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MEETING**

Thursday, 1 October 1970,
at 11 a.m.

NEW YORK

Chairman: Miss Maria GROZA (Romania).

AGENDA ITEM 55

Youth, its education in the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, its problems and needs, and its participation in national development: report of the Secretary-General (continued) (A/7921, A/8003, chap. IX, sect. K; A/C.3/L.1764, A/C.3/L.1766)

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mrs. FJOSE (Norway) said that she thought that in regard to the need for peace, justice and progress there was no generation gap and that if one wished to serve the interests of youth it was better to work for peace, justice and progress than to analyse endlessly the "crisis of youth".
2. The first seminar on the role of youth in the promotion and protection of human rights, held at Belgrade in June 1970, in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 2497 (XXIV), had enabled young people to express their views on vital questions of human rights as well as on the role of youth in national and international development. The participants in the seminar had made specific suggestions with a view to intensifying contacts and exchanges among young people throughout the world which would enable them to understand each other better. Constructive proposals of that kind should be taken into account. In that connexion, the conclusions of the Belgrade seminar (see A/C.3/L.1764) were particularly interesting, especially perhaps the conclusion relating to the importance of free and compulsory education at all levels.
3. In Norway, teaching of the principles of the Charter and the purposes and principles of the United Nations continued throughout the nine years of compulsory school attendance. The Norwegian United Nations Association, which was very active, played an important role in that respect with the support of the Government and the participation of a number of non-governmental organizations.
4. The Norwegian delegation thought that, in addition to international seminars, it would be helpful to organize regional seminars devoted to certain subjects which were of particular interest to the region concerned. Such meetings would be organized by the young people themselves, in consultation with the appropriate United Nations organizations.
5. The World Youth Assembly had been a very important element in the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations. It was regrettable to note that, in general, the information media had placed particular emphasis on the less positive features of the Assembly's work and had not drawn sufficient attention to the work of the commissions, which had dealt in a spirit of unity and co-operation with the questions of development, education and the human environment. It was to be hoped that the Assembly had enabled the participants to gain a better understanding of the need for international co-operation and that they would continue in their own countries the work which had been begun at the Youth Assembly.
6. In conclusion, she expressed the hope that, when the Third Committee came to consider the item once again, probably at the twenty-seventh session, the Secretary-General would be in a position to report significant progress.
7. Mr. KOSCIUSKO-MORIZET (France) said that young people carried within them the hope for a better world, a world of justice and freedom. Their strength did not come solely from their numbers but mainly from their energy, their intransigence, their lack of prejudice and their disregard of conventions.
8. The World Youth Assembly had given young people an opportunity to express their views on the main problems of the day and, as the Secretary-General had said in essence, it was above all the courage and frankness with which they had expressed their points of view which had given such significance to their deliberations. The participants had indicated that they were more concerned over the events taking place in the modern world than over what older people called the problem of youth. Youth was not rebelling against the generation gap but rather against the gap which separated the social and political ideals proclaimed in the United Nations Charter and in other such solemn declarations from the actual conduct of Governments, nations and individuals.
9. Since the International Conference on Human Rights, held at Teheran in 1968, many recommendations and conclusions had been formulated both in the United Nations and in UNESCO. It was now for Governments and national organizations to implement them. It would be premature to draw up a balance-sheet and pointless merely to praise the creative spirit of young people. That impetus should be used instead to strengthen peace, to ensure the triumph of human rights and to promote economic and social development by active solidarity.
10. In France, respect for human rights was a tradition of national life and of the educational system, and young people—school children or students—were made aware of those rights.

11. Young people should be better informed concerning the work of the Organization in the promotion of human rights and development. Courses on the United Nations should, for instance, be organized in individual countries and the action taken by national ministries of education should be supplemented by that of the UNESCO national commissions. The French UNESCO Commission, for example, had established “UNESCO clubs”, whose activities were outside the school curriculum but which acted in close liaison with the teachers in the schools concerned.

12. In order to promote the participation of young people in the consideration of problems and in the formulation of measures of direct concern to them, the United Nations was planning to hold a number of seminars. The first had taken place at Belgrade in June 1970 with the participation of the specialized agencies, including UNESCO, which had undertaken a major study of the reform of the various levels of education. For its part, France had gone a long way towards participation by endeavouring to associate young people in matters directly related to their training and their future. The old university structure had been overthrown and the educational system greatly transformed. The life of the city was penetrating the secondary schools and the university faculties and, in their turn, education and culture were spreading throughout city life to make it more humane. Dialogue had taken the place of formal courses. An intense effort at reform had been made. Moreover, in view of the importance which young people attached to international co-operation, a number of those called up for national service were given an opportunity to serve, not in the military forces, but as civilians under the system of co-operation with the developing countries. They contributed a little technical knowledge and, in return, received inestimable benefit from their encounter with other cultures. The success of that formula showed how much young people were aware of the enrichment which they could derive from it. Prompted by a desire to encourage similar activities, France had decided to participate more closely in the work of the International Secretariat for Volunteer Service by making a financial contribution.

13. It was by listening to young people and associating them with national and international efforts, that the way could be found to help them become an integral part of national and international society. What was needed was not a display of paternalism, but rather an attempt to solve with young people the various problems which arose. It was essential to deal with the question on a practical level, and for that reason the French delegation hoped that over-ambitious statements or proposals would be avoided. The General Assembly should draw the attention of Governments to the conclusions of the Belgrade seminar (see A/C.2/L.1764) and to the message of the World Youth Assembly;¹ it should refer to the important work of UNESCO on educational reform and make arrangements to consider the question again in a few years' time.

14. Mr. GUNewardene (Ceylon) welcomed the fact that the question of the problems and needs of youth had been given such a high priority, since the aspirations of youth reflected the trend of the future and were basic to an understanding of global problems. Demographic considera-

tions indicated the extent of the subject under consideration; of the present world population of 3,700 million, 55 per cent had been born after the establishment of the United Nations. Moreover, young people were proportionately more numerous in the developing countries than in the developed countries.

15. The youth demonstrations and protests which had occurred in many countries were evidence of a psychological disaffection. The current generation was the first to live in a nuclear age, and that circumstance inevitably had a considerable impact on the way in which it viewed life. It also seemed that the traditional pattern of transmitting knowledge from the older generation to the young was being reversed. Young people were currently better informed than their seniors had been; but they did not have an opportunity to apply their knowledge and aptitudes, and that was inevitably a source of discontent.

16. When considering the problems and needs of youth, it was important to avoid taking refuge in conventional solutions. The argument that increased employment opportunities reduced revolutionary ardour was somewhat limited, since the discontent of youth was not solely of economic origin. The essential thing was to recognize the sources of youth's discontent.

17. His Government believed firmly in the right of youth to a creative involvement in national development. It had long since extended voting rights to persons of the age of eighteen. It was endeavouring to reconcile age-old civilizational values with modern technology, and the participation of youth in that effort was particularly important.

18. As stated in paragraph 13 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/7921), youth was concerned for human rights, but its concern was often expressed in forms different from those observed by United Nations organs, which were concerned more with principles than with practical action. The United Nations should therefore provide a more acceptable framework for education concerning human rights and fundamental freedoms. To that end, it should work in close co-operation with youth groups and, for example, develop programmes for bringing human rights projects to the attention of youth. A report prepared by the Secretary-General,² published in February 1970, indicated that a number of important United Nations organs hardly dealt with the question of youth at all. The specialized agencies and the regional economic commissions, for example, should devote more energy towards youth programmes in their specialized areas. An organized attempt to include United Nations and human rights subjects in the curricula of all instructional institutions should also be made, and United Nations organs should take action to that end.

19. The United Nations was now dealing with many matters of immediate concern to the youth of today such as development, peace-keeping, refugees and narcotic drugs. Rather than compartmentalize those activities, was it not possible to integrate all the elements affecting youth?

20. His Government viewed the problems and needs of youth as critical and felt that they called for understanding

¹ See *World Youth Assembly*, document 56/WYA/P/10, p. 5.

² Document E/CN.4/1032.

and goodwill. The United Nations should provide appropriate leadership in that task—something worthy of its twenty-fifth anniversary. Success would enrich the future of the world; failure would mean that the United Nations would become irrelevant and would be bypassed by those in whose hands the future would rest.

21. Mr. HAILE SELASSIE (Ethiopia) said that the future of the world depended directly on the maturity and seriousness of purpose of the leaders of tomorrow—in other words, on the youth of today. Some representatives had criticized the youth of today for not having the desired qualities; others had placed the blame on the older generation, which had not been able to create a congenial atmosphere for the realization of the immense aspirations and potentialities of youth. But neither criticism nor blame would alter the facts. What the Third Committee should now do was to tackle the basic problem, which was the review and reform of the accepted social, political and economic norms of society with a view to creating a healthy atmosphere for the education of youth. Those norms and the established institutions, whether they were religious or political groups or economic and social institutions, should undergo a radical transformation to take account of the rapid development of the world. The moving speeches that had been made would remain a dead letter if the United Nations did not resort to positive action and appeal to Member States to provide youth with the means for active participation in the formulation of social and economic policies that would enable future generations to develop in harmony.

22. His delegation welcomed the fact that the Secretariat had organized meetings such as the World Youth Assembly and the Belgrade seminar, which by bringing together young people of different and sometimes opposing cultures, contributed, albeit modestly, to the promotion of international peace and security. It hoped that at reasonable intervals other similar meetings would be organized in the greatest possible number of countries.

23. Mr. REDDY (India) said that his delegation welcomed the interest being taken by the United Nations in youth. All over the world, youth was in a state of ferment, which was undoubtedly caused by the chaos following the Second World War and the technological revolution in the developed countries, and by the downfall of colonialism in the developing countries. Youth everywhere noted the existence of a gap as regards opportunities and material benefits, and their views were therefore generally the same. They differed only in their choice of means for achieving their ultimate goals of peace, peaceful coexistence and mutual respect—goals which implied the establishment of equality, social justice and brotherhood and recognition of and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Disappointed by the results achieved by their elders, particularly by the United Nations in its efforts to maintain international peace and security and thus to raise the standards of living of the peoples, they had begun to question the traditional values proclaimed in their universities, in their countries or in the world as a whole. In the young nations, young people, whether or not engaged in study, rejected the old educational system, which was linked to colonialism and neo-colonialism. In the advanced countries, youth were dissatisfied mainly because they were

denied participation in real economic, social and political progress because their parents and elders would not listen to them. Hence their restlessness.

24. In India, the Government had on 3 February 1970—as stated in the report of the Secretary-General to the Commission on Human Rights at its twenty-sixth session³—taken a series of measures to provide youth with wider channels of self-expression and thus to create a new generation. In the light of the special problems of the developing countries, the creation of a generation of youth was the most striking achievement of the post-independence period and the result of a massive effort at planned economic and social development. The first three five-year plans had encouraged the participation of youth in development programmes. The educational programmes had been geared to rapid advancement of literacy, development of a balanced personality and the inculcation of the dignity of the individual and the observance and protection of human rights. It was hoped thus to promote social progress and economic growth and also to create a favourable climate for youth. At present, education was free and compulsory for all children up to the age of fourteen and the majority of children in that age group were in fact going to school. In the forthcoming plans, priority would be given to elementary education in the least advanced areas and to education for girls, as well as to the improvement of teacher training, scientific education, post-graduate education and research and the development of Indian languages and book production, especially textbooks designed to promote patriotism. Efforts would also be made to consolidate and reorganize technical education to meet the needs of industry, to promote self-employment and ultimately to create new job opportunities.

25. In pursuance of the objectives of the fourth five-year plan, a Ministry for Youth Services had been established to develop services designed to meet the needs of youth in rural and urban areas and to canalize their energies. For students, the programmes would include improvement in curricula and methods of teaching, provision of lodgings, reading rooms and libraries and physical education facilities as well as counselling and health services. School children and students would participate in community development or social service programmes, which at the university stage would be optional and would include the conduct of literacy classes for adults. Counselling and further education services would be provided for young workers. Efforts would be made to develop, both among student and non-student youth, a wider national outlook by organizing meetings of young people from different parts of the country. There was already a Cabinet Minister for Education and Youth Services, and Mrs. Indira Gandhi also proposed to set up a national youth organization to advise the Government on the development of youth services programmes. Furthermore, special educational programmes for youth were broadcast daily.

26. His delegation thought there could be no question that young people in general, as the World Youth Assembly had shown, defended the same principles, viewed international questions in the same light and had the same ideas as to the action to be taken at the international level. That identity

³ *Ibid.*

of outlook was a factor conducive to solidarity and understanding among peoples and reflected the ideals of the United Nations.

27. The Belgrade seminar, in which India had participated, likewise showed that the formulation of programmes for international co-operation in the field of human rights was not only possible but also highly desirable. His delegation would support the periodic holding of meetings of young people and the organization by the United Nations and its specialized agencies of large-scale programmes related to the problems of youth and their education in respect for human rights. It would be interested to hear the comments of the representative of UNESCO in that connexion. His delegation also hoped that those countries which had not yet submitted their reports on the question under consideration would do so as soon as possible, since an exchange of information among the Member States would facilitate the establishment of programmes designed to promote among young people respect for human dignity and equal rights. In addition, his delegation would like to know what progress the specialized agencies and the Secretary-General had made in their study of the problems and needs of youth in the developed, as opposed to the developing, countries and whether they were ready to suggest any constructive action.

28. Finally, his delegation suggested that the General Assembly might consider the possibility of decentralizing certain United Nations activities relating to youth. At the twentieth session of the Commission for Social Development, India had stressed the importance of action at the regional level in the fields of aid and social development. He would like to know whether any action had been taken in that connexion. The United Nations had an obligation to turn the present crisis involving youth into an opportunity for progress for all mankind, and, to that end, should place full confidence in youth.

Mrs. Barish (Costa Rica), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

29. Mr. LEW (China) said that he merely wished to express his regret that some participants in the World Youth Assembly had been denied the right to speak. It was the first time that that fundamental freedom had not been respected at the United Nations. His delegation did not wish to condemn the young people but it hoped that the same thing would not happen at the meetings which were planned for the future.

30. Mr. OUÉDRAOGO (Upper Volta) said that the problem of youth was currently a burning issue, for all over the world there were signs of revolt against régimes and societies which did not allow young people to take part in various national and international activities. Whatever the form such revolt took, it was always engendered by a feeling of frustration. Unable to realize their aspirations, young people were compelled to accept mediocrity, routine and paternalistic attitudes. There was an urgent need to establish conditions which would allow young people to express themselves freely and to engage in constructive activity. Citing the terms of resolution (XX) on the education of youth in the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms⁴ which had been adopted by the

International Conference on Human Rights, he observed that in order to pave the way to a brighter future, it would be necessary to take cognizance of the legitimate desire of the young leaders of the coming generation to be of use and to take part in the process of social, economic and spiritual renewal.

31. He earnestly hoped that the United Nations, UNESCO, the other specialized agencies and Member States would begin to work together in studying questions relating to youth. Every effort should be made to train effective teachers and educators. Emphasis should be placed on education in human rights, which should be included in the curricula of educational establishments in all countries. All the modern information media should be utilized to stimulate a dialogue between young people and the rest of society, first at the national and then at the regional and international levels. Accordingly, his delegation welcomed the recommendation of the World Youth Assembly calling for youth seminars to be held every two years. The results of the first such seminar, held at Belgrade in June 1970, seemed to be encouraging.

32. His Government was sparing no effort to educate its youth. Education at all levels was provided free of charge in the public educational establishments and the moral and intellectual training which they offered reflected the principles of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Government encouraged private initiative, which had made it possible to establish centres for vocational training and guidance. It had set up rural development organizations in all the important production centres of the country, which made it possible for young people who had had to discontinue their studies to find work and participate in the economic development of the country. The Government also encouraged youth movements and had built many cultural centres and clubs for young people. Unfortunately, the majority of the developing countries were handicapped by a lack of resources and were hoping that the most developed countries would be generous in assisting them and would support their efforts.

33. Mrs. MOFOLO (Lesotho) said that her Government attached great importance to the item under consideration since it was convinced that the principles of respect for human rights and justice constituted the foundations of a harmonious and united nation and should be instilled in people when they were children. The importance of the home and the family in teaching respect for human rights should be emphasized. In Lesotho the family was a unit which usually included a number of elderly people, such as grandparents or other relatives. Within that family framework, the women were primarily responsible for bringing up the children, who from their earliest years learned to be unfailingly respectful of the rights of their elders. It was also within the context of the extended family that children established their first relationships with the older generation. Women's organizations had been established to assist women in their role as teachers. In that social context, moreover, adults had a responsibility towards all the young people in the community, for whom they had to set a good example.

34. The school also played an important role in the civic education of youth. The Government had made great

⁴ See *Final Act of the International Conference on Human Rights* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.XIV.2), p. 15.

efforts to attain its objective of providing education for everyone in the conviction that education was vital to a better understanding of the laws of the country and the rights and responsibilities of its citizens. Attention was given to civic education from the first years of schooling, and efforts were made to teach young people at a very early age about the social systems of other countries, laying emphasis on the interdependence of nations with a view to awakening in young people a consciousness of international solidarity. Special radio broadcasts were directed towards young people to give them an understanding of the world in which they lived.

35. Her Government also encouraged the development of youth movements and had established a national youth movement which was designed to educate young people in their civic and international responsibilities and to mobilize their energies for development purposes. Through that movement they were trained in agricultural skills and brought into community development projects. The movement had received assistance from friendly countries in Africa, Europe, North America and Asia. It had been so successful that it had become a model for a co-operative movement for adults.

36. Her Government was convinced of the usefulness of the exchanges and contacts among youth of different countries which had made it possible to organize events such as the World Youth Assembly in which a delegation from Lesotho had participated. In that spirit, it welcomed the visit to Lesotho by young people from other countries. In view of the progress made in the field of communications, Governments and organizations should encourage young people to travel as a means of promoting better understanding among peoples.

Miss Groza (Romania) resumed the Chair.

37. Mrs. CHAPMAN (Ivory Coast) said that the problem of youth affected everyone closely, since everyone had day-to-day experience of it. Parents often tended to bring up their children as they had been brought up themselves, without taking into account the development of the modern world, and to over-protect them, whereas scientific and technical advances were opening up new horizons for young people. In their desire to save young people from making mistakes, parents thus ran the risk of checking their impetus and hampering their development. That was why young people brought up in environments where they had received a good education often "went wrong". The problem had different aspects in the developed and the developing countries: in the former, young people were rebelling against a decadent social system in which they were kept under guardianship, whereas in the latter, they were irritated by the perpetuation of traditions and prejudices and they denounced discrimination, aggression and injustice all the more vehemently because their education set them such lofty aims. Although the causes of rebellion differed, young people had the same reactions; they wanted to make themselves heard and to be understood. There could be no question that education must be adapted to the modern world and should be better suited to preparing young people for their future life, even if it thus departed from the principles inculcated into their elders. It was for parents to make the necessary effort to ensure that

their children did not become disoriented; their efforts should be co-ordinated with those of educators, who should provide instruction in civics from elementary school through to higher education in order to instil respect for human rights and high ideals in their pupils.

38. Her Government devoted about 23 per cent of its capital budget to national education. It maintained contacts with young people in order to understand their problems better and to help them integrate themselves in society and adapt themselves to its rapid development. Unemployed young people were trained in accordance with the employment opportunities offered by newly established industries. Young people wanted to take part in preparing and executing national development plans; above all, they wanted the promises of respect for human rights and freedoms made to them by their elders to be carried out.

39. Mr. TOKO-MANGAN (Cameroon) welcomed the interest which the international community was showing in youth problems, and which had resulted in the organization of such meetings as the World Youth Assembly and the Belgrade seminar.

40. The problems of youth must be considered in their context; whereas the young people of the more prosperous countries enjoyed excessive luxury, in other latitudes they were rebelling against the evils which paralysed the efforts of the developing countries. Education programmes should accordingly be drawn up with the social environment in mind. In some countries, the difficulty lay in reconciling the need for scientific education and the desire to preserve certain values inherent in their civilization.

41. Technical progress was drawing the peoples of the world ever closer together, and that imposed a great responsibility on the developing countries; that was why stress had rightly been laid on the threat that the pornographic films and publications so freely disseminated by the developed countries represented for young people in the developing countries. The cultural imperialism of the former presented another threat to youth throughout the world. It was impossible to ignore the problems of millions of young people who lived under oppressive régimes and were subjected to discriminatory measures; those young people were still very far from being able to aspire to education in respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

42. In Cameroon, where the young accounted for more than half the population, the Government spared no effort to associate them with all activities. It was aware of the role which youth could play in the economic development of the country. Since Cameroon was essentially an agricultural country, the Government was making a special effort to promote rural development and to adapt education to life in rural areas.

43. His delegation welcomed the initiatives taken by UNESCO and the United Nations on behalf of youth and it supported the recommendations of the World Youth Assembly, despite their somewhat utopian character. Finally, he emphasized the value of international volunteer corps, which would enable young people to work for development.

44. Mr. GUZMAN (Peru) said that his delegation attached great importance to the question before the Committee. The three aspects of the problem had humanism as their common denominator. Thus, the first aspect, that of the education of youth in respect for human rights, was inspired by the high value attached to the human person and the structure of society; the second, relating to the problems and needs of youth, was concerned with giving young people a chance to express themselves and to develop in society; and the third was concerned with enabling young people to exercise their rights and carry out their duties in the society in which they lived. In that connexion, it would be essential to define clearly the link between those rights and duties of young people within the particular political system to which they belonged.

45. Peru was making considerable efforts to train the young and to establish a just society by eliminating all

obstacles to the participation of everyone in the life of the nation.

46. The Peruvian Government's educational policy had a threefold aim: first, to enable young people to find work and thus to promote individual awareness, social development and national solidarity; secondly, to instil in young people the spiritual values which would lead to the elimination of inequalities due to the scramble for personal profit; and lastly, to foster a national feeling among young people while making them understand that they were also members of the broader community of Latin America and that it was their duty to participate in the liberation and development of the third world as a whole.

47. His delegation associated itself with the conclusions of the seminar on the role of youth in the promotion and protection of human rights (see A/C.3/L.1764).

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.