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HUMAN RIGHTS AND SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Report of the Secretary-General

1. In resolution 2721 (XXV), entitled "Human rights and scientific and technological developments", adopted at its 1930th plenary meeting, on 15 December 1970, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to study the problems relating to human rights as they arise from developments in science and technology, as provided in paragraph 1 of General Assembly resolution 2450 (XXIII); and requested the Commission on Human Rights at its twenty-seventh session to give priority to the examination of the preliminary report on human rights and scientific and technological developments (E/CN.4/1028 and Add.1 and 2, Add.3 and Corr.1, Add.4 and 5) prepared by the Secretary-General in accordance with paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 2450 (XXIII), as supplemented by such further information as may be made available to it, including the preliminary memorandum submitted by the World Health Organization on health aspects of human rights and scientific and technological developments, (A/8055/Add.1) and to transmit to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, its suggestions and recommendations for the attainment of the objectives of resolution 2450 (XXIII). The Assembly decided to give priority to the consideration of this item at its twenty-sixth session.

2. At its twenty-seventh session, the Commission on Human Rights considered the preliminary report of the Secretary-General, including a further addendum (E/CN.4/1028, Add.1-3, Add.3/Corr.1 and Add.4-6), the preliminary memorandum of the World Health Organization (A/8055/Add.1), and a working paper by the

Secretary-General on the draft programme of work arising out of his preliminary report (E/CN.4/XXVII/CRP.2). A statement relating to this agenda item was submitted by the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations (E/CN.4/NGO/159).

3. In resolution 10 (XXVII) of 18 March 1971, the Commission expressed the view that each State should, individually and through international co-operation with due regard to the principles of inviolability, sovereignty and equality of States, make use of scientific and technological developments to promote the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms as fully as possible; and that problems of protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms in the context of scientific and technological progress should be tackled at the national and international levels in accordance with the principles underlying the structure of the State and society, specific economic and social conditions, and cultural tradition. The Commission recognized the need during the Second United Nations Development Decade to concentrate its attention on the most important and basic problems of protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms in the context of scientific and technological progress, and in particular on: (a) protection of human rights in the economic, social and cultural fields in accordance with the structure and resources of States and the scientific and technological level they have reached, as well as protection of the right to work in conditions of the automation and mechanization of production; (b) the use of scientific and technological developments to foster respect for human rights and the legitimate interests of other peoples and respect for generally recognized moral standards and standards of international law; and (c) prevention of the use of scientific and technological achievements to restrict fundamental democratic rights and freedoms.

4. The Commission requested the Secretary-General to continue his study of the consequences, for the observance of human rights, of current developments in science and technology, taking into account also the possibility of using them to improve living conditions and the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. It requested Governments to submit to the Secretary-General any material they might have on problems arising in connexion with the protection of human rights within the context of scientific and technological progress, including information on the problems mentioned above, and on the development of legislation, court decisions and national practice and any projects they have in view in connexion with the matters

dealt with in the resolution. It requested the International Labour Organisation, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Health Organization, the other specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency to submit to the Commission, through the Secretary-General, a report on the above problems in relation to those human rights which fall within their competence; requested other intergovernmental organizations, especially regional organizations, to transmit to the Secretary-General their comments and observations on these problems; and requested the non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council to transmit to the Secretary-General any communications they consider relevant to these problems.

5. The Commission further requested the Secretary-General, bearing in mind the information received from Governments and in the light of the discussions at the twenty-seventh session of the Commission, to supplement his studies so as to present a balanced picture of all basic problems arising in connexion with the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms in conditions of scientific and technological progress; to submit to the Commission one or more reports, in fields where sufficient documentation and studies are available, which could be used as a basis for exploring the possibility of preparing international instruments designed to strengthen the protection of the human rights proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and to bring to the attention of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment and of the Economic and Social Council, in the course of the efforts to ensure the success of the Second Development Decade, resolution 10 (XXVII) and the relevant documents studied by the Commission at its twenty-seventh session. The Commission decided to retain the item on human rights and technological developments as a standing item on its agenda.

5. As requested in General Assembly resolution 2721 (XXV), the Secretary-General is continuing to study the problems relating to human rights as they arise from developments in science and technology, as provided in paragraph 1 of General Assembly resolution 2450 (XXIII) bearing in mind resolution 10 (XXVII) of the Commission on Human Rights and, as far as possible, the views expressed by members of the Commission.