

SUBJECT

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THE STATE HOUSE,  
DAR ES SALAAM,  
TANZANIA.

1st December 1984

Prime Minister Mrs. Margaret Thatcher,  
10 Downing Street,  
London, SW1.,  
U.K.

PRIME MINISTER'S  
PERSONAL MESSAGE

SERIAL No. T202 AB/84.

Dear Mrs. Thatcher,

I am writing to you on this occasion in my capacity as current Chairman of the Organisation of African Unity, and my subject is the Drought which has affected 36 countries of Africa and the famine which has followed in so many of them. For as you know, the desperate situation in Ethiopia is unfortunately not unique. People are dying or in imminent danger of death also in countries such as Mozambique, Mali, Chad, Sudan, Somalia; and conditions are getting worse in other countries of the Sahel Region.

Let me say at the outset that I myself, and all my colleagues at the O.A.U. Summit Meeting in Addis Ababa, did express great appreciation of the swift and generous response of the British people when they became aware of the terrible conditions of starvation and deprivation which have hit the people of Ethiopia. We were also aware of the assistance given and promised by your Government and others, both to Ethiopia and to other African countries; we do appreciate it.

Our Meeting recognised three facts in connection with drought in Africa. Firstly, that the primary responsibility for preventing famine, and if it occurs for dealing with it, rests with Africa itself. Secondly, that our own resources are inadequate to meet either the emergency or the medium and long term requirements of relief and future prevention work. And thirdly, that the food shortages will be with us until at least the 1986 harvest even if the rains are good this year and next. The other economic and social effects of the current drought will take even longer to overcome.

Individual African states have already embarked upon structural adjustment programmes to meet that underlying economic crisis which weakens still further the capacity of our poor nations to deal with disasters of this nature. Our Meeting had a long and serious discussion about how we could cooperate to promote this necessary reorganisation through greater cooperation among ourselves. Among other things, we decided that the next Summit Meeting would be devoted to economic matters.

The Summit Meeting also decided to establish a Special Emergency Assistance Fund for Drought and Famine in Africa. Algeria promised ten million U.S. Dollars for this Fund, and we have reason to hope that a similar amount will be contributed by Libya. It was agreed that the other nations represented at the Meeting will contribute whatever they can.

But it was obvious to all of us that the amounts we could ourselves contribute would be inadequate to the needs, and that when the Fund is inaugurated it will be necessary to appeal to the more developed countries for their support also.

Inevitably, however, this Fund will take a little time to become operative, and to receive sufficient money to be really helpful. This does not make it useless. I have already referred to the months and years it will take to re-establish the famine victims as productive farmers. And unfortunately, there is no reason to believe that this continent will not experience other droughts in the future - even although we pray that they may not again be as long lasting and serious as the current one.

But people are starving now, and the countries affected need food supplies, and transportation assistance, continuously from now onwards for a very long time if the assistance already given is not to be rendered useless. A break in the food supplies means that those who have so far been kept alive could still die of starvation before local production can be re-established.

I am therefore appealing to your Government, and through you also to the European Economic Community, to give urgent consideration to increasing your food and logistic support both to Ethiopia and to the other food deficit areas of Africa. In particular, I ask that you should plan to maintain this aid throughout the long period of the shortage. I am doing this in the full confidence that we share the desire to prevent people dying from hunger when food is available elsewhere in the world.

I take this opportunity to send my personal greetings and good wishes to you.

Yours sincerely,

Julius K. Nyerere.