

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE ADMINISTRATOR

October 19, 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY

SUBJECT: Conclusions from Meeting with the Six Sahel Africa  
Ministers who Accompanied President Lamizana

This memorandum reports the conclusions of our discussions with the Ministers of the six drought stricken countries who accompanied President Lamizana, of Upper Volta, to Washington. Meetings took place October 15 at the State Department and the White House Cabinet Room, when President Lamizana called on President Nixon.

In their reports on the current situation and the relief needs ahead the six Ministers concluded that:

- The current Sahel food crops are much poorer than we had previously anticipated, due to failure of rain in many areas in the last 30 days.

- A major relief effort for emergency food assistance, on the scale of this past year, is needed in 1974.

- Measures must now be taken urgently to organize relief for the coming year, to secure food grain from donor countries, organize transport within the region to avoid air-lifts, and assure sustained distribution to the large destitute population of the region.

- Special attention must be given in relief operations to the serious plight of the destitute women and children.

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E.O. 12958, as amended  
May 4, 2006

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Following these discussions I revised the estimate of PL 480 food-grain requirements for the Sahel in 1974 from 150,000 to 200,000 tons of U.S. sorghum. This means the U.S. would provide about one-third, as our share, of the overall food relief needs of some 550,000 tons in 1974.

Our discussions of approaches for recovery during the coming year stressed the need for Sahel governments to take the lead with appropriate donor assistance, to:

- organize work projects for the large destitute population which is now totally dependent on relief.

- provide means for farmers to maximize the planting of the next food crop in seven months.

- begin now to change harmful practices in land and water use in an attempt to limit further deterioration of the region.

- relate recovery assistance to support of local community programs in road improvement, simple water catchment basins for irrigation, resettlement of displaced people and other short term recovery measures.

The emphasis of these discussions was to encourage the Sahel governments to get on with the job of helping themselves in areas where they can and to avoid becoming overly dependent on outside help.

There was a tendency on the part of the Ministers to blame the historical past for the plight of their drought stricken countries. For example, Minister Dakoure of Upper Volta, who is the spokesman and overall relief coordinator for the group, said that Western donor countries have "major responsibility for the backwardness of the region and its low level of economic development." He called for "a whole new approach" of massive aid on grant terms which would meet African priorities and criteria, rather than the "wholly inapplicable" Western investment criteria of the past.

I agreed that a "whole new approach" to the recovery of the Sahel is needed, that development programs of the past are inadequate to the task, and that we would work with them on their problems. At the same time, I stressed that the re-evaluation and search for new approaches challenged the Sahel people and their governments who have the major responsibility to change practices which had over-grazed the land and led to poor results in crop and water usage.

We ended the discussions constructively with a review of our efforts to place U.S. -scientific research in the equation of their fight for recovery of the Sahel, and our plan to contribute substantially, with other donors, to recovery efforts after appropriation by the U.S. Congress of the proposed \$30-\$40 million.

*Maurice J. Williams*  
Maurice J. Williams  
Acting Administrator

SUBSEQUENT ROUTING / ACTION

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