drought persistence.*

o. Large abstractions from the Zambezi for irrigation will require new agreements among riparians re: withdrawals, and have a negative impact on the river's power generating capacity and reduce Zambia's earnings from the sale of power. This is further complicated by the forecasted gap in power supply and demand for Zimbabwe by the mid '90s, and Mozambique's plan to resume and expand the supply of hydropower to South Africa.

o. The flow rate in the River Limpopo has been seriously depleted due to regulation and drought, with long periods of negligible flow along the Botswana border. Mozambique, with major rivers such as the Zambezi, Limpopo, Incomati, Umbeluzi, and Maputo rising in other countries, is particularly susceptible to water development projects in other countries of the region.

* Note: In the current economic climate and varying national and sectoral demand for scarce water resources -- water provision, particularly for irrigation, will increasingly be driven by economic factors.

Hence, there are likely to be trade-offs between food production and food procurement --prompted in part by the shift from production to consumption, to production for export; and in part, by increasing sensitivity to the limits in carrying capacity of marginal lands for the production of maize and other water intensive crops grown mainly for local consumption.

Investments by governments in physical and economic infrastructure at local and sub-regional levels will need to be complimented by investment at the community and individual level in new crops, cultivation technology, and rural industry at an appropriate scale. Simply stated, the new problems brought on by the prolonged drought have mainly served to exacerbate what continues to be the principal problem for the countries of the region namely, sustainable economic and social development.

It should follow, therefore, that before long term strategies can be developed and implemented addressing the region's food security and continued economic development, a sector assessment of the institutional capacity at national and regional levels must be undertaken. This will necessarily entail a major re-assessment of the allocation of the water resources at national and regional level.

This can only be done after an evaluation of the required water resource capacity to sustain the development of rural, urban, and industrial sectors and an assessment of the need to support the institutions concerned with water resource planning.

The programme will proceed in two phases:

Phase I. Consultative mission to national, and regional organizations in southern Africa; Planning Session.

Phase I would begin with a desk review of existing national and regional reports relating to water sector institutional capacity, water law and proposed investments that would have an impact on water related sectors. Sector summaries, including the inventory of planned investments, would be compiled in tandem with preliminary consultations with SADCC, national planning authorities, the World Bank, African Development Bank, donor groups, industrial organizations, local NGO's and appropriate community organizations into a briefing document to be used by those participating in the 3 day workshop targeted for December 1992.

The planning session would be a facilitated exercise in regional cooperation and planning. The main objective of the planning session is to bring together the principal regional stakeholders to discuss and review planning and organizational capacity at community, national, and regional levels in response to continuing drought, and growing demand for food production.

The planning session is expected to generate a number of agreed strategy options for consultation, co-operation, planning and investment at national and regional levels.

The options will be compiled into a consensus document and used in developing the terms of reference for Phase II which will begin with a technical mission to assist national and regional organizations in the preparation of programme documents for submission at a donors conference in June/July /93.

Time Frame: August - December '92.

Phase 2. Sector Assessment:

With the agreed options for an appropriate planning mechanism prepared as a consensus document following the December '92 Planning Session, a multi-disciplinary mission would be mounted to assist the countries in preparing a detailed programme document for submission to a donors conference.

Time Frame: January - July 93

Conclusion:

As of this writing, the Emergency and Capacity Building responses can be said to be at an incipient stage, and not enough is yet known about the long term effects of the drought to be definitive. What can be offered at this time is a sense of what will not work:

1. A compartmentalized approach i.e. one which frames the crisis in purely disaster assistance terms divorced from the capacity of national systems and institutions to achieve development objectives.
2. A purely technical assistance approach i.e. one which fails to include inputs from all affected by the crisis in planning a response.
3. A short-term approach i.e. a few bags of grain here, some roads and rail links there, some training courses, a few workshops...as we have stated at the beginning, the current crisis is largely attributed to the gradual weakening of the ability to perceive the linkages, at both the personal and institutional levels, between lifestyle and or policy objectives, and their economic, environmental and political consequences.

A major public educational and capacity building effort will be required. This effort would target expanded extension training, and in particular upgraded science, environmental, meteorological, and hydrological training for village men and women highlighting the impact of human behavior and aspirations on future and present prospects for sustainable socioeconomic development and environmental well being.

**Before concluding, we would like to request the support of this Committee in obtaining approval from the Secretary of State to allow the official participation of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Water Resources Support Center in our December workshop. The Institute for Water Resources is just completing its Interim Report on Drought Contingency Planning is in the second year of the National Study of Water Management During Drought, and would make an invaluable contribution to our planning session.
Thank you Mr. Chairman.**