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Chairman: Mrs. Aase LIONAES (Norway).

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. López (Philippines), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 12

Report of the Economic and Social Council (chapters VI and VII) (A/3613, A/C.3/L.609, A/C.3/L.610) (continued)

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. RICHARDSON (Liberia) congratulated the Economic and Social Council on its excellent report (A/3613). His country had derived great benefit from the assistance of the United Nations and the specialized agencies.
2. The Liberian Government and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had decided to continue their joint educational project, of which the national fundamental education centre at Klay, in operation since 1952, formed part. The centre had made a great contribution towards the education of the people and the Director of the Department of Technical Assistance of UNESCO, who had visited the centre early in 1957, had described it as the best school of its kind in the world.
3. The World Health Organization (WHO), which was intensifying its work in Africa, was conducting a yaws project and, in conjunction with the United States International Cooperation Administration, a malaria control project in Liberia. Towns and villages within an area of 3,000 square miles had been treated with insecticides and the results had been found satisfactory.
4. The Liberian Government had greatly appreciated the valuable work of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in the field of maternal and child welfare. His Government was fully aware of the importance of the work of such agencies and of its responsibilities towards them and would continue to give them all the support it could.
5. Liberia had also received valuable assistance from the United States: the International Cooperation Administration provided technical assistance in nearly every field, notably through the granting of scholarships, and the United States public health mission which had visited Liberia in 1954 had done much to improve health conditions throughout the country.

6. He congratulated the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities on its proposal that the Economic and Social Council or UNESCO should consider the possibility of preparing an international instrument or instruments embodying the principles of non-discrimination in education.

7. In conclusion he welcomed the new States of Ghana and the Federation of Malaya.

8. Mrs. SYSOEVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that, in general, the picture that emerged from the Report on the World Social Situation (E/CN.5/324/Rev.1) left much to be desired. Despite impressive advances in science and technology, the peoples of many countries were still living, in the middle of the twentieth century, on the borderline of famine and in poverty and ignorance. The information before the Committee showed that the economically under-developed countries were in a particularly poor situation. That was largely owing to the fact that the natural wealth of such countries was in the hands of foreign monopolies. Living conditions in the under-developed countries could be improved only by industrialization and the peaceful development of an independent national economy.

9. She wished to emphasize the urgency of eradicating all the forms of discrimination to which women were subjected. She appreciated the fact that the solution of that problem was given high priority in the Commission on the Status of Women.

10. Considerable resources which must in the main be provided by the State were needed to improve social conditions and raise family levels of living. To make that possible, national income must be raised, local sources of wealth exploited, economy and trade developed, and the productivity of the workers increased. Her delegation noted with regret that many countries were still devoting large sums to military purposes when the money could be usefully employed to increase the welfare of their peoples. That state of affairs was particularly distressing in view of the amounts that had been wasted and were still being wasted in that way. Such an anomalous situation must be brought to an end.

11. The Group of Experts appointed to make recommendations for a co-ordinated policy regarding family levels of living had done some positive work. It was regrettable, however, that its report (E/CN.5/321, appendix I) omitted various important points such as the need to free workers from the payment of social security contributions, to make primary education in the under-developed countries and the colonies and secondary education in the more advanced countries free and compulsory, and to introduce such things as free medical care, unemployment benefits, and old-age pensions.

12. Governments had an essential part to play in

community development, in financing and planning social programmes. She did not wish to minimize the importance of individual efforts in both the under-developed countries and other countries, but it must be borne in mind that for such efforts to be successful they must form part of a general programme designed to increase the well-being of the peoples concerned.

13. The socialist countries offered a striking example of the results that could be achieved when individual initiative was backed by government support. Many lessons of use in settling the social problems confronting the world could be learned from her country's experience. More than half her country's wealth had been swallowed up by the Second World War, which had inflicted very heavy material and human losses. Nevertheless, thanks to the efforts of the Byelorussian people and the other peoples of the Soviet Union, industrial production in Byelorussia was 2.7 times higher in 1956 than it had been in 1940. The level of living was constantly rising. The consumption of food products had considerably increased; a vast housing programme had been completed and education had made great strides. Progress had also been made in the health of the people. In 1956 much had been done to improve the living conditions of the workers. Pensions had been increased; secondary and higher education were now free; the working day had been reduced and maternity leave extended.

14. Like all the other peoples in the Soviet Union, the Byelorussian people wished to expand its economic, social and cultural relations with all countries. The links which united it with other peoples were growing closer every year and there was an increasing number of tourist and scientific exchanges. In 1957 several leading foreign personalities, and numerous parliamentary, cultural, artistic, scientific and sports groups had visited the Byelorussian SSR. She warmly supported the Czechoslovakian draft resolution (A/C.3/L.610), which would do much to promote international co-operation.

15. In addition, her Government wished, as a member of the Economic Commission for Europe, to stress the value of that body's efforts to expand and strengthen commercial contacts between the various European countries.

16. Mr. DI BERNARDO (Italy) expressed his delegation's satisfaction at the progress achieved in certain social sectors. The efforts of the United Nations, the specialized agencies and Governments to solve the extremely complex problems before them, and the increased co-operation and co-ordination to be found at all levels augured well for the future. The Iranian delegation was to be warmly congratulated on the courageous decision its Government had taken on narcotics.

17. The information about the progress in social legislation in Member States was extremely valuable, because it enabled the Committee to understand the specific forms social problems took in the various countries and the methods adopted for their solution. His delegation thought the reports on the world social situation and the international studies of social programmes most useful. Further information on the social measures taken by Member States would be valuable. The attention given to national efforts did not mean that there was any wish to limit Government action, but merely to elucidate general principles.

The work of the United Nations in social affairs should be made better known to parliamentary circles and to the public in the various countries in order to facilitate the preparation of positive and effective policies.

18. In Italy, the process of transforming the economic and social structures as a consequence of the agrarian reform was being accelerated, particularly in the under-developed parts of the territory. Special attention had been given to the organization and development of social services, and public authorities were giving substantial help to the family, the nucleus of society. Social assistance had made very great strides in the last few years. That was true particularly in the case of the rural population, the improvement of whose condition was a constant aim. Like urban workers, peasants and their families were now entitled to free medical care, and they would soon be covered by disability and old-age pension schemes.

19. The housing problem, which was one of the difficulties caused by the exodus of rural populations to the towns, had received particular attention from the Italian Government. In addition to large housing schemes for workers, there were projects planned by the local authorities in under-developed areas such as Sicily. Economic development and social development were interdependent, but the relation was much more than technical. One of the chief factors of economic development was its cost in human terms and it was precisely in the social field that that cost made itself felt. Moreover, all economic and scientific progress must be accompanied by social progress, the purpose of which should be to raise the level of living. If social progress were not accompanied by real economic vitality, it would be an illusion. If the work of the United Nations was to be effective in general, the purposes of economic and social development should be clearly defined. Those purposes should be man's spiritual and material progress, his greater freedom and dignity.

20. The work of the Economic and Social Council in the field of human rights was being followed with a great deal of interest and sympathy in Italy, not only in official quarters, but also among private cultural associations. The principles of human rights should find an echo in the peoples' political and social conscience, before they were enshrined in a legal document. That was why particular importance must be attached to those activities of the Economic and Social Council which were intended to shape that conscience and thus to promote observance of those rights. The Council had taken up many aspects of human rights. Of particular importance were the conclusion, in 1956, of the new Convention on the Abolition of Slavery and the remarkable advances achieved with regard to the status of women. The method adopted for dealing with human rights was excellent. A study of the situation in each country would gradually result in the establishment of standards and corresponding penalties applicable throughout the world.

21. The Economic and Social Council, the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination and the Secretary-General were to be congratulated on having done so much to promote and co-ordinate so many studies and activities.

22. Mrs. CISELET (Belgium) congratulated the Sec-

retary-General on his remarkable Report on the World Social Situation (E/CN.5/324/Rev.1) and thanked the specialized agencies which had helped to prepare it. While the study had emphasized a well-known fact, namely, the close interdependence of economic and social factors, it had also shown that economic and social progress was very far from being satisfactory everywhere. It had certainly achieved one of its objects by drawing the attention of the international community to the social problems and needs of the moment, by making nations more aware of their responsibilities and by stimulating their sense of human solidarity. Such an important inquiry, it was hoped, would have tangible results and lead to effective national social policies and international action.

23. Her delegation was very concerned at the growing gap in per caput income as between industrialized and under-developed countries. It also felt there was great danger in the process of urbanization, which often proceeded at a much more rapid rate than industrialization.

24. The Belgian Government was giving particular attention to the problems arising in the Belgian Congo, as elsewhere, from modifications in structure and social organization due particularly to rapid urbanization. Belgium was seeking a solution for each of those problems: housing, sanitation and health, new conditions of family life, the education of children and to some extent of adults, criminality and juvenile delinquency. Belgium was building hospitals, schools, clubs, houses and entire cities; it was creating new industries, and education was expanding rapidly. All those measures formed part of a methodical plan for economic and social development and the Congolese people's level of living was constantly rising. A few figures would suffice to illustrate that evolution. The index of the national income of the Belgian Congo had risen to 162 in 1955, 1950 being taken as the base year at 100. During the same period, the average pay of the indigenous inhabitants had increased from 100 to 216, while the price index was merely at 129. The share of the indigenous economy in the national income was also increasing. The gap between the level of living of Europeans and indigenous inhabitants was progressively narrowing. From 1950 to 1955, indigenous incomes had risen from 13,490 million to over 25,000 million. The number of savings books owned by Congolese was also very revealing: in one year, from 1955 to 1956, it had increased from 394,000 to 610,000, or 94.6 per cent of the total number of savings books. Belgium had applied its system of pensions, of health and disability insurance, family allowances and paid holidays to all Congolese workers. There was still a great deal to be done, but Belgium could at least feel and prove that it was on the right road.

25. Her delegation completely endorsed Council resolution 663 E (XXIV) concerning the preparation of future reports, and also resolution 663 I (XXIV) in which the Council recommended an extension of international co-operation in the social field and the development of personal contacts and the exchange of experience among experts.

26. Her country attached great importance to social defence. The Belgian delegation fully endorsed Council resolution 663 C (XXIV) and hoped that all Member States would take care to follow the recommendations of the First United Nations Congress on the Preven-

tion of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders. In view of the difficulties facing the Secretary-General in the execution of the United Nations programme of work in social defence, difficulties which the Social Commission had recognized, General Assembly resolution 415 (V) should be carefully reviewed; she was happy to hear that the Ad Hoc Advisory Committee of Experts provided four in paragraph (c) of the annex to that resolution would be convened in 1958 to examine the situation.

27. Her delegation was highly gratified at the interest taken by the Economic and Social Council in the work of the Commission on the Status of Women. That Commission, whose very creation had been the subject of lively debate ten years earlier, was growing in importance from year to year, and its usefulness was no longer in dispute.

28. She had been very interested in the Secretary-General's note concerning the Bangkok seminar (A/C.3/L.609), and she had been impressed by the number of countries or territories represented and the scope and importance of the problems studied. She was thinking not merely of the emancipation of women, but of social progress in general. In fact, whatever was designed to increase the participation of women in the public life of their country was likely to improve that country's economic and social conditions. It was to be hoped that similar seminars would be organized in other regions.

29. Her delegation was greatly pleased at the Council's decision concerning closer co-ordination between the action of the United Nations and that of the specialized agencies in the economic and social fields.

30. Mr. BEAUFORT (Netherlands) said he was glad that the Commission had been able to discuss the report of the Economic and Social Council more fully at the current session. The economic and social field was one in which the United Nations could do a great deal. The Netherlands delegation was glad to note that the Council had decided in 1953 to make the world social situation a main and recurrent theme of its discussions. The reports submitted in 1957 on the world social situation (E/CN.5/324/Rev.1), on the maintenance of family levels of living (E/CN.5/321, appendix I) and on community development (E/CN.5/325 and Corr.1 and Add.1) were of great importance and he thanked all those who had worked to prepare them.

31. The Report on the World Social Situation (E/CN.5/324/Rev.1) showed that progress had been made, particularly in health, education and food production. It also, showed, however, that the results so far obtained did not warrant unqualified satisfaction. The situation remained serious, and whenever progress was achieved in one field, it inevitably led to new difficulties in another. The progress in medical science and the improvement of public health services, for example, had considerably reduced the death-rate, with the result that there had been a steady growth of population. In Asia alone, the population had increased by 97 million persons in four years. At the same time, however, the world food situation was deteriorating. Even at the current time the level of living of too large a part of the population of the world left much to be desired, and in many regions food consumption per caput was lower than before the Second World War. It was therefore essential to in-

crease food production substantially. At the twenty-fourth session of the Economic and Social Council, the Netherlands delegation had indicated some ways of arriving at that result: increasing agricultural productivity by such means as the modernizing of equipment and the use of fertilizers and selected seeds; irrigation in areas where water was scarce; draining of areas where there was too much water; bringing into cultivation certain areas which could thus receive the excess population from elsewhere; and better distribution of resources, so that countries having food surpluses could help those whose population was underfed. Obviously those were only some of the possible measures. The problem was so urgent and so vast that all countries had to join their efforts and pool their resources in order to bring it nearer to a solution. It was to be hoped that the United Nations would be able to fulfil its task without delay.

32. The problem of urbanization offered another example of the close interdependence of economic, social and cultural factors. Urbanization was particularly rapid in the less developed countries where small centres of population had grown almost overnight into cities of a million inhabitants. Unfortunately, it was a disturbing fact that those who wished to migrate to the towns were not certain of finding better employment possibilities, and therefore a higher level of living, because the pace of industrialization was much slower than that of urbanization. What the migrants wanted was to escape the poverty of the countryside but, once transplanted, they often experienced a deterioration in social conditions. Since urbanization was so closely connected with rural poverty, it necessarily followed that the two questions had to be studied as related problems. If economic and social conditions were improved in rural areas, for instance by encouraging industrial development in smaller and more widely scattered centres, rural emigration would thus be slowed down, together with the growth of giant cities.

33. It was, however, an inescapable fact that the trend towards urbanization would continue. That was why, in addition to improving conditions in rural areas, it was essential to prepare a plan of action for keeping the process of urbanization in check. United Nations help was indispensable, and he noted with satisfaction that certain proposals had been made and that the programme of work in the social field made provision for a number of seminars on urbanization. The Netherlands delegation had, however, pointed out at the most recent session of the Council that such seminars would have a more beneficial effect if they were prepared by a special group of experts entrusted with the task of preparing an urbanization policy. That suggestion had not yet been taken up; he hoped that someone more competent than he in that matter would say whether it had any practical possibilities.

34. The Report on the World Social Situation was also useful in showing how complex was the interdependence between social and economic development and why economic and social policies should be integrated.

35. Opinions concerning the nature of community development were still divided and there were doubts whether it was necessary to place the main emphasis on the role of the community or on that of the State, the United Nations and the specialized agencies. While recognizing that the two ideas were not neces-

sarily mutually exclusive, the Netherlands delegation felt it desirable to emphasize primarily the idea of individual effort and to encourage local communities to assume responsibilities and to display initiative.

36. Miss FUJITA (Japan) said that women's organizations and the general public in Japan had followed with great interest the seminar held at Bangkok in August 1957, in which Japan had taken part. That seminar would play an important role in the improvement of the status of women and the Japanese delegation hoped that the United Nations would organize further seminars in future.

37. It was regrettable that only twenty-eight countries had ratified the Convention on the Political Rights of Women; Japan had ratified that Convention in 1955 when it had not yet been a Member of the United Nations. The rights proclaimed therein were considered fundamental in Japan and it was gratifying to note that the Economic and Social Council, by its resolution 652 B (XXIV), had invited States Members of the United Nations and members of the specialized agencies to recognize the political rights of women. It was, however, only by ensuring the close co-operation of women's organizations throughout the world that it would be possible to improve effectively the situation of all women. That improvement was bound up with the development of education; the Japanese delegation therefore hoped that the Council's resolution recommending an intensified campaign against illiteracy among the female population (resolution 652 C (XXIV)) would prove effective.

38. In Japan, women had achieved considerable progress since the end of the Second World War. The new Constitution proclaimed their full equality with men. At the general elections held on 27 February 1955, and at the local elections held in April 1955, the percentage of women voters who went to the polls was 72.1 per cent and 92.25 per cent respectively. Japanese women had become so quickly conscious of their political responsibilities largely because most of them had a sufficiently high level of education. In 1948 only 2.8 per cent of the women aged between fifteen and sixty-four were unable to read and write. In Japan, men and women workers enjoyed the same benefits and the principle of equal pay for equal work was duly observed. Women sometimes received smaller salaries than men because a worker's pay depended on age, training, experience and the number of dependants.

39. The demographic problem was still acute in Japan and the Government was doing all it could to solve it. The rate of population growth was decreasing from year to year but in Japan, as in many other countries, demographic pressures were still slowing down economic and social development. The community development programmes, and the studies on internal migration and urbanization could help to solve the problem in part. International measures must be adopted and there must be facilities for international migration. The United Nations and other international organizations had already taken steps to encourage European migration to Latin America. The Japanese delegation hoped that they would continue to play that role of intermediary in respect of other regions of the world, thus rendering an immense service not only to the over-populated countries but also to those with undeveloped land and resources. She thanked the countries of Latin America which, in the course of

recent years, had received Japanese immigrants and helped with their installation. She hoped that those immigrants would become good citizens and contribute to the development of their adopted countries.

40. Mrs. LEIVO-LARSSON (Finland) thought that one of the most difficult social problems was the raising of the levels of living. She pointed out that the education of women was essential in order to improve family levels of living. The Finnish delegation was pleased that the Commission on the Status of Women attached so much importance to education, which alone would enable women to improve social conditions in their countries, as workers and mothers.

41. Mrs. Leivo-Larsson did not share the opinion of those delegations which had objected that the Bangkok seminar was of purely regional importance. She thought that regional seminars were in every respect as useful as meetings organized on a world-wide scale and that they were of even greater practical value in studying the fundamental problems common to a specific group of countries.

42. The Finnish representative noted, incidentally, that the Commission on the Status of Women was engaged in very useful co-operation with various national and international organizations and hoped that that co-operation would continue in the future.

43. Mrs. Leivo-Larsson, speaking of other social questions, said that the housing question, both in urban and rural areas, was not as acute as it had been just after the Second World War. However, there was still much to be done. In order to help all countries to solve that problem, it would be necessary to increase the exchange of technical information.

44. With respect to the internal migration of which so much had already been said, it should be recalled that the levels of living of urban population would also be improved if the levels of living in rural areas were raised. In that field as in others, progress along all lines was closely interconnected.

45. Mr. ROY (Haiti) wished to associate his delegation with the congratulations which had been addressed to both the Secretary-General and the specialized agencies which had co-operated with him for the high quality of the Report on the World Social Situation (E/CN.5/324/Rev.1). That study had not been over-optimistic; it had pointed out that social conditions had improved in certain regions, while noting that that progress had not been uniform. The report revealed the growing gap between per caput income in industrialized countries and that in the less developed countries and indicated the causes of that discrepancy, the most important of which were the excessively rapid expansion of industry in relation to agriculture and the growth of population in the less developed countries. It also rightly emphasized the interdependence of economic and social factors. The Haitian delegation, however, could not but regret that that masterly collection of data on the social situation had not produced any constructive suggestions. It was as if the physicians, after making a perfect diagnosis of the disease, had failed to prescribe the proper remedy. The lack of any concrete suggestion or recommendation concerning the social situation was all the more remarkable inasmuch as the report on community development (E/CN.5/325 and Corr.1

and Add.1) contained a detailed account of a long-term international programme. With respect to family levels of living, the experts had found that the application of a co-ordinated policy posed various problems and had then recommended certain measures and suggested means for encouraging populations to participate in plans prepared for their benefit.

46. In Mr. Roy's opinion, the Social Commission's report on its eleventh session (E/3008) ^{1/} was an indispensable supplement to the three reports which he had mentioned, since it dealt with many other subjects, such as housing, building and planning, social services, and social defence.

47. The report of the Population Commission (E/2957/Rev.1) ^{2/} was also deserving of attention. The programme prepared by that Commission offered the under-developed countries a chance to profit by the experience of countries which had already attempted to solve the technical problems.

48. The Haitian delegation had also read with interest the reports of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (E/3010/Rev.1), ^{3/} the Commission on Human Rights (E/2970), ^{4/} the Commission on the Status of Women (E/2968) ^{5/} and the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (E/CN.4/740).

49. The world was now in possession of a marvelous and smoothly functioning apparatus which could prescribe effective remedies for human misery and suffering. It was the duty of the Governments to make proper use of that apparatus.

50. Mr. EPINAT (France), replying to certain points which had been raised by the representative of Tunisia at the preceding meeting, said that the question whether the French rule in Tunisia had been beneficial or harmful to that country was one which would have to be decided by historians, economists and sociologists. He did not think that their conclusions would be unfavourable to his country. When Tunisia had gained its independence in 1955, that territory had contained 103 hospitals and medical centres, 193 rural dispensaries and medical consulting offices, and 1,039 doctors, dentists, pharmacists and midwives for a population of approximately 3,750,000 inhabitants. That fact alone was sufficiently significant.

51. France was indeed deeply distressed by the tragic events which were taking place in Algeria but continued to be a resolute partisan of human rights in that country. The French delegation would have been willing to accept the allusion made by the Tunisian representative if it had been accompanied by some expression of regret for the acts of terrorism which were claiming so many victims among the entire Algerian population, including Moslems, Christians and Jews.

52. In conclusion Mr. Epinat emphasized that his few words had not been inspired by any desire to engage in controversy.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

^{1/} Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Twenty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 9.

^{2/} Ibid., Twenty-third Session, Supplement No. 4.

^{3/} Ibid., Twenty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 10.

^{4/} Ibid., Supplement No. 4.

^{5/} Ibid., Supplement No. 3.