

September 27 the following message from His Excellency U Thant, Secretary General of the United Nations;

Sir,

The Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations has forwarded to me your message of September 21, concerning the situation in Nigeria.

I am most grateful to you for your letter which reflects the consistent interest shown by Canada in regard to the United Nations and to questions of a humanitarian nature. I wish to tell you also of my deep appreciation for your references to my statements regarding the distressing fratricidal strife in Nigeria, and I am greatly encouraged by your support of the position which I have taken concerning this situation. I agree with you that raising the situation in Nigeria in general terms before the United Nations General Assembly could be divisive, particularly in light of the resolutions adopted by the last two meetings of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity in Kinshasa and Algiers, respectively.

The question of humanitarian aid to the victims of the Nigerian civil war has been and continues to be a matter of deep concern to the entire United Nations family. Considerable efforts have been made to obtain medical, food and other supplies and transport them to staging areas in Nigeria and to other sites in the neighbourhood, such as Fernando Poo and Sao Tome. The United Nations Childrens Fund in particular, in close cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross and other organizations, has been fully involved for some time now in providing urgently needed assistance. The fund has allocated \$700,000 for this work and the Executive Director is submitting to his board, for their approval, a further allocation of \$1,500,000, a part of which he has already found it necessary to commit in advance in light of the urgent needs.

With these resources, which have come largely from private contributions, UNICEF has been and is continuing to provide medical supplies, foodstuffs and vehicles, and is also sending supplies contributed in kind by governments and industry to a further value of approximately \$9,000,000. It is also covering the costs of some specialized personnel working with other agencies in the field. The fund

has also made a contract for a small helicopter airlift for local delivery in territories around Calabar which have passed again under federal control.

The International Red Cross, which is coordinating the humanitarian assistance to Nigeria, has chartered a number of planes which have been transporting supplies into the war affected areas. Important church relief organizations have also chartered and are operating planes for this purpose. However, for military reasons adduced by one side of the conflict or the other, it has not been possible to establish a sufficiently effective air-bridge to meet the needs of the afflicted civilian population. The main immediate problem, in the view of experts in the field, is to find adequate means for transporting into the war affected areas the supplies which have accumulated at various staging points.

Involved is an extremely difficult logistical problem which includes not only finding such means for transportation by air, land and sea as may be required, but also of enlisting the cooperation of commanders in the field who naturally have a tendency to give first priority to military commitments.

There is particular concern regarding the need to strengthen the airlifts. For various reasons, including the destruction of roads, airlift capacity is required throughout the region on both sides, and it is not considered that this need will disappear if the military situation changes.

The combined efforts of the International Red Cross supported by national Red Cross societies, voluntary organizations and the family of United Nations organizations have not been able to bring the amount of relief required to the civilian population. This is not only because of the restrictions just referred to, but also because of insufficient financial and logistical support.

For the reasons outlined above, I believe there are two main areas in which governments can be particularly helpful. First, it would be useful for governments to lend their support, by public pronouncements and by such action as they may deem appropriate, to the recent appeal of the Organization of African Unity on Nigeria to all interested parties to cooperate with a view to ensuring the rapid despatch of humanitarian aid to all those who are in need of it. In addition, I feel that governments could increase their logistical and financial support to the organizations