



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 28th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. CALERO RODRIGUES (Brazil)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 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)]

1. Mrs. ROSER (Federal Republic of Germany) commended the Report on the World Social Situation as a much-needed summary of information presented in a well-organized format. Of particular importance was the way in which different aspects of the "social landscape" had been shown to the interrelated and dependent on economic, political, historical, legal, cultural and religious frames of reference. The report contained information about the causes and impact of a variety of social problems and listed the solutions being sought for them.
2. Her delegation found the report particularly remarkable because its authors had refrained from politicizing the issues under discussion, adopting instead a balanced, matter-of-fact approach. That attitude should also guide the endeavours of the Third Committee. It was true that the social and humanitarian issues before the Committee were, to some extent, intertwined with political and economic questions, but the political aspects of those issues were being dealt with extensively in other Committees and forums: consequently, there was no need for the Third Committee to bring up well-known political arguments again. The report provided an example of how pressing social issues could be approached within the parameters of heterogeneous political systems and competing ideologies.
3. The work currently being done by the United Nations with regard to the questions discussed in the report was carried out by a great number of specialized bodies in many locations. As a result, even experienced insiders found it difficult to keep abreast of the proliferation of activities and their documentation. Since the Report on the World Social Situation had already provided basic data on 15 major social issues, her delegation proposed that the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs should, in future reports, briefly list United Nations activities and the most important relevant documents in each field. With such a comprehensive reference work at its disposal, the Third Committee would be in a better position to serve as the focal point of all United Nations activities in the social domain. Moreover, because of its wide distribution, such a report would provide those agencies working in the area of social and humanitarian affairs with a context in which to reassess and improve their work.
4. Mr. DHAR (Assistant Secretary-General for Development Research and Policy Analysis, Department of International Economic and Social Affairs), replying to a question asked at the preceding meeting, said that the Report on the World Social Situation had not been considered by the Commission on Social Development because the interval at which the reports were to be submitted had been reduced from four to three years, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 34/152. The present report had been prepared with a view to its consideration by the General Assembly during its thirty-seventh session. The Commission on Social Development had met most recently in February 1981 and would next meet in February 1983; thus, it would

(Mr. Dhar)

have been impossible for the Commission to consider the report at the proper time. The current report would, in time, be submitted to the Commission for its consideration. The problem would not arise in the case of the next report, since its appearance in 1985 would coincide with the holding of a session of the Commission.

5. Miss RADIĆ (Yugoslavia) expressed regret that the report had not been submitted in time for her delegation to consider it more thoroughly, particularly in view of the importance her delegation attached to the Declaration on Social Progress and Development, to relevant General Assembly resolutions, especially resolution 34/152, and to United Nations instruments in that field.

6. Although the report provided a detailed and comprehensive review of the current world social situation, it tended to record facts rather than provide a detailed analysis of the causes of that situation or indicate ways for improving it. Not enough stress had been laid on the extremely difficult situation of the developing countries and the international community's responsibility for taking effective measures to improve it. In addition, the relationship between the current social and economic situation and the need to establish a new international economic order had not been sufficiently stressed.

7. The report tended to consider social rights in isolation, rather than as an integral part of all human rights, as General Assembly resolution 32/130 had stipulated. Categorizing countries as developing, developed and having centrally planned economies constituted a rather stereotyped approach and failed to take sufficient account of differences existing within those groups with regard to social conditions and policies. The presentation of social conditions and rights in the developed countries had not been sufficiently critical. Her delegation believed that the report should consider not only the enjoyment of social rights by the poor but also the relationship between their enjoyment of those rights and the effective distribution of national product. Consideration should also have been given to individual countries' policies for eliminating economic and social problems and the degree to which they had equalized opportunities for prosperity and protected women's rights. It was unfortunate that the report had not dealt with the question of migrant workers.

8. Nevertheless, the report had succeeded in presenting a detailed picture of the currently deteriorating world economic and social situation. Due attention had also been paid to the question of participation, as outlined in the Declaration on Social Progress and Development. However, that question had been somewhat artificially broken down into political, economic and social participation. Greater attention should be given to participation in the case of developing countries. She stressed that, although her country had been singled out in the report as a "model of workers' management" to be followed by other countries, the entire Yugoslav socio-economic system was based not merely on participation, but on worker self-management practised at all levels of political, economic and social life. The basis of the social system was social ownership, which served as the premise for the principle that labour and its results alone determined man's

(Miss Radić, Yugoslavia)

material and social status. She drew attention to the International Seminar on Popular Participation, which had been held in Yugoslavia in May 1982. The Seminar had considered various aspects of popular participation and the experiences of different countries in promoting popular participation in development. Participating countries had agreed in principle to promote popular participation in development; many had already begun programmes for that purpose. A number of other important conclusions and recommendations, which were contained in document A/37/442, had been adopted and had served as a basis for a draft resolution on agenda item 78 that her delegation, in collaboration with other delegations, would submit. Her delegation hoped that the draft resolution would win the approval of many Committee members and to that end, was prepared to consult with other delegations on all aspects of the resolution.

9. Mrs. SIVOLOB (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the world social situation and the trends in its development must be considered in depth by the General Assembly, since it was adversely influenced by the aggravation of the international situation caused by the forces of imperialism and the further deepening of the chronic crisis in the capitalist economy. The lack of desired progress in the social development of the majority of countries was a direct consequence of the various imperialist military-strategic, political, commercial and economic policies. The solution of the social and economic problems affecting the developing countries required capital investment and significant human and material resources, which were being diverted by the growth in military tension, accompanied by the arms race. Certain forces in the world had a direct interest in the arms race and in its further growth. The military-industrial complex of the imperialist States derived massive profits from the production of arms and was doing all it could to step up the arms race, on the absurd pretext that the outbreak of a nuclear war could thus be averted. The report, however, did not give sufficient consideration to those factors. Nor did it even list the many important initiatives taken by the Soviet Union and other socialist countries to strengthen peace and international security, check the arms race and promote peaceful international co-operation. By way of example, she mentioned the solemn obligation undertaken by the Soviet Union not to be the first to use nuclear weapons and the Declaration on the Prevention of Nuclear Catastrophe adopted by the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session.

10. Since General Assembly resolution 34/152, under which the report had been prepared, mentioned colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, racial discrimination, apartheid, aggression, occupation and foreign domination among the obstacles to the economic and social progress of peoples, the authors of the report clearly had a direct duty to give those problems the necessary attention. She stressed that United Nations documents, especially those of an analytical nature, could serve their purpose only if they mentioned the real reasons for the problems involved and clearly defined the obstacles preventing the achievement of the targets set. For example, when dealing with the current difficulties of the developing countries, it should be stated that those difficulties were aggravated not only by the general crisis in the capitalist economy but also by the growing resistance of the forces of imperialism to the restructuring of the old colonial order. No increase in the

(Mrs. Sivolob, Ukrainian SSR)

flow of resources to the developing countries could have the necessary effect so long as those countries remained in a situation of dependence - in other words, so long as international economic relations had not been restructured on a truly democratic and just basis. The socialist countries firmly opposed all discriminatory policies and the exploitation of developing countries: they supported those countries' just demands and efforts to strengthen their economic independence. That could be seen from the information concerning the nature and volume of USSR assistance to the developing countries, published at the second regular session of the Economic and Social Council in 1982 and during the current session of the General Assembly. In particular, document A/C.2/36/4 on the economic relations of the USSR with developing countries stressed that expanding and strengthening the State sector, the main aim of Soviet assistance, was an effective method of implementing the principal economic goals and protecting national industries and the entire economy from transnational corporations which dominated the world capitalist economy. Her delegation felt that the way to solve social problems was through radical social and economic changes, including the strengthening of the State sector of the economy, progressive agrarian reforms, just distribution of income and other measures in the interest of the broad masses and not merely of a small elite.

11. The entire burden of the economic difficulties in the Western countries during the period under review had fallen on the workers and on small proprietors. One of the essential social features of those countries was an increasingly large group of people living in extreme poverty and destitution. That group was constantly becoming larger as a result of inflation, cut backs in social programmes and, first and foremost, the unprecedented rise in unemployment. Incapable of offering any real solution to the problem of unemployment, certain Western economists were trying to put forward the idea that unemployment was an "inevitable phenomenon", to which people had to reconcile themselves, and even that it had ceased to be a "social evil". The report itself seemed to echo such theories in asking whether increases in benefits did not lead to increased unemployment (p. 49). Her delegation believed that there was no justification for such a superficial treatment of that extremely serious problem when, for example, in the United States, less than 40 per cent of the 11 million officially registered as unemployed received unemployment benefits and, as the report's authors themselves stated, unemployment remained a major source of income loss and, for some, of poverty (p. 20).

12. She regretted that many other sections of the report showed a similar lack of depth. There were very frequent methodological errors in assessing the situation in socialist countries, including a general tendency to indicate a certain similarity in the economic and social processes in countries with different social systems, without taking due account of the fundamental differences in their social policies. There were also certain evaluations which were based not on a comprehensive analysis of the facts but on the arbitrary manipulation of dubious figures.

(Mrs. Sivolob, Ukrainian SSR)

13. In order to correct the false impression which might have been caused by such subjective evaluations and conclusions, she said that, contrary to what the report asserted, social expenditure in her country had not decreased in recent years. On the contrary, as a result of the steady development of the economy and increased scientific and technical progress, the well-being of the Ukrainian people had further increased. The Communist Party and the Soviet State focused their activities on more completely satisfying the material and spiritual needs of the people and used the country's entire economic potential to achieve that goal. That could be seen in the broad social and economic programme adopted for the eleventh five-year plan, which was being implemented successfully. That programme embraced literally all aspects of life and was of direct relevance to the questions being considered by the Committee. In particular, following a 17 per cent increase in real per capita income in the period 1976-1980, a further rise of 16-18 per cent was planned. Full employment for all able-bodied members of the population was guaranteed as it had been for over 50 years, and, as before, increased wages were the main means of improving the material situation of citizens. Agricultural wages were to rise particularly quickly, in accordance with one of the aims of her country's social policy, that of equalizing the standard of living of the urban and rural populations. Another important trend was the increased role of payments and allowances from social consumption funds, which increased the yearly income of a family of four by an average of approximately 25 per cent. According to the programme, those funds would be increased by 22 per cent over the five years of the plan. The growth in such funds was considered extremely important because it helped to achieve social equality for all citizens irrespective of their levels of wages or social origins.

14. Emphasizing the importance of the fact that her country was part of the Soviet Union, she said that its participation in that voluntary association of peoples, now celebrating its sixtieth anniversary, had transformed the Ukraine into a socialist republic with a high level of development in the economic, scientific, health-care, educational and cultural fields. All of that had become possible through the fraternal assistance and co-operation of other peoples in the USSR, the elimination of all forms of social and national oppression, the true guarantee of social, economic and cultural rights, and the involvement of the broad masses of workers in social life. Therefore her delegation felt that the national experience of her country and of other socialist countries in solving the problems of social and economic development should be considered more attentively and seriously by the Secretariat, when, for example, reports such as the one now before the Committee were being prepared. If that experience was not duly taken into account, it would be difficult, if not entirely impossible, to prepare reliable recommendations concerning the solutions of the problems facing the modern world, particularly the developing countries. She regretted that the authors of the report had disregarded the recommendation in General Assembly resolution 31/83 that the information provided by Governments should be used when preparing future reports on the world social situation.

15. It was also regrettable that the report's authors had not gone beyond simply quoting certain provisions of the Declaration in their attempt to link the sections

(Mrs. Sivolob, Ukrainian SSR)

of the report with its relevant provisions. Attention should have been drawn to the situation regarding measures undertaken by Governments and international organizations to implement the Declaration. Her delegation felt that the goals and principles set forth in that document were still fundamentally important for the development of social policies and programmes at the national and international levels.

16. In conclusion, she requested the Chairman to take the necessary measures to inform the Commission on Social Development of the views expressed in the Committee.

17. Mrs. KALM (World Health Organization) said that the report constituted a major contribution to the identification of emerging social trends of international concern and to the elucidation of relationships among major development issues having both international and national dimensions. It ought to become a valuable tool for policy-makers and those concerned with planning for integrated development. She welcomed the study's assessment of world health conditions in the broad context of development and social progress. The chapter on health, which had drawn on the WHO Sixth Report on the World Health Situation for much information, identified recent trends in both developed and developing countries and clearly indicated progress achieved and outstanding problems confronting national health administrations. In addition to highlighting the importance of primary health care, the report also supported the WHO position that public health would be more effectively improved by changes in living conditions and individual behaviour than by reforms in health care delivery systems.

18. With regard to the goal of health for all by the year 2000, a global strategy for reaching that objective had been adopted and a plan of action approved by States members of WHO. The strategy had its basis in national and regional strategies and should be viewed as the health sector's contribution to the implementation of the third International Development Strategy.

19. WHO agreed with the report's analysis of trends in morbidity and causes of death, even though it had made some technical comments to the Secretariat with regard to data and their interpretation, particularly with regard to mortality. The report might also have dealt with mental morbidity, since in many countries, mental disorders constituted the main cause of disability in two out of five disabled persons. The report had noted that, with the exception of smallpox, major diseases had not been significantly reduced in the developing countries. However, a number of international co-operative programmes of major significance had been launched, including the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade, the Expanded Programme of Immunization, the Global Diarrhoeal Disease Programme, the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases and the WHO river blindness programme in West Africa. It was to be hoped that the effects of those programmes would soon be felt.

20. The section of the report on integrated health policies rightly highlighted the role of malnutrition in causing ill-health and decreasing resistance to infectious disease, particularly among small children. Accordingly, the World

(Mrs. Kalm)

Health Assembly had taken decisions concerning the promotion of breastfeeding and had adopted the International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes in 1981. In addition, a joint WHO/UNICEF five-year programme to improve nutrition had recently been launched with a view to reducing infant and young child mortality and morbidity, fostering child growth and development, and improving maternal nutrition.

21. With regard to health policy, the report had noted that many Governments had adopted a primary-health-care approach. Regrettably, thus far too few countries had altered their patterns of health resource allocation to reflect the principles of equity contained in the Declaration of Alma-Ata on Primary Health Care and the World Health Assembly's decision on Health for All by the Year 2000. She expressed the hope that future reports could indicate the progress made in those important fields.

22. Mr. SCHLEGEL (German Democratic Republic) observed that it had been exactly 30 years since the world social situation had first been included as a separate item on the agenda of the Third Committee. In view of the problems described in the present report, however, that anniversary gave more cause for concern than for rejoicing. The report's wealth of information on serious social problems deserved a more thorough discussion than was possible during only four meetings. Its greatest weakness lay in its failure to apply a sufficiently differentiated approach to the description of the problems addressed. Treatment of the achievements of the socialist countries, including his own, in the social field was far from satisfactory, since the report's pessimistic picture was not valid for the socialist world. The social welfare policies of the socialist countries, particularly the Soviet Union, were examples worthy of emulation.

23. All major social problems were the consequences of social injustice, colonial and neo-colonial subjugation, aggression and war. That was clearly demonstrated by the adverse effects of imperialism's policy of confrontation and accelerated arms build-up on socio-economic development. Those who were involved in mapping out strategies for nuclear war would of necessity relegate social problems to the sidelines. The report had successfully indicated the relationship between increased expenditures for armaments and growing social problems. On a global scale, governmental expenditures for health amounted, on the average, to only half of those made for military purposes. At the same time, 500 million people in the developing countries suffered from malnutrition. Merely one tenth of the amount spent on armaments in the world would suffice to eradicate illiteracy and make it possible to combat disease, hunger and food scarcity successfully. It was therefore apparent that the world's most pressing social and economic problems could be solved by taking practical steps towards disarmament and arms limitation. In that respect, the disarmament proposals of the socialist countries were of great significance.

24. His Government supported all efforts aimed at giving the newly independent countries equality in international economic relations and implementing the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States and the Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order.

(Mr. Schlegel, German
Democratic Republic)

25. He reaffirmed his country's commitment to pursuing a strategy based on a synthesis of economic and social policies. The absence of unemployment, the guarantee of job security and the special attention given to mothers and children in the German Democratic Republic were elements of a truly humanistic system. Fundamental to that system were socialized ownership of the means of production and constitutional guarantees of equal participation in all social processes. He recommended that, in future, discussion of the world social situation should give greater consideration to efforts made to promote social progress under conditions of peace and disarmament.

26. Mr. AL-QAYSI (Iraq) said that the Revolutionary Government of Iraq attached great importance to plans for social development and had taken appropriate measures based on national and humanitarian concepts. Its social-development plan which was being implemented with the assistance of specialized governmental authorities, promoted popular participation and concentrated on the human aspects of development. As a participant in the International Seminar on Popular Participation, he welcomed the report contained in document A/37/442 and expressed the hope that Member States, the United Nations and its specialized agencies would respond to its recommendations and give the subject the attention it deserved.

27. The Government of Iraq had promulgated legislation to lay the basis for social transformation, seeking a unified and democratic socialist society. The social welfare law of 1980 had been adopted with that goal in mind and covered all members of the population. Its aim was to guarantee a stable social life for all and to ensure prosperity for everyone throughout his life and, after his death, for his family. It focused on the family as the central unit of society, on children and on the rehabilitation and education of the disabled to enable them to work and participate in the development of society.

28. A principal aim of the Glorious July Revolution of 1968 had been to promote economic development and to raise the standard of living of the population. One of the major changes which had taken place since that date was the growth of per capita income, particularly among low-income groups, which had been achieved through raising wages, lowering taxes, expanding educational and social services and monitoring crises. Governmental policy was aimed at fighting poverty, ignorance and disease, so that all people might live a better life.

29. Positive results had been achieved through the implementation of the comprehensive compulsory campaign, for the eradication of illiteracy. Iraq had also participated in joint activities with other Arab countries to eliminate illiteracy, taken part in seminars to train leaders in the fight against illiteracy and sent experts to other countries. The Supreme Council for the Eradication of Illiteracy carried out activities in Iraq and maintained relations with international organizations. Its work had won wide international acclaim. Iraq had participated in the work of the World Council for Adult Education through seminars, and the Iraqi experience had been chosen by UNESCO as the subject of a film. The literacy campaign reflected the determination of the people to continue

(Mr. Al-Qaysi, Iraq)

the transformation of society and to enlarge its scope. Its success was an indication of the efforts of his country's historic leadership, which had guided the campaign at all levels; it was one of the great achievements of the revolution and an inspiration for the building of a new revolutionary man to play a positive role in society.

30. Mrs. FLOREZ (Cuba) said that the social panorama as set forth in the report was not very pleasant, since expectations had been lowered as a result of the state of the world economy. Although that situation had had negative repercussions in the developed countries, developing countries had been those most seriously affected. It was disheartening to note, as the report stated, that for the developing countries as a group, 1981 had marked the first year in a quarter of a century in which the per capita supply of goods and services had failed to increase. The situation presented in the report was inevitably gloomy, since it reflected the bleak panorama of the world economic situation resulting from the serious structural crisis in the capitalist system, which affected developing countries in particular. To that should be added the tense international political situation and the proliferation of areas of conflict in various regions of the world which had a negative impact on international economic relations.

31. Today more than ever before, the developing countries were faced with increasing external debt which had already reached \$500 billion, a constant reduction in the price of their raw materials, inflation, monetary instability and unjust economic dependency and vulnerability which darkened their real prospects for development. In addition, there was an increasing tendency to use threats and coercive economic measures, including food aid and the sale of foodstuffs, as a means of exerting political and economic pressure on developing countries, particularly those that had adopted an independent development line. Such illegitimate and arbitrary unilateral actions taken by developed nations or groups of developed nations contravened the most sacred principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations and other international legal instruments.

32. It was urgent to end the unbridled arms race, which, on the one hand, posed a danger of war and nuclear holocaust and on the other hand, aggravated the international economic crisis. Each year, military budgets increased enormously, currently surpassing \$500 billion, a figure equal to the total external debt of the underdeveloped countries. If only a part of those resources used for arms were freed and used for development, that would be a positive contribution to peace and international security and understanding among nations.

33. In his historic statement to the General Assembly in 1979, President Fidel Castro, had made an in-depth analysis of the international political and economic situation, its main trends and its prospects for future years. Some had called his description exaggerated; yet, in only three years, those facts had been confirmed by the current situation. As President Castro had stated, development was not only economic but also social. In that context, a group of non-aligned countries had promoted that concept since 1979, both in the Third Committee and in the Commission on Human Rights.

(Mrs. Florez, Cuba)

34. Health and education, like other fields such as employment and housing, were of fundamental importance and must be given priority by Governments in order to raise the of living and social welfare of their peoples. Her Government had given special attention to those fields since the revolutionary triumph in 1959. Cuban doctors and medical personnel carried out their tasks in remote rural areas of Cuba and thousands of them were working in many countries of the third world. In the field of education, the first task undertaken by the revolution was the literacy campaign in 1961, a year marked by aggression and threats from Cuba's northern neighbour and by the mercenary invasion of Playa Girón. Over 200,000 young people born since 1959 now filled Cuban universities and centres of higher education. Cuba knew the value of education and knew that it was not possible to obtain modern technology without educating its young people to be skilled workers, technicians and specialists.

35. The principle of international co-operation, as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, was still valid; today more than ever, it was an essential requirement in the search for solutions to the serious world economic crisis and for the preservation of international peace and security. The launching of global negotiations had been an important initiative which the developing countries had promoted zealously in the search for a solution to the serious problems of the world economy. In that search, economic problems could not be separated from financial, energy, monetary, commercial or other socio-economic problems. The Group of 77 had made strenuous efforts to break the current deadlock and to reach an understanding, as demonstrated by the high spirit of co-operation they had showed in March 1982, when they had submitted a new draft for the launching of global negotiations, and subsequently, in July 1982, when they had submitted counter-proposals to the amendments that had come out of Versailles. Those initiatives, however, had not received the hoped-for response from the developed countries. Her delegation reaffirmed the statements made in the Group of 77 and in the General Assembly by Cuba's Minister for Foreign Affairs, who, appealing to those developed countries that had demonstrated their will to pursue progress, jointly with the developing countries, had urged them not to take positions alien to the common interest. Improvement of the world social situation depended on the international community's finding satisfactory solutions to the serious economic crisis, and that was possible only through international co-operation. As President Castro had stated, the current era was one of democratic struggle within the framework of universal co-operation among nations. There was no other rational alternative.

36. Mrs. AZIZUDDIN (Pakistan) said that the one point which stood out clearly from the report was that the world social situation was far from satisfactory. There were some encouraging developments, for instance in the field of health, but the overall picture remained gloomy, especially in the developing countries. The most important factor behind the deterioration of the world social situation was the continued stagnation and recession of the world economy combined with high levels of unemployment and inflation in the developed market economies and severe setbacks to the economies of the developing countries. The condition of energy-importing developing countries was particularly bleak. Those developments had had repercussions on living standards throughout the world and had caused severe social strains, adversely affecting the quality and magnitude of social programmes.

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(Mrs. Azizuddin, Pakistan)

37. Her delegation was particularly disturbed by the widening disparities between the developing and developed countries in various elements of well-being. Another alarming development was the weakening of the will to promote international co-operation in the economic and social fields. In addition, it was particularly disappointing to see the rapid growth of expenditure on armaments and a decline in programmes of economic assistance through multilateral channels. While there were no easy solutions to the complex economic and social problems of the world today, her delegation hoped that the information provided in the report could be used by Governments and international and other organizations in helping mankind overcome its economic and social difficulties.

38. It was essential to make every possible effort to strengthen international co-operation in the economic and social fields. In a world marked by growing interdependence, such co-operation was to the advantage of all members of the international community. There was an urgent need to begin global negotiations for the promotion of international economic co-operation and the establishment of an equitable world economic order. Resources released by reducing expenditure on armaments could be utilized for the development and progress of the entire world, including in particular the developing countries.

39. Her delegation shared the view that the primary responsibility for a country's social and economic progress was that of its people and Government, even though international co-operation could play an extremely useful supportive role. In that connection, there was a need for an integrated approach in resolving economic and social problems, since they were closely interrelated. It was also vital to maintain the sanctity of the family as the basic social unit for the sake of cohesion and the long-term progress of society. Pakistan fully endorsed the provisions of the Declaration on Social Progress and Development and was guided by them in its policies and programmes at all levels. It had found the community-development approach very effective in integrating the socio-economically underprivileged segments of urban and rural communities into development activities. In addition, a number of steps had been taken in Pakistan to enhance child welfare, including motivating and encouraging people to undertake voluntary social welfare activity at the national, provincial and local levels.

40. Despite what had already been accomplished, Pakistan was conscious of the need to do a great deal more in the field of social welfare. The major limitation in that regard, in addition to the low level of economic development, was the continued recession and stagnation of the world economy, the increased reliance of many countries on protectionism, and the dwindling net inflow of external resources for development. Correction of those adverse trends in the world economy was an indispensable requirement for the solution of social problems.

41. Lastly, her delegation regretted that the 1982 Report on the World Social Situation had been made available only recently. It was essential that the Governments of Member States and other interested organizations should obtain the report well ahead of the General Assembly, so that they could study it in depth and offer worth-while comments.

42. Mr. MATHEWSON (United Kingdom) welcomed the Report on the World Social Situation as a useful means of focusing attention at the United Nations on the social aspects of development. The report was longer than its predecessors, including for the first time substantial chapters on agrarian reform, science and technology, disarmament and development, and civil and political rights. Problems such as selection and presentation had been handled well. The major problem of balance had perhaps been the need to give adequate attention to the situation in different country groups and geographical regions, with differing types of political economy and levels of income, and there had also been the question of the extent to which information should be provided not only on social conditions but also on political measures to alleviate social problems. His delegation warmly commended the authors on the confidence with which they had confronted those difficulties.

43. The picture emerging from the report was one of conflicting trends: steady gains in areas such as increasing life expectancy, and primary-school enrolment and reducing infant and child mortality and adult illiteracy, but little advance in solving other problems such as alcoholism, drug addiction and what the report termed "irresponsibility vis-à-vis fellow men and the community". However, while in some sectors differences between or within regions and countries appeared to be narrowing, it was clear that enormous differences still existed between rich and poor countries in respect of social standards and access to social services. The report gave no cause for complacency.

44. Chapter VI vividly illustrated the gap in health standards between rich and poor countries, one of the more startling statistics being that total capital and operating expenditure per capita on health in the developed countries was 80 times as much as in the least-developed countries and 25 times as much as in middle-income developing countries. It also brought out the increased problems of violence, industrial accidents and preventable diseases, but his delegation would have welcomed some discussion of the fact that the situation in respect of many diseases was getting no better and might even be deteriorating.

45. Chapter XI on participation and chapter XV on civil and political rights were welcome additions. Participation, a difficult topic to which much vague lip-service was paid, had been handled with analytical rigour combined with sensitive political insight. Chapter XV made clear the international community's progress in recognizing civil and political rights and how far it still had to go in implementing them. The analysis on page 202 of the reasons for abuse of power and violations of human rights was incisive and urgently relevant to many of the particular situations discussed in the Third Committee, the Commission on Human Rights and elsewhere. It illustrated clearly the fundamental importance of the principle stated in article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that "the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government", which was in itself an important part of participation. Where that principle was not recognized and implemented, social progress would remain limited, no matter what the other inputs of ideology and financial resources might be.

(Mr. Mathewson, United Kingdom)

46. Chapter II was less successful. In particular, the definition of the family was focused excessively on Western middle-class norms, which led to over-emphasis on Western concerns and failed to do justice to the many variations in family forms and problems throughout the world. However, the chapter gave useful identifications of trends, such as the growing incidence of small households and one-parent families.

47. With regard to periodicity and co-ordination, while welcoming the change in format and the concentration on trends, his delegation doubted that trends in the world situation would change fast enough to justify a fresh report in the present format every three years. Account must also be taken of the growing output of surveys on social conditions from other United Nations sources. One possibility would be to have the report in its present form presented, say, once every 10 years, with shorter reports on particular issues in the interim. That would be in line with the World Bank's World Development Report, which focused on a different theme every year, and would provide annual quantitative information on world development indicators. The main point was not to maintain the present reporting system through inertia but to give serious thought to making the best use possible of all the relevant resources in the United Nations system. As a first step his delegation would welcome a report - perhaps for the fortieth session of the General Assembly - on co-ordination between the United Nations and its specialized agencies in collecting and presenting social statistics, as a basis for a proper review of all available options.

48. Ms. FAWTHORPE (New Zealand) said that the Third Committee had allocated only four meetings at the present session to the world social situation, compared with 21 meetings at the twenty-sixth session, discussion over the years having become more specific, with more in-depth treatment of sectors such as the aging, disabled and youth. At the twenty-sixth session, her delegation had pointed out the need to keep the discussion of specific groups in the broad perspective of over-all development.

49. The Third Committee, together with the Economic and Social Council and, in particular, the Commission for Social Development, was responsible for formulating the United Nations view of the social aspects of development and the present debate offered scope for a more analytical approach to questions of social development. While it was now generally accepted that the social aspects must be given equal priority and weight with the economic aspects in all development planning, as provided in the eighth preambular paragraph of the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade, social progress was far more difficult to measure and analyse than economic development. One of the most useful features of the Report on the World Social Situation was its picture of the essential aspects of living conditions throughout the world - a more substantial basis for developing progressive national policies than a detailed description of the situation in individual countries would be. New Zealand had always been a strong supporter of the principles set forth in the Declaration on Social Progress and Development and believed that the inclusion of references to relevant sections of that Declaration at the beginning of each chapter of the report was an effective way to help the continuing review process and reinforce the Declaration's relevance to the 1980s.

(Ms. Fawthorpe, New Zealand)

50. The 1982 Report on the World Social Situation was the latest in a series which constituted the main element in the United Nations effort to ensure that social problems ranked as highly as economic matters in the minds of planners, administrators and Governments. She commended the Office for Development Research and Policy Analysis for the hard work and thought that had gone into its preparation. The report had not been available long enough for any detailed comment by her Government at the present stage, but New Zealand would be interested in participating in a more detailed discussion when the authorities concerned had examined it - perhaps at the first regular session of the Economic and Social Council in 1983. In such a discussion, delegations of developed and developing countries could indicate which elements in the report had the most practical application.

51. Her delegation had in past years put forward various suggestions aimed at making the report more useful to national decision-makers, planners and administrators. While the ultimate responsibility for formulating development policies rested with Governments themselves, her delegation believed that the United Nations could and should play a valuable role, particularly in helping them to set their policies within the context of current global trends. That difficult task had been tackled in the present report better than in past years. The review in Part One was a frank look at a way in which political, economic and cultural changes in all parts of the world impinged on the life and material well-being of people, bringing out clearly the fact that all countries were being adversely affected by the current economic recession in their efforts to raise, or even maintain, living standards and that, however strong the stated commitment of the Government to social programmes, those might well be the first to be pruned in times of economic hardship. Regression in social policies had serious political implications, primarily for democratically elected Governments but also, in the longer term, for countries in which popular participation was not a major factor.

52. Chapter II, concerning the family, was one of the most interesting, being relevant to most societies. The examination of changes in the family life cycle and in the perception and role of the family accorded in many respects with New Zealand's recent experience, the effects of which were already being reflected in the development of social security, education, housing and health policies. An important aspect was the recognition of the changing status of women, whose gradually increasing equality with men was taken into account elsewhere in the report as one of the most far-reaching shifts in economic, political and cultural relations.

53. In Part Two of the report, chapter V, concerning food and nutrition, illustrated the relevance of the report both for the developing and for the so-called developed countries. New Zealand, whose economy was based on the export of primary products, particularly food, had also suffered the effects of the "highly supportive policy stances" produced in developed market countries by the political strength of agricultural interests, referred to on page 69. The resulting surplus production and accumulation of food stocks in some of those countries - sometimes disposed of on the world market below cost - had also been harmful to her country's economy, which, in its dependence on primary exports, had many similarities with those of developing countries.

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(Ms. Fawthorpe, New Zealand)

54. Part Three, with its attempt to assess the impact of features of modern life on human beings and groups, was the key to the superiority of the present report over previous ones. Chapters XI and XV, in particular, were linked with the Committee's work relating to human rights questions. In that connection, she recalled a suggestion by the representative of Ireland in 1981 concerning the preparation of a report on the world human-rights situation, as a parallel to the present report, to illustrate the links between human rights, peace and development. While chapter XV was set in a different context, it was at least a recognition of that link and of the need for strong policies to safeguard individual human rights at international and national levels, not least because of the interdependence of those rights with the enjoyment of the economic and social rights examined in earlier chapters. Chapter XV and the report as a whole would be a useful contribution to the continuing discussion of the right to development as a human right and an illustration of what was meant by a unified approach to development.

55. While not optimistic, the report was realistic about the possibilities for social advancement in a world of contrast and conflict, and it endeavoured to analyse social progress in terms of its effects on the individual. If widely studied and used by development planners, it could make a significant contribution to the realization of the objectives set forth in the Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies adopted at the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies in August 1982.

56. Mr. GERSHMAN (United States of America) commended the Secretary-General and the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs for the Report on the World Social Situation, which was a constructive and thoughtful document. It had been issued too late for his Government to review it in detail, but it would do so before the next session of the Commission for Social Development. Even now, however, it was clear to his delegation that the report could be an important tool in evaluating progress towards achieving the objectives of the Declaration on Social Progress and Development and an important background document for review and appraisal of the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade.

57. His country had long emphasized one of the main themes of the report, that economic development by itself did not and could not assure social development, and had urged that social and economic development issues should be linked in planning and implementing development strategies. The report should be a great help to Governments in seeking to implement the various suggestions on social development made in the International Development Strategy.

58. The United States also agreed with the report's emphasis on an integrated approach to the problems of marginal populations; while sensitive to pressures to provide special assistance programmes for children, for the elderly and the aged, and for the unemployed, his country believed that a model of development based on special groups had serious limitations.

(Mr. Gershman, United States)

59. The report recognized the pessimism and uncertainty resulting from international economic difficulties and focused on the gap between developed and developing countries, food shortages, inflation, unemployment and its implications for migrant workers, the persistence of pockets of poverty even in developed countries, and the need to ensure that programmes really reached their intended beneficiaries. Although economic policy was far from being an exact science, there were lessons to be learned from the experience of recent decades. The extraordinary economic success of a number of developing countries, even in the face of adverse international conditions, had shown that reliance on free and open markets could bring about rapid and widely distributed gains in economic well-being, while the failure of command economies to meet the economic and social aspirations of the population had become too manifest to be denied.

60. A recurring theme of the report - which was also a conclusion of the International Seminar on Popular Participation held in Yugoslavia in May 1982 (A/37/442) - was that all nations, developing and developed, could benefit from the involvement and participation of citizens in decisions on economic and social development. In non-democratic situations all people except a relatively small and privileged elite were excluded from decision-making. His delegation supported the Seminar's conclusion that the role of the State in the development process must be complemented by various organizations or groups, such as free and independent trade unions, volunteer organizations, co-operatives, and non-governmental organizations that could reach into every community at the local level. There could be no genuine participation without free expression, and development itself would be retarded without expression, innovation, voluntary co-operation and autonomous association. The Report on the World Social Situation pointed out the need to strengthen mechanisms for the protection of the individual and commended the increasing understanding of the relationship between the protection and promotion of civil and political rights and development. The report was also clear on the importance of respecting civil and political rights in practice, not merely in principle or in rhetoric, as indicated in the passage on page 202 concerning the gap between accepted principles and actual practices and concerning the reasons for abuse of power and widespread violations of human rights.

61. Without the protection of basic human rights, as defined on page 203 of the report, there was nothing to prevent Governments from manipulating and controlling people. Without social rights, personal freedom and minimum legal rights, workers and other groups would not have the means to defend themselves or to participate in decision-making, and the power to control the distribution of the social and economic products of society would be in the hands of the reigning bureaucracy, which might hide behind the mask of a fraudulently egalitarian ideology but which did not tolerate interference with its prerogatives of power by the people in whose name it spoke. Freedom and opportunities for social, economic and personal autonomy were thus the pre-condition for economic and social achievements by workers and by the population generally. That applied especially to the question of working people's participation and self-management, as discussed at the Seminar in Yugoslavia. His country was interested in all genuine efforts to enhance voluntary social participation and had studied carefully the steps in that direction taken in

(Mr. Gershman, United States)

the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan, Israel and other countries, although convinced that its own system of free collective bargaining was best suited to its own circumstances and history. Worker participation or self-management required a guaranteed right to freedom of association, since workers could not defend themselves as workers unless they could do so as citizens under the laws of their land.

62. The importance of putting principles into practice was illustrated by the example of Poland, where, even though the constitution guaranteed the workers the right to form self-governing trade unions, the workers' insistence on freedom to participate and to have genuine free and self-governing trade unions, independent of governmental control, had resulted in martial law and the abolition of the Solidarity trade-union organization. A government which denied workers the right to associate freely and bargain collectively would never rest on a secure popular foundation. Voluntary participation by workers and other elements of society, through the exercise of fundamental human rights, served the cause of social and economic development and was the best guarantee of domestic and international peace.

63. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the deadline for submitting proposals under the present agenda item should be 6 p.m. on Thursday, 4 November.

64. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.