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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 15th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. CALERO RODRIGUES (Brazil)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 77: INTERNATIONAL YOUTH YEAR: PARTICIPATION, DEVELOPMENT, PEACE: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/37/237, A/37/348 and Add.1 and 2)

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AGENDA ITEM 89: WORLD PROGRAMME OF ACTION CONCERNING DISABLED PERSONS: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/37/160, A/37/351 and Corr.1 and Add.1 and 2)

1. Mr. YOLAH (Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs) said that the world economic crisis had led to a deterioration of the social situation, particularly in developing countries. Economic growth as one had known it in the past had virtually come to a standstill in most sectors of the developed market economies; unemployment was reaching alarming dimensions in some, and the benefits which individuals had been able to create as a cushion in time of need might not be sufficient to contain social and political uncertainty and unrest. In industrial socialist countries, the long period of rapid post-war economic expansion had apparently been interrupted. As national output had slackened, pressure had been placed on funds set aside for various social purposes.

2. It was also clear that per capita incomes in the developing countries were likely to have fallen in 1982, for the second year in a row. Moreover, as indicated in the Report on the World Social Situation just issued by the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, many developing countries had been affected by the world recession in the form of an absolute decline in living standards. The full social effect of the global slow-down in economic activity was not yet clear, but the short-term effects on employment and income were already apparent. In countries having a moderate rate of growth in the past, job opportunities in the modernizing sectors of the economy had been blocked for a substantial number of people. The poor in countries at lower levels of development had been particularly affected. There had been drastic cut-backs in investment plans and public spending had either levelled off or declined in real terms.

3. Irrespective of the country, the economic recession had meant for some a decline in the standard of living, for others an abrupt interruption in the steady improvement of their circumstances, and for still others a loss of confidence in their future prospects. For developing countries the problems of social development were becoming increasingly difficult to deal with.

4. It was to be feared that the momentum built up in recent years on the social front was in danger of slowing. Over the past three decades social conditions had improved in many parts of the world and in many domains. For example, in most

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developing countries there had been an improvement in the quality of life. The gains in literacy, health, education and life expectancy had created their own momentum of growth. The present difficulties, in threatening to set back progress, presented a serious challenge to the international community and to Governments. Efforts were being made to address social problems even in the face of pressures on national economies that were adversely affecting the most vulnerable groups in particular. But the capacity of Governments to apply socially oriented or indeed any kind of long-term policies had been eroded. At the same time, international financial transfers had been insufficient to permit significant allocations to social programmes or other measures to reduce the scope and intensity of poverty.

5. Poverty remained the central social issue in the developing countries. That truism had to be repeated because the international community had yet to design and implement effective policies for the eradication of the worst forms of misery. The greatest concentration of poverty was in the least developed countries of Africa and in the most populous countries of Asia; but it existed everywhere: there were perhaps 500 million people suffering from malnutrition in all parts of the world. Within developing countries, food deficiency was most visible in the large towns, but the greatest number of hungry persons was to be found in the countryside. Yet globally, during the 1970s, food production had stayed ahead of population increase, but production varied widely from country to country and, particularly in Africa, it had not kept pace with population growth. Another sign and cause of poverty was illiteracy. During the last decade the absolute number of illiterates had been increasing, but the proportion of illiterates in the total adult population seemed to have diminished. Other manifestations of poverty in health, housing and income were documented in reports submitted to the General Assembly at the current session.

6. For urban and export-dependent areas in particular, the recession was making things more difficult, as earnings from exports were sharply curtailed and as capital flows were drying up. In the past, at a time of economic expansion, the merits of growth-oriented strategies had been questioned. At present, it seemed obvious that the absolute necessity of restoring and maintaining a dynamic world economy should be reaffirmed. Without that, there was little hope of alleviating the worst social problems of the day.

7. The economic and financial constraints on social development had been aggravated in many parts of the world by population growth. Demographic data had altered in ways that had been quite unprecedented as recently as 8 or 10 years previously. Although the rate of population growth world-wide had begun to decline, the increase in the world's population each year was more than 70 million.

8. One of the most striking developments in the developing countries was the growth of large urban centres. Reflecting profound social and economic changes, including in all too many cases relative stagnation in rural areas, urban migration had become an urgent issue to most developing nations. Much of the growth of the cities was the result of migration from rural areas of young adults who must be provided with jobs, housing and essential services. Governments often lacked the resources needed to respond to such a situation.

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9. Another issue in the present world situation was international migration, including massive flows of migrants who were sometimes compelled to leave their countries because of intolerable living conditions or in some cases political oppression. It was to be hoped that the International Conference on Population to be held in 1984 in Mexico City would provide a forum for consideration of such crucial issues.

10. The Conference on Population was only one of the major events in the social field for which the United Nations, and the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs in particular, had responsibility in the 1980s. In August 1982, the World Assembly on Aging had been held in Vienna. The year 1981 had been the International Year of Disabled Persons, and 1985 would be International Youth Year. The World Conference on the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace would also take place in 1985. All those events would have a special contribution to make to the achievement of the objectives of the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade.

11. While attention was focused on the situation of the global economy and its broad social impact, the Third Committee ought to be concerned also with particular population groups. The current recession was threatening the chances of vulnerable social groups - the aging, the disabled and the youth - for full participation in development along the lines envisaged in the Strategy, because they tended to be the first victims of contraction of investment and reduction in public expenditure, particularly its social component. Their problems required specific international attention, and that needed more than ever to be reaffirmed.

12. The draft plan of action on aging, adopted by the World Assembly, emphasized that the preparation of the entire population for the latter stages of life should be an integral part of the social, economic and other policies of all nations. Although the problems of the elderly had not reached the same level in developing as in developed countries, the representation of developing countries at the World Assembly demonstrated that their concern on that score was also growing. The implementation of the Plan of Action on Aging was as much a responsibility of the international community as a whole as for national Governments.

13. The problems facing the elderly were less acute in developing than in developed countries, while those confronting youth were serious in all countries. The situation had the potential to become still more serious given the fact that, according to United Nations estimates, while the youth population of developed countries would increase by only 5 per cent by the year 2000, it would grow by 80 per cent in developing countries. The need for youth-oriented policies to be an integral part of development strategies therefore became imperative. International Youth Year should help to focus world-wide attention on the specific needs of young people and the strengthening of their capacity to make a substantial contribution to social progress throughout the world.

14. The International Year of Disabled Persons was an example of the results that could be achieved through United Nations efforts to draw world attention to an

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issue. During 1981 disabled persons in all regions of the world had themselves proclaimed their right to benefit from the improvement in living conditions resulting from social and economic development and to participate fully in the social life and development of their societies. The problems of the 500 million disabled, of whom 400 million lived in the developing world, should therefore not be forgotten. The adoption by the General Assembly of the draft World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons was therefore crucial for maintaining the momentum generated during the International Year.

15. In the past decade considerable major gains had been made with regard to the gainful employment of women in developed countries and attention had been drawn to the important role played by women not only in the family but also in the economies of developing countries, especially in rural areas. In reviewing progress achieved during the United Nations Decade for Women, it would be essential to make a realistic assessment not only of the successes achieved but also of the obstacles encountered in the efforts made to promote women's full participation in the economic, social and political life of societies. The conference to be held in 1985 would provide an opportunity to look back over the experience of the Decade and, on that basis, to recommend future action to further the progress of women.

16. A matter of immediate concern was the critical resource situation of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women since demands on resources were far in excess of contributions. It was time for Governments to intensify their efforts to mobilize resources for the Fund which would continue to be necessary after the United Nations Decade for Women.

17. A better understanding of the welfare and distribution implications, within and among countries, of economic activities had become urgent in order to counteract prevailing gloomy prospects for economic and social development during the 1980s. Economic stagnation and budgetary difficulties were reinforcing the belief in the need to trade off social and economic objectives. She believed that the opposite was true. Production and distribution objectives were not only mutually compatible but, in most instances, actually reinforced each other. The emphasis of public policy should be on interrelations among economic and social objectives so as to ensure maximum national and international social stability. That was an "integrated", "unified" or simply realistic approach in the sense that the aim was to identify and understand the forces and constraints of the development process in order to influence the course and scope of social and economic change. That approach was particularly necessary in the current situation.

18. A better understanding of socio-economic changes and problems was extremely necessary at present because of the conjunction of several factors - the deficiencies in the functioning of the world economy, the political difficulties affecting the fabric of many nations, the difficult and complex building of a world community, the uncertainty attached to the design and effects of many social and economic policies and, perhaps above all, the attitudes of cynicism and national, class or group egoism emerging here and there. All those factors called for a renewed effort to improve the knowledge of the situation and enhance the capacity for action based on collective social consensus.

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19. It was necessary periodically to re-examine the objectives of economic and social policy. Currently the social aspects and social consequences of the process of adjustment to changes in the unfavourable economic situation should be addressed and measures taken against the deterioration of the quality of life. That process was, of course, painful and countries and groups differed widely in their capacity to adjust to worsening conditions. It was not difficult to observe that many groups and sometimes entire nations were suffering the worst aspects of that adjustment without any possibility of determining their own fate. They were the passive victims of events and decisions that were far beyond their control.

20. Realism in the context of a strategy for solving social problems should be regarded as the adjustment to necessity. It should not be equated with cynicism and should not lead to quick and unimaginative solutions. The burden of adjustment should be shared equitably and not imposed on the poor and the weak. For that purpose the guide should be the many resolutions emanating from the Third Committee, including the Declaration on Social Progress and Development adopted in 1969. While the limitations of their understanding of the interactions between the many and complex forces that were shaping the contemporary world and its future were recognized, the Third Committee and the Second Committee had a privileged position and a special role in that field. Her Department was willing and ready to do its utmost to work for the achievement of balanced and just economic and social development in the world.

21. Mrs. SHAHANI (Assistant-Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs) said that she would review a number of distressing social trends affecting most third-world countries before dwelling on the various activities of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. She pointed out that unemployment and under-employment, which were serious problems even in periods of intense economic activity, had worsened under the impact of the near global recession. Some of the important gains achieved in literacy, health and nutrition appeared threatened as more and more Governments were obliged to cut back on expenditures for social services. Needless to say, that retrenchment had the most serious effect on the poor and the population groups of direct concern to the Centre, namely, women, disabled persons, youth and the aging. Deprived of the safety-net existing in the developed countries, the unemployed, the poor and those special population groups, who made up a substantial proportion of the population in the developing countries, must make do in ways that were detrimental to their well-being and offensive to their human dignity.

22. The number of cases in which the recession was also producing its corrosive effects on the very fabric of society were growing and the shrinking supply of goods and services in countries where the poor population was increasing was a sure prescription for social unrest; it could lead, and in some countries actually was leading to a weakening of national solidarity, the very glue that held a society together.

23. The lack of resources placed severe constraints on government action, but there were areas where Governments could do much to deal with the problems in

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question, as was demonstrated by the efforts made by some Governments. One possible approach would be to invest the small volume of capital at their disposal wisely in the development of human resources, which could help to promote broad-based development and, at the same time, to build up the social infrastructure of society. Over the long term, the basic needs of the people could thus be met through an increase in production and productivity. Thus, in the health field, more and more attention should be given to rural health services emphasizing preventive medicine, in preference to urban hospital complexes, whose characteristic trademark was curative medicine.

24. Governments would do well to tap the resources of the poor, without adding to their already heavy burdens. Given imaginative leadership and proper incentives and material support, the poor could do much to help themselves. There was considerable scope for self-help, which had enabled the poor in most developing countries to build their own shelter using indigenous materials in the rural areas and in the squatter settlements that had sprung up in the urban centers, in other social sectors. Farmers' associations and co-operatives provided convincing examples of the benefits that could be gained from activities based on private initiative and mutual aid. Governments should encourage such activities, but they should not forget their own responsibility for aiding disadvantaged population groups and use self-help as a stratagem for shifting the burden of development onto such groups.

25. Mobilization and utilization of human resources could lead to a greater degree of national self-reliance, and greater South-South co-operation in certain important economic and social areas was one way of attaining that goal at the international level. If Governments were mindful of their obligation to satisfy the basic needs of the poor and to help the poor help themselves, they would be going a long way towards strengthening the national consensus in countries where the recession, and the maldistribution of benefits arising from past development policies, had produced strains within society.

26. With regard to agenda items 77, 81, 82, 89, and 95, which were of direct concern to the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, in 1981 the Centre had organized and completed the activities undertaken in the framework of the International Year of Disabled Persons. In 1982 it had devoted much of its energies to organizing the World Assembly on Aging, and it was already making preparations for the International Youth Year, the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women and the Seventh United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, all of which would take place in 1985.

27. With regard to the International Youth Year, the concern shown by the international community for the situation of young people and the fact that the international community recognized the importance of their future role indicated that the Year should be used to mobilize efforts at the local, national, regional and international levels. The political will of member States and their commitment to improving the situation of youth remained the key to the success of the

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International Youth Year. Many Governments therefore considered that the Year's themes, which were "Participation, Development, Peace", should provide a basis for concerted and integrated action for youth at both the local and national level. Some 30 Member States had established national co-ordinating machinery, or were in the process of doing so. In addition, numerous countries had held, or were planning to hold, meetings and seminars on the Year with a view to identifying appropriate areas for action. International non-governmental organizations had also given broad support to the Year's objectives. However, it was urgent that such organizations should formulate individual programmes and plans in close co-operation with their regional and national affiliates.

28. Preparations for the International Youth Year not only called for vision and imagination but also a realistic assessment of the resources available for completing them. Past experience clearly indicated that the General Assembly should consider strengthening the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs in terms of staff and financial resources in order to enable it to discharge its tasks and responsibilities in that connexion effectively. It was also important to consider the financial implications of certain activities, namely, the convening of regional meetings within the framework of the Year, with respect to which no financial provision had been made for the remuneration of consultants or for participation by government representatives. She appealed to Member States to give even greater support to the implementation of the specific Programme of Measures and Activities to be undertaken prior to, and during, the International Youth Year. Specifically, she invited Member States that had not yet done so to establish national co-ordinating committees for the Year and urged all countries in a position to do so to contribute to the Trust Fund for the Year.

29. Turning to the question of the elderly and the aged, she noted with satisfaction the role the United Nations was playing in solving the problems of the population group concerned and in dealing with the impact of population aging on the development process, and said that she was pleased to note that the Organization was thus endeavouring, for the first time, to take specific measures with a view to preventing a problem from occurring, rather than waiting until it become necessary to respond to it.

30. With regard to the question of holding a Day for the Aging, it could be seen from document A/37/408 that 20 of the 27 Member States that had responded to the Secretary-General's aide-mémoire prior to the distribution of his report supported that idea. Two additional Member States had responded favourably to that suggestion in the mean time.

31. It should also be noted that as of 30 July 1982, 21 Member States had either made or pledged contributions to the Trust Fund for the World Assembly on Aging and that total contributions received as of that date amounted to approximately \$900,000. The Fund's terms of reference stipulated that those resources were to be used to supplement the funds appropriated under the regular budget for the preparatory work for, and the follow-up to, the World Assembly.

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32. In addition to having undertaken a series of important activities to help ensure the success of the World Assembly on Aging, the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs was to contribute to the follow-up to the International Plan of Action on Aging, which proposed that the Centre should be strengthened in order to continue to serve as the focal point for activities in the area of aging. The Centre was thus to continue to promote all technical co-operation activities conducted under the Plan and to provide them with substantive support. It had also been entrusted with the co-ordination of the specialized agencies' activities and of the activities of regional, sub-regional and national research and development centres, with the promotion of the preparation of documentation and the training of personnel, and with the facilitation of activities related to technical co-operation among developing countries. It had in fact already undertaken specific activities to promote technical co-operation among developing countries and would, moreover, continue to formulate and promote projects for execution in developing countries financed by the Trust Fund, as well as undertaking fund-raising activities.

33. With regard to the preparations for the Seventh United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, she said that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 36/21, the Committee on Crime Prevention and Control had given particular attention to the formulation of the agenda of the Congress. She also drew attention to the preparatory activities, including in particular regional and interregional meetings, involving the close collaboration of the regional commissions and the United Nations training and research institutes in crime prevention, and also inter-agency co-ordination arrangements.

34. Consultations were under way with the Moroccan authorities to finalize the agreement for the hosting of the Congress in 1985. The Government of Bulgaria would be the host for the European regional meeting, to be held from 6 to 10 June 1983; the Governments of Canada and China had offered host facilities for interregional meetings, and discussions were taking place with the Government of Hungary on similar arrangements. Because of the complexity of those preparatory steps, the full involvement of Member States, the specialized agencies of the United Nations system and inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations was needed.

35. There could be little doubt that the International Year of Disabled Persons, observed in 1981, had had a world-wide impact in bringing to the fore the problems of disabled persons, which all too often received insufficient attention. Everything must be done to ensure that the hopes raised by the Year were not disappointed. The importance of the draft World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, contained in document A/37/351/Add.1, was due to its pioneering approach to the problems of disabled persons. It insisted upon full participation in social life and in development for persons with disabilities and pointed out that that could be achieved only through equalization of opportunities whereby society made accessible to disabled persons the full range of services offered to the community at large in the major areas of life. The World Programme of Action

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was more than a set of principles; its specific provisions could help Governments to organize programmes for disabled persons at all levels of society.

36. Many of the 140 countries that had established national committees and formulated medium-term and long-term plans for the follow-up to the Year had taken measures to maintain their committees beyond 1981 or to establish bodies for the purpose of co-ordinating ongoing activities. Within that context, it should be noted that the Advisory Committee for the Year had recommended that the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs should be designated as focal point for monitoring the co-ordination and implementation of the World Programme of Action, and in particular for its review and appraisal. The Centre had continued to support initiatives by Governments in Africa, Asia and the Pacific and the Caribbean to establish regional support services to promote the exchange of information and experience in the field of disability prevention and rehabilitation. In addition, it had followed up the initiative of the Government of Yugoslavia to facilitate the transfer of know-how and technology to developing countries.

37. She appealed to Member States to support as generously as possible the Trust Fund for the International Year of Disabled Persons. Up to August 1981, 21 countries had contributed \$1.4 million to the Fund and additional contributions totalling \$400,000 had been pledged. The balance of resources available had been committed, in principle, to strengthening national committees or similar bodies as well as organizations of disabled persons.

38. With regard to item 95, entitled "New international humanitarian order", she said that, as at 10 July 1982, 23 Governments had replied to the Secretary-General's note seeking their views on the subject in accordance with General Assembly resolution 36/136. All of them had recognized the importance of the proposal in question and the need to develop greater international awareness of humanitarian issues and to find more effective means of dealing with such issues. Most of them had stressed that the proposal concerned a very complex issue which required further study and elaboration.

39. The social dimension was a critical one for development and for the achievement of national goals. Yet it was often underplayed. If economic growth was to benefit the population at large, greater attention must be given to the human factor in development. The mandate and programmes of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs could be effectively carried out only with the full support and close co-operation of Member States, and she hoped that the activities undertaken with their assistance would result in significant progress in the field of social development and ensure a better life for all those who were deprived of basic needs and denied the benefits of development.

40. Mr. DVEHRING (German Democratic Republic), speaking on item 77, said that, since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 34/151 designating 1985 as

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International Youth Year, there had been a broad international exchange of experience concerning the contribution of young people to the fulfilment of the goals of the United Nations and their role in the struggle for peace, democracy and social progress. The threat to the younger generation which stemmed from the intensified arms race and mounting international tension, and the desolate social situation of young people in many countries, made it imperative that strong measures should be adopted at both the national and the international levels.

41. Safeguarding and strengthening peace was one of the most important prerequisites for overcoming current difficulties. Millions of young people in all continents were clearly aware of the dangers to the survival of mankind inherent in the schemes of the aggressive imperialist circles for, and their concepts about, nuclear first strikes and "limited" nuclear war. That awareness was evidenced by the massive participation of young people in big peace rallies against the nuclear threat and against the arms race. For example, in the spring of 1982 more than 4 million young people in the German Democratic Republic had demonstrated against the deployment of new NATO missiles in Europe.

42. It was more necessary than ever before for the United Nations to take into account the desire of the young to live in peace in a world free from the nuclear threat. That was why the question of peace should have top priority in all efforts made in connection with the International Youth Year, and he welcomed the fact that the Advisory Committee for the Year had pointed that out at its second session.

43. His delegation had noted with interest the results of the second session of the Advisory Committee, and supported its recommendations on the procedure to be applied in drafting a declaration concerning the rights and responsibilities of youth. In addition, it was of the view that achievement of the goals of the International Youth Year required the involvement of young people in efforts to ensure the effective enjoyment of their fundamental rights and in the solution of pressing international and national problems. Most important in that connection was the adoption of measures at the national level, including in particular the development of youth organization activities. Although the international community must support the activities undertaken in that field, it did not seem necessary to establish new organs or institutions for that purpose within the framework of the United Nations. With regard to the holding of regional conferences in preparation for the International Youth Year, he wished to thank the Socialist Republic of Romania for having taken the initiative of convening a European regional conference in Bucharest in 1983.

44. His delegation very much hoped that the measures adopted in preparation and observance of the International Youth Year would contribute to the betterment of the younger generation's socio-economic situation and to the furtherance of peace and co-operation among peoples. The Year should be an occasion for the adoption of recommendations conducive to the advancement of young people and to the enjoyment of their fundamental rights in important spheres, such as education, employment, culture, sports and health. The German Democratic Republic was ready to share the experience it had gained in the pursuit of its youth policies.

(Mr. Dvehring, German Democratic Republic)

45. The education of youth in a spirit of peace and understanding among peoples and of solidarity with all forces fighting colonialism, racism, apartheid and fascism was a major objective of any international youth policy. By carrying on solidarity campaigns in many forms, the young citizens of the German Democratic Republic were continually giving expression to their support of those fighting for democracy and human dignity and against colonialism, racism and oppression.

46. Mr. SOKALSKI (Poland), speaking on items 82, 83 and 89, observed that the questions of the elderly and the disabled were to a great extent interrelated, the common denominator of the two groups being a sense of insecurity that pervaded their daily lives. The main purpose of all actions for the benefit of the elderly and the disabled should therefore be to create conditions in which they could live a normal life, free from the fears inspired by their physical or mental state.

47. The increased international awareness in recent years of the situation and needs of the elderly and the disabled, as evidenced by the observance of the International Year of Disabled Persons and the successful deliberations of the World Assembly on Aging, was a welcome development. That was only a starting-point, however, and a great deal remained to be done, particularly where the much-desired equalization of opportunities was concerned.

48. No social problem could be tackled unless it was placed in a broader context and determinant factors, including the international environment, were taken into account. Consequently, the success or failure of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the International Plan of Action adopted by the World Assembly on Aging would depend on both the effectiveness of whatever action was taken to eliminate wars and ensure the right of all, including the aged and the disabled, to live in peace and the effectiveness of the social policies and reforms which Governments were prepared to embark upon in order to enable all social groups truly to share the fruits of their work. There could be no meaningful improvement of the situation of disadvantaged groups unless the socio-economic system of a country was based on social justice, free access to social amenities and constant financial assistance by the State.

49. He was stressing the relationship between peace and international action for the benefit of the aged and the disabled because he could not erase from his memory the thousands of disabled Poles, crippled as a result of Nazi aggression and the Second World War; because he was still able to draw a distinction between an elderly Nazi criminal and his elderly Polish victim being sent to a gas chamber; because there were still too many places in the world where the problem of the aged was little known, as life ended there before adulthood; and because the situation of the elderly and the disabled in South Africa, among the Palestinians and elsewhere was indubitable testimony to the need for world peace.

50. The International Year of Disabled Persons, in 1981, had been particularly important in Poland, where disabled persons comprised 7.1 per cent of the population, or more than 2.5 million people, including many ex-servicemen. Several civic organizations for disabled persons had been active for years, and they had

(Mr. Sokalski, Poland)

all joined in the activities of the Year. As a result, the Polish parliament had adopted a special resolution on invalids and disabled persons, requesting the Government to prepare and implement a broad programme of measures relating to equalization of opportunities and to prevention and rehabilitation at all levels. The parliament had also recommended the creation of an organ to advise the Council of Ministers on disabled persons and the establishment of a national fund to finance rehabilitation programmes as a follow-up to the International Year.

51. The draft World Programme of Action had been received in Poland with great appreciation and keen interest. Some of its recommendations had in fact been applied for a long time under the national programmes for the benefit of disabled persons and, should the draft World Programme still be subject to changes, the Polish National Committee for the Year would be ready to make further suggestions on some specific points in order to broaden the scope of the text.

52. His delegation shared the Secretary-General's view that it was essential to preserve the momentum all over the world created by the International Year, but it was not sure that the best way to achieve that was to proclaim a United Nations Decade for Disabled Persons; it agreed that other possibilities should not be ignored.

53. With regard to the elderly, the past year had seen active preparations in Poland for the World Assembly on Aging. There were close to 5 million old people in Poland and, in view of the prevailing socio-economic situation, activities in connexion with the World Assembly had concentrated primarily on ensuring for old people a standard of living that would not be lower than they had had before retirement. The Polish Government had accordingly taken a number of emergency measures, including increased pensions for all retirees, extra grants for recreational activities among the elderly and increased family allowances.

54. Every year, Poland observed a month of "Seniors' Days". The National Committee for the Elderly and the Aged and the Family Council had contributed to enhancing the awareness of the needs of that important population group. The International Plan of Action on Aging, adopted at Vienna in 1982, would certainly help Governments to focus their policies and programmes both on tangibly improving the situation of the elderly and on educating the public about the problems of aging. The international community could count on Poland's active participation in the implementation of the Plan.

55. Mr. LUNDE (Norway), speaking on items 77 and 81, said that the young, far from being spared by the acute economic and social crisis currently affecting the world, constituted a particularly vulnerable group, in particular because of the inadequacy of the educational and training opportunities offered them and the rise in unemployment. Insecurity and fear of a future under the threat of nuclear war seemed to affect contemporary youth more deeply than the previous generation. Many young people felt themselves alien to their own society and sought to flee reality, as was evidenced by the increase in alcoholism and drug addiction among the young as well as by the unfortunate trends in juvenile delinquency.

(Mr. Lunde, Norway)

56. The proclamation of 1985 as International Youth Year bore witness that the international community had recognized the need to improve plans and measures aimed at increasing participation by the young in all of society's activities. It was, however, unrealistic to think that the problems which the young encountered in most societies could be fully resolved in any international forum. It was at the national level that energetic measures needed to be taken without delay. International Youth Year could nevertheless play the part of an important catalyst by promoting exchanges of opinion and co-operation among countries.

57. For its part, his own Government had recently presented a report to Parliament entitled: "Youth: participation and responsibility", which contained an analysis of the current situation of the young in Norway and concrete proposals concerning education, training, employment and housing in particular. In it, the Government recognized the need to engage in a dialogue with those young people who did not belong to any youth organization, who had only limited education and limited resources in general, and who represented more than half of Norway's youth; the report also dealt with the particular problems encountered by young people from foreign countries living in Norway.

58. His delegation would support the recommendations agreed upon by the Advisory Committee for the International Youth Year, of which his country was a member, but it would not support all the recommendations with equal enthusiasm. Being aware of the need to achieve as wide a consensus as possible on the specific Programme of Measures and Activities to ensure the success of the Year, it was willing to make important concessions; but it had to state that it was not convinced of the need for an international instrument concerning the rights and responsibilities of youth, which might contribute to isolating youth from the rest of society. Only with the greatest reluctance would it support proposals for creating a new body within the United Nations to deal with matters concerning youth. It considered rather that better use should be made of existing organs, in particular the Commission for Social Development, but readily admitted that the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs must be strengthened if people wished it to fulfil properly the functions for which it was responsible in connection with the International Youth Year.

59. He noted in conclusion that his delegation was not convinced that holding world or regional conferences was the best way of resolving the problems facing young people, but believed that in the first place it was important for Member States to take the proper measures at the national level. It was because his delegation recognized that the specific Programme of Measures and Activities gave each Member State the proper latitude to establish programmes in accordance with its own national priorities and objectives that it had always declared itself in favour of the Programme.

60. Mr. STEVENS (Belgium), speaking on item 89, pointed out that 400 of the world's 500 million disabled persons were living in the third world and that those simple figures must prompt action without delay. Economic recession, unemployment and budgetary deficits must not serve as a pretext for slowing down or postponing

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actions to assist the disabled as if it was a case of problems which could wait. Lack of action would be particularly unfair since economic recession hit the disabled harder than those who had been better favoured by fate.

61. Proclamation of the International Year of Disabled Persons had given considerable impetus to activities aimed at equalizing the opportunities of the disabled as well as at prevention of disability and rehabilitation at all levels. Having been made more aware, society as a whole was more willing to accept the right of the disabled to take part in social life in all its aspects and to enjoy conditions of life equal to those of their fellow citizens. However, important physical and social barriers remained which prevented the disabled from participating fully in the life of society as a whole. It was necessary therefore to pursue activities already under way, to undertake new ones and to pay particular attention to the situation of the disabled in the third world.

62. The World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, which was now before the Committee, would guide the activities to be undertaken at the international, regional and national levels in the three fundamental directions of prevention, rehabilitation and equalization of opportunities. At the national level, the World Programme of Action envisaged measures affecting the following spheres in particular: legislation, participation by the disabled in the taking of decisions, the physical environment, the maintenance of income and social security, education and employment. At the international level, it envisaged action in such spheres as human rights and economic and technical co-operation. His delegation welcomed the fact that the Programme also paid due attention to elderly disabled persons and the mentally disabled.

63. It was up to States themselves in the first place to undertake measures to help the disabled and although the principal object of international activity was to support efforts made at the national level, it could not be a substitute for them. His delegation recognized that the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs should be the central body responsible for co-ordinating implementation of the World Programme of Action and evaluating it. The dual role of catalyst and co-ordinator which the Centre would play should not lead to the creation of a new or complex administration with major budgetary implications. Such a growth was all the less necessary since the Centre itself would not have to ensure implementation of technical assistance projects and would leave that responsibility to the competent bodies which already existed.

64. On the question of financing for United Nations technical assistance projects, his delegation considered that existing mechanisms should be employed, such as the budget and funds at the disposal of executing agencies and UNDP; it was not in favour of prolonging the existence of the United Nations Trust Fund for the International Year of Disabled Persons, as it was illusory to believe that special funds increased the total amount of available resources. At best such funds had a purely decorative effect and merely eroded the role of UNDP as a source of finance for the technical assistance activities of the United Nations system.

(Mr. Stevens, Belgium)

65. Moreover, he questioned whether the time was ripe for the proclamation of a United Nations Decade or even Day for Disabled Persons; the point at issue was to find the formula which would best ensure the implementation of the World Programme of Action. Similar initiatives in the past had absorbed substantial human and material resources, often without achieving concrete results. The means for implementing the World Programme of Action should be evaluated, and the Third Committee might be entrusted with such an evaluation process; the Belgian and Libyan delegations proposed to submit a draft resolution to that effect.

66. As disabled persons were themselves the best judges of their needs and the action required in order to satisfy such needs, they should be given the opportunity to participate fully in the implementation and evaluation of the Programme of Action. Consistent with the new structure of the Belgian State, three advisory councils for disabled persons had been created in his own country, one for each of the two communities which comprised Belgium and one at the national level. Those councils consisted of experts and representatives of organizations for the disabled and their role was to assist the authorities in the preparation of appropriate laws and regulations; they would be responsible for the follow-up in Belgium of the International Year of Disabled Persons.

67. Mr. LOPEZ (Nicaragua), speaking on item 77, said that preparations were being made to celebrate International Youth Year at a time when an unprecedented expansion of the arms race represented a threat to world peace and stability and devoured vast material and human resources which would be better used for the solution of the economic and social problems facing the developing countries. To the tense international situation in which the youth of the world were growing up must be added the difficult economic relations between developed and developing countries and a deep economic crisis which had manifested itself in increased unemployment, illiteracy, hunger and scanty health and social services; such deteriorating conditions affected the new generation particularly. Without burdening the Committee with statistics which in any case were known to all, it should be emphasized that youth could not remain unmoved in the face of flagrant inequality and injustice and indeed were anxious to contribute to the improvement of living conditions for all and to manage their own future. His delegation accordingly welcomed the initiative of the United Nations in designating 1985 as International Youth Year.

68. Nicaraguan youth had suffered at a very early age from the exploitation and oppression of the Somoza régime and had felt constrained to show its patriotism and to play an active role in the liberation struggle of the Nicaraguan people. In an unequal struggle, it had confronted the repressive institutions of the régime with courage and faith in victory. More than 50,000 of his countrymen had sacrificed their lives in the hope that generations to come would be freed from social injustice and inequality. Today the youth of Nicaragua were performing new tasks in the social, educational, economic and political fields. To the extent possible, the Nicaraguan Government was endeavouring to implement General Assembly resolution 36/29 regarding efforts and measures for securing the implementation and the enjoyment by youth of human rights, particularly the right to education and to

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work, and resolution 36/16 concerning physical education and sports exchanges among young people. For that purpose a national literacy campaign had been launched and 120,000 young people had travelled throughout the country in order to teach more than 500,000 people to read and write; the result had been to reduce the illiteracy level from 54 per cent to 12 per cent. After sharing the hard everyday life of rural and other workers who had been ruthlessly exploited in the past, those young people had become mature and responsible by the time they returned home. Literacy had been achieved in Spanish and in the languages of the Miskito, Sumo and Rama people of the Atlantic coast, who for the first time in their history had become aware that somebody was taking an interest in them. Following the successful completion of that programme, the Nicaraguan Government had introduced an adult education programme with the participation of 120,000 community teachers who had been trained during the literacy campaign.

69. Nicaragua was basically an agricultural country and therefore needed a substantial labour force to gather the harvest, and youth had played an exemplary role in that connection also; grouped into brigades, thousands of strong, young people had sallied forth to work in the fields and the country had thereby been enabled to obtain foreign currency which it had invested in social programmes organized for the entire population. Brigades of young workers were also being organized to build housing for rural workers in remote areas or to work on the construction of prefabricated houses with a view to reducing the country's housing shortage, which amounted to 250,000 dwellings. Such brigades, consisting as they did of volunteers, thus made it possible to save the cost of wages while at the same time providing their members with the satisfaction of a duty well-done and the joy of serving the least-favoured groups of the population.

70. Nicaragua had made tremendous strides in the field of education. Apart from the construction of schools and the acquisition of teaching materials, which had contributed to the success of the effort, the number of students both at the secondary and higher education levels, had increased greatly between 1978 and 1981. With the support of organs created by the State for the purpose, young people were also contributing to the development of educational policy as well as to the efforts made to stimulate scholarship as well as scientific and social research; the organization of sports competitions enabled them to exercise their right to sporting and recreational activities. Young people were contributing enthusiastically to the maintenance of inherent cultural values and were maturing as a consequence of the activities in which they participated.

71. Through the active role which they had played in the struggle for freedom and in the work of national reconstruction, young people in Nicaragua had earned the right to be represented in the Council of State, where they had the right to speak and vote.

72. It must therefore be clear to all that Nicaraguan youth was determined to play its role as an agent of change in difficult circumstances, which had been aggravated by the need to defend Nicaragua's sovereignty and its right to self-determination in the face of the acts of aggression and threats of those who

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were attempting to destabilize the country and who tolerated the presence of Somoza guards on their territory, where in addition they permitted the training of mercenaries whose avowed objective was to invade Nicaragua. The people of Nicaragua wished to live and develop their lives in peace and it was his hope that the youth of the country could grow up and flourish in peace and for peace.

73. His delegation had followed with interest the preparations for International Youth Year and was convinced that the activities to be undertaken in that connection would make it possible for the young people of his country to learn a great deal and to share the little which they already knew. Nicaragua intended to contribute actively to the preparation and celebration of the International Year and wished it every success.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.