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THE NEW INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER AND THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Written communication submitted by the International
Commission of Health Professionals for Health and
Human Rights, a non-governmental organization in
consultative status (category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[20 August 1987]

At the forty-first session of the Commission on Human Rights under agenda item 8, the International Commission of Jurists made an introductory statement drawing attention to "the recent creation of a new international non-governmental organization, based in Geneva, called the International Commission of Health Professionals for Health and Human Rights, which will be devoted to promoting the right to health as a human right".

Having been granted category II consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, in May 1987, we are privileged to participate in the deliberations of the Sub-Commission of its thirty-ninth session. We would at this time like to add our point of view to that of others, putting forward from the perspective of health professionals, comments on the Right to Development as suggested in paragraph 164, page 29, of the annotated agenda of this session.

As per the Declaration on the Right to Development, as adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 41/128, the human person both individually and collectively is central to all aspects of this Right. We as health professionals working at all levels in different parts of the world would concur with many of the statements made by the ILO and UNESCO and particularly with that of the World Health Organization in document E/CN.4/1986/38/Add.1 regarding the totality of the vision which is sought for.

More specifically and as enumerated in article 5 of the Declaration, today we should wish to call attention to the system of apartheid in the Republic of South Africa, a system which by the very nature of separation of races inevitably leads to diminished health care for the majority of the population.

In the light of article 8 of the Declaration, we would also wish to call attention to the great difficulties found in several countries in their fight against endemic diseases like malaria, infantile diarrhoea and more recently AIDS, because the health services in these countries lack adequate facilities for their health care services. It goes without saying that such inadequate services in third world countries adversely affect the industrialized and richer countries of the world. The development of a better quality of life is therefore of mutual benefit to every person on this earth.

With reference to article 6 (2), we would further underline the interdependent qualities of development. It has been proven in research and epidemiological studies that health levels of certain countries have actually declined during periods of political dictatorship, countries with undemocratic Governments where national resources for health care were expended on health facilities serving only a minority of the population.

ICHP is convinced that if health professionals' groups or individuals are not allowed to practise their profession according to their high ethical standards, or follow their consciences in bringing aid to the less-favoured sections of their people, because of Governments which abuse their health professionals for any reason, such authorities are only harming themselves. No Government should actively implicate its health professionals in acts of torture or inhuman treatment, of political oppositon, under any circumstances. ICHP will denounce such mistreatment of professionals, whose ethical code forbids it.

Promotion of the health rights outlined in accepted covenants and declarations of the United Nations, constitute a high priority for ICHP in the future, as well as the implementation of the principles of the Declaration on the Right to Development. Through its activities, publications, and network of health professionals, ICHP stands ready to collaborate with Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, to further the right of health for all.