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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Thirty-seventh session

SUMMARY RECORD (PARTIAL)* OF THE 31st MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Monday, 6 November 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. BONOAN-DANDAN

CONTENTS

OPENING OF THE SESSION

STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The CHAIRPERSON declared open the thirty-seventh session of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

2. Mr. NDIAYE (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that, following the resignations of Mr. Malinverni and Mr. Shen, he expected that the Economic and Social Council would hold elections for the seats made vacant before the end of the year.

3. The recent accession to the Covenant of Maldives and of Montenegro had brought the number of States parties to 155.

4. Progress had been made in the elaboration of an optional protocol to the Covenant. The extension, for a further two years, of the mandate of the Open-ended Working Group on an optional protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights had enabled work to move from the conceptual stage to concrete issues of drafting. The Committee's contributions, made through Mr. Riedel, had been and would continue to be most valuable.

5. A draft international convention and optional protocol on the rights of persons with disabilities had recently been adopted by the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities. While not creating new rights, it would prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities and establish a new treaty body to monitor implementation, consider individual communications and look into serious violations. It was expected to be adopted by the General Assembly at its current (sixty-first) session.

6. The Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights had continued its pioneering work on economic, social and cultural rights, having in 2006 adopted draft guiding principles on extreme poverty and human rights, and draft guidelines on the realization of the right to drinking water and sanitation.

7. The Human Rights Council currently had before it draft resolutions on both those issues.

8. Turning to the relationship between the Human Rights Council and the treaty bodies, he recalled that the Chairperson of the Human Rights Committee, in a statement made to the Council at its second session in her capacity as Chairperson of the eighteenth meeting of chairpersons of treaty bodies, had welcomed the potential of the universal periodic review to provide a framework for a broader and different kind of scrutiny than that available in the context of the treaty body system, although the information on which such a review would be based should also include treaty bodies' findings and recommendations as reflected in their concluding observations.

9. The High Commissioner for Human Rights had similarly stated to the Human Rights Council that the question was how to create synergy rather than overlap between special procedures and treaty body mechanisms and the universal periodic review.
10. The intersessional and open-ended intergovernmental Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review had submitted its report on the modalities of the review mechanism to the Human Rights Council.
11. On reform of the treaty bodies, he said that a working group on reform proposals, comprising one member from each of the treaty bodies, was to meet shortly in follow-up to recommendations by the fifth inter-committee meeting and the eighteenth meeting of chairpersons of treaty bodies. A meeting would also be held in February 2007 to allow States parties to meet with the chairpersons of treaty bodies with a view to strengthening dialogue.
12. Lastly, he said the working group on reservations would reconvene in December and submit its report to the sixth inter-committee meeting.
13. Noting that the Committee had a heavy agenda to deal with at its current session, he said that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights would provide its full support to the Committee to assist it to fulfil its mandate. The High Commissioner's Office was very pleased that the Committee had decided to resume its in-depth examination of global trade, a field with profound implications for the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, in the days following the current session. The meeting had been organized with the support of the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation, to which the High Commissioner's Office joined with the Committee in expressing its immense appreciation.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (E/C.12/37/1)

14. The agenda was adopted.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (E/C.12/37/2)

15. The CHAIRPERSON drew Committee members' attention to the draft programme of work for the session, contained in document E/C.12/37/2.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 10.40 a.m.