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HUMAN RIGHTS AND SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Report of the Secretary-General

1. In paragraph 1 of resolution 2450 (XXIII) of 19 December 1968, the General Assembly invited the Secretary-General to undertake, with the assistance, inter alia, of the Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development and in co-operation with the executive heads of competent specialized agencies, a study of the problems in connexion with human rights arising from developments in science and technology, in particular from the following standpoints: (a) respect for the privacy of individuals and the integrity and sovereignty of nations in the light of advances in recording and other techniques; (b) protection of the human personality and its physical and intellectual integrity, in the light of advances in biology, medicine and biochemistry; (c) uses of electronics which might affect the rights of the person and the limits which should be placed on such uses in a democratic society, and (d) more generally, the balance which should be established between scientific and technological progress and the intellectual, spiritual, cultural and moral advancement of humanity. In paragraph 2 of the resolution the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare, on a preliminary basis, a report comprising a summary account of studies already made or in progress on the aforementioned subjects, emanating in particular from governmental and intergovernmental sources, the specialized agencies and the competent non-governmental organizations, and a draft programme of work which might be undertaken in fields in which subsequent surveys would be necessary for the attainment of the objectives of the resolution.

In paragraph 3 of the resolution the Secretary-General was requested to submit the said report to the Commission on Human Rights at its twenty-sixth session for consideration and transmittal, through the Economic and Social Council, to the General Assembly at its twenty-fifth session.

2. In accordance with paragraph 2 of resolution 2450 (XXIII) the Secretary-General prepared a preliminary report, which was circulated as documents E/CN.4/1028 and Add.1-3 and Add.3/Corr.1 and Add.4. In accordance with paragraph 3 of the resolution, the Secretary-General submitted this report to the Commission on Human Rights at its twenty-sixth session.

3. The introduction to the report (E/CN.4/1028) includes in its paragraphs 5 and 6 an account of the contribution made in the preparation of the report by Governments, specialized agencies, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and a number of other organizations, institutes and individual scholars. Reference is also made in paragraph 7 of document E/CN.4/1028 to the setting up by the Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development of a liaison group to maintain contact and provide liaison with the Division of Human Rights in connexion with the present study. To the extent permitted by the time factor, the procedures of co-operation defined in paragraph 1 of General Assembly resolution 2450 (XXIII) were observed; it is hoped that a greater degree of consultation will be possible as the study develops from now on. The Secretary-General wishes to express his appreciation for their valuable assistance to all those whom he consulted in preparing his preliminary report. These included a number of eminent experts.

4. In a communication dated 23 July 1970, the World Health Organization indicated that it will submit to the General Assembly at its twenty-fifth session a document dealing with the health aspects of human rights in the light of scientific and technological developments.

5. By paragraph 1 of resolution 14 (XXVI) of 26 March 1970, the Commission on Human Rights transmitted the preliminary report to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council. By paragraph 2 of the resolution, the Commission decided to examine at its next session, in the light of the decisions of the General Assembly, the preliminary report of the Secretary-General, as supplemented

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by such information as may be collected in the meantime, particularly that submitted by Governments and the competent specialized agencies.

6. Subsequent to the adoption of resolution 14 (XXVI) an addendum to the preliminary report has been prepared (E/CN.4/1028/Add.5).

7. At its 1693rd meeting on 27 May 1970 the Economic and Social Council transmitted the preliminary report (E/CN.4/1028 and Add.1-3 and Add.3/Corr.1 and Add.4) to the General Assembly.<sup>1/</sup>

8. The attention of the General Assembly is therefore drawn to documents E/CN.4/1028 and Add.1-3 and Add.3/Corr.1 and Add.4-5. Attention is drawn in particular to chapter VI: Final observations, which appear as paragraphs 341 to 351 in document E/CN.4/1028/Add.4. This chapter, inter alia, contains cross-references to the suggestions made in the preliminary report for possible further surveys of problems of human rights and scientific and technological developments. In connexion with such possible further surveys, attention is also drawn to paragraphs 66, 73, 77 and 96 of document E/CN.4/1028/Add.5.

9. It may be added that the preliminary report speaks of threats and dangers to human rights arising out of scientific and technological developments, while the later study called for by the General Assembly in paragraph 1 of resolution 2450 (XXIII) might also take into account the benefits of such developments, so that their advantages and disadvantages might be assessed in the light of the intellectual, spiritual, cultural and moral advancement of mankind.

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<sup>1/</sup> See E/4868, para. 25 (b), and E/SR.1693.