

Council when critical food shortages or famine occurred or became imminent. Canada supported this resolution, recognizing that emergencies might arise which would require action by both national governments and international agencies. At the same time, however, the Canadian Representative emphasized that a real solution to the problem of food shortages could only be found in more rapid development of the world's agricultural resources.

Food and famine were discussed also by the General Assembly at its sixth session at the end of 1951. The Assembly adopted a resolution requesting the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Specialized Agencies concerned, to prepare recommendations for prompt, concerted and effective action which might be taken by governments, inter-governmental organizations and voluntary agencies in the event of actual or threatened famine. The Secretary-General submitted his report to the fourteenth session of ECOSOC in 1952. His suggestions did not include the possible establishment of an emergency food reserve, a proposal which was being studied by FAO.¹

The first part of the Secretary-General's report listed specific tasks which might be undertaken by voluntary agencies, national governments, Specialized Agencies, and the United Nations itself. These suggestions were designed generally to improve administrative and organizational machinery and to ensure effective co-ordination of activities in the event of famine. The second part of the report proposed that funds should be made available to the Secretary-General to be used by him to help meet the initial impact of a disaster. In addition, the report envisaged a programme which went far beyond food requirements to include medical supplies, clothing, emergency shelters and other relief activities.

It became apparent, in the course of the Council's debate on the Secretary-General's report, that most Council members were prepared to accept the administrative measures proposed. There was little inclination, however, to support the establishment of funds of the kind suggested by the Secretary-General or to plan for wide United Nations relief activities. The debate was a useful one, bringing out the responsibilities of recipient as well as donor countries. A resolution was adopted recommending that national governments make arrangements in advance for the designation of ministries or agencies to be responsible for famine relief activities. The resolution specified a number of measures which these agencies should take. It called on governments to arrange for the suspension of customs duties and other barriers to the emergency importation of food. It asked that encouragement and support be given to local and international voluntary agencies such as the Red Cross and Red Crescent organizations which, in the past, had provided timely assistance. It recommended that FAO perfect its arrangements for investigating and reporting famine conditions and that the Secretary-General arrange, as circumstances might require, for the co-ordination of the famine relief activities of inter-governmental organizations, governments and voluntary agencies. The resolution concluded with a paragraph commending FAO for the study it had

¹See p. 94.