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MEETING

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## C O N T E N T S

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Chairman: Mr. S. Amjad ALI (Pakistan).

**Report of the Economic and Social Council (chapter IV, sections I to V) (A/2172, A/C.3/L.319/Rev.1, A/C.3/L.320) (*continued*)**

[Item 11]\*

GENERAL DEBATE (*continued*)

1. Mrs. SPERANSKAYA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the Economic and Social Council had avoided the implementation of its fundamental tasks in social matters and had concentrated on subjects of secondary importance. The USSR representatives on the Council and to the Social Commission had made attempts to propose a programme of concrete measures to improve the social lot of the peoples of the world, but the attempts had been thwarted by pressure from the Anglo-American "bloc".

2. The Secretary-General's *Preliminary Report on the World Social Situation* (E/CN.5/267/Rev.1) was an inadequate and unsatisfactory step towards solving vitally important social problems, since it omitted reference to such questions as the lowering of the standard of living in capitalist countries as the result of the armaments race, unemployment assistance, social insurance, defence of trade unions and equal pay for equal work for men and women. The report gave the excessive rise in population as a reason for the adverse social position in capitalist countries and referred to vague historical and geographic factors. Thus, it was implied that the low *per capita* food distribution in underdeveloped countries was due to the accelerating rate of increase of the population.

3. The real reasons for the adverse social situation were clearly shown by facts relating to the economies of the countries parties to the North Atlantic Treaty. In the United States of America direct military expenditure accounted for 74 per cent of the total budget and the total expenditure for security was 85 per cent, whereas in 1937-38 those expenses represented 14 per

cent of the total budget. Workers were paying from 20 to 25 per cent of their wages in direct and indirect taxes, and about 45 per cent of the wage-earners were unable to keep pace with the rise in prices, which had risen 10.1 per cent in a single year. Similar conditions prevailed in the United Kingdom and France.

4. Nevertheless, the authors of the report had been unable wholly to conceal the social consequences of the armaments race in the countries parties to the North Atlantic Treaty. Reference was made to mass illiteracy in certain countries and the figures showed the extremely unsatisfactory position of education in dependent territories. The report stressed the wide breach between the attainments of modern medicine and their practical application, but proposed no plan for improving such application by making medical assistance free to all classes in every country. According to the report, there were 900,000 physicians in the world, one-third of whom were in the USSR, although the population of that country constituted only one-tenth of the world population. The report said that the number of doctors should be doubled. Nevertheless, that would not change the situation in the countries where there was no free medical care, since the high price of medical services made them inaccessible to the great masses of the people. Unlike the United States of America, where a very small percentage of the budget was spent on health services, the USSR provided free medical assistance, and all medical institutions were maintained by the State.

5. Although the net increase of population in the Soviet Union in the past three years had been 9.5 million, the national income had risen by 83 per cent in ten years, in spite of the disasters of the Second World War. The workers of the USSR received three-quarters of the national income for their own needs, and the remainder was used to increase production and for other State needs. Prices of consumer goods were half what they had been in 1947. Allowances, pensions and scholarships to the amount of 125,000 million roubles had been paid in 1951, as against a total of 40,800

\* Indicates the item number on the agenda of the General Assembly.

million in 1940. The wages of employees and workers had risen by 57 per cent and those of agricultural workers by 60 per cent in the same period. Expenditure on education had increased more than two and a half times in ten years. Twenty-three thousand five hundred schools had been built after the war and 57 million pupils were receiving education. In 1952 alone, 375,000 students had entered higher educational establishments and 221,000 specialists had graduated from them.

6. The report shed no light on the position with regard to social insurance and security, although it was well known that millions of people in capitalist countries were unemployed or unable to work. The situation in the United States of America and certain Western European countries where unemployment was rife, was glossed over with general references, and no solution was proposed for the lamentable situation in the Middle East and the dependent territories. In the Soviet Union, where there was and could be no unemployment, the position was quite different. The Constitution guaranteed every citizen the right to employment and payment for his work in accordance with its quantity and quality, the right to rest and leisure, the right to maintenance in old age, sickness or loss of capacity to work and the right to education. The USSR Government was sparing no effort to improve housing conditions. Over 155 million square metres of dwellings had been built in urban areas after the war, and 3,800,000 houses in rural districts. Rents in the Soviet Union were the lowest in the world and represented 10 per cent of the workers' budgets.

7. Although social and economic conditions in the Soviet Union differed from those of other countries and its methods were not immediately applicable everywhere, the positive experience of the USSR should be useful in improving the world social situation.

8. The Economic and Social Council should consider and prepare recommendations for the solution of such vitally important problems as social insurance against unemployment, old age, disability and sickness, maternity and child welfare, the extension of compulsory free education without any discrimination whatsoever, the extension of housing available to all and the improvement of health, education and social security conditions in the Non-Self-Governing and Trust Territories. Until the Council concentrated its efforts on such problems, its work could not be regarded as satisfactory.

9. Mrs. BERGER (Canada) recalled that the Canadian representative on the Economic and Social Council had expressed his Government's satisfaction with the social work being done by the specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies. She assumed that the specialized agencies would wish to review their existing programmes in the light of the *Preliminary Report on the World Social Situation* and make any changes necessary to render those programmes still more effective.

10. The Economic and Social Council fulfilled an essential task in the United Nations; many practical achievements could not have taken place had the Council not existed. It was true that more energetic measures would shortly be required if the social and economic difficulties besetting the free world were to be eventually eliminated. There was no doubt that the serious political

problems facing the United Nations had been instrumental in curtailing the Council's initiative in some fields. It should be recognized, however, that the Council's effectiveness would depend substantially upon the extent to which impractical proposals, as well as propaganda, were kept out of its discussions.

11. The Canadian delegation would support the joint draft resolution on the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (A/C.3/L.320). By its substantial contributions to UNICEF, her Government had often demonstrated its desire to assist in relieving the suffering to which the children of the world had been subjected as a result of war and other calamities. Nevertheless, it had not thus far made any commitment as regards a new contribution to UNICEF. The Canadian people felt strongly that the work of UNICEF required a wider and more generous response than it had so far received; and the final attitude of the Canadian Government to the review of the organization and operations of UNICEF in the following year would be influenced by the support given by other governments.

12. Mr. REYES (Philippines) thought that the *Preliminary Report on the World Situation*, one of the most important documents ever submitted to the General Assembly, was being received by the Third Committee with astonishing casualness. The debate had revealed an understandable but none the less regrettable reluctance to come to grips with the problems raised in the report, problems which were fully as important as those of freedom of information or the right of peoples to self-determination.

13. In its resolution 535 (VI) the General Assembly, recognizing the vital connexion between social and economic development, had recommended that a new programme of effective concerted international action in those matters, with emphasis on the needs of underdeveloped countries, should be presented to the Assembly at its seventh session, if possible. The Social Commission had not had time to give due consideration to the report on the world social situation, and had been authorized by the Council to hold its next regular session in 1953 instead of 1954, in order that recommendations on such a programme of concerted action might be presented to the General Assembly at its eighth session. The Yugoslav representative had been justified in saying that the Third Committee should make known its views on the criteria which should guide the Social Commission and the Economic and Social Council in preparing the new programme, on the scope of the programme, and on the methods and types of activities to be stressed in the light of the findings set forth in the report. Failing that, the governments of Member States should transmit in their replies to the request for suggestions contained in Council resolution 434 (XIV) in time to be of assistance to the Social Commission and the Council.

14. Since the Committee was not disposed to undertake a detailed study of the report, he would make only one comment for the time being. Paragraph 417 of the Council's report (A/2172) stated incorrectly that the main lesson to be drawn from the report on the world social situation was the need for efficiently organized self-help activities. On the contrary, the principal message reiterated throughout the report was that, although

self-help in the under-developed areas was essential, it was not enough, and that the most urgent need was for prompt and concerted international action on a major scale. That conclusion must necessarily be the basis of the programme of action to be prepared by the Social Commission and the Economic and Social Council.

15. With regard to the joint draft resolution (A/C.3/L.320), of which his delegation was a co-sponsor, he reiterated the Philippine people's appreciation of the magnificent work done by UNICEF and their desire to give it their continued support.

16. He endorsed the principle upon which the Argentine draft resolution (A/C.3/L.319/Rev.1) was based. Before his delegation could determine its position on that proposal, however, he wished to know what its relation to General Assembly resolution 535 (VI) was intended to be and how it would affect the preparation of the concerted programme of practical action which the Assembly had requested.

17. Mr. HUNEIDI (Syria) thought that the Secretary-General's *Preliminary Report on the World Social Situation* was especially important because it was the first of what should become a series of regular reports. It had succeeded in its primary objective of revealing general conditions, would help governments to attain their national goals and would inspire international organizations to achieve peace through social justice.

18. The classification of countries into geographical groups seemed to be arbitrary and it might be more appropriate to group them according to historic, ethnic or religious categories. It was regrettable that only one paragraph had been devoted to the conditions of the 750,000 Palestine refugees; it was impossible to do justice to that important problem in such a small space. The report also failed to mention the important social reforms that were taking place in certain Middle Eastern countries, such as Syria, and consequently lacked balance. Finally, it omitted any reference to problems of maladjustment, such as delinquency and drug addiction, which were serious obstacles to social progress in many countries.

19. His delegation agreed with the conclusions in the report on the interdependence of economic and social conditions and the necessity of regarding technical assistance to under-developed countries as a basis for all action in that connexion.

20. Mr. BIRECKI (Poland) said that the *Preliminary Report on the World Social Situation* confirmed the statements made by a number of representatives in the Second, Third and Fourth Committees at the current session to the effect that millions of human beings throughout the world were living in primitive conditions which were an outrage to human dignity.

21. The President of the United States of America, in a report to the Congress in January 1952, had indicated that his country's economic life would have to be dominated by armament production. It had been revealed that the rearmament programme would necessitate a serious curtailment of expenditures for social welfare, education, housing construction and public health. The construction of hospitals and schools would be limited despite the fact that the number of such

facilities was already insufficient. Moreover, funds for housing construction had been limited, even though United States newspapers such as *The New York Times* had published vivid descriptions of the shocking housing situation in New York City and elsewhere. The low standard of social insurance in the United States of America was illustrated by the fact that, according to the Department of Labor, 35 per cent of the workers were not covered by unemployment insurance. Moreover, the racial discrimination practised in the determination of wage scales was reflected directly in the various types of social insurance. In the matter of public health, a prominent United States official had reported that four-fifths of the families of the country could not pay for medical care.

22. In the other countries which were members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization a similar situation existed. The United Kingdom Government had offset its huge armament expenditures by substantial reductions in government housing and school-building programmes. Owing to the disproportionate sums being spent for armaments by the Italian Government, thousands of Italian families lived in abject misery.

23. The situation was even worse in the dependent and Trust Territories. His delegation had already cited many instances of the tragically low standard of living prevailing among the indigenous inhabitants. Expenditures for education and medical care did not meet even the most basic needs. Thousands of persons in Asia and Africa did not know the meaning of the words "social welfare".

24. The situation was very different in countries like Poland, where the national economy was based upon the principle of a constantly rising standard of living for the working masses. Since the Second World War, unemployment had entirely disappeared in Poland; indeed, there was not enough manpower to meet the demands of rapid industrial development. Medical assistance had been expanded; all mines and factories had their own medical services and all workers and employees enjoyed free annual vacations. Slums had been razed and whole new towns had been built. New housing units for workers, equipped with all modern conveniences, had risen from the ruins of Warsaw. Maternal and child welfare services had been developed to a point unknown before. Women were guaranteed equal rights, and responsible posts in all services were open to them. Poland had twice as many secondary schools as before the war, and the number of students enrolled had trebled. The average life expectancy had risen by 18 per cent in comparison with the period before the war, and infant mortality had fallen by 27 per cent. The Government had set aside almost 40 per cent of its total 1952 budget for social and cultural purposes.

25. The United Nations had no right to ignore the glaring difference between the social situation in the capitalist countries and that in the Soviet Union and the peoples' democracies. It was the Third Committee's duty to analyse the true causes of the appalling situation described in the *Preliminary Report on the World Social Situation* and to act upon its conclusions.

26. Mr. MANI (India) considered that the *Preliminary Report on the World Social Situation* gave an

especially clear picture of the needs of the under-developed countries; the second paragraph of chapter I stressed that countries which were in a position to alleviate distress should come to the assistance of less fortunate regions. That consideration also applied to the food shortages in the Far East, partly due to the Second World War, which were referred to in chapter IV of the report.

27. His delegation was not fully satisfied with the references to Southeast Asia. Although brevity was essential, greater attention should have been paid to the fundamental causes of certain conditions in that area.

28. Several references had been made during the debate to the "untouchables" in India, but in fact any discrimination against that former caste had become punishable by law. The Indian Government had devoted much attention to their position and consulted them on measures for improvement of their situation. A result of that policy was that the Minister of Civil Aviation then in office was a former "untouchable". A special commission had also been set up to improve the social position of the aborigines. It would have been appropriate to stress such facts in the report.

29. The Indian delegation hoped that the Council would take effective action on the report on the world social situation and thus bring hope to the peoples of under-developed countries.

30. The work of UNICEF, and especially its efforts in India, where it had helped to set up a DDT factory and had fed children in drought-stricken areas, was much appreciated.

31. Miss BERNARDINO (Dominican Republic) said that the percentage figure for literacy in the Dominican Republic given in appendix A to chapter VI of the *Preliminary Report on the World Social Situation* was erroneous, probably because it had been based on the obsolete 1935 census. The correct figure was nearer 80 than the 26 given. A thorough campaign to eradicate illiteracy had been opened by executive order in 1941 and more than half a million illiterates had been taught to read and write in ten years. The Government did not confine itself merely to eradicating actual illiteracy but also provided the necessary subsequent schooling. Some 5,000 special rural schools had been established, and, in addition, there were some 2,500 primary, secondary and vocational schools with 250,000 pupils of both sexes.

32. It was to be hoped that the Secretary-General would see to it that the error was corrected in subsequent studies and that more recent data on the Dominican Republic was used. That complaint should not be construed as a criticism of the report as a whole, which should stimulate the Economic and Social Council to press on with its social work.

33. Mrs. NOVIKOVA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republics) thought that the preliminary report had not given a true picture of the world social situation. Nor had a programme of practical action been drawn up, as requested in General Assembly resolution 535 (VI). The report tried to conceal the shocking conditions prevalent in many areas and to study social conditions in isolation from economic conditions, despite the fact that social conditions depended largely on the

exact stage of the development of a country's production.

34. The real reason for the deplorable social conditions existing in many countries was the fact that small groups of monopolists derived huge profits from exploiting the mass of the people and that the militarization of the economy had led to unbalanced development. A further reason was supplied by the desperate competition between countries, by the exploitation of some countries by others and by the emphasis placed on the profit motive.

35. The number of wholly and partly unemployed persons in the United States of America, United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Italy, Western Germany and Japan amounted to at least thirty-two million. The reservoir of unemployed was deliberately maintained in order to worsen the conditions of the employed and to exploit them more drastically. The workers bore the brunt of taxation, not the corporations; otherwise, the corporations would long since have become bankrupt. The workers' plight was aggravated by the wage "freeze", which had lowered real wages below the pre-war levels. The situation in such dependent territories as Morocco and Tunisia, especially where military bases were being prepared, was particularly bad. In many parts of the world, people were actually dying of starvation, as the Haitian representative had intimated.

36. In many countries the mass of the people had practically no access to culture, social services and social insurance. Unemployed persons incapable of work were virtually left to starve in at least thirty countries. While the preliminary report could not wholly gloss over such facts, it failed entirely to deal with the detestable effects of racial discrimination, especially in the United States of America.

37. In the peoples' democracies and in the People's Republic of China, on the other hand, social conditions were being continuously improved. Wages, particularly real wages, were increasing and the cost of consumer goods was being constantly reduced. Unemployment was rapidly being eradicated and full social security was guaranteed by law. In the People's Republic of China, for example, where illiteracy had once prevailed, a great cultural revolution was taking place. Four million primary and secondary schools were being built to serve the thirty-eight and a half million new pupils in addition to those who had lacked proper facilities before.

38. In the Byelorussian SSR, despite the devastation caused by the Second World War, employment was increasing, the production of consumer goods and housing in both urban and rural areas was being very greatly expanded. Schools, technological institutes, cultural organizations and health services were being made available on an ever-greater scale. That had been made possible by the simultaneous expansion of agriculture and industry. The production of cotton textiles in 1951 had been 580 per cent greater than in 1938, that woollens had increased by 300 per cent, of footwear by 200 per cent, of vegetable oils by 270 per cent, of butter by 200 per cent and of cheese by 400 per cent. Even greater increases were anticipated in the near future.

39. The free medical and preventive services had been improved. There were 49 per cent more hospital beds

than there had been in 1941. In the 1940 budget 29 per cent had been devoted to education; in 1949, 34.5 per cent and in 1952, 38.2 per cent. Free, universal and compulsory education for seven years was accessible to all. There was no illiteracy. More than 142,000 rural community schools had been opened during the past three years and 148 public libraries. In 1951, 1,000 million roubles had been spent on social services.

40. Thus, the preliminary report did not give a true picture of the social situation in all parts of the world

and could not be regarded as satisfactory. The United Nations was in duty bound to work out practical recommendations on specific social remedies to be given effect without any form of discrimination.

41. Mr. GREEN (United States of America) reserved the right of his delegation to reply under rule 114 of the rules of procedure to allegations made against his country by the representatives of the Byelorussian SSR, Poland, the Ukrainian SSR and the USSR.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.