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SESSIONAL WORKING GROUP (OF GOVERNMENTAL EXPERTS) ON THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 19th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 20 April 1982, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. BURWIN (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

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by States parties to the Covenant, concerning rights covered by articles 13 to 15
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The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1988 (LX)
BY STATES PARTIES TO THE COVENANT, CONCERNING RIGHTS COVERED BY ARTICLES 13 TO 15
(continued)

Report of Sweden (E/1982/3/Add.2)

1. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Danelius (Sweden) took a place at the table.
2. Mr. DANELIUS (Sweden), introducing the report of Sweden contained in document E/1982/3/Add.2, said that, although it was comparatively short, extensive material was annexed to it and gave quite detailed information about the Swedish educational system and Swedish cultural and scientific policy.
3. The fact that most children in Sweden received their primary school education in the public comprehensive schools, which were run by the municipalities, and that nine years of primary school at three different levels - junior, intermediate and senior - was compulsory, meant that each municipality had a legal obligation to ensure that all children living in its district could be admitted to the local school. Parliament had adopted the 1962 School Act laying down the basic rules for instruction in the municipal comprehensive schools. According to that Act, the purpose of the instruction was to impart knowledge to the children, develop their skills and, in co-operation with their families, promote their development into well-rounded persons and competent and responsible members of the community. More detailed teaching guidelines could be found in the 1980 Compulsory School Curriculum, listed as annex 3 to the Swedish report. The School Curriculum put a great deal of emphasis on objectivity and neutrality in the teachers' presentation of the subject matter, leaving it to the children themselves to form their own opinions when they were sufficiently mature.
4. Annex 6 to the report gave further details on the right of non-Swedish children to be taught at school the language spoken in their homes.
5. Regarding secondary education, which was not compulsory, secondary schools offered two-year, three-year and four-year curricula emphasizing the arts, social studies, scientific and technical subjects, or subjects with a more practical orientation.
6. With respect to university studies, important reforms had been introduced in the new Higher Education Act of 1977, as was stated in the report. It should be pointed out that public education at all levels, from primary school through university, was entirely free of charge.
7. The Swedish Government gave a great deal of financial support to both cultural and research activities, while the municipalities also spent considerable amounts of money on culture at the local level. The purpose was to direct talented persons

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towards creative activities or research, and to ensure access to culture in all parts of Sweden and by all segments of the population. An effort had been made to establish cultural institutions throughout the country, not merely in the large cities, and to disseminate culture among population groups that would normally not have easy access to it, such as the handicapped, the sick, immigrants, children and so on. While encouraging creative activity and research, the Government traditionally set great store by freedom of expression, which included artistic freedom, and by freedom of thought, which included the right to carry out independent and unrestricted research. Public policy was aimed at promoting a pluralistic culture and a wide spectrum of cultural activities and values in Swedish society.

8. Mr. VEITIA (Venezuela) asked, with regard to section II E of the Swedish report, whether the fact that working experience was now considered a criterion for admission to university meant that a student had to have worked before being admitted. Concerning the statement in section II J of the report that Swedish parents did not for the most part regard private schools as a real alternative to public schools and that therefore there were very few private schools, he asked what, then, was the the Government's reason for subsidizing those schools.

9. Mr. MARDOVICH (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) observed that the Swedish report was exceedingly brief. Its annex referred to materials in the original language in the United Nations archives, which made it difficult for the members of the Working Group to arrive at a deeper understanding of the situation in Sweden.

10. He asked what percentage of young people received secondary education and completed it, and with reference to section II E, what percentage of university students did not receive full Government grants.

11. Regarding section II J on private schooling and the question of religious education, he asked what was meant by the statement that the teaching of religion was by no means confessional, and he requested more information on the criteria certain parents had used in requesting exemption for their children from courses on religion.

12. Mr. SOFINSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) observing that the materials referred to in the annex to the Swedish report were unavailable, said that a number of questions arose. The educational system in Sweden seemed highly developed, with many progressive elements such as the fact that it was free of charge at all levels and that the private school system had not nearly the importance of the public school system, a testimony to the high quality of the latter.

13. Regarding the recent extension of higher education to new groups of students (section II E of the Swedish report), he asked to what extent the number of students who could be admitted to universities was restricted by the economic factors referred to in the second paragraph of that section.

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14. He wished to know what measures the Swedish Government was taking to maintain the cultures of the indigenous peoples of the north of Sweden, such as the Eskimos and the Lapps, and whether the public schools provided teaching in their native languages as well.

15. Mr. MRACHKOV (Bulgaria) said that he too had been surprised that the Swedish report was so short and made reference to unavailable documents. A question of principle was involved, since the Working Group could not itself review documentation on the actual situation in Sweden but had to rely on the statements by the Swedish representative. Another result was that virtually every paragraph of the report raised questions.

16. He asked what, for instance, was the duration of primary education, discussed in section II C of the report. The statement in section II F that the average level of education in Sweden was comparatively high was very vague: what percentage of the population actually completed primary, secondary and higher education? With regard to the statement in section II J that private schools in Sweden played a less important part in the school system than in many other countries, he wondered whether the Government policy of subsidizing private schools was based on the fact that there were so few of them, and asked how much was actually spent in such subsidies. He would also be interested in further information on the conditions set by the Government for accreditation of private schools.

17. Mr. BORCHARD (Federal Republic of Germany) said that he had also found the report by Sweden somewhat brief. It would have helped if some of the annexed material had been condensed within the report, so as to facilitate an understanding of the educational system, especially the university system. The report made no mention of vocational education or of education for the handicapped, and he hoped that the Swedish representative would elaborate on those two areas.

18. Regarding the trade union rights of teachers, discussed in section II I of the report, he wished to have further information on those rights and how the teachers' unions exercised them. Did, for instance, the right to strike extend only to the material conditions of work or to the curricula and the administration of the schools as well? Could teachers strike in one school alone or did a strike by one group require a regional or national teachers' strike? It would be interesting to know what Sweden's actual experience had been with the exercise of the right to strike by teachers.

19. He would welcome further information on educational facilities and programmes for children living in remote areas, who could, for example, be transported each day to schools at certain central points or, after a certain age, be sent to boarding schools elsewhere. Those living in remote areas were at a disadvantage with regard to higher education, and he wondered if the Government was assisting them in a special way.

20. Mr. HOUSHMAND (Division of Human Rights) said that he wished to make the point that, contrary to what a number of speakers had said, the documents mentioned in the annex to the report of Sweden were indeed available, and available in English. Although there was only one set of the documents, it had been available for some time, in accordance with the normal practice, to any member of the Working Group who wished to consult the reference material.

21. Mr. SOFINSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said he was glad to hear that the documents were available, but they should be available in all the official languages. Neither the Working Group nor the Secretariat could act as a research institute studying source material. Therefore the essence of the documents referred to in annexes should be contained in the reports themselves.

22. The CHAIRMAN said that he agreed that documents should be available in all official languages.

23. Mr. ALLAFI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) asked how widely the Government student grants mentioned in section II E of the report were available. It was stated in section II J that private schools in Sweden played a less important part in the school system than in many countries, and it would be useful to know what the basis for such a comparison had been. The last sentence of section II K, regarding the possibility of closing down seriously mismanaged schools, was unclear and he would appreciate an explanation of that point.

24. Mr. BERGTHUN (Norway) asked whether there was any difference between the children of migrant workers and those of Swedish citizens with regard to the requirements for admission to higher and university education and the award of government loans and grants for higher and university education.

25. He asked what the Swedish Government did to preserve the cultural identity of immigrants. Were there any measures other than those mentioned in section IV A of the report, namely, organizing theatre activities in the languages of immigrants and encouraging the publication of periodicals in foreign languages?

26. Finally, he would like more details of how foreigners could be admitted to Swedish universities.

27. Mr. BOUFFANDEAU (France) said that, according to the report (sect. II J), some private schools in Sweden used special educational methods. What were those methods? The report seemed to imply that they were methods used in private but not in public schools. Was that the case, and if so why? The statement seemed prima facie to contradict the previous paragraph, which said that private schools could be approved only if the instruction was essentially equivalent to that in the public schools.

Report of the United Kingdom (E/1982/3/Add.16)

28. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Boyd (United Kingdom) took a place at the table.

29. Mr. BOYD (United Kingdom) said that the United Kingdom unreservedly endorsed both the letter and spirit of articles 13 and 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Because of the developed nature of the United Kingdom educational system, article 14 did not apply.

30. The main feature of the United Kingdom educational system was decentralization. In the early years, the Government had kept very much in the background, and the system of local authority control of education had been firmly established by the beginning of the twentieth century.

31. The 1944 Education Act establishing the present Ministry of Education had retained the basic administrative structures established earlier and still constituted the basic legislative framework of the education system. The Act had raised the upper age limit of compulsory schooling from 14 to 15 and had provided for the first time a system of free secondary education for all (primary schooling having been free and compulsory since the 1880s). The Act had also increased the powers of the central Government with regard to national educational policy.

32. After the Second World War, the former "grammar" and "secondary modern" schools had been gradually replaced by comprehensive secondary schools, which at present educated 86 per cent of all pupils at publicly controlled secondary schools. That development had been a response to doubts regarding the effectiveness and justice of selection for secondary education at the age of 11.

33. Another major post-War development had been the rapid expansion of the further and higher education system. The student population in all types of further and higher education had risen from 250,000 in 1959 to over 750,000 in 1979 while in the same period the number of university institutions in the United Kingdom had increased from 24 to 44. A new category of higher education institution, the polytechnic, had been established to provide a wider range of education, including both degree and sub-degree courses, with special emphasis on meeting the local and regional needs of commerce and industry. There were at present 30 such institutions in the United Kingdom.

34. A national system of tuition and maintenance awards for students had been introduced, and a Council for National Academic Awards had been established for the validation of degree and diploma awards outside the university sector.

35. The establishment of the Open University in 1971 and the extension of compulsory schooling to 16 in 1976 were two other important post-War developments. The Open University was a unique experiment in higher education and through it some 44,000 students had gained university degrees. There was a growing emphasis on the requirements of the mature student for further education and, in particular, on the need to give him a second chance.

36. Legislation passed in 1980 had given parents a wider choice of schools and information on the policies and achievements of individual schools. Discussion on the school curriculum was focused in particular on securing agreement on a core of

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skills essential for individual development, on meeting the needs of disadvantaged groups, and on preparing pupils for their entry into employment. Consideration was also being given to the introduction of a common system of examinations at age 16 plus.

37. Much attention had been given over the last few years to the needs of students aged from 16 to 19, who were dispersed among a wide range of institutions in both the school and higher education systems. In 1977, a unit had been established to develop and co-ordinate further education curricula and was at present concentrating on vocational preparation and the development of a continuing education programme. The budget of the Unit had been substantially increased for 1982. A review of the Youth Service was currently in progress.

38. The priorities in adult education were to concentrate on the eradication of illiteracy and on the provision of an education which would directly assist people to find and keep employment. The Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education was examining the educational needs of the adult unemployed. An impressive feature of the adult education system was the high rate of participation therein.

39. Although nursery education was not compulsory, significant progress had been made in providing it, and in the past decade the proportion of 3- and 4-year old children receiving it had risen from 17 per cent to 40 per cent. Children began primary schooling at the age of 5, which was considerably earlier than in most other countries. The policy of successive Governments in recent years had been to give special help to nursery education in inner city and urban areas.

40. There was growing concern over meeting the requirements of such groups as the physically and mentally handicapped; the consensus was that they should be integrated, as far as their disabilities would permit, in the normal education system.

41. The number of pupils in school was expected to fall by 8 per cent between 1981 and 1984, so that, despite a planned reduction of the teaching force over that period, the pupil/teacher ratio would remain close to its best level ever of 18.6:1.

42. Despite the fact that economic growth in the world in general had slowed since the 1950s and 1960s, the United Kingdom in 1980 had spent approximately £11.8 billion on education, representing 6 per cent of gross domestic product and 11 per cent of all public expenditure.

43. The report was as up to date as possible; however, it did not reflect current conditions in the Falkland Islands, where the situation had temporarily changed.

44. The guidelines for submission of reports requested States parties to give attention inter alia to article 1 of the Covenant, which dealt with self-determination. Until 2 April 1982 the Falkland Islanders had exercised that right, as well as the rights set forth in articles 13 to 15 of the Covenant, and

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their loyalties lay with the United Kingdom. As was pointed out in the Falkland Islands section of the report, the Islanders had always felt themselves closely linked to the United Kingdom by tradition, and had adopted many of its cultural ideas and attitudes. The present population was largely derived from settlers who had gone to the Islands from the United Kingdom during the second half of the last century.

45. Mr. SOFINSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) recalled that, following the Robinson report, there had been major changes in higher education in the United Kingdom, with new universities and technical colleges emphasizing technical training in various fields.

46. With regard to secondary education, he asked how far the trend towards comprehensive schools had been carried, and what percentage of schools were comprehensive rather than grammar or secondary modern. The secondary modern school had always been regarded as a dead end, since it was virtually impossible to go to Oxford or Cambridge University from such a school. He asked whether that was still the case.

47. In paragraph 7 of the report there was a reference to ethnic minorities. He asked what was meant by that term. Did it include the Scots, the Celts and the Northern Irish, or were other kinds of ethnic minorities meant? He noted the reference, in the same paragraph, to the report on West Indian children and inquired whether there was a language problem in connexion with those children.

48. He noted from paragraph 4 of the report that, under the 1980 Education Act, parents could express a preference regarding the school they wished their children to attend, and the local education authorities had to respect that choice except in certain specified circumstances. He asked what kind of circumstances or exceptions were contemplated.

49. He asked for clarification of the remark in paragraph 6 regarding the teaching of English as a second language. Were Gaelic and Welsh the first languages in some schools in Scotland and Wales? The teaching of first languages was referred to in paragraph 8 and needed explanation.

50. He would welcome an elaboration of the statement in paragraph 14 that as part of its counter-inflation strategy, the Government expected the beneficiaries of adult education to meet some of the costs of providing it. In connexion with paragraph 15, he inquired to what extent the provision for adult education needs in rural areas was unsatisfactory, and what particular needs in that respect could not be fulfilled.

51. It was stated in paragraph 19 that there were some 2 million adult illiterates in the United Kingdom; he inquired whether that really was the figure. Paragraph 21 stated that the criteria set forth in article 13, paragraph 2 (a), of the International Covenant had been already well met in the United Kingdom before the Covenant came into force. He was unable to reconcile that with the statement that there were 2 million adult illiterates.

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52. He noted from paragraph 23 that, in recent years, a slightly diminishing volume of public funds had been available for higher education, and inquired how much the reduction had been, in specific terms.

53. Mr. BOUFFANDEAU (France) observed that the education system in the United Kingdom was somewhat baffling to someone accustomed to a more centralized approach. He inquired, in particular, about the precise division of responsibilities between local and central authorities in the field of education.

54. Referring to paragraph 4 of the report (E/1982/3/Add.16), he asked what the specific circumstances were in which parents would not be allowed to express their preference as to the school they wished their children to attend. It was indicated in that paragraph that legislation similar to the 1980 Education Act was currently in preparation for Scotland, and he asked whether that implied that the 1980 Act was in force in all parts of the United Kingdom except Scotland.

55. Additional statistics would be appreciated on the financial support for adult education programmes provided by local education authorities. He also requested figures on the number of persons benefiting from the adult education opportunities referred to in paragraph 18.

56. It was stated in paragraph 22 that all parents had a duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school-age received full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, and he asked what the other acceptable arrangements were. He requested details about the recent developments and future prospects with regard to entry to full-time higher education referred to in paragraph 23.

57. It was not clear from paragraph 24 whether awards from public funds were automatically granted to students entering university, and he asked for clarification of that point.

58. The "Open University" was an interesting experiment. He asked when it had been founded, what subjects could be studied under its programmes and what conclusions had been drawn from the experience so far. In a similar experiment in his country, it had been found that graduates had encountered difficulties in finding employment in the labour market.

59. Lastly, he requested additional information regarding State assistance to schools run by religious groups.

60. Mr. MRACHKOV (Bulgaria) said that the length of the United Kingdom report made it difficult to form a clear idea of how the education system was organized.

61. He was struck by the rather high number of illiterates in the United Kingdom, and he wondered whether the number of 2 million referred to in paragraph 19 was for the entire United Kingdom. It was indicated in the report that education had been free and compulsory since 1944 and it was difficult to understand how there could be so many illiterates if that had been the case.

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62. With regard to the system of awards and grants, he requested additional information concerning eligibility requirements and the amount of such grants.

63. He would appreciate more information on the private school system and State subsidies to such schools.

64. The section of the report on Guernsey was rather sketchy. For example, there was no indication of the number of primary and secondary school students. He requested clarification regarding the apparent contradiction between the statement in part E of section III that there was no higher education on the Island of Jersey owing to its small size, and the indication further in that section that there was one high school on the island with 500 students.

65. Mr. RUIZ-CABAÑAS (Mexico) observed that there was little mention in the report of the children of migrant workers and requested information on the education of such children. There were, on the other hand, many references to ethnic minorities, and he wondered whether migrant workers were subsumed under that category.

66. The reference to full-time students in paragraph 24 implied that there were students in the United Kingdom studying on a part-time basis. He asked whether that was the case, at what levels of education a student could attend on a part-time basis, whether such students had to work to support themselves and whether only full-time students were eligible for awards from public funds.

67. A striking feature of the education system in the United Kingdom was the involvement of the local authorities. He asked who maintained minimum standards of uniformity in school curricula and how such curricula were drawn up.

68. Lastly, he asked whether statistics could be provided on the national and ethnic origins of students entering university-level institutions.

69. Mr. MARDOVICH (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that not only had members just received the United Kingdom report but that the report itself was so detailed that it was difficult to use as a basis for discussion. Moreover, there were technical problems in the layout which complicated the Group's task and created confusion. He did not understand, for example, why the report had been divided into five sections, each dealing with a different geographical area. The status of the various areas should have been clearly defined in the report.

70. On the whole, the report did not provide a clear picture of the complicated structure of the education system in the United Kingdom and further elucidation was needed. Since the 1980 Education Act apparently did not apply to Scotland, he asked what legal provisions governed the education system there at the current time.

71. There was a reference in paragraph 6 to a dialogue with local education authorities on ways of promoting racial understanding, and he requested further information on that subject. Specifically, he wished to know to what extent the

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dialogue helped to ensure equality of rights for the various ethnic and racial groups.

72. He had difficulty understanding the meaning of the second sentence of paragraph 9. Specifically, he inquired what was done to ensure the right of citizens to attend courses at institutes of further and higher education.

73. He would appreciate more detailed information on adult education programmes, referred to in paragraph 14. It was not clear what link existed between such programmes and inflation. He asked what specific measures the Government took to "encourage" local authorities to subsidize courses for people not in a position to pay fees.

74. He requested information on the employment situation of graduates of higher education institutions and on measures to ensure that young people found employment.

75. He was shocked by the number of illiterates reported in paragraph 19 and inquired whether that figure was, in fact, accurate; if so, he would welcome additional information on the measures adopted to solve the problem of illiteracy of specific population groups. Referring to paragraph 20, he requested more information on the opportunities available to citizens to pursue their education.

76. He requested elaboration of the statement in paragraph 21 that the criteria set forth in article 13 of the Covenant "were already well met" in the United Kingdom before the Covenant came into force. Lastly, he asked for clarification regarding the "current financial constraints" and the recent development and future prospects with respect to higher education referred to in paragraph 23.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.

