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REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

World conference on human rights

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its 44th session the General Assembly adopted its resolution 44/156, on 15 December 1989, entitled "World conference on human rights". In that resolution, the Assembly noted the progress made by the United Nations over the past 20 years towards achieving its goal of promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion and that there are still areas in which further progress could be made towards that goal, and considered that, in view of the progress made and the new challenges that lie ahead, it would be appropriate to conduct a review of what had been accomplished through the human rights programme and what remains to be done. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Governments, specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations and United Nations bodies concerned with human rights on the desirability of convening a world conference on human rights for the purpose of dealing at the highest level with the crucial questions facing the United Nations in connection with the promotion and protection of human rights, and also requested him to submit to the Assembly at its forty-fifth session a report on that question. The present document is submitted to the Assembly pursuant to that request.

2. The Secretary-General, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 44/156 and by notes verbales and letters dated 30 April 1990, requested the views of Governments, specialized agencies, United Nations bodies concerned with human rights and non-governmental organizations in consultative status on the desirability of convening a world conference on human rights for the purpose of dealing at the highest level with the crucial questions facing the United Nations in connection with the promotion and protection of human rights.

3. As at 31 October 1990, views on that question had been received from the following Governments: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bolivia, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Chad, Cuba, Cyprus, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Fiji, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland (on behalf of the 12 member States of the European Community), Mauritius, New Zealand, Paraguay, Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Romania, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey and Zaire.

4. Substantive replies regarding the convening of a World Conference on Human Rights were also received from the International Labour Organisation, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Health Organization and the World Bank. In addition, views were expressed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Centre Against Apartheid, the Commission on Human Rights, the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. The Chairpersons of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights stated that the matter would be taken up in the coming sessions of their respective Committees.

5. The following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council submitted views: Amnesty International, Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches, Four Directions Council, International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty, International Association of Penal Law, International Council of Jewish Women, International Catholic Migration Commission, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Christian Democrat International, International Federation Terre des Hommes, International Institute of Humanitarian Law, International Organization for the Development of Freedom of Education, Planetary Citizens, Prison Fellowship International, Soroptimist International, World Association for World Federation, World Confederation of Labour and the World Movement of Mothers.

6. In their replies, all the Governments supported the convening of a World Conference on Human Rights with the exception of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Similarly, the specialized agencies that submitted their views supported the idea of a world conference, or indicated their willingness to take part should one be organized. The replies from United Nations bodies and organs and non-governmental organizations were also favourable to the holding of such a conference with the exception of the reply of the World Movement of Mothers. Some replies contained detailed ideas concerning the background of such a conference, the approaches to be adopted, the items to be discussed, participation and the results to be expected.

7. The recent favourable changes in international conditions and the new perspectives that were thus opened for the protection and promotion of human rights were underlined in several replies as were the developments and achievements over the past 40 years in the United Nations human rights programme. Replies also underlined the important interrelationship between international peace and security and respect for human rights, as well as the interdependence between the various human rights themselves. Some replies pointed out the gap between international standards and the actual respect for human rights in the world.

8. Many replies stated that a world conference on human rights should focus on improving international co-operation in the field and in strengthening the effectiveness of the United Nations system for the promotion and protection of human rights. Several replies suggested specific topics, issues, problems and phenomena for study by a World Conference covering a very wide range of issues. In addition, the need to reconfirm the existing principles and priorities of international co-operation in the field of human rights was stressed.

9. As a framework for a world conference, the following main ideas emerged from the replies: review of progress made in the field of human rights in the world, particularly with reference to the work of the United Nations; evaluation of the effectiveness of methods and techniques for the protection and promotion of human rights, at global and regional levels, in particular by the United Nations; and consideration of future action.

10. There was a wide agreement that the success of a conference would depend in large measure on its preparation. Broad consultations were called for and the importance of the involvement of expert human rights bodies, the specialized agencies and other organizations dealing with human rights, the academic community

and non-governmental organizations in consultative status was underlined. These preparations could lead to the submission of specific recommendations for consideration by a world conference. It was also felt that the success of a world conference would also depend upon participation at the highest level. Finally, it was generally felt that a well-prepared world conference with high-level participation could make an important contribution to the international promotion and protection of human rights.

II. VIEWS SUBMITTED BY GOVERNMENTS

ARGENTINA

The Government of Argentina transmitted its "opinion in favour of convening a world conference on human rights for the purpose of dealing at the highest level with the crucial questions facing the United Nations in connection with the promotion and protection of human rights".

AUSTRALIA

The Government of Australia submitted the following views:

"The Australian Government welcomes the proposal to convene a world conference on human rights. The proposal is a timely one, especially in view of the sweeping progress of democratization world wide which has created new opportunities for the advancement of human rights.

"Australia believes that the focus for such a conference should be on the major elements of the work of the United Nations on the promotion and protection of human rights. It should provide the opportunity for a reaffirmation of the central importance of existing international standards, as well as a discussion on expanding and strengthening the infrastructure which already contributes to the promotion and protection of human rights. Consideration should also be given to changes and developments in the international environment and multilateral system as they affect human rights.

"A forum such as this should review progress since the previous world conference in the field of human rights and take stock of the effectiveness of existing multilateral human rights machinery.

"The conference should serve as an occasion and stimulus for the rapid expansion of the number of ratifications of existing instruments. It should review means of implementing the various instruments and, where necessary, propose enhanced and more effective monitoring and reporting procedures. The role of non-governmental organizations in promoting human rights should be discussed in this context.

"The conference should ensure that the United Nations allocates sufficient resources to all its human rights bodies to enable them to function at an increased level of effectiveness.

"Consideration should also be given to means of enhancing the human rights infrastructure through the expansion of programmes of training and advisory services, by encouraging Governments to avail themselves of assistance, through the active promotion of national and regional institutions, the protection and support for human rights defenders and through enhanced co-ordination with other United Nations bodies.

"Public information activities such as the teaching of human rights in schools, universities and colleges and the promotion of human rights in the workplace should be promoted through a forum such as this.

"Australia would look to a world conference to produce action-oriented proposals for the integration of human rights into strategies for development, peace and security. The conference agenda should take due account of indigenous peoples' rights and concerns.

"There should be effective preparation for the conference in order to ensure substantial outcomes. Preparations should include the establishment of a prepcom of manageable size. Australia would only support the use of the Commission for Human Rights as a prepcom if additional meeting time were allotted for that purpose.

"Opinions from non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, specialized agencies, as well as national and regional human rights institutions, should actively be sought in the preparatory phase for the evolution of an effective programme. Active participation by these bodies should also be encouraged."

AUSTRIA

The Government of Austria stated that, "25 years after the Tehran Conference, it would seem appropriate and useful to the Austrian Government to convene a World Conference on Human Rights under the auspices of the United Nations. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that such a conference can only be useful if there are sufficient prospects for its successful outcome and if the conference creates an impulse towards a world-wide improved protection of human rights. Such an impulse would be contingent on the subject to be dealt with by the conference as well as on its preparation. Consequently, given a positive decision, preparations should start immediately. Austria is prepared to participate actively in the preparations".

BOLIVIA

The Government of Bolivia stated that it "fully supports the convening of a world conference on human rights for the purpose of analysing the human rights situation in the world and considering and adopting measures to promote respect for those rights".

BYELORUSSIAN SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

The Government of the Byelorussian SSR stated that it "supported the idea of convening a world conference on human rights by becoming a sponsor of the corresponding draft resolution. Despite the progress achieved by the United Nations in the attainment of the established goal - promotion of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms - unsolved problems unfortunately still exist in this area and require the constant attention of the United Nations in the future. In view of the need both to make a detailed analysis of what has already been achieved during the implementation of the human rights programme and to determine what still remains to be done in the protection and promotion of human rights in the light of the new tasks which are emerging, the holding of such a conference before 1995 seems inappropriate".

CHAD

The Government of Chad submitted the following views:

"The international environment has been undergoing a significant transformation for several years. Improved East-West relations have created new opportunities to strengthen international peace and security. Thus there has never been a better time to devote special attention to human rights, without which international peace and security could not exist. A world conference on human rights would provide a timely opportunity to approach the question from a less politicized and less ideological perspective, and to highlight the importance of international co-operation in this field. It must be admitted that, despite the adoption of major international human rights instruments, implementation has proved hypothetical or short-lived in some regions of the world.

"This is the case, for example, in South Africa, where the Pretoria régime has constantly been violating human rights through its abject policy of apartheid. Similarly, since 1967 Israel has been committing flagrant violations of human rights in the occupied territories, and has stubbornly refused to apply the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Other aspects of the problem, including torture and mercenary activities, so widespread in certain parts of the world, could also be discussed.

"Chad recognizes the urgent need for a high-level world conference on human rights, which alone can ensure progress in the effective implementation of international norms for the protection of human rights - the source of peace, stability, economic progress and security - and, constantly desiring to improve the conditions of life, work, freedom, security and expression of its people, cannot but support this idea."

CUBA

The Government of Cuba submitted the following views:

"The Government of the Republic of Cuba attaches great importance to the initiative to convene a world conference on human rights for the purpose of dealing at the highest level with the crucial questions facing the United Nations in connection with the promotion and protection of human rights.

"The need for such an international conference is proven by the fact that genuine co-operation in the field of human rights is still a distant goal, for there persists, to an increasing extent, a dangerous tendency to politicize certain issues indiscriminately and, in the case of certain Western countries, to use human rights as tools to facilitate intervention in and attacks on developing countries. This must be stated in the clearest possible terms: the Government of Cuba is concerned that the question of human rights has been distorted from the positive and important issue which it could be into a tool to promote intervention in the internal affairs of States, a façade to conceal coercion and blackmail against sovereign countries or impose patterns and models which bear no relationship to the history and culture of our peoples.

"For Cuba, however, there can be no true enjoyment of human rights unless it goes hand in hand with the exercise of the right to life, work, shelter, education and the other economic, social and cultural rights which are the foundation for the spiritual enrichment of man, not to mention civil and political rights, including the right to self-determination and development as clearly laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Charter.

"The tragic plight of millions of inhabitants of the third world as a result of underdevelopment and the perpetuation of an unjust international economic order should guide the efforts of the United Nations in this field, and constitutes the difficult challenge which the Organization must confront and resolve. Never has the international community been more convinced that economic and social development and human rights are two complementary aspects of the same goal: the maintenance of peace and justice among nations which is the foundation for the freedom and well-being to which our peoples aspire. Accordingly, the international community must not tolerate attempts to divert its efforts from actions which are necessary in order to undo the evils of centuries of injustice and exploitation that have condemned more than one third of the world's population to hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy and premature death. To accept that would be tantamount to abjuring the *raison d'être* of the United Nations.

"Accordingly, the Government of the Republic of Cuba once again endorses the content and scope of General Assembly resolution 32/130 entitled 'Alternative approaches and ways and means within the United Nations system for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms', which recognizes the unified and indivisible nature of all human rights. The Government of Cuba also regrets that many of the principles

stated in that resolution have not yet been approached with the full measure of energy and objectivity required.

"The Government of Cuba therefore believes that future work within the United Nations system on human rights matters should focus primarily on the following points pursuant to General Assembly resolution 32/130:

- (a) All human rights and fundamental freedoms of the human person and of peoples are inalienable;
- (b) Consequently, human rights questions should be examined globally, taking into account both the overall context of the various societies in which they present themselves, as well as the need for the promotion of the full dignity of the human person and the development and well-being of the society;
- (c) In approaching human rights questions, the international community should accord, or continue to accord, priority to the search for solutions to the mass and flagrant violations of human rights of peoples and persons affected by situations such as those resulting from apartheid, from all forms of racial discrimination, from colonialism, from foreign domination and occupation, from aggression and threats against national sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity, as well as from the refusal to recognize the fundamental rights of peoples to self-determination and of every nation to the exercise of full sovereignty over its wealth and natural resources;
- (d) The realization of the new, equitable international order is an essential element for the effective promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms."

CYPRUS

The Government of Cyprus submitted the following views:

"The promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms has always been an important element of the foreign policy of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus since 1960, when Cyprus attained its independence.

"It is the Government's firm belief that respect for human rights is a necessary condition for the maintenance of international peace and security and that the promotion and protection of human rights should be pursued independently of any political or other considerations.

"It is within this spirit that the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, both in its bilateral and multilateral relations, follows a principled and independent human rights policy.

"What is more Cyprus, having experienced the tragic consequences of gross and systematic violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms of its people for the last 16 years, cannot but reiterate its conviction that the first and foremost task of the international community should be the effective protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

"It is for these reasons that the Government of the Republic of Cyprus supports the convening of a world conference on human rights for the purpose of dealing at the highest level with the crucial questions facing the United Nations in connection with the promotion and protection of human rights.

"Such a Conference would in particular examine ways and means of implementing the United Nations resolutions and decisions in the field of human rights and of improving the effectiveness of the human rights procedures and machinery entrusted with the promotion and protection of human rights."

ECUADOR

The Government of Ecuador stated that it "believes it desirable to convene a world conference on human rights to study and suggest measures to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as to contribute to the further development of international law in this area".

EGYPT

The Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt stated that it "supports the convening of an international conference on human rights under the auspices of the United Nations".

EL SALVADOR

The Government of El Salvador stated that it was "in agreement with the convening of a world conference on human rights in accordance with resolution 44/156".

ETHIOPIA

The Government of Ethiopia stated that "in view of the great importance it attaches to the protection and promotion of human rights, the Government of the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia supports, in principle, the convening of a world conference on human rights, which hopefully will have as one of its major objectives the enhancement of the role and effectiveness of the United Nations in the field of human rights, with strict adherence to widely recognized norms and principles of international law as enunciated in the Charter of the United Nations".

FIJI

The Government of Fiji expressed "its concurrence to the convening of a world conference on human rights".

IRAN (ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF)

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran communicated the following views:

"1. Concerning the fact that the Universal Declaration and international instruments of human rights were formulated without a balanced participation and a deserved share of the Islamic countries, it is necessary that the divergences of human rights in view of Islam with the provisions of international human rights be studied and be taken care of. For the same reason, many Islamic countries face difficulties in implementing some of the provisions of international organizations, for the proper discharge of their duties, to heed to the sublime values of Islam, which has over 1 billion believers throughout the world.

"2. Human rights issue should not serve as a political tool to exert pressure on any State. On the contrary, it should remain a purely humanitarian issue and be used to strengthen the human relations and amelioration of social standards.

"3. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran wishes to request that these points be reflected in the agenda of the conference."

IRELAND

The Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations Office at Geneva submitted the following views on behalf of the 12 member States of the European Community:

"The member States of the European Community would wish to emphasize at the outset their belief that any such conference (world conference on human rights) should take place on the basis of the established corpus of universally recognized principles in the field of human rights.

"The Twelve believe that the main human rights priority in the period ahead lies in ensuring the effective implementation in all countries of the human rights and fundamental freedoms already established in existing international instruments. The proposed world conference should concentrate on this. The conference could focus on the status of ratification, implementation and application of existing human rights instruments at the United Nations level; teaching and training in the field of human rights standards and their world-wide dissemination; creation and strengthening of regional human rights institutions; and strengthening of national human rights institutions and national infrastructure.

"In keeping with the focus on implementation, the conference should pay particular attention to ways of improving the effectiveness of United Nations human rights programmes, including by the strengthening of supervisory machinery, improving information and advisory programmes and ensuring the availability of the necessary financial and other resources. The conference could also consider further the question of the creation of the position of a high commissioner for human rights.

"As adequate preparation is essential to the success of a conference of the kind envisaged, the preparatory process should be organized in a manner likely to facilitate the emergence of specific recommendations across a range of issues aimed at promoting enhanced enjoyment of human rights on a world-wide basis. It should have provision for inputs of those with specialist knowledge or particular relevant experience. We believe that the chairmen of the treaty monitoring bodies, as well as special rapporteurs and working groups concerned with both thematic and country-specific issues have an important contribution to make in this regard.

"Active contribution by non-governmental organizations in the preparatory work and active participation by them at the conference itself would be an essential element in the Twelve's conception of this event."

MAURITIUS

The Government of Mauritius stated that it "welcomes the decision of the Commission on Human Rights to convene a world conference on human rights".

NEW ZEALAND

The Government of New Zealand stated that it "supports the proposal to convene a world conference on human rights. This support was demonstrated by New Zealand's co-sponsorship of (General Assembly) resolution 44/156 entitled 'World conference on human rights'. It is New Zealand's view that it would be appropriate for such a conference to be held in 1993, which would mark 25 years since the Tehran Conference. This would be an opportunity to review progress made since 1968, and to focus on what will be required of the international community to further the promotion and protection of human rights in the coming decades".

PANAMA

The Government of Panama submitted the following views:

"In this connection, I should like to inform you that, in our opinion, the proposal to hold a world conference on human rights should be carried out with the participation of all States. Major achievements could be made in this area in the interests of effective protection of human rights. Our country will offer its full support for the initiative.

"It should also be pointed out that respect for freedom, justice and peace throughout the world is based on recognition of the intrinsic dignity of the human rights of the international community. For this reason, we believe that there should be a concerted effort to ensure that the conference and similar events are held more frequently in order to promote respect for fundamental human freedoms. The results would be to the benefit of all States that have signed the International Covenants on Human Rights."

PARAGUAY

The Government of Paraguay stated that it "considers the convening of a world conference on human rights for the purpose of dealing at the highest level with the crucial questions facing the United Nations in connection with the promotion and protection of human rights to be of great interest for Paraguay. Forums of this kind are in fact very useful means of providing our country with more details about the functioning of the various bodies working on the promotion and protection of human rights and about the special committees established under the human rights covenants already recognized by Paraguay".

PHILIPPINES

The Government of the Philippines stated that it "welcomes the holding of a world conference on human rights, in order to address, and if possible thresh out, in a more restricted forum, the various human rights issues all over the world, and through international co-operation arrive at acceptable solutions and remedies, for the benefit of peoples in all nations, and the alleviation of the plight of victims of ever-increasing human rights violations".

POLAND

The Government of Poland submitted the following views:

"The Government of Poland firmly believes that it would be desirable to convene a world conference on human rights for the purpose of dealing at the highest level with the crucial questions facing the United Nations in connection with the promotion and protection of human rights.

"Poland, is nowadays deeply committed to the full and comprehensive implementation of the international instruments on human rights. It has adopted recently remarkable and important measures aimed at the improvement of the dignity of the human person, giving the force of treaty laws to provisions protecting the human rights as provided for in the International Covenants on Human Rights.

"The scope of recent developments that have taken place in Poland to ensure each citizen conditions enabling them to live in an atmosphere of freedom and dignity bears eloquent witness to the importance Poland attaches

to human rights issues and to United Nations endeavours for peace, security and better conditions for life in larger freedom.

"Notwithstanding the impressive progress that has been made in developing new international human rights instruments since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which first illuminated the organic tissue that weaves together peace, justice, freedom and human rights, there are still serious inadequacies in effectively and impartially guaranteeing the fundamental freedoms and human rights for everyone. The need to reflect upon the international community's achievements and the areas that remain open for progress, to consolidate the recent developments and assess new directions with respect both to machinery and to standards and priority areas, would be both timely and appropriate.

"Today, as we enter a new, far more encouraging era in international co-operation and a new search for international security and social development is taking place, the elaboration of a human rights programme that would deal with these crucial issues might bring an important and promising new contribution to these encouraging developments and to the challenges humanity is facing now, as well as those of the coming century.

"Poland firmly believes that the conference, offering a possibility for a global consultation on the position and approaches of different countries to human rights and fundamental freedoms - will inspire everyone to greater efforts for the promotion and protection of human rights, thereby strengthening the foundations of justice, peace and freedom in the world of the future. Poland is determined to give its utmost to ensure the success of the conference."

QATAR

The Government of Qatar stated that it "is in agreement with the convening of such a conference".

ROMANIA

The Government of Romania stated that it "regards as desirable the initiative to convene a world conference on human rights for the purpose of dealing at the highest level with the crucial questions of the promotion and protection of human rights in the modern world. In view of the great importance of such a conference, the Government of Romania believes that it should not be convened until after extensive preparatory consultations involving Member States and contributions by the international organizations concerned. For its part, the Government of Romania is ready to make a full contribution to the preparatory work for the meeting".

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines stated that it "does not consider a world conference on human rights a priority at this time, in the light of the general improvements in this area over the last decade".

SURINAME

The Government of Suriname stated that it supports the desirability of convening a world conference on human rights.

SWEDEN

The Government of Sweden submitted the following views:

"In view of recent important developments in the field of human rights, including the changes in Central and Eastern Europe and taking into account also the forthcoming enlargement of the Commission on Human Rights, the Swedish Government believes that it would be appropriate to convene a conference on human rights. Human rights have indeed become a major issue in international affairs.

"The basic standards of human rights and fundamental freedoms have been adopted by the international community. These rights and freedoms are of a universal character. It is, however, an undeniable fact that the concept of human rights is not understood in the same way all over the world. Neither are there uniform standards of application of human rights. Therefore, it would seem to be of importance to deepen the dialogue between Member States concerning human rights.

"One major task of a world conference should be to strengthen the implementation of the existing human rights instruments. It would seem natural that the conference review the progress made in the field of human rights and make an evaluation of the existing methods for the protection of human rights and make recommendations in this respect. The importance of inviting United Nations specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations to the conference should be stressed.

"In order to ensure a successful outcome of a world conference it should be carefully prepared. Taking into consideration other activities in this field, *inter alia*, in the framework of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, it would perhaps be suitable to convene a world conference on human rights not earlier than in 1994. Possible agenda items, venue of the conference, etc., could be subject to further consideration in the preparations for the conference. Taking into account the financial implications, it would seem appropriate to convene the conference at Geneva, but other alternatives and recommendations can be considered."

SWITZERLAND

The Government of Switzerland submitted the following views:

"Since its establishment, the United Nations has worked steadily towards the goal it has set for itself, namely, promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The General Assembly has produced a number of international instruments covering the various aspects of human rights. It is heartening to note that by ratifying these instruments a growing number of States have committed themselves at the international level to respecting those rights and freedoms.

"In the opinion of Switzerland, however, the real situation of human rights in the world does not yet correspond to the undertakings given and the efforts made by many States to implement human rights and guarantee fundamental freedoms. The mechanisms for monitoring and promotion are insufficiently developed and too unco-ordinated to contribute satisfactorily to greater respect for human rights.

"The problem of the unsatisfactory implementation of the existing standards is one of the crucial questions in this field. A world conference on human rights could be useful if its task was to consider in depth the question of an increased contribution by the United Nations system to improved implementation of the existing standards. This would involve, among other things, developing and co-ordinating the existing monitoring machinery with a view to making it more effective, and discussing the possibilities of intensifying efforts towards dissemination and promotion.

"Switzerland considers, accordingly, that if there is to be a world conference on human rights, its main task should be to enhance the implementation of the existing standards, not to draw up new ones."

TUNISIA

The Government of Tunisia submitted the following views:

"As a participant in the consensus on General Assembly resolution 44/156, entitled 'World conference on human rights', Tunisia cannot but reiterate its agreement in principle as to the importance of holding the conference. Tunisia attaches particular importance to the promotion and protection of human rights at the international level, and is unflagging in its efforts to strengthen and consolidate these rights at the national level. In this connection, it is Tunisia's view that the success of the conference will largely depend on the priorities that will be set for the next few decades and on an effort to achieve greater effectiveness for the means and mechanisms already set in motion in regard to human rights.

"Certain questions of special and immediate importance should receive increased attention from the international community, such as the right to sufficient food and an adequate standard of living, the right to housing and the right to a healthy and balanced environment.

"Thus, in order to establish the appropriate conditions for the success of the conference, the preparatory activities should in the main be based on the widest possible consultations, with the aim of defining and identifying those fields which have not so far been given the necessary importance, reviewing the achievements of the United Nations in regard to human rights and drawing up a strategy for work in the years to come. An objective approach to all these considerations should essentially take into account the development of present trends, but also, and above all, the higher interest of mankind and human welfare."

TURKEY

The Government of Turkey submitted the following views:

"The Turkish Government is committed to pursue the steady and irreversible progress towards highest standards in the field of democracy and human rights. It believes in the merits of achieving international co-operation in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights. In this context, the Turkish Government supports international efforts to promote human rights, including the idea of convening a world conference on human rights for the purpose of discussing the activities of the United Nations in the field of human rights. Taking into account the progress achieved in this field and the recent positive developments in different parts of the world, the Turkish Government is of the opinion that such a conference may provide a good opportunity to reiterate the commitment of the international community to human rights, as an essential element of the international order.

"The Turkish Government intends to participate actively in the proposed conference as well as in its preparatory work. The Turkish Government believes that the venue and the agenda of the conference must be very carefully determined. Moreover, activities of the Council of Europe and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe should be kept in sight while preparing the agenda and choosing the date of the conference."

ZAIRE

The Government of Zaire submitted the following views:

"The Executive Council considers, first of all, that the time is ripe for holding such a world conference on human rights. Two reasons argue in favour of the conference.

"There is first the fact that about four years ago, States, including the Republic of Zaire, took firm action to promote respect for human rights by setting up special mechanisms for the defence and protection of those rights. There is also, and above all, the wind of political reform - let us call it the wind of 'perestroika' - that has been blowing since the end of last year, not only in the countries of Eastern Europe, dominated hitherto by one party, but also in the countries of the third world, African countries in particular. As far as Zaire is concerned - and this may apply to many African countries affected by 'perestroika' - the fact that the determination to engage in the defence and protection of human rights coincides with the determination to set in motion a thorough-going reform of political institutions through the introduction of a multi-party system will inevitably make it necessary to draw up a kind of inventory of the practical tasks that must be accomplished in order to realize, on the ground, all the aspirations of the people.

"The Executive Council of the Republic of Zaire is of the view that the world conference on human rights would provide a suitable opportunity or forum for such an inventory of the means that will, in the new liberal context, need to be employed to ensure the promotion of human rights. Drawing on its experience with the Department of Citizens' Rights and Freedoms, the Executive Council of the Republic of Zaire believes that a world conference on human rights would be the proper occasion for discussing the point which it considers the most essential as regards human rights, namely, how to finance human rights activities in the field.

"The Executive Council is convinced that the human rights situation throughout the world cannot be improved by criticism - no matter how useful - or by lengthy reports and so forth, but only by concrete material and financial co-operation. If that point is accepted, it is high time that the terms of such effective co-operation should be discussed at the kind of meeting proposed by General Assembly resolution 44/156. The desirability of holding a world conference on human rights is demonstrated not only by the quasi-embryonic nature of the 'advisory services and technical assistance in the field of human rights' (cf. 'Fortieth Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948-1988', fact sheet No. 3), but still more by the slender proportion of the United Nations budget (less than 1 per cent) devoted to human rights."

III. VIEWS SUBMITTED BY SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) stated that it supports "in principle the convening of a world conference on human rights. We trust that full consultation, in particular of the specialized agencies concerned, will be ensured in the preparation and adoption of the agenda of such a conference. It is also hoped that the specialized agencies will be able to contribute actively and participate in the presentation and discussion of questions falling within their areas of concern".

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) submitted the following views:

"There is general agreement that human rights issues are of fundamental importance to all nations. A properly timed and carefully prepared world conference on human rights could contribute to increasing awareness of major issues (e.g., on refugees) and give an impetus to furthering the application of human rights standards to all. The idea of a world conference is therefore welcome. The preparation of such a conference should take into account earlier work and build upon earlier declarations of international principles, policy sets and strategies, such as, in FAO's purview, the Food Security Compact, the Plan of Action for Integration of Women in Development, the Principles adopted by the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD), those principles and resolutions to be produced by the International Conference on Nutrition (ICN), etc.

"Our immediate concern regarding human rights is combating hunger and alleviating poverty, and taking care of human resources development, which are central to the international development strategy. We also feel that the world conference on human rights should pay due regard to these aspects and focus on translating the entire set of human rights into practical instruments and concentrate on the design of practical means for attaining human rights. One of the important means of enabling people to assert their rights is people's participation, which therefore merits particular attention."

THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) stated that "the Director-General considers that the organization of such a conference would indeed be timely and desirable. Having regard to the scope of the commitment of UNESCO to the protection and promotion of human rights, our contribution to the conference could cover the following subjects:

"(a) The procedure adopted by the Executive Board for the examination of cases and questions submitted to UNESCO concerning violations of human rights in the spheres of its competence;

"(b) Human rights teaching, information and documentation;

"(c) Protection of human rights of specific social or professional categories (women, scientists, artists, etc.);

"(d) Apartheid".

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

The World Health Organization (WHO) stated that it had carefully considered the request for views on the convening of a world conference. "mindful in particular of the fact that WHO, in accordance with its Constitution, has long asserted the principle that health is a fundamental human right. In his statement to the forty-third World Health Assembly on 8 May 1990, the Director-General said:

"As we enter the decade of the 1990s, human rights, social justice and ethical issues will become more and more important. Human rights in health and medicine must be seen within the wider framework of basic human rights, for the rights of the patient are the rights of man. They involve three related issues: freedom of expression and the right to be informed; respect for the integrity of the individual, including freedom to decide; and prohibition of discrimination of any kind. In the 1990s, I intend to emphasize the human rights aspects of health in all our programme activities.

"We are encouraged that the issue of human rights has come to the forefront of international attention during the past several months. Should the majority of other organizations and institutions of the United Nations system wish to support the initiative, we would be willing to join forces for its success."

THE WORLD BANK

The World Bank stated that "the Bank's basic objective is the economic development of its developing members, including the reduction of poverty. The Bank is thus engaged in helping in the satisfaction of basic social and economic human rights and would be pleased to consider participating in the proposed conference, should it be convened".

IV. VIEWS SUBMITTED BY UNITED NATIONS ORGANS AND BODIES

CENTRE AGAINST APARTHEID

The Centre Against Apartheid stated that "under the prevailing circumstances in the world and the present political climate, the role of the United Nations in the protection of human rights is acquiring increasing importance. As part of the Secretariat, the Centre Against Apartheid cannot but strongly support the holding of a world conference on human rights".

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

At its forty-sixth session, the Commission on Human Rights adopted decision 1990/110, in which it decided, without a vote, that it would be desirable to convene a world conference on human rights for the purpose of dealing at the highest level with the crucial questions facing the United Nations in connection with the promotion and protection of human rights.

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

The Human Rights Committee "was of the view that convening a world conference on human rights could be helpful not only in promoting human rights but also in generating additional resources for the protection of human rights. It could also serve as an important forum for discussing persistent violations of human rights and provide a possibility for applying pressure to certain offending régimes".

COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

The following views were submitted on behalf of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women:

"Need for a world conference

"The value of a world conference on human rights would be to ensure that the world community is informed of the extent of the hardship now endured by many people because their basic human rights have not been met, and of the need for international co-operation to improve the situation. Such a conference should emphasize that human rights are a global concern.

"Alongside widespread abuse of power and denial of rights, poverty and deprivation continue to affect millions of people. In addition to causing misery, death and disease, poverty contributes to environmental damage as States exploit finite natural resources in an effort to provide people with basic standards of living and to meet crippling burdens of debt. These are matters which demand the attention of all States and peoples.

"Importance of women's rights

"The impact of poverty and deprivation is especially severe on women and children. Women throughout the world have responsibility for food production, for child care and health. Their education and economic independence is a vital link in maintaining standards of living. Nevertheless, as a result of widespread discrimination, women do not enjoy equal opportunities in education, training and employment. Nor do they have an equal opportunity to participate in development. This discrimination helps to perpetuate poverty and deprivation.

"Both poverty and armed conflict have resulted in many women becoming refugees or forced migrants, subject to further exploitation and deprivation. International action is needed to protect women from this kind of oppression.

"The underrepresentation of women in decision-making roles in national and international institutions contributes to a distortion of priorities in the field of human rights. In history, women have often been the victims of human rights abuse, seldom the perpetrators. These issues which affect millions of women should be given high priority in any human rights agenda.

"Key human rights issues:

"Significant human issues which could be included in an agenda for a world conference are the following:

"(a) Economic, social and cultural rights: the need for international co-operation to make these rights a reality, and to establish a proper balance between these rights and environmental protection;

"(b) Equality of women: the need to involve women as policy makers at international and national level, to ensure appropriate priority in dealing with human rights issues;

"(c) Poverty, and the need for international co-operation and appropriate development to ensure that basic standards in food, shelter and health care are met for all people;

"(d) Education and training of women to ensure that their abilities are used to the full in combating poverty and to ensure their full participation in development;

"(e) Employment opportunities, social security and economic independence for women.

"Supervisory machinery

"Effective international machinery is necessary to identify human rights problems and to provide advice and assistance to States in resolving these problems. The supervisory machinery and the reporting processes under the

different United Nations conventions need to be strengthened and made more effective in line with recent proposals. Appropriate co-operation between the supervisory bodies should be encouraged. In particular, the relationship between the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and other supervisory bodies should be strengthened.

"It would assist States in fulfilling their obligations under human rights conventions if the reporting processes could be rationalized to avoid duplication of effort, both on the part of States and on the part of the treaty bodies and their secretariats. For example, all basic information, statistics, etc. should be readily available through a central system.

"Role of non-governmental organizations"

"A world conference would be a suitable opportunity to consider ways of enhancing the role of non-governmental organizations in the human rights system. Their work in identifying issues and drawing them to the attention of supervisory bodies has already been of great assistance and should be given further recognition."

MEETING OF CHAIRPERSONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY BODIES

The 3rd meeting of chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies, held at Geneva from 1 to 5 October 1990, included the following comment in its report to the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session:

"The proposed world conference on human rights, if adequately prepared, could make a major contribution to furthering the overall objectives of the United Nations in the human rights field. The work of the treaty bodies should be fully reflected in the agenda, the preparation of which should be done in consultation with those bodies as far as possible. A detailed evaluation of the work of each of the treaty bodies should be prepared by individual experts as part of the background documentation for the conference."

SUB-COMMISSION ON PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND PROTECTION
OF MINORITIES

At its forty-second session, the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities adopted, on 30 August 1990, its decision 1990/144, in which it decided to submit document E/CN.4/Sub.2/1990/NGO/3 to the Secretary-General to be studied within the framework of the definition of objectives and modalities of a world conference on human rights. The relevant part of that document is reproduced below:

"Guidelines for the world conference on human rights

"1. The conference should be convened in 1993, if possible, and in a country that has recently made substantial progress in the achievement of human rights and development.

"2. The conference should aim at producing concrete recommendations for improving the effectiveness of United Nations activities in the field of human rights, including proposals for new institutional and financial arrangements.

"3. The theme of the conference should be: 'New challenges for human rights in the twenty-first century'.

"4. The specific objectives of the conference should include:

"(a) A thorough interdisciplinary evaluation of the effectiveness of existing multilateral mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights;

"(b) Formulation of proposals for new implementation mechanisms, with particular attention to the future operational aspects of the United Nations human rights programme;

"(c) Anticipation of the future personnel and financial needs of the United Nations human rights programme, and ascertaining the best means of meeting these needs fully;

"(d) Identification of innovative ways of improving co-ordination within the United Nations system in the field of human rights, in particular through linkages among programmes in the fields of development, peace, and the environment; and

"(e) Implementation of the recommendations of the Global Consultation on the Right to Development as a Human Right (E/CN.4/1990/9).

"5. The Economic and Social Council should serve as the preparatory committee for the conference and should establish an in-session working group for this purpose. The chairmen of the Commission on Human Rights, the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, and the human rights treaty bodies should be invited to participate in all preparatory meetings.

"6. In preparation for the conference, the Secretary-General should:

"(a) Invite widely recognized independent experts from different academic disciplines and different political, economic and cultural systems to prepare studies and recommendations on the objectives of the conference, to be completed and distributed to the Commission on Human Rights, the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, and the human rights treaty bodies prior to the forty-seventh session of the Commission;

"(b) Convene a preparatory conference of recognized experts in the fields of law, development planning, social development and related fields, as well as governmental and non-governmental representatives, to consider and report on problems and opportunities for the future of the United Nations human rights programme;

"(c) Organize a formal consultation of professional staff from the United Nations programmes concerned with human rights, development and the environment, as well as appropriate specialized agencies, with the aim of preparing proposals for consideration by the conference.

"7. Preparations should begin at least two years in advance of the conference and should be co-ordinated by the Centre for Human Rights.

"8. Non-governmental organizations should be encouraged to submit concrete written proposals to the Economic and Social Council as part of the preparatory process for the conference, and should be invited to attend both the preparatory meetings and the conference itself, as observers.

"9. Governments and non-governmental organizations should be urged to conduct national-level consultations with the widest possible spectrum of grass-roots constituencies, such as women, youth, industrial and rural workers, indigenous peoples, and particularly vulnerable or disadvantaged groups, and to summarize these consultations in written reports to the conference."

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) stated that its "involvement in the question of human rights principally comes through the operational support to be provided for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Should the General Assembly choose to launch such a conference, it would be our hope that this Convention would be an important focus, and that countries would come to the Conference with specific country level action plans for the implementation of this Convention. In this regard our experience is that such preparatory efforts, if they are to be meaningful, require country, regional and thematic preparatory processes drawing upon a broad range of expertise and social groups. In short, such a conference should be more of a process than a meeting. Naturally, the same applies to the follow-up of any such conference".

UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) stated that it "wishes to lend its full support to this proposal and agrees that it would be an appropriate time to conduct a review of what has been accomplished through the human rights programme, to identify areas for further progress and to focus international attention on human rights concerns at the highest level. Human rights considerations are directly relevant across the spectrum of the refugee problem from causes of exodus, to treatment in countries of asylum and realizing

durable solutions. A world human rights conference could therefore be of direct benefit to us in our work on behalf of refugees. We would hope that refugee concerns would find an appropriate place in the Conference agenda".

V. VIEWS SUBMITTED BY NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN
CONSULTATIVE STATUS*

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Amnesty International stated that it:

"Attaches the highest importance to the United Nations work in promoting respect for human rights. We would like to raise a number of points that may be of use in identifying the objectives of the proposed Conference.

"Amnesty International believes that one of the challenges before the international community today is to ensure the effective implementation of the body of international human rights standards which the United Nations has elaborated, in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international covenants on human rights. It is a matter of concern to us that over one third of Member States have yet to ratify or accede to the international covenants, although they were adopted, without a vote, by the General Assembly almost 25 years ago. We therefore believe that an international conference on human rights should provide a practical forum to discuss how to attain universal ratification of the international covenants and other important human rights instruments. It should also look at ways to improve the implementation of international standards, including the work of treaty monitoring bodies and the means by which the United Nations can further its own work for the protection of victims.

"With such an agenda in mind, Amnesty International considers an international conference should utilize the knowledge and experience the United Nations has gained to date in examining these questions. The Commission on Human Rights and its subsidiary body, the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities, both have an important role to play in seeking the promotion of respect for human rights and the protection of the victims of human rights violations. For example, the Commission has for a number of years appointed special rapporteurs and representatives to look at particular situations where human rights are violated, and also at the scope and extent of practices which amount to serious abuses. Amnesty International considers an international conference could usefully examine the experiences of these procedures, with a view to considering how they may be improved and strengthened."

* The full text of the replies are available for consultation with the Secretariat.

Amnesty International also stated that the recommendations of meetings of chairpersons of treaty monitoring bodies and the study of the independent expert on long-term approaches to the effective implementation of human rights instruments "would provide suitable material on which to base a discussion of ways in which the implementation of international standards could be improved".

Amnesty International also stated that consideration could be given to an examination and evaluation of the current effectiveness of the programme of advisory services and technical assistance in the field of human rights in meeting its objectives. To facilitate discussion:

"Amnesty international recommends that any such international conference should be structured in such a way as to enable persons with expertise in the respective fields to take part in in-depth discussions. These would need to include government officials most integrally involved in human rights promotion and protection, independent experts, members of all the United Nations departments involved in this field, United Nations specialized agencies and other intergovernmental organizations. In addition, we believe that it would be essential for non-governmental organizations working on human rights issues to be able to participate actively and fully in any such conference.

"Finally, ... we would urge most strongly that the extensive preparations required for such a conference should not rely on existing resources, which are needed for the United Nations to carry out its current human rights activities."

COMMISSION OF THE CHURCHES ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs stated that it "considers it important for the United Nations to look afresh at the issues and challenges in the area of human rights. Such a meeting should review both shifts in global concepts of human rights definition and practice, and the mechanisms by which United Nations bodies review and act on particular issues and situations. Therefore, we welcome the proposal for such a meeting and would support actions towards such a goal, assuring also full and appropriate participation by non-governmental organizations".

FOUR DIRECTIONS COUNCIL

The Four Directions Council submitted a memorandum of its views, in which it reviewed the development of the United Nations human rights programme, including its structure, its cost, the available resources and the need for a greater integration of human rights into development activities. The Four Directions Council stated that:

"In view of the growing demands made on the human rights programme, the new challenges and obstacles it will face in the next century, and the unresolved problem of financial resources, there is an urgent need to identify

and strengthen its most effective activities, and to consider possible alternatives.

"To be effective, an evaluation and consideration of alternatives must be based on thorough study of the existing programme, provide adequate time and resources for the formulation of detailed proposals, and seek a genuine consensus among Member States. A global conference, with at least two years of preparatory work, would meet these criteria far better than the use of in-session working groups of the Commission on Human Rights.

"We believe that the specific objectives of such a conference would be:

"(a) A thorough interdisciplinary evaluation of the effectiveness of existing multilateral mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights;

"(b) Formulating proposals for new implementation mechanisms, with particular attention to the potential future operational aspects of the human rights programme, in the light of the report of the Global Consultation on the Right to Development (E/CN.4/1990/9);

"(c) Anticipating the programme's future staffing and financial needs, and agreeing on the best means to meet those needs fully;

"(d) Identifying ways of improving linkages between the human rights programme and United Nations activities in the fields of development, peace, and the environment.

"We further believe that the preparatory process should emphasize the preparation of rigorous analytical studies by social scientists, as opposed to legal studies. This should include a number of individual research mandates, as well as at least one technical review conference involving governmental and non-governmental experts, well in advance of the world conference itself.

"We also suggest that the Economic and Social Council itself serve as the preparatory committee, with the chairs of the human rights supervisory bodies participating ex officio, to maximize co-ordination and minimize preparatory costs.

"In conclusion, then, we regard the proposal for a world conference on human rights as timely and, if the conference is properly aimed at the challenge of redesigning the human rights programmes for the future, potentially useful. However, we would view a largely academic or legal conference, or one that lacks substantial technical preparation, as an inefficient use of the United Nations limited resources."

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE DEFENSE OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

The International Association for the Defense of Religious Liberty stated that it "earnestly hopes that a conference of this kind will be organized. Despite the important results that the various United Nations bodies have achieved in the promotion and protection of human rights, millions of people are still prevented from enjoying all their fundamental rights and freedoms. If we truly wish to build a world of peace and justice, there must be education about the fundamental rights and freedoms that must be respected in practice. A world conference would make it possible to draw the attention of Governments, and also of the media and public opinion, to the vital importance of respect for human rights. It could also draw attention to the progress that still needs to be made in particular areas - including that of the right to freedom of opinion, conscience and religion - areas where the preparation of international instruments is required. In the last few years, we have witnessed manifestations of religious fanaticism that grow worse every day. This fanaticism challenges not only the right to freedom of opinion and religion, but also a whole series of other fundamental rights and freedoms".

The Association further stated that "the proposed world conference could provide an opportunity for dealing with this crucial question and for taking a stand on behalf of effective and universal respect for that freedom, which is at the origin of all other freedoms, and is the foundation on which true democracy rests".

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PENAL LAW

The International Association of Penal Law submitted a draft programme for a world conference on human rights containing the following main themes: self-determination and minority rights; protection of fundamental human rights through international criminal law; the human right to development; the human right to a clean environment; State responsibility for human rights violations, the effectiveness of regional human rights implementation and assessment; protection against discrimination; the protection of children; protection of the rights of the mentally ill; access to justice for the protection of human rights; human rights education; and human rights and the mass media.

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF JEWISH WOMEN

The International Council of Jewish Women stated that, in their view such a world conference on human rights could be useful, "providing it is not a mere replica of the Commission on Human Rights, in both its framework and agenda.

"(a) As for the framework, we believe it should indeed be that of a conference at the highest level. However, we would suggest it to start with an analytical session, in which internationally renowned human rights' Experts would expose their views on the more important questions facing the United Nations today concerning human rights. Those Experts should not only be jurists, but sociologists, historians and political scientists as well, in order to provide a multidisciplinary approach to the subject of the conference.

"(b) With relation to the agenda, we think it should not deal with specific country situations since this is already done in the Commission on Human Rights. The question of implementation and of the ways and means of improving existing human rights' mechanisms should be given priority, as well as that of defining the new challenges lying ahead, as mentioned in General Assembly resolution 44/156.

"Finally, we trust that the non-governmental organizations will be invited to make a significant output in this important manifestation."

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC MIGRATION COMMISSION

The International Catholic Migration Commission stated that it: "regards the holding of a world conference on human rights envisaged by the United Nations General Assembly as very desirable".

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions stated that it:

"Would welcome the holding of such a conference as it would certainly further promote the application of human rights as enshrined in the International Bill of Human Rights. We consider it most timely to take stock of achievements and continued failures. However, such a conference could be confronted with an agenda reflecting the vast variety of rights, as well as a vast variety of contexts and philosophies. The outcome, therefore, may not be optimal. We believe that the conference and its organizing organ must have a clear mandate and a precise agenda. We would favour a conference on human rights to focus on selected particular areas of problems.

"As an international trade union organization, we are involved on a daily basis in human and trade union rights. Individually and collectively, workers and trade unionists are under attack, often persecuted, imprisoned or killed. Given that the largest part of any population consists of people whose livelihood depends on remunerative work and given that it is they and their freely chosen organizations who represent the most important factor in society for economic and social progress and security, we strongly recommend to include freedom of association and trade union rights in the crucial questions to be dealt with at the highest level at the proposed world conference. I enclose a copy of our recent publication 'Survey of violations of Trade Union Rights' by way of background information."

CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT INTERNATIONAL

The Christian Democrat International stated that the convening of a world conference on human rights:

"Seems to us highly desirable and has our firm support. Our participation is guaranteed.

"We consider that the conference should include among its objectives the following:

(a) To draw up a balance sheet of what has been accomplished so far as regards standard-setting and practical implementation. To indicate clearly those areas where the work of the United Nations is inadequate or insufficient;

(b) To review the whole range of declarations, resolutions, covenants, agreements and other instruments of the United Nations system, with a view to bringing them up to date and suggesting areas where they should be supplemented or revised;

(c) To establish specific goals and set a timetable for achieving them within a reasonable period of time (a programme for the next 10 years would be desirable), in accordance with priorities to be established not only on the basis of the urgency or magnitude of the problem, but also on the basis of the multiplier effect that possible measures might have."

The Christian Democrat International mentioned the following areas of particular concern to them: minors, protection of minorities, elimination of discrimination, protection of journalists, right of asylum and protection of refugees, combating doctrines and practices of imperialism, colonialism and interventionism, guarantees for multi-party democracy, right to development, terrorism, establishing rules preventing the manipulation of non-governmental organizations for political reasons and the establishment of a high commissioner for human rights.

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION TERRE DES HOMMES

The International Federation Terre des Hommes stated that "respect for human rights is the foundation of all democratic nations seeking to establish a system of social justice. Human rights are also one of the foundations of the United Nations and should therefore be discussed at the highest level. The Federation agrees with the statement in the preamble to General Assembly resolution 44/156 that there are still areas in which further progress needs to be made. It also hopes that the future international conference on human rights will devote equal attention to civil and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights, and the right to development".

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF HUMANITARIAN LAW

The International Institute of Humanitarian Law stated that it "is much in favour of the organization of this conference because the events which occurred in particular this year in the world confirm the necessity of such a conference. We do hope that the non-governmental organization system will be actively involved in

this conference and our Institute also wishes to prepare a small contribution concerning our activities in the promotion, dissemination and teaching of human rights at the national and international level".

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF FREEDOM OF EDUCATION

The International Organization for the Development of Freedom of Education stated:

"Our Organization considers it highly important that this meeting, which would make it possible to work more specifically for the defence and promotion of human rights, should be convened. I can assure you of the Organization's readiness to co-operate closely with the Centre for Human Rights in the work of the conference.

"In our view, the conference should be attended by Governments, non-governmental organizations and academic experts on human rights. Two general topics strike us as being particularly important: the interdependence between civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights, and the universal nature of human rights. The recent political changes in Eastern Europe should make it possible to hold a real debate and achieve substantial agreements on these fundamental points, far removed from yesterday's ideological prejudices."

PLANETARY CITIZENS

Planetary Citizens stated:

"The Organization firmly believes in the necessity to deal with crucial human rights issues at the highest level, and that a "world conference", with adequate preparation, and with high-level representation, could make a significant contribution to the advancement of human rights at a time when new freedoms and their exercise are being sought, and when many of the most fundamental human rights continue to be flagrantly violated.

"The Organization further believes it is more than ever necessary to reaffirm that both civil and political rights, and economic, social and cultural rights are of equal significance, importance and value."

PRISON FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

Prison Fellowship International stated it concurred "in the desirability of convening a world conference on the vital questions of human rights, and we urge that such a conference have on its agenda the status of prisoners and criminal justice systems in respect to those matters. At the same time, because of the religious principles that undergird our work, we urge that the conference also

attend to the critical questions of religious freedom in all societies. Religious freedom is itself essential to human dignities and rights, such that the restriction or erosion of religious freedom is in fact a kind of oppression and imprisonment of the human spirit".

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL

Soroptimist International stated it "would support the proposal and would define 1996 as being an appropriate target date, in order that such a Conference may have before it the outcome of the 1992 World Conference on Environment and Development, with its relevance to the right to development, any proposals arising from the activities related to 1994 as the International Year of the Family, and 1995, with its emphasis on women and the further review of women's concerns based on the Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women".

WORLD ASSOCIATION FOR WORLD FEDERATION

The World Association for World Federation stated:

"We believe that a well-prepared world conference on human rights would be a major contribution to the international law decade. We also believe that non-governmental organizations can make a real contribution to such a conference and should be involved both in the preparation and in the Conference itself. We think that a special effort should be made to involve legal and bar associations which do not usually participate as non-governmental organizations in the work of the Commission on Human Rights, the Sub-Commission and the Treaty bodies.

"We believe that regional human rights bodies such as the European and Inter-American should be asked to participate both in planning and in the Conference. Special efforts should be made to have law students from a wide number of Law schools be able to monitor the Conference."

WORLD CONFEDERATION OF LABOUR

The World Confederation of Labour expressed its support for the world conference and submitted the following views:

1. Need to pursue the promotion and protection of human rights

...

The human rights situation has undoubtedly improved in the last few years, which is heartening. In reviewing the situation, however, the world conference on human rights should take care not to lose sight of the need to

pursue the promotion and protection of human rights, in spite of the generally satisfactory situation.

...

Today more than ever it is necessary that all Member States should ratify and implement all the international instruments relating to human rights. Unfortunately, most of the permanent members of the Security Council have not ratified these instruments - far from it. This leads many developing countries to say that the human rights issue is being used by the great Powers to destabilize the countries of the South.

"2. Promotion and defence of social, economic and cultural rights

In evaluating activities for the defence and promotion of human rights, the conference will certainly not fail to note that, so far, the United Nations and its Member States have emphasized, and concentrated their efforts on, the protection and promotion of civil and political rights. Given the widespread and repeated flagrant violations of these rights, this could not be otherwise.

Nevertheless, the World Confederation of Labour notes - as the conference will certainly not fail to do - that it is not only a matter of great importance, but at the present time a matter of urgency to promote and defend social, economic and cultural rights, without which civil and political rights cannot be guaranteed.

...

It seems to us essential that a conference of this kind should give the United Nations system the means necessary for the real and concrete implementation of these rights and for the establishment of monitoring mechanisms, and should see to it that the structures of the United Nations system do not transmit policies that are harmful to respect for and implementation of these rights.

"3. Participation of non-governmental organizations

In order that the conference may be representative of the real world, we strongly urge that those men and women who are actors and agents in the defence and promotion of human rights should be able to take part in it.

Such participation should be a factor not only during the actual conference, but also throughout the preparatory phase, whether at the national or the international level. We are in favour of the widest possible participation by non-governmental organizations at all preparatory levels, including trade-union organizations, churches, federations of teachers,

/...

lecturers and the like, as well as women and representatives of minority groups.

The United Nations might suggest to Member States that they should include in their delegations representatives of non-governmental organizations, as well as women and spokespersons for minority groups."

WORLD MOVEMENT OF MOTHERS

The World Movement of Mothers stated that:

"It is our considered opinion that a world conference is one of the least effective ways of promoting the cause of human rights. The usual procedure in world conferences, as evidenced on too many occasions during the past several decades, is for certain countries to denounce and condemn others in a 'holier than thou' exercise, usually totally unjustified, since many of the accusers are themselves far more at fault than those they condemn.

"The International Year of the Child in 1979 was a success with real effect on public opinion in most countries precisely because there was no world conference. World conferences represent irresistible temptations to too many Governments to denounce, declaim, condemn (and thereby appear on the side of the angels themselves).

"If there must be conferences, and if the United Nations sincerely desires progress and not mere politicizing, then limited regional conferences among nations whose problems are alike, and which can, therefore, conceivably benefit from discussing these together in a climate of mutual trust instead of one of sadly motivated prejudice, might actually bear fruit. The United Nations might really further the cause of human rights on a practical level instead of spending a good deal of money on providing a tribune for vain and self-justifying speeches. Moreover, evaluation and follow-up to such limited regional conferences would be both easier and more efficient."
