

UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION

**Arab Cooperation Agreement Regulating and Facilitating
Relief Operations**

**Arab League Decision No. 39,
dated 3 September 1987**

The Governments party to this Agreement,

In view of the historic bonds and traditional relations between sister Arab States,

Motivated by a deep belief in the common goal and destiny of the Arab Nation,

In view of the need to build up humanitarian relations between States members of the League of Arab States,

In pursuit of Article 2 of the Charter of the League of Arab States which calls for close cooperation between Arab States in the areas of customs duties, communication, railway, overland, air and maritime transport, and in nationality, passports, visas, health and social matters,

In an effort to place further emphasis on the importance of cooperation between Arab States in the field of relief in times of natural disasters and emergencies,

Taking due consideration of the difficulties and obstacles which may impede rapid access of relief teams and material to victims of natural disasters and emergency situations as may be required to produce the desired effect,

It has been agreed on the following:

For purposes of this Agreement, the terms used below may be defined as follows:

a) Natural Disasters

Include earthquakes, floods, landslides, hurricanes, tsunamis, ebb and tide, drought, aridity, volcanic eruptions and other disasters.

b) Emergencies

Large fires and tragic accidents taking place on roads, in factories and mines, in addition to civil strife, armed conflict, epidemics and similar disasters.

c) **Relief Operations**

These include all forms of relief services particularly the provision of urgently needed materials, personnel and other services, which must be procured from external sources with the approval of local relief authorities in order to save the lives of victims of natural disasters and people in emergency situations provided that personal business interests are excluded .

d) **Relief Items:**

All materials used in the relief of victims of Natural Disasters and Emergencies such as vehicles and other means of transport, food and medical items, clothes, bed covers, tents, prefabricated houses, and other relief materials deemed to be of paramount importance as aid to people affected by natural disasters and other emergencies.

Article 2

The Agreement shall cover organizing and facilitating relief actions between Member States in disaster and emergency situations in which individual Member States may fail to respond single handedly to such situations.

Article 3

Member States pledge to coordinate their efforts to provide all the assistance and facilities required to respond to any natural disaster or emergency situation that may take place in any of them with the aim of speeding up and facilitating measures required to eliminate obstacles or difficulties which may impede the rapid access of relief teams or materials to the victims as prescribed by this Agreement.

Article 4

An Arab Supreme Relief Committee shall be established within the framework of the League of Arab States to assume responsibility for coordinating relief action between Arab States and following up the implementation of the provisions of this Agreement.

The Committee shall be convened by the Secretary General of the League of Arab States and shall develop its own Rules of Procedures. It shall submit periodical and annual reports dealing with relief matters in member States, revealing obstacles or difficulties encountered in carrying its mandate and highlighting possible violations of the provisions of the Agreement. The report shall be submitted to the Board of Directors of the League of Arab States to take the necessary action.

Article 5

The Arab Supreme Relief Committee, with the assistance of specialized ministerial councils, shall establish the plans needed for relief matters including the recruitment and training of relief teams drawn from the Arab world and monitor the implementation of such plans.

The Arab Supreme Relief Committee shall establish relief plans to respond to disasters and emergencies, particularly to organize communication and coordination between Arab Member States and the Arab Supreme Relief Committee, determine relief needs and best means to provide and deliver such needs to the affected areas as soon as possible.

The Arab Supreme Relief Committee draws an annual budget for addressing the costs of the services and activities it is responsible to deliver. Member States shall contribute to the budget according to the scale of their contributions to the League of Arab States budget.

Article 6

A National Relief Committee shall be established in each Member State to undertake the organization of relief work at the local level and to coordinate with the Arab Supreme Relief Committee and with organizations, conferences, regional and international committees operating in this field.

The Supreme Committee shall be informed of the names and addresses of the chairmen of national committees with the aim of facilitating communication as and when needed.

Article 7

Member States pledge to provide – from their own territory or through it, all the facilities for the shipment or the transit of food relief items destined to disaster states. Facilities shall include the following:

- (1) Approve documents and certificates issued by government authorities or relief organizations regarding types and quantities of relief material dispatched, and the exemption of such materials from submission of certificates of origin, import or export authorization, and other such documents as may be required by authorities in Member States from which such aid is exported or transited through their respective national territory. Such items shall be accompanied by a comprehensive statement indicating quantity, type, and estimated value of the items, and duly signed by the competent official in the government or relief organization concerned and stamped with the respective seal. The seal of the respective government or relief organization and its emblem – if any – must also be fixed to all containers carrying the items.
- (2) Facilitate customs procedures for relief items at land, air and sea Centres located at the borders where shipment or transit of relief items takes place in Member States. Priority in customs clearance shall be accorded to relief items to ensure their clearance from customs as rapidly as possible. Relief items shall be stored in

- safe warehouses provided with adequate security until their transport to the desired destination takes place.
- (3) Relief items shall be exempted from customs duties and all other fees and taxes imposed on exports or imports or transit goods in Member States.
 - (4) Facilitate the passage and entry of different transport vehicles carrying relief items to Member States and their due exemption from restrictions imposed on the passage and entry that are imposed under normal conditions.
 - 5) Secure a reduction in transport charges for relief items carried by national transport by land, sea and air as agreed upon by Member States, provided that transport services be free of charge on national means of transportation of the affected state, and grant relief items priority over other items in shipment to facilitate the arrival of such items to the affected areas as rapidly as possible.
 - 6) Companies and corporations operating in air, maritime and overland transport shall be granted licenses and facilities to step up their journeys or flights in addition to the right to fly in national air space of Member States and the right to land in national airports or dock in national sea ports so that relief items may be carried by such companies and corporations to the disaster areas as soon as possible.

Article 8

Member States pledge to provide the facilities needed for the travel of relief teams and delegates of Member States dispatched on missions to accomplish relief tasks. Facilities specifically include:

- 1) To grant relief delegates who are duly accredited by government authorities or relief organizations recognized in Member States, entry or exit visas at their arrival or departure at border points in Member States without undue delay provided that their entry into or exit from such States is on account of relief works.
- 2) To provide the needed facilities for transporting relief delegates along with relief items to disaster areas via national air, sea or overland transport of Member States, free of charge or at reduced rates on the said carriers, in addition to priority over all other passengers.

Article 9

Member States pledge to provide all the facilities possible to accredited national relief organizations and committees, and telecommunications services including telex, telegrams, telephones and wireless services in the event that a natural disaster or emergency takes place in any Member State: this applies to both internal and external communications.

Article 10

Member States shall ratify this Agreement in accordance with their own Rules of Procedure the soonest possible. Ratification instruments shall be deposited with the

General Secretariat of the League of Arab States, which will register the depositing of the ratification instrument for each State and report such to other signatory States.

Article 11

States which have signed this Agreement but the ratification instruments of which have not been deposited with the Secretariat General of the League of Arab States, shall enjoy the rights of a signatory State for two years starting from the date the Agreement comes to effect.

Comment:

This article has been proposed with the aim of encouraging states to ratify the Agreement, a similar text may be found in Article 11 par. 2 of the Arab Telecommunications Agreement.

Article 12

States members of the League of Arab States which have not signed this Agreement may accede to it by sending a statement to this effect to the Secretary General of the League of Arab States who will duly report such accession to other contractual states.

Article 13

This Agreement shall be put to effect after the lapse of one month from the date on which three States have deposited their ratification instruments. The Agreement shall be put to effect for other Arab States after two months have lapsed from the date on which the ratification or accession instrument is deposited with the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States.

