

GENERAL
ASSEMBLY

THIRTY-SEVENTH SESSION

Official Records*



THIRD COMMITTEE
29th meeting
held on
Monday, 1 November 1982
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 29TH MEETING

Chairman: Mr. CALERO RODRIGUES (Brazil)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 78: WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
(continued)

AGENDA ITEM 77: INTERNATIONAL YOUTH YEAR: PARTICIPATION, DEVELOPMENT, PEACE:
REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 81: POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES RELATING TO YOUTH: REPORT OF THE
SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 82: QUESTION OF THE ELDERLY AND THE AGED: REPORTS OF THE
SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 83: WORLD ASSEMBLY ON AGING (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 89: WORLD PROGRAMME OF ACTION CONCERNING DISABLED PERSONS: REPORT OF
THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

* This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room A-3550, 866 United Nations Plaza (Alcoa Building), and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate fascicle for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL

A/C.3/37/SR.29
4 November 1982

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 78: WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
(continued) (A/37/442: E/CN.5/1983/3-ST/ESA/125 and corrigendum)

1. Mr. OGURTSOV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the 1970s and early 1980s clearly demonstrated the serious obstacle to social progress represented by imperialism with its policy of neo-colonialism, which held back the social and economic development of developing countries and attempted to increase their economic and political dependence. It was therefore only natural that General Assembly resolution 34/152 should affirm that all forms of dependence and possession, including aggression, foreign occupation, colonialism, neo-colonialism, apartheid and racial discrimination were the main obstacles to world social and economic progress. The events of recent years confirmed that essential social progress was impossible unless international peace and security were strengthened and that new possibilities for the economic development of all countries and for social and economic progress would be promoted if détente was strengthened and the arms race curbed. The Report on the World Social Situation contained statistics showing how human and material resources were being wasted on military build-ups at a time when more and more people were becoming victims of poverty and squalor. Between 500 million and 1 billion people were constantly suffering from malnutrition, and in the opinion of some, the scale of hunger in the world would increase threefold by the year 2010. Those problems could, however, be solved by eliminating the arms race. According to United Nations experts, the equivalent of 8 to 10 per cent of world military expenditure would suffice to put an end to hunger, disease and illiteracy. General or partial disarmament would save resources to be used for increasing capital investment in the world economy and for accelerating its growth. It would be possible to devote more funds to social programmes, which in many capitalist countries were currently the main target of "economies" and were being sacrificed in the interests of stepping up the arms race.

2. One of the principal methods of solving the current problems was to carry out far-reaching social and economic changes and to restructure international economic relations on a just and equal basis. The question of making such changes for the purpose of social progress was extremely important at a time when newly independent States were endeavouring to accelerate their economic and social development. Those countries had to determine the most acceptable strategy for their development, so that they could solve their social problems as quickly as possible and on a solid basis. Their choice could be made easier by studying and using - with due regard to their national characteristics - the experience of other countries which had successfully achieved or were successfully achieving far-reaching economic and social changes and, as a result, had attained a high rate of development and ensured a constant growth in their people's standard of living. Such experience demonstrated the decisive role of the working masses themselves in making the necessary changes in the economic and social structure of society, and the need to create within the country the political and social conditions that would enable all workers to participate actively in the management of social affairs, including production and the distribution of national income.

(Mr. Ogurtsov, Byelorussian SSR)

3. In the early years of Soviet power, his country had had to face the same difficult problems which today confronted many developing countries. The situation had been worsened by the massive destruction caused by the First World War and the foreign intervention after the victory of the Great October Revolution. Indeed, all the peoples of Soviet Russia had faced the same difficulties, but, freely united in the fraternal family of the peoples of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, now celebrating its sixtieth anniversary, they had achieved a high level of economic and social development, based on socialist changes in the structure of society and the intense labour of Soviet citizens. The essence of those far-reaching social and economic changes lay in the establishment of social ownership of the means of production, the elimination of the exploitation of man by man, the establishment of a planned economy, the introduction of the socialist principle of distribution according to work, under which there was no place for income derived from capital, the move towards free education at all levels and free health care, the provision of public housing, and the involvement of workers in the management of social affairs at all levels. The Byelorussian SSR was successfully implementing the wide-ranging programme of social and economic development set forth at the Twenty-sixth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Twenty-ninth Congress of the Communist Party of Byelorussia. The greatest achievement of socialism was social concern for the all-round development of the personality. The socialist economy aimed at ensuring the fullest satisfaction of the people's growing material and spiritual needs. Real per capita income was steadily increasing as a result of the dynamic growth of social production: it had increased by 120 per cent in the period 1965-1981 and was expected to increase by 17 per cent during the eleventh five-year plan (1981-1985).

4. A major element in the real income of the population of the Byelorussian SSR consisted in the payments and benefits received from the social consumption funds, which provided free social services for the population. A major item of State expenditure from those funds was the construction of housing, which workers could secure free of charge.

5. The living standards of Byelorussians had doubled every 11 years, in spite of the heavy losses suffered during the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1948, in which half of the Republic's national wealth had been destroyed. Through the great advantages of the socialist system, the fraternal assistance received from all the peoples of the Soviet Union and the heroic efforts of the workers, the difficult task of economic recovery had been completed in an unprecedentedly short time. By the end of 1950, the pre-war level of industrial production had been restored.

6. In socialist societies, the growth of material prosperity was seen as an essential condition for the all-round development of the individual. The rise in prosperity was accompanied by an enrichment of the people's spiritual life. Byelorussian society was characterized by its moral health, a humane attitude of man towards man and an atmosphere of collectivity and comradeship. All major political, economic, social and cultural issues in the Byelorussian SSR were studied directly by manual and non-manual workers and the intelligentsia, and millions of people took part in the preparation of economic and social development

(Mr. Ogurtsov, Byelorussian SSR)

plans and worked energetically to implement them. His delegation felt that the Republic's achievements in the social sphere should be adequately reflected in United Nations documents, and in particular, in its reports on the world social situation.

7. There was no doubt that increasing the social and economic progress of developing countries was a world-wide problem. As L. I. Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, had emphasized, it was essential to overcome the economic backwardness of the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, a result of colonialism, in order to ensure the smooth future development of relations between States and the progress of mankind as a whole.

8. The Report on the World Social Situation contained many observations and general conclusions with which everyone had to agree. Drawing attention to the material concerning the growth of unemployment in the capitalist countries, he said that it was impossible to speak of the observance of human rights when people were deprived of one of their fundamental rights, the right to work. Since certain delegations had referred to violations of trade-union rights, he pointed out that according to the report (p. 123), the Governments of a few Western European countries had initiated various legislative and administrative restrictions on trade-union powers, an example being the 1980 Employment Act and the more recent proposals introduced in the United Kingdom. Nor had anyone forgotten the reprisals against the striking air traffic controllers' union in one of the developed capitalist countries, the representative of which had spoken in the Committee in favour of the rights of trade unions in other countries. Modern capitalist society was characterized by chronic crises and falling production, growing unemployment, inflation, unrestrained price rises, more expensive housing and services, education and medical care, an increased number of suicides and increased crime.

9. The report did not define the subject under consideration - that is, it did not state which aspects of social life were included in the term "social situation" and did not provide information on the distribution of available wealth and national income among social groups in the population. The report omitted such elements as culture, sports and physical culture, pre-school education, paid leave and recreational facilities for workers, free time, the social consequences of scientific and technical progress and workers' access to political life. Nor did it clearly distinguish between phenomena in the social situation and the factors which caused such phenomena to appear and develop, as, for example, in the section on science and technology. The difficulties confronting the authors of the report were understandable, since there were no generally accepted definitions of certain terms relating to the social situation of the population, and scientists sought quantitative generalized indicators which would adequately characterize the level and dynamics of those categories. It was enough to say that more than 1,000 individual indicators were needed to characterize the various aspects of a category such as "quality of life", and no one had ever been able to suggest a single all-embracing indicator.

(Mr. Ogurtsov, Byelorussian SSR)

10. He drew attention to the regrettable mistakes made in compiling the material and in the formulation of a number of ideas, including the attempt to lump together superficially similar social phenomena existing in societies with different political and socio-economic systems. Such generalizations were contrary to the real state of affairs in many cases and were thus simply tendentious, obscuring the situation in countries in which social problems were being solved successfully and whitewashing countries in which, for good reasons, those problems could not be solved.

11. Turning to a number of specific examples in the text, he said that on page 1 of the English text it was asserted that in the socialist countries the main concern had shifted from a fair share in growth to a fair distribution of the cost of retrenchment. That was quite untrue: his country not only had not departed from the principle of distribution according to labour but was improving its application so that the degree of social equity in distributing the wealth created was actually increasing.

12. Page 5 of the report stated that the socialist countries had seen a fall in national output, in consumption per capita and in the funds set aside for a variety of social purposes. The truth was that industrial output in the USSR had increased by 3.6 per cent in 1980 and by 3.4 per cent in 1981, while in the Byelorussian SSR it had increased by 6 per cent in 1980, 4.5 per cent in 1981 and 4.9 per cent in the first nine months of 1982. National income in the USSR had grown by 3.8 per cent in 1980 and 3.2 per cent in 1981. Payments and benefits to the population out of social consumption funds had increased in 1980 by 4.8 per cent per capita for the USSR as a whole and 6.9 per cent in the Byelorussian SSR, while in 1981 they had increased by 3.4 per cent and 4.6 per cent respectively. Real per capita income was increasing year by year. Statistics also showed that the supply of consumer durables was being systematically increased. The food products which were being consumed in smaller amounts in the USSR were potatoes and bread, a fact which reflected the improvement in the population's diet.

13. He questioned the assertion on page 12 that changes in the price of goods had helped a variety of consumer goods within the reach of the ordinary citizen but had also burdened poorer groups. The retail prices of the most important foodstuffs had remained stable since the mid-1960s, despite increased production costs and the continued growth of wages, including increases in the minimum wage and in student grants and pensions. It should also be borne in mind that the cost of education and health, as well as most of the cost of housing, was paid not out of individual income but by society as a whole.

14. The statement on page 39 that the modern industrial age had brought about not only vastly increased wealth but also new forms of insecurity and misery to be mitigated was an incorrect generalization: in his country there was no misery, and there were no homeless men and women walking the streets of its cities, as was the case in the country hosting the United Nations.

15. The statement on page 41 of the report that the socialist countries were cutting back on social security benefits was quite unfounded, as could be seen from the table presented on the same page.

/...

(Mr. Ogurtsov, Byelorussian SSR)

16. One example of the one-sided generalizations made about social phenomena in countries with different social systems was the way in which the differences which essentially distinguished such phenomena in a socialist society were glossed over. For example, on page 47, which referred to old-age pensions, there was no mention of the fact that in socialist countries retirement was possible at the age of 55 years for women and 60 for men, while for workers in certain jobs the age limit was even lower. On page 48, the report spoke of the measures taken by the countries of Western Europe since 1978 to guarantee equal social security rights for men and women, without mentioning that in the Byelorussian SSR and other socialist countries such problems did not even exist, since men and women had equal rights in all areas, including social security benefits. On page 49, in the reference to the rising cost of health care in the developed countries, it would have been appropriate to explain that in the socialist countries the increase was paid not out of personal incomes but by society. In providing information on the number and density of health personnel and facilities (pp. 89-90), the report should have indicated that the average figures were much higher in socialist countries; for example, in the Byelorussian SSR there were 345 physicians per 100,000 population, while the average for the developed countries as a whole was 190.

17. The information relating to working hours should have included the fact that his country had introduced the five-day working week at the end of 1960. The information on housing would have been clearer if mention had been made, for example, of the fact that in his country housing was provided essentially free of charge and that rent accounted for no more than 3 per cent of household budgets, the level of rents having remained unchanged since the end of the 1920s, despite the fully understandable increases in the cost of construction and maintenance. During the past five-year plan alone, housing conditions had improved for one fifth of the Republic's inhabitants.

18. On page 165, the important question of workers' participation in social management in socialist countries was presented tendentiously, with no account being taken of the facts. His country's Constitution guaranteed the right of workers' collectives to participate in all decisions affecting them, including the preparation of plans, questions relating to wages and working conditions and the distribution of housing. The various statutory and voluntary methods were used to ensure participation included collective agreements between trade unions and the administration, standing conferences on production, general meetings of the whole collective, and various voluntary social offices dealing, for example, with personnel questions. The system of electing deputies allowed representatives of workers to manage social affairs at all levels, including the very highest. In short, the report should not have interpreted the question of workers' participation in management under socialism in such a primitive fashion.

19. The methods used in presenting statistics in the report were not always up to acceptable standards. Table 2 on page 68, for example, used only a two-year period to determine the annual average rate of growth in food production, whereas it was normal practice to use a five-year period, so as to take account of the influence of exceptional weather conditions and other factors. With regard to table 2 on

(Mr. Ogurtsov, Byelorussian SSR)

page 181, dealing with the distribution of research and development expenditure among major regions, he wondered how the difficult question of converting local currency into dollars had been tackled, since that was not explained in the report. With regard to the chapter on disarmament and development, he said footnote 1 on page 199 indicated that the figures used consisted of "indirectly-constructed estimates based on theoretically questionable methodologies". It was well known that the aim of such estimates was to exaggerate the defence expenditure of the socialist countries. Therefore the judgements made in the report on the basis of such figures were themselves questionable. Furthermore, for the sake of objectivity, footnote 11 on page 200 should have mentioned that the United States had not yet ratified the SALT II agreement. One of the reasons given for its reluctance to do so was the alleged supremacy of the USSR in nuclear weapons. However, the figures presented in footnote 6 on page 199 showed that in 1980 the USSR had had 6,000 nuclear warheads, while the United States had had 9,200. The report also contained a gross error in arithmetic on page 89, where it presented the unlikely figure of 1,124,516 for the total number of medical schools in developed countries.

20. He said that the authors of future reports should be more objective in describing the social situation in various countries and should confirm their figures or refer to research published in those countries. Reports of that type should be based on information provided by Member States. While he did not wish to suggest that the socialist countries should always be portrayed favourably in United Nations research papers, he did feel that it was inadmissible to deviate from or distort the facts.

21. In conclusion, he observed that the English version of the report had been given a sales number. He felt that it would be inadvisable to put the report on sale as it stood, since much essential work still remained to be done and the report still had to be considered by the Committee on Social Development and by the Economic and Social Council. Only after due regard had been given to the comments expressed in the Third Committee and other United Nations bodies, making the report a document worthy of the United Nations, could it be widely distributed.

22. Mr. SYED SHAH (Bangladesh) said that the report before the Committee gave a grim picture of the world social situation. Social and economic disparity was even wider than in the 1960s and 1970s, millions of people were suffering extreme poverty, income growth had been least where it was needed most, there had been little improvement in social fields such as food, health care, housing, employment and education, millions were unemployed or underemployed, and during the International Year of the Child, 650 million children had been deprived of school for lack of money. In most of the developing countries, economic expansion had declined in 1981 for the fourth consecutive year. The objectives of the Second United Nations Development Decade had not been achieved, and the Third Decade remained uncertain. One of the primary reasons for that situation had been the state of the world economy and the unjust economic order.

(Mr. Syed Shah, Bangladesh)

23. Social development was an integral part of the total process of development. His own country's national development strategy increasingly reflected the relationship between social and economic aspects and was designed essentially to help individual groups or communities to overcome their current difficulties and develop their social and economic potential. With its predominantly rural agricultural society, Bangladesh concentrated its development plans on transforming the social and economic structure through decentralization and ensuring the widest possible participation of people in development, with emphasis on rural and agricultural activities. To that end, the Government had inaugurated multi-dimensional and comprehensive projects for various segments of society.

24. While many social-development objectives remained unattainable for lack of resources, global expenditure on armaments continued to increase. As indicated on page 193 of the report, total military expenditure had already reached the \$445 billion mark at constant 1978 prices. Military expenditure per person per day now exceeded the annual per capita gross national product of many developing countries, and 500,000 nuclear weapons were available, with an explosive power equivalent to 1 million Hiroshima bombs. Yet some 500 million humans were suffering from hunger and malnutrition and about 800 million could not read or write. The need for general and complete disarmament and for redeployment of the resources released thereby could not be overemphasized.

25. The grim statistics set forth in the Report on the World Social Situation emphasized the urgent need to implement the social and economic development objectives of the Third United Nations Development Decade, such as the elimination of hunger and malnutrition; the achievement by the year 2000 of full employment, a life expectancy of at least 60 years and universal primary-school enrolment; population control; reduction of mortality rates; the provision of safe water and adequate sanitary facilities by 1990; and women's equal participation in all sectors and at all levels of the development process. Future reports should continue to be comprehensive and to contribute to the identification of emerging social trends of international concern. The 1985 report should review progress made in implementing the Declaration on Social Progress and Development in the light of the goals and objectives of the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade.

26. The report had been published too late for his Government to study it in detail. He hoped that future reports would be available for adequate consideration by Governments and by bodies such as the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council before being submitted to the General Assembly.

27. Mrs. IDER (Mongolia) said that her delegation had been unable to study the report on the world social situation in detail owing to the late distribution of the document. The Secretariat's work on such important documents should be so organized as to allow Governments the time to study them seriously. She believed that delegations were entitled to expect that the Report on the World Social Situation, which was discussed once every three years, would be completed and distributed to delegations three months before the opening of the General Assembly session, not a week before the item was taken up.

(Mrs. Ider, Mongolia)

28. The established practice for the consideration of the report had proved its value and should be continued in the interests of a workmanlike debate on social questions in the Third Committee. Unfortunately, the current report displayed the same shortcomings as previous ones had done, notably a lack of any analytical approach to the issues discussed. The Declaration on Social Progress and Development, the International Development Strategy, and General Assembly resolutions on social development questions all clearly indicated the underlying reasons for the unsatisfactory social situation around the world, but the authors of the report had once again deemed it unnecessary to provide an analysis of those reasons and had also failed to make any recommendations concerning effective ways of promoting social progress and development. Yet, in her delegation's view, the whole purpose of considering the report was to encourage an exchange of experience on how countries dealt with social issues and overcame the difficulties they encountered. The unprecedented arms race, instigated by the forces of imperialism and reaction, was absorbing vast amounts of resources which could have been used instead to eliminate hunger and disease and promote education, science and environmental protection. Military expenditure world-wide in 1980 had amounted to \$US 110 for every man, woman and child on the planet, while 570 million people were undernourished, 800 million were illiterate and 250 million children were unable to attend school.

29. The current report sought to embroider the trend about the developed capitalist countries, suggesting that their social policy was similar to that pursued in the socialist countries and that unemployment in the capitalist countries was not really so bad as many supposed. In actuality, social policy under socialism was radically different. Concern for the welfare of the working people was fundamental to the activities of any State under socialism. The socialist countries guaranteed people their most important right - the right to work - in addition to providing them with many other social benefits.

30. In the short period since 1921, the year of the victory of the revolution in Mongolia, her country had undergone radical socio-economic changes and completed the transition from feudalism to socialism without passing through the capitalist stage of development. Great advances had been made in education, health care, maternal and child welfare and general conditions for all workers. Illiteracy had become a thing of the past, and the country now boasted an extensive educational system in which tuition was free at all levels, while students at some secondary and higher educational institutions received grants from the State. Boarding schools had been built for the children of herdsmen in pastoral areas, and it was expected that between 70 and 90 per cent of all such children would shortly be attending such schools. Great advances had also been made in health care, on which the State had spent 10 per cent of its annual budget. The country had a unified pension system that extended to all 60-year-old males with at least 25 years of service and all 55-year-old women with at least 20 years of service; earlier retirement was allowed in some cases. Steps were being taken to increase real income and benefits for workers and to reduce the difference between living standards in urban and rural areas. During the five-year plan that had ended in 1980, the prices of basic consumer goods had been kept stable while the cost of

(Mrs. Ider, Mongolia)

medical and school supplies and some other categories of goods, together with fees for certain community services, had been reduced. Pensions for invalids and families that had lost their breadwinners had been raised, and additional leave on partial pay had been introduced for working mothers looking after children.

31. Special attention was given to young children, beginning at the pre-natal stage. Since May 1981, children under 1 year of age had been receiving all medicines and medical supplies free of charge. Women were released from work for 45 days before giving birth, and 56 days thereafter, on full pay; after that statutory period they could, if they wished, take up to six months' leave on reduced pay. Special benefits were provided for women with large families. The country also had an extensive system of inexpensive pre-school child-care facilities and after-school activities were organized in a range of different fields.

32. Her delegation would continue to support efforts by the international community to promote social progress and development. The United Nations could do a great deal to overcome the problems confronting States, particularly by ending the nuclear arms race.

33. Mr. GONZALEZ de LEON (Mexico) said that his delegation had been devoting increasing attention to social matters because of their intrinsic importance and because there appeared to be a slackening of action on them by the United Nations and many of the international organizations and also by some Governments, which tended to concentrate more attention on technical and economic matters. Admittedly, it was sometimes difficult to draw a line between social and economic matters, but, as his delegation had pointed out on many occasions, there were entire areas of the social problem - such as preservation of the environment, human settlements, child care and population questions - which were not included in the agenda of the Third Committee but were being dealt with by the Second Committee on the pretext that they had important financial implications. His delegation, and doubtless many others, failed to understand why such eminently social problems were not being discussed in the committee responsible for social, humanitarian and cultural affairs. His delegation contemplated submitting a formal proposal with a view to remedying the situation.

34. It was clear from the Report on the World Social Situation that even the most elementary analysis would have to take into account all the areas to which he had referred, and it would be difficult to imagine a serious and balanced analysis which did not, in addition, take into account such areas as food, nutrition, health, education and training, working conditions, and housing. Nevertheless, he commended the Secretariat for the 1982 report, which provided a broad and fruitful basis for the Committee's work.

35. In his delegation's view, the report rightly reflected the general doubts about the possibility of meeting the world's social needs in the short term or the medium term. Indeed, there was a striking contrast between the optimism of the 1960s, when the General Assembly had adopted the Declaration on Social Progress and

(Mr. Gonzalez de Leon, Mexico)

Development, and the subsequent scepticism. His delegation shared the attitude reflected in the Secretariat's report, which was not so much a study of the world social situation as a report on the social situation of the present crisis. It felt concern, however, at the approach to the treatment of social problems, which was clearly summed up in the third paragraph of the introduction, containing references to "the limits of the role of the nation-State as a manager of socio-economic change" and "a certain disenchantment with the dominant ideologies of development". Although the Secretariat had not stated what the limits of the functions of the nation-State were nor identified the ideologies which had caused disappointment, it was clear that the report touched, there and elsewhere, upon important and complex questions which the Committee had neither the time nor the necessary information to debate fully. However, his delegation was disturbed at the mere reference to them because it suggested that there might be a tendency in the Secretariat which would make the analysis far from partial. He could not discuss those questions in detail at present, nor deal with the substantive part of the report, because many problems referred to therein were not on the Committee's agenda. However, he wished to point out that just as some aspects of social problems had been placed outside the Committee's scope, it might be argued at some future time that the Committee could not deal with humanitarian and human-rights matters because they had been entrusted to various ad hoc bodies. He was bringing up the matter not because of a tendency over the past two years to deprive the General Assembly, the highest organ of the United Nations, of the capacity to deal with anything which was being dealt with in another forum, even a subsidiary one. The General Assembly could and should deal with all aspects of international life, including those relating to the international protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

36. The Report on the World Social Situation was so important that it should be given much more time and should be the first item on the Third Committee's agenda. He hoped that in future it would be issued much earlier so that Governments would have time to study it in depth and base their positions on a full understanding of its implications.

37. Mr. MANALO (Philippines), commending the Secretariat for the Report on the World Social Situation, said that it was important to realize that economic and social issues were not dichotomous but were directly related and impinged on each other at almost every point. The report contained elements which transcended political, ideological and cultural boundaries, such as hunger and malnutrition, people's participation, environment, and science and technology, which, while requiring approaches compatible with national needs, would always remain central to human life.

38. The United Nations system had long regarded social development as essential to the attainment of world peace and stability. His delegation was troubled, however, by the fact that the advancement of technology, while desirable in itself, had outstripped social progress in the developing world. Technology had had certain adverse effects on the quality of life and had not enabled the people to participate effectively in development or enjoy fully the benefits resulting from a

/...

(Mr. Manalo, Philippines)

fair distribution of economic wealth. If the world social situation was to improve, a just international economic system must be established, with the participation of the developing countries. That would be possible only through the transfer of technology and increased financial flows to developing countries, a goal that called for the political will to bridge the widening gap between rhetoric and action. A fresh impetus was needed to break the deadlock in the North-South dialogue, and the long-stalled global negotiations must be launched as soon as possible.

39. On the question of food security, he said it was regrettable that many countries used food - a basic need - as a political weapon. During the International Year of the Child in 1979, 17 million children had died of hunger and according to current statistics there were at present more than 30 countries with severe food problems or food deficits. At the International Meeting on Co-operation and Development, held at Cancún in 1981, the President of the Philippines had recommended certain measures to alleviate the plight of the world's hungry and malnourished. The measures suggested by the Philippines included intensified research to develop technology appropriate to individual countries; the provision and financing of technology for farmers; assured markets and a price-support system to ensure fair prices for agricultural products; and irrigation, farm-to-market roads and transport facilities. Furthermore, there should be an increase in the financial assistance given by the international community to countries suffering from food deficits; foreign investment in basic infrastructures; increased bilateral food aid; and an expansion of the role of international monetary institutions in the world of food aid and food production.

40. Food-reserve schemes at the national and regional levels were critical for eliminating food problems. His country had established its own rice and corn reserves and was a partner in the ASEAN Food Security Reserve Scheme in rice. Such schemes were important in enabling countries, particularly developing countries, to secure food supplies at reasonable cost in times of crop failure and sharp fluctuation in food markets; however, effective management was often impaired by lack of storage facilities and by transport and distribution problems. Massive foreign exchange was required for infrastructure and would, in the case of the developing countries, have to be financed from export earnings, foreign loans or grants-in-aid. His delegation viewed with concern the protectionist policy pursued by certain countries and appealed to them to liberalize their trade practices, particularly in respect of agricultural and food products.

41. There was a growing realization in developing countries, such as his own, that self-sufficiency was an important factor in solving the ills of the present-day world. Community participation provided a durable basis for promoting national unity and was the best means of redressing poverty and restoring stability to an uncertain national economy. To that end, his country had established a national livelihood programme as the centrepiece of its development strategy.

42. Regarding the environment - another issue of special interest to his country - he said that human settlement was being promoted in the Philippines by a system of

(Mr. Manalo, Philippines)

land and community development aimed at ensuring the growth and meeting the essential needs of depressed and impoverished areas, with due regard to optimum land use and environmental protection. The project was being introduced to the international community under the auspices of the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements as a demonstration project in the developing countries.

43. Although his delegation could not mention all the matters relevant to the social situation, including employment and working conditions, it fully agreed with the elements suggested in the report and looked forward to periodic reports on all those issues.

44. He also stressed the value of close co-ordination between the organs of the United Nations system and suggested that it might be useful to hold a joint meeting of the Third and Second Committees.

45. Mr. RODRIGUEZ MEDINA (Colombia) said that three years ago Colombia and the countries of the Andean Group, supported by the Group of 77, had proposed a new method of measuring development, maintaining that changes in development theory and practice should be accompanied by changes in indicators, since the conventional indicators, which were all based on per capita income and similar factors, had served only to identify economic growth and trade and commerce. They had urged the use of qualitative indicators or indicators of social equity and the General Assembly had adopted resolution 34/152, in which it had requested the Secretary-General to take measures, in co-operation with all the organizations in the United Nations system, to improve the methodology, using quantitative and qualitative indicators and taking account not only of the social services provided by the different countries, the real demand for them and their feasibility, quality, efficiency and effectiveness, but more especially the way in which they reached the marginal sectors of the population. That was the only way to obtain a true picture of the dimension of poverty and reliable information on the real world social situation.

46. Then, as today, those countries had been calling for an end to talk about poverty in the abstract - the poor must be identified in concrete terms - and they had criticized the Report on the World Social Situation as not being a serious document. The same criticism applied to the present report, which was misleading, and deliberately so, since it claimed that the picture it presented of economic development, using per capita income as an indicator, showed what poverty really was. And that had been done with the full knowledge of the Secretariat, which had been repeatedly requested to improve its methodology for social and economic analysis. It was regrettable, that, despite appeals in the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, the vast slow-moving bureaucracy of the United Nations was allowing the world to be misled as to the true nature and needs of poverty by issuing reports which were merely descriptive.

47. Most of the traditional social indicators were based on averages - which, as everyone knew, were misleading. What was important was to know the extremes, the relative inequality. It was not enough to show per capita income increasing at a

/...

(Mr. Rodriguez Medina, Colombia)

favourable rate if the gap between rich and poor persisted. The United Nations indicators presented snapshots here and there of poverty but never the whole film showing how it developed and whom it affected. There could be no real diagnosis on the basis of statistics about resources, school attendance, dollar earnings and so forth. With new indicators it would be possible to ascertain the magnitude of the problem, in time and space, and its impact on different income levels. Without a clear idea of the social situation, what was left was a paradoxical picture of a world economically integrated but socially disparate.

48. The multinational credit agencies had only recently become concerned about social development, although it was the main reason for the current international crisis - since poverty was not confined to the third world: it existed even in New York where hospitals were being closed daily because there were no social indicators to show that there was a demand for them. Yet the Third Committee had allocated barely four meetings to the subject. The present report presented a projection of world social services, but since inflation still persisted, there was no indication whether the budgetary resources of the developing or developed countries were greater or smaller than the funds allocated for that purpose a decade earlier. Until recently, the multinational credit agencies had financed only projects involving large imports of capital goods, which were of interest to the major Bretton Woods countries. Now, however, they were beginning to take an interest in such matters as justice, health and education. However, initial efforts had totally ignored the social realities, owing to the lack of objective indicators reflecting internal changes in individual societies. The United Nations must take the lead in producing a new basic instrument for analysis of the world social situation, which was what his country and others of the Andean Group and the Group of 77 had already proposed, to no avail.

49. The crux of the problem was the lack of a new methodology and the failure of the organizations of the United Nations system to implement General Assembly resolution 34/152 calling for that methodology. As representative of Colombia for the past three years he had appealed in every possible committee for fewer meaningless reports and fewer documents to augment the vast and useless archives in United Nations missions. He now appealed to the Chairman of the Committee to use his good offices to ensure that the Secretariat implemented the resolution of the General Assembly.

50. Mr. REITZE (Chile) said that the report had dealt with world socio-economic realities seriously and objectively, analysing their significance for the present and making projections for the future. The report had noted that the feeling of powerlessness experienced by countries, regardless of level of development, had led them to adopt a somewhat pessimistic outlook.

51. It was interesting to note that the overall view reflected in the report was fundamentally consistent with the statistical data contained in the 1982 World Development Report of the World Bank. He would therefore comment briefly on the behaviour of three basic indicators singled out by the Bank-life expectancy at birth, adult literacy rate and per capita income - over the last two decades.

(Mr. Reitze, Chile)

52. Life expectancy at birth was a good indicator of many social variables, particularly health. While life expectancy had increased in all countries between 1960 and 1980, the population age gap between the industrialized countries and the low income countries had been considerably narrowed. Moreover, the non-industrialized countries had progressed much more rapidly than the industrialized countries in increasing life expectancy.

53. The adult literacy rate was especially reflective of educational variables. While the industrialized countries had maintained a rate of 99 per cent since 1960, the least-developed countries had increased their rate from 26 to 50 per cent, which, although indicative of enormous progress in relative terms, was still unsatisfactory.

54. Figures on per capita income showed that, from any point of view, the least-developed countries remained dismally poor.

55. Consideration of such basic indicators showed that progress had been made in certain major social fields. Nevertheless, the main impression given by the report was that the present-day world was in the throes of a profound disequilibrium. In many regions the trends generated rising expectations of better standards of living, even though the rate of development of those regions was not even satisfactory. Moreover, the current world economic crisis threatened to erode the modest gains made in recent decades in just a few years. Moreover, the gap separating the developed and the developing countries seemed to be widening.

56. His country also suffered from the current world socio-economic crisis. Although it had appeared to be entering a period of intense and sustained economic growth marked by a sharp reduction in inflation, that upward trend in growth had recently been halted by such factors as a drastic decline in export income caused by a drop in world prices of export commodities such as copper and a dramatic increase in foreign indebtedness resulting from rising international interest rates. The loss of international competitiveness had brought about a significant rise in unemployment.

57. Government concern for the social sector had not wavered, however, as was evidenced by the allocation of 54 per cent of public expenditure to that sector. For that reason, Chile had experienced substantial social progress in recent years. Life expectancy at birth had risen by 10 years in two decades, while infant mortality had dropped from 115 per 1,000 to 43 per 1,000 in the same period. Government expenditure for health had increased four-fold between 1972 and 1979 and roughly 90 per cent of the country's population had access to safe drinking water. Government expenditure for education had also increased and the adult literacy rate currently exceeded 90 per cent. The Government was implementing an economic recovery programme based on a fair wage policy in conjunction with other programmes designed to achieve full employment.

58. The uncertain international climate depicted in the report had been reflected in the Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization, in which he

(Mr. Reitze, Chile)

had expressed concern with regard to the political viability of the United Nations. Likewise, the Administrator of UNDP and the Executive Director of UNEP, in their statements to the Second Committee, had emphasized the adverse effects of current financial difficulties on United Nations development programmes. However, his delegation agreed that the Secretary-General's report on the World Social Situation and the World Bank report provided grounds for cautious optimism. Instead of succumbing to the fears and uncertainties of the present, the United Nations had a moral imperative to consider each sensitive issue realistically and in perspective with a view to finding viable, prudent and agreed solutions.

59. The current session of the General Assembly provided practical opportunities for embarking on that course, one of which was the opportunity to launch global negotiations in the near future. Although countries bore primary responsibility for accelerating their own development, their efforts would be seriously frustrated unless a more equitable international economic order was established, barriers to international trade were eliminated and financial and technical resources were transferred from the developed to the developing countries. He expressed the hope that all the resources of the United Nations, which, despite its limitations, constituted the only hope for effective international co-operation, would be made available for the promotion of further progress in the socio-economic sphere.

60. Mr. ASANTE (Ghana) said that the Secretariat was to be commended for its judicious selection of material for inclusion in the report and for the choice of indicators to be used in its preparation. The report effectively demonstrated the relationships between social trends and major development issues. Since it contained a wealth of ideas on those vital subjects, he proposed that it should be included as a priority item on the agenda of the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly for further consideration.

61. The CHAIRMAN said that the scope of the debate on agenda item 78 was limited to discussion of the Report on the World Social Situation and not of the world social situation itself. Committee members should bear in mind that the report would be submitted to the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Social Development for their consideration. The basic question of the report's methodology would be the subject of further study by the Secretariat. With regard to the suggestion made by the representative of Ghana, he said that the report could be given further consideration by the Third Committee if Committee members so wished.

AGENDA ITEM 77: INTERNATIONAL YOUTH YEAR: PARTICIPATION, DEVELOPMENT, PEACE:
REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/C.3/37/L.16, L.20, L.25)

AGENDA ITEM 81: POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES RELATING TO YOUTH: REPORT OF THE
SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/C.3/37/L.23*)

AGENDA ITEMS 82 and 83: QUESTION OF THE ELDERLY AND THE AGED: REPORTS OF THE
SECRETARY-GENERAL; WORLD ASSEMBLY ON AGING (continued) (A/C.3/37/L.21 and L.26)

AGENDA ITEM 89: WORLD PROGRAMME OF ACTION CONCERNING DISABLED PERSONS: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/C.3/37/L.19; A/37/351/Add.2; A/C.3/37/L.22)

Draft resolution A/C.3/37/L.16, with financial implications contained in L.25

62. Mr. VOICU (Romania), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/37/L.16, said that Botswana, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Mali, Mauritania, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Upper Volta had become sponsors. The draft resolution was a natural follow-up to General Assembly resolution 36/28 which had endorsed the specific Programme of Measures and Activities to be undertaken before and during IYY. The preamble dealt with the aspirations of contemporary youth throughout the world, and the need for greater concern by the United Nations about youth problems. Paragraph 4 had been drafted in the light of a resolution adopted by ESCAP concerning measures to be taken with respect to IYY. Paragraph 7 had been included with one regard for the success of the Advisory Committee's second session. Paragraph 9 was intended to stress the importance of vigorous action by the Secretariat to help obtain generous contributions, since spontaneous voluntary contributions might prove insufficient. He referred Committee members to document A/C.3/37/L.25, which contained the financial implications of draft resolution L.16, and said that document A/37/348/Add.1 should not be taken into consideration during the voting on L.16. Since the draft resolution represented a follow-up to General Assembly resolution 36/28, the sponsors believed that it met all conditions necessary for it to be adopted by consensus.

Draft resolution A/C.3/37/L.20

63. Mr. SLABY (Czechoslovakia) introducing draft resolution A/C.3/37/L.20 of which Afghanistan, German Democratic Republic, Mozambique, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe had become sponsors, said that the draft was a follow-up both in form and in substance of General Assembly resolution 36/29. That was no coincidence. During the discussion of the items under consideration, the overwhelming majority of delegations had agreed that the problems of young people required particular attention and that effective measures had to be taken to improve the status of all youth in all walks of life. One of the underlying causes of the sombre situation of youth in many parts of the world was the absence of adequate safeguards for the rights of youth. Young people in many countries did not have access to education, vocational training and particularly employment. The demand that youth rights should be guaranteed was fully in accordance with the objectives of International Youth Year. The sponsors believed that at the same time the rights of youth, particularly the right to education and the right to work, should receive attention in the preparation and drafting of any measures, decisions or proposals affecting the situation of youth and relating to International Youth Year.

Draft resolution A/C.3/37/L.23

64. The CHAIRMAN said that the draft resolution had been submitted under agenda item 81 and not under item 77 as shown in the document.

65. Mr. ZAKI (Egypt), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/37/L.23, said that it was intended to supplement the resolution adopted by the 1981 General Assembly and was in line with the guiding principles set forth in resolution 36/17. The seventh preambular paragraph and operative paragraph 3 were the new elements in draft resolutions on International Youth Year. Finally, the wording in the fourth line of operative paragraph 8 should be amended to read: "implementation of the guidelines for improving channels ...".

Draft resolution A/C.3/37/L.21

66. Mr. VELLA (Malta), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/37/L.21 of which Argentina, Australia, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Egypt, Guyana, Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, Madagascar, Mauritania, Spain, Thailand, Togo, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay and Venezuela had become sponsors, said that the content of the draft resolution was self-explanatory. In future, it was expected that the question of the elderly and the aged would be taken up under one agenda item, namely, the question of aging. The draft resolution was not politically controversial. It was controversial only in that it had financial implications. Since the early 1970s, Member States had dealt with the question without requesting the General Assembly to allocate additional funds. They had felt that the matter of funds should not be raised until it was absolutely necessary. Consideration of the item had now passed from the preparatory stage of a conference or a programme to the implementation of the International Plan of Action. In order to maintain the momentum generated at the World Assembly on Aging, some financial expenditure, however modest, was required. He understood that the financial implications of the draft resolution would be issued the following day in document A/C.3/37/L.26, at which time the draft resolution could usefully be discussed by the Committee.

Draft resolution A/C.3/37/L.19

67. Mr. STEVENS (Belgium), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/37/L.19, of which Gabon, Malta, Qatar and Zaire had become sponsors, said that the draft dealt exclusively with the adoption of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and would be complemented by a second draft resolution, A/C.3/37/L.22, which would be introduced by the representative of the Philippines.

Draft resolution A/C.3/37/L.22

68. Mrs. TIRONA ((Philippines), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/37/L.22 of which Argentina, Nicaragua, Oman and Sri Lanka had become sponsors, said that the rationale behind the draft was to break away from the practice of formulating strategies and programmes of action without genuine commitment to implement them. The original plan had been to have a consolidated draft resolution which incorporated the adoption of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and its implementation. However, in a spirit of compromise and an effort to meet the concerns of some countries, the Group of 77 had agreed to two separate draft resolutions, the first being the one just introduced by the representative of Belgium. The present draft had been inspired by the Advisory Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons. The members of the Committee were recognized national experts on matters pertaining to the disabled and the sponsors of the draft wished to express their appreciation of the Committee's work.

(Mrs. Tirona, Philippines)

69. Draft resolution L.22 emphasized the following principles: (a) the need to continue global efforts to sustain the momentum generated by IYDP whose theme was "full participation and equality" and to support fully and effectively the implementation of the World Programme of Action; (b) the need to generate continued acceptance by the community of the right of disabled persons to participate fully in the social life and development of their societies and to enjoy living conditions equal to those of their fellow citizens; (c) the role of the regional commissions in developing technical co-operation programmes at the regional and subregional levels in the training of rehabilitation personnel and production of prosthetic appliances and aids utilizing local resources.

70. While the financing of projects for disabled persons at the international level was difficult at the present time in view of the constraints on United Nations resources, it was still hoped that the means would be found of providing the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs with the necessary support to ensure follow-up of the World Programme of Action.

71. While the sponsors were not entirely happy with the present text, they felt that in the interest of compromise and since, as stated in the twelfth preambular paragraph, funds should come from the reallocation of existing budgets within the United Nations system, the draft resolution could be adopted.

72. Mrs. DOWNING (Secretary of the Committee) said that in the French text, in operative paragraph 13, the word "internationales" should be replaced by "nationales".

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

73. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the deadline for submission of draft resolutions on agenda item 78 be set at Thursday, 4 November, at 6. p.m.

74. It was so decided.

75. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the list of speakers on agenda items 91 and 92 should be closed on Wednesday, 3 November, at 6 p.m.

76. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.