MEMORANDUM

## THE WHITE HOUSE

## WASHINGTON

## CONFIDENTIAL

## MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

President Nixon

Major General Sangoule Lamizana, President

of Upper Volta

Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME:

October 15, 1973

11:30 a.m. - 12:05 p.m.

PLACE:

The Oval Office

SUBJECT:

Drought in the Sahel

[The press comes in for photos.]

Lamizana: I am very happy to see you, Mr. President.

The President: Did you have a good visit to the UN?

Lamizana: We have held a number of important meetings at the UN.

The President: We have read about problems of the Sahel with a great deal of sympathy in this country. I am glad to get the first hand report from you on the situation.

[The press is out]

Lamizana: First, I wish to present my personal thanks and on behalf of my colleagues for seeing us and hearing our story.

Also my heartfelt thanks for bringing detente in the world. There are still problems, but we are very much aware of your efforts. For us peoples struggling to develop, we do appreciate your efforts.

We wish that you remain in excellent health so you can continue on the road to peace. We thank you for your help in the drought which has hit

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us over the past five years and especially this last season. The effect has not yet been felt this rainy season because we are still planting, but our farmers are less discouraged now.

I want to express our appreciation for the U.S. Government sending us food, feed and transportation. Also on behalf of our population of over 20 million.

With regard to the prevailing situation, here is an historical sketch: Between 1920 and 1930 there was a similar drought. The last seven years were about the same. In 1972 the rain was low and in 1973 it has been disastrously low. Production fell 20 to 50 percent. In cattle, the situation accommodated to 1972 when the wells dried up and the rivers; people lost 50-70% and in Mali and Mauritania some places lost 80-100 percent. Where some people couldn't reach water, they were wiped out.

As a result, the heads of six countries met in March to coordinate the assistance coming in and to plan economic measures. In September we met again to draw up an action program. There are a number of projects to be carried out if we are to save this part of Africa. The desert keeps advancing, and if we don't coordinate our efforts and work hard, it will come right down to the sea.

Speaking of the wide range of projects, they include emergency and long-range projects. The six countries have gotten together a fund of about a billion dollars. We have begun projects of irrigation, health, etc. We have also started research into the causes of the drought so it can be countered.

In addition to these projects, there is great need for emergency supplies for this year into next. In Niger, the deficit is 300,000 or double. There was virtually no harvest this year. What few crops came in were eaten by caterpillers. All the rest are in a similar situation. It is really unprecedented.

There is a scientific meeting next month in Dakar. I hope they can figure it out. I also hope that U.S. satellite pictures will help us assess the situation. In addition to malnutrition, any disease has especially severe effects, especially on the old and children. The six countries have asked me to bring this situation to the UN and to ask you what the U.S. can do with food. We must figure how to apportion everything. I want to thank you very much for what you have done.

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The President: I received a full report from Maury Williams. Our hearts go out to you. As a sign of this, there is substantial private effort in addition to our governmental effort. For example, Mrs. Nixon is working on a project of relief.

<u>Lamizana</u>: Speaking of additional efforts by the United States, I want to convey thanks from me and all the others for the U.S. interest and Mr. Williams and the private groups' efforts.

The President: I wish we could do more, but as you know, there is always more demand than funds. I am requesting \$150 for Nicaragua, the Sahel, and Pakistan. I hope Congress will act quickly and that will give us additional funds to help in this disaster.

In addition, Williams will be working on recommendations for emergency measures. Those recommendations will get every sympathetic consideration from me -- grain, etc.

Your emphasis on long-range analysis is very important. I will instruct our experts to work with others to look into it. It is a difficult problem. Rainmaking, for example, hasn't worked too well.

We want to help -- with vehicles and whatever we can do.

If you and your colleagues discuss with Williams, I will do my best to get cooperation within the government, the private sector, and with the UN. In other words, we will do all we can within our limitations. I wish I could do it more instantly, but the President can be assured I will take a personal interest to try to get support in Congress for ongoing programs for the future.

<u>Lamizana:</u> My thanks to Mrs. Nixon for working with the Administration wives.



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