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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 33rd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 17 July 1998, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. FOLIE (Italy)
(Vice-President)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION (continued)

- (c) REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARDS OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME/UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND, THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND AND THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (continued) (E/1998/L.17)

Mr. PRIEDKALNS (Latvia) introduced draft resolution E/1998/L.17, entitled "Input to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/8". The draft resolution was procedural in nature and concerned a review by the General Assembly of the distribution of seats in the Executive Board of the World Food Programme.

The PRESIDENT informed the Council that informal consultations on the matter in question were taking place under his chairmanship.

COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEME: COORDINATED FOLLOW-UP TO AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VIENNA DECLARATION OF ACTION (continued) (E/1998/60)

Mr. SUCHARIPA (Observer for Austria), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associate countries of Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia and, in addition, Iceland and Liechtenstein, said that the European Union believed that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should become the principal provider of expertise and guidance on human rights for the whole United Nations system, in which it should become a full partner, and called for early action on the appeal by the Commission on Human Rights for the necessary resources to be provided for the Office of the High Commissioner and United Nations human rights activities.

The European Union supported the efforts of the High Commissioner and the Commission on Human Rights to streamline and rationalize the United Nations human rights machinery with a view to enhancing its effectiveness. In that connection, it hoped that the inter-agency mechanism set up for the five-year review process would be made more permanent.

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Human rights must be mainstreamed in the United Nations system, and gender mainstreaming should form part of that process because the approach to gender issues throughout the system and in the field should be rights-based. Thus, the concluding observations on country reports and the general comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women should be taken into account throughout the system. Also, the Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2 on gender mainstreaming and the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of women on the human rights of women should be implemented in full.

The European Union believed that the right to development was an important aspect of human rights, and welcomed the establishment by the United Nations Development Group of a working group on the issue: the concept of the right to development had evolved since a common approach to implementing it had been agreed at the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993.

He cautioned that the activities of the United Nations system in the area of human rights were not ends in themselves: responsibility for promoting and protecting rights lay first of all with governments, and the role of the international community was to support national endeavours in that direction.

Ms. KING (United States of America) said that in the Constitution of the United States, the rights to life and liberty reflected the individual's civil and political rights - the core of fundamental freedoms - while the right to the pursuit of happiness meant the right to freedom from want, which was the economic right to pursue an adequate standard of living. The realization of that right was a progressive, joint endeavour between the individual and the State, because the duty to protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms rested with governments: sound economic policies, good governance and the rule of law led to sustainable economic growth.

Human rights should be mainstreamed within the entire United Nations system in its work on economic development and technical assistance. The system should recognize that States had a legal and moral obligation to meet the basic needs of their people, and should be held accountable if they did not do so. Given their common commitment to the right to development as a fundamental human right, States must also ask themselves if proper consideration had been given to economic, social and cultural rights in the context of macroeconomic issues and structural adjustment.

Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh) said that there were three necessary

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conditions for the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action: there must be independent, transparent and participatory national human rights mechanisms, awareness of human rights throughout society - with effective education programmes for the younger generation - and the right to development must be made the core of human rights initiatives. His recommendations for United Nations action in those areas were as follows.

The United Nations system must avoid duplication by giving the High Commissioner for Human Rights responsibility for coordinating all its human rights activities.

All United Nations system personnel should be given training to increase their awareness of human rights.

All the Council's subsidiary bodies should take into account the fact that democracy, development and respect for human rights were interrelated, interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

The right to development should be mainstreamed within the United Nations system, with the Bretton Woods institutions increasing their participation in the process.

Representation of the developing countries in general and the least developed countries in particular within the Working Group on the Right to Development of the Commission on Human Rights was essential. As extreme poverty was a serious violation of many fundamental human rights, there should be a coordinated focus on implementing the agreed conclusions concerning system-wide efforts for the eradication of poverty.

A renewed effort in general and more resources in particular were needed to realize the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education and the World Public Information campaign for Human Rights, and the office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should develop inter-agency partnerships and joint projects for educational and information activities.

The General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights should make integration of a gender perspective explicit in all human rights mandates.

Coordination must continue between the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Children's Fund and other relevant United Nations bodies on work to promote and protect the rights of the child, particularly those of children affected by armed conflict.

The Office of the High Commissioner should be provided with the resources

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to assist governments in disseminating information and to provide training and technical assistance in the field of human rights.

All parts of the United Nations system should renew efforts to achieve adherence to human rights instruments and bring universality to the human rights regime.

Human rights were universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, and must be treated by the international community globally and in a fair and equal manner. The various United Nations entities should improve coordination with each other to provide States with more effective help in their efforts to promote and protect human rights.

Mr. BAALI (Algeria) recalled that the World Conference on Human Rights had solemnly affirmed the indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights and had recognized the right to development as universal and inalienable. More than a decade after the adoption of the Declaration on the Right to Development, however, its implementation was still awaiting the adoption of specific measures and recommendations. His delegation therefore welcomed the establishment of the working group to monitor and review the progress made in the promotion and implementation of the right to development and the appointment of an independent expert to prepare a study on the current state of progress in the implementation of that right.

Despite the fact that the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action had recognized the clear link between human rights, democracy and development, there was an increasing tendency to subject aid to political conditionalities which frequently violated the principle of sovereignty and the freedom of States to choose their own political, economic and social systems. The mainstreaming of human rights concerns in United Nations programmes and activities must not become a pretext for imposing conditionalities on developing countries within the framework of development programmes. For it to be effective, such mainstreaming must place greater emphasis on the promotion of economic, social and cultural rights. The commitment which the High Commissioner for Human Rights had given in that sense was a step in the right direction.

While Algeria fully respected the principle of the universality of human rights, that did not mean that there should be only one model of social and political organization. Indeed, the notion of universality would have meaning only if it took account of cultural, historical and geographical particularities

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and was based on the international norms and principles of law that provided the legal and political underpinning of the United Nations and the system of international relations, namely, the sovereign equality of States, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States and respect for the political, economic and social systems freely chosen by States.

Despite the ravages of colonialism in the developing world, under which individual rights had been trampled, the rule of law and democracy were being strengthened everywhere and human rights were being increasingly protected as civil society organized and consolidated itself. That task, however, was a long-term one in which the contribution of the developed States could make a critical difference.

Algeria, which had played an active role in the work of the World Conference on Human Rights, believed that a rigorous and objective evaluation of the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action must be undertaken with a view to strengthening international cooperation in the field of human rights by promoting dialogue instead of confrontation; streamlining existing United Nations human rights mechanisms to avoid duplication and overlapping; promoting the effective implementation of the right to development as a collective responsibility; and determining the responsibility of non-State actors in massive violations of human rights.

Mr. KAMITANI (Japan) said that despite progress made since the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, much remained to be done, and, since democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms were interdependent and mutually reinforcing, it was critical for human rights to be fully integrated into all United Nations activities. His delegation welcomed the creation of the posts of United Nations High Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner for Human Rights, the consolidation of the human rights secretariat and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the strengthening of that office in New York. As a participant in all Executive Committees and the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), the High Commissioner would be able to better discharge her responsibilities for the coordination of human rights activities within the United Nations system.

He recognized that the resources of OHCHR had not kept pace with its growing responsibilities and he looked forward to hearing the results of the

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current review of the human rights machinery being conducted by the Bureau of the Commission on Human Rights, and the views of OHCHR on how to improve its efficiency and effectiveness and enhance the quality of its personnel.

His delegation believed that all United Nations organs and agencies should be reminded of the need to promote human rights at all times and stressed that development should lead to increased political and human rights, which should never be suppressed for reasons of economic development. He reaffirmed that the human person was the central subject of development and welcomed the establishment by the Commission on Human Rights of a follow-up mechanism on implementation of the right to development.

He appreciated the role played by the Commission on the Status of Women in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and hoped that further cooperation and coordination would be promoted through the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality in order to ensure system-wide implementation. He was also pleased to note the increasing importance given the rights of children, hoped that trend would continue, and attached special importance to closer cooperation between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children in armed conflict and the United Nations system.

His delegation welcomed the initiatives taken by the United Nations system to promote human rights education and urged that human rights education, including the rights of women, should be provided for all personnel and officials within the United Nations system.

His delegation had always supported human rights field operations and there was no doubt that human rights activities could play an important role in peacekeeping, peacemaking and post-conflict peace-building. Coordination between human rights and peacekeeping operations should be further developed, human rights field officers should receive better training and every effort must be made to guarantee their safety in the field.

He regretted that the percentage of the United Nations regular budget allocated to human rights programmes had decreased and stressed that the budget for the next biennium must reflect the recommendations of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and substantially increase the resources allocated to human rights. Members States should consider the possibility of financing human rights field operations through the United Nations regular budget. His delegation for its part, would continue its financial assistance for human

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rights operations.

Mr. AZAIEZ (Tunisia) said that the examination of follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and the upcoming fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provided an opportunity for the international community to reflect on progress made and to freely and unanimously adopt a global vision aimed at making human rights universal, for the United Nations system to improve and better coordinate its efforts in the human rights area, and for States to guarantee their peoples' full enjoyment of their human rights within a framework of sustainable development and peaceful growth.

He expressed satisfaction at the work done by the United Nations system in the areas of human rights and capacity-building within civil society in many countries. Democracy, development and human rights were interdependent and central to all United Nations system activities: the universal and inalienable right to development was a fundamental human right.

His Government had undertaken a series of reforms aimed at consolidating democracy and pluralism, stressing the promotion and protection of human rights and economic and social development. Those measures were in keeping with the growing acceptance and promotion of human rights across the world, which promised a better world for future generations.

He noted however that extreme poverty, environmental degradation, international debt, discrimination against women and armed conflicts continued to be major obstacles to universal respect for human rights. He therefore agreed that, as suggested by the Secretary-General in his report, States Members should take into account the Vienna Declaration in policies, programmes and periodic examinations of follow-up to conferences. Commitments to human rights and human rights programmes would be more credible, however, if they led to more partnerships and increased development assistance and technology transfer.

Ms. ALCALA (Argentina) said that although there were still examples of serious violations of human rights, the Vienna meeting had been an important step in the promotion and defence of human rights. The Vienna Declaration had recognized that the international community had a responsibility to promote human rights and that democracy, development and respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms were inextricably linked.

Her Government had reformed the Constitution in 1994 to take into account

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the relevant international human rights instruments and to protect and recognize the rights and heritage of the native peoples of Argentina. Measures had also been undertaken for the victims of the military dictatorship of 20 years earlier. Human rights institutions had been created at the federal and provincial levels in accordance with the principles adopted by the General Assembly and all international commitments were being respected.

The promotion of human rights was essential for political stability and socio-economic development and the Vienna Declaration must become an integral part of all United Nations systems activities, including peace and security, economic and social affairs, international development cooperation and humanitarian affairs. All bodies and agencies of the United Nations system must cooperate to strengthen, rationalize and simplify human rights activities through the capable leadership of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, with a view to identifying needs in the areas of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Human rights activities must also be reinforced to protect the most frequent victims of conflicts: civilians, refugees, displaced persons, women and children. She hoped that the future international criminal court would play a leading role in deterring the authors of conflict from creating innocent victims.

Given the importance of the human rights component in field operations, including development and humanitarian activities, the respective responsibilities of the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner, and the Commission on Human Rights in cases where the latter had appointed a special rapporteur, should be analyzed in greater detail.

Finally, she called on the Organization to heed the request from the Chairmen of the treaty bodies for increased collaboration between the Organization and those bodies, especially in humanitarian activities during operations for building and maintaining peace, including the technical cooperation programme on early warning mechanisms.

Mr. BURLACU (Romania) aligned his delegation with the statement delivered by the representative of Austria on behalf of the European Union. He stressed that the Vienna Conference had represented a milestone in the modern history of human rights. It had placed human rights in the new context of democracy and development, while reaffirming their universality and

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indivisibility, supported by a strong political commitment on the part of the United Nations. His delegation believed that the momentum created by the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should be used to reinforce common efforts towards full implementation of the Vienna commitments and adequate mobilization of financial resources for the attainment of those goals.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights had had remarkable success in strengthening the United Nations human rights programme and facilitating system-wide mainstreaming of human rights and he noted the important steps already taken to redefine and strengthen the United Nations human rights machinery and ensure a balanced approach to human rights, including increased interest in the right to development and the issues of gender equality. He also appreciated the particular attention given to human rights by the Secretary-General in his programme for reform.

In that context, he noted the action-oriented recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General and supported the establishment of human rights focal points in all relevant United Nations entities, at Headquarters and in the field. Better coordination was also imperative within the United Nations system at the country level in human rights and related projects and he therefore favoured incorporating human rights priorities in strategic programming frameworks such as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) or the country strategy note. That would contribute to an integrated approach involving mutually reinforcing objectives such as democratization, good governance, human sustainable development and respect for universal freedoms.

As a party to the main international human rights instruments, his delegation welcomed the increase in the number of countries which had ratified them and called for greater effectiveness and coordination in the work of the six treaty bodies responsible for the monitoring of those instruments and for more simplified and harmonized reporting procedures so as to facilitate the task of Member States in the presentation of periodic reports.

In the context of the democratic transformation since 1989, his country had acceded to the major international human rights instruments and updated the national legal framework to reflect the requirements of the rule of law, political pluralism, respect for human rights and gender equality, and had

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enacted constitutional provisions enshrining the primacy of international human rights regulations. He noted the active role played by non-governmental organizations in Romania in increasing the participation of civil society in human rights issues.

He noted that his Government had encouraged the mainstreaming of a human rights perspective in projects undertaken in cooperation with United Nations entities, especially the inclusion of human rights objectives in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Romania, and said that his delegation was confident that the agreed conclusions to be adopted under the coordination segment of the Economic and Social Council would provide importance guidance for further implementation of the Vienna Conference commitments.

Mr. TYRIHJELL (Norway) recalled that the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action had given the United Nations system a clear mandate for the initiatives undertaken by the Secretary-General to mainstream human rights in the work of the United Nations. The Secretary-General's personal commitment and proposals for reform had achieved concrete results: the establishment of Executive Committees with participation by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the strengthening and continuous high-level presence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in New York. Those reforms would make it easier to truly mainstream human rights in the United Nations as a whole.

The High Commissioner and her Office provided invaluable expertise and demands for their services as a secretariat for human rights instruments and as providers of technical assistance had greatly increased. Those demands must be matched by the necessary financial resources; the resolution regarding the need for securing regular budget resources for the Office of the High Commissioner adopted at the 1998 session of the Commission on Human Rights must be supported by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

Increasing human rights activities at the field level, and developing more innovative activities, constituted a challenge and a learning experience and the regrettable difficulties faced by the human rights mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo must not prevent similar initiatives; he cited the experience in Guatemala as an example of a successful field mission where the human rights element was central. To ensure further successes, all United Nations personnel, including field personnel, must receive human rights training for short-, medium- and long-term humanitarian and peacekeeping activities.

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He recalled that the report of the Secretary-General stated that the impunity of perpetrators of human rights violations was not only a moral issue but also an obstacle to durable solutions to conflict situations. The United Nations must give priority to overcoming those problems and, in that regard, he welcomed the adoption of the statute for the creation of an international criminal court and looked forward to the adoption of the statute by the General Assembly.

He applauded the appointment by the Secretary-General of a Special Representative on the situation of children in armed conflict and welcomed the open debate held in the Security Council the previous month on that issue as having clearly depicted the gravity of the problem, and also underlined the relevance of the human rights of children to all entities in the United Nations system.

The Vienna Conference had also for the first time affirmed that the human rights of women and the girl child were an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights and he was pleased to note continued efforts by Member States and by the United Nations to operationalize that affirmation. His delegation encouraged further initiatives, such as the agreed conclusions of the previous year's coordination segment and the agreed conclusions on the human rights of women adopted at the forty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

He stressed that human rights and economic and social development were closely linked, as had been expressed in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and in the report of the Secretary-General, and announced that his Government would be co-hosting, together with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), an expert symposium on human rights and human development in Oslo from 2 to 3 October 1998.

He said that progress in mainstreaming human rights in the United Nations system and coordination and cooperation in that regard would require time, hard work and the support and encouragement of Member States, and he assured the Council of his delegation's full support in those efforts.

Mr. VALLE (Brazil) said that Brazil attached a high priority to the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action both nationally and internationally. Its own national plan had been the fruit of broad

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consultations with all segments of civil society, including representatives of non-governmental organizations and human rights movements, and embodied the genuine aspirations of the Brazilian people. Its implementation was monitored by a group of independent experts representing different sectors of civil society as well as through public hearings held by the national Congress.

During the previous two years, a series of initiatives by federal, state and local governments had considerably improved the legal framework for the enjoyment of human rights in Brazil. New legislation had been passed to combat impunity for acts of violence committed by military police personnel, who no longer benefited from special criminal jurisdiction in cases of intentional homicide. Other measures included witness protection programmes, new regulations governing the use of firearms, rural land reform and human rights training programmes for law enforcement officials. Those positive trends were reinforced by a nationwide mobilization to combat violence and intolerance and to redress the injustices of social exclusion.

Brazil welcomed the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (E/1998/60) and supported the mainstreaming of human rights in the work of all United Nations departments, funds, programmes and specialized agencies. Mainstreaming, however, must also give full consideration to, inter alia, the promotion of the right to people-centred development and to the involvement of civil society in technical cooperation projects. It must also be recognized that the level of resources available for technical cooperation in the field of human rights was not commensurate with the growing demand for assistance on the part of developing countries, which were undergoing everywhere a vigorous process of consolidation of democracy.

Mr. ROGOV (Russian Federation) said that in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action the world had acknowledged that the road to security and stability lay also through ensuring respect for human rights and solving social and humanitarian problems. However, for the Vienna recommendations to be implemented in full by all parties, further efforts were needed based on the understanding that they had resulted from a global consensus that had been very difficult to achieve: although the consensus needed to be further developed and implemented more fully, there must be no attempts to review or adulterate it.

The Russian Federation supported the High Commissioner's efforts to mainstream the gender aspect in the work of her Office.

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To break the vicious circle of human rights violations, conflict and violence, there must be effective cooperation between the Commission on Human Rights, the various United Nations treaty bodies and other entities working on human rights, and the relevant regional mechanisms. Also, coordination should be improved between the Council's functional commissions working in the human rights protection field and the agendas and programmes of the Council's auxiliary organs should be harmonized.

United Nations system entities, including the Council, should base their human rights work pursuant to the Vienna consensus also on the appropriate resolutions of the Third Committee and the Commission on Human Rights.

His delegation shared the Secretary-General's view that the greatest attention should be given to those rights on which there had been least progress. In that connection a more accurate definition of economic, social and cultural rights was needed, and ways and means of implementing them should be reinforced, as by boosting work on implementing the agreed conclusions on system-wide activities to eradicate poverty.

The international community should try to stamp out racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance - and particularly the increasing trend towards policies involving notions of religious, ethnic, cultural or national superiority and exclusivity - through increasing participation by United Nations agencies in the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, studying the possibility of an inter-agency coordination mechanism in that area and participating in preparations for the next world conference to combat racism and racial discrimination.

Constant attention had to be given to vulnerable groups, including minorities, within the United Nations system, particularly in the context of conflict prevention.

Although his delegation supported the principle that humanitarian and peacekeeping operations should be carried out with the need to protect human rights in mind, to avoid previous mistakes the practical implementation of that principle should be based on a thorough and independent analysis of existing experience of United Nations operational activities with a view to defining better models for a human rights presence in the field.

He expressed the hope that there would be cooperation in implementing the decisions of the Conference on Refugees, Returnees, Displaced Persons and

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Related Migratory Movements in the Commonwealth of Independent States and Relevant Neighbouring States which had taken place in Geneva in 1996; the international community had shown a great deal of interest in seeing those problems resolved quickly and the Conference had been an example of a comprehensive approach to human rights issues.

Ms. TRONE (United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) said that the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights had extended the vision of human rights to include social, economic, political and civil rights. A carefully constructed framework of human rights now recognized that all human beings had the same rights and that women must be able to make choices of their own and to make decisions concerning their reproductive and sexual health, free from discrimination, coercion and violence.

UNFPA recognized that all human rights, including the right to development, were universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and was strongly committed to the mainstreaming of human rights, in fulfilment of its mandate in the area of population and development. In 1996, the Fund had organized a round table at which participants had outlined the legal and moral framework for recognizing reproductive and sexual rights as human rights as well as ways of integrating gender awareness in their work. The Fund had also provided technical support to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the mainstreaming of gender concerns and had undertaken a number of key initiatives for the promotion of reproductive rights and gender equality, including advocacy campaigns to eliminate female genital mutilation and other harmful practices.

As part of its capacity-building efforts, the Fund proposed to organize training programmes for mainstreaming human rights in sectoral programming and to support efforts aimed at enabling countries to track the progress being made in promoting a culture of human rights. The Fund had established close contacts with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and had organized a number of joint activities at the global and country levels.

Ms. SIBAL (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action had become UNESCO's guide for the implementation of activities in the field of human rights. The organization's aim was to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among nations through education, science and culture in

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order to further universal respect for justice, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. In order to encourage education for human rights and peace, UNESCO awarded prizes to individuals and institutions which had made outstanding contributions in those fields.

Special emphasis continued to be placed on education for human rights, democracy, peace and tolerance not only through the adoption and implementation of the new United Nations and UNESCO policy instruments but also through the efforts of UNESCO to widely disseminate the texts of international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and data on the status of ratification of major human rights instruments.

In 1991, the General Conference of UNESCO had recommended that the United Nations General Assembly should proclaim 3 May as World Press Freedom Day to mark the fundamental principles of press freedom. Also, at the initiative of UNESCO, 1995 had been proclaimed as the United Nations Year for Tolerance.

Concerning the right to development, the Constitution of UNESCO acknowledged that peace and development were inseparable and that just as peace could not be taken to be the mere absence of war, development could not be reduced to economic growth. The experience of UNESCO in the fields of education, science, culture and communication could therefore make a major contribution to the attainment of development for peace. The time was ripe to take stock of the experience gained and to explore ways of strengthening conceptual and methodological innovations for the design and implementation of coherent programmes of action to more effectively address the issues of development and poverty eradication.

Mr. TÜRK (Slovenia) noted that the Council's debate coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and offered an opportunity to juxtapose daily efforts to promote respect for human rights and the long-term vision which had made human rights a part of the international discourse and identity of the United Nations. Regrettably, contemporary realities defied the spirit of the age to which reference was made in the preamble to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and had had a devastatingly adverse effect on human rights.

In its search for solutions, the United Nations must not be blinded by the illusion that international institutions were omnipotent. There were profound

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structural causes for the inadequate realization of human rights, many of which could not be addressed with the tools which had been developed thus far. There were good reasons to believe, however, that the United Nations system was capable of performing better and to that end, Slovenia wished to make a number of suggestions.

First, it was essential to preserve and strengthen the human rights instruments thus far developed, since they represented the clearest and most binding expression of the commitment of States to human rights. Implementation of those treaties was the most important foundation for all action in the field of human rights and the supervisory bodies established by the treaties must be given adequate resources to enable them to carry out their vital task.

The second priority related to United Nations field operations, the number of which had increased in recent years. Political stability and the need to make peace irreversible required strong support for the strengthening of State and other institutions which protected human rights. Field operations must therefore begin sufficiently early and last long enough in order to be effective. Also, in situations in which peacekeeping or other Security Council-led operations took place, the human rights component must be introduced in a timely manner.

The third important area of United Nations action was assistance to States, at their request, in developing an independent and credible judiciary and appropriate national human rights institutions. Encouraging practical and conceptual progress had been made in that area in recent years and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was well placed to coordinate the activities of not only the United Nations but also of multilateral and bilateral programmes and governmental and non-governmental organizations.

With regard to the right to development, field activities helped to give full meaning to the concept of the right to development, which had gained universal recognition at the World Conference on Human Rights. Slovenia agreed with the view expressed by the European Union that system-wide activities were needed in pursuit of the right to development. United Nations human rights bodies must also place greater emphasis on the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights. Unless greater progress was made in those areas, development issues would fall victim to the blind forces of globalization, which

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had already proven incapable of guaranteeing a future worthy of humankind.

Finally, the post-Vienna period had witnessed the emergence of new constituencies for human rights. Women's movements had gained in influence and power in many parts of the world and now represented a major factor for change. The United Nations must therefore provide more space in its programmes for the advancement of women.

Mr. PRIEDKALNS (Latvia) said that the United Nations Centre for Human Rights had played a key role in the development of the Latvian National Programme for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights centred in an independent institution, the Latvian National Human Rights Office, and supported by appropriate legislation. Financing and technical assistance for the programme had also been provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Thereafter, United Nations and OSCE cooperation in monitoring the observance of human rights had been strengthened, in recognition that inter-agency collaboration and coordination were essential to an integrated approach to implementing human rights objectives.

Mr. SWEPSTON (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that 1998 was an important human rights year for ILO. It was the fiftieth anniversary of the ILO Convention concerning Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize and recently the ILO Declaration on fundamental principles and rights at work had been adopted, committing ILO to carrying out an annual examination of its technical assistance activities in the light of its human rights principles and standards and, where necessary, to focusing such activities on the implementation of fundamental principles. To achieve the goals for adopting human rights standards established by the international community, it was essential for both ILO and the Economic and social Council to take a human rights-based approach to their activities.

Close collaboration between ILO and the United Nations treaty bodies and agencies was necessary in order to maintain a single, coherent system of international law on human rights. ILO held regular meetings with each of the treaty bodies to provide detailed information on relevant ILO standards and activities; moreover, it had met with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to discuss practical cooperation on a range of activities. ILO hoped that, in its recommendations, the Council would underline the need to

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ratify the United Nations and ILO basic human rights standards.

The campaign for the ratification of ILO's seven fundamental Conventions was making progress and preliminary discussions had been held with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on how her office might establish its own campaign in relation to the United Nations human rights instruments.

Since the adoption of the ILO Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, ILO and the office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights had organized annual technical meetings of all United Nations system staff working on that issue to exchange experience and coordinate activities. The meetings had also been attended by the corresponding national development agencies and government representatives from various developed countries. It was disappointing that the Secretary-General's report did not mention the need for coordination with other partners in the promotion and defence of human rights.

The ILO had met with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to discuss the need to ensure that their operational activities took basic workers' rights into account. Economic globalization made it increasingly important to ensure that all countries guaranteed fundamental human rights, including workers' rights.

Mr. GRAISSE (World Food Programme (WFP)) said that poverty eradication was crucial to increasing the access of individuals and communities to adequate levels of food. Hunger was not only a result of poverty but also a cause of it. Nutritional deficiencies in women and children could result in the underdevelopment of the physical and mental capacities and the loss of the productive potential of a new generation. Urgent, concerted action was needed to tackle the problems of hunger and food insecurity that affected an estimated 800 million people.

The policies governing the use of WFP food aid were aimed at eradicating hunger and poverty by providing food and work, supporting the improvement of education and health opportunities, and encouraging economic development. It was generally recognized that human rights and development could not be separated and WFP considered that access to adequate levels of food was a prerequisite to the exercise of the right to development and to the enjoyment of human rights. When providing food aid, WFP tried to address the root causes of hunger in particular, by building assets and promoting self-reliance and also by trying to empower the poor to participate in the decision-making processes that

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affected them. WFP considered that women were a critical element of the solution to hunger and poverty and, following the Beijing Conference, it had translated its commitments into specific action plans, including programme-wide training to mainstream the gender focus and promote equal rights.

To be truly effective, food aid needed to be fully integrated in the development plans and priorities of recipient countries and coordinated with other forms of assistance; good working partnerships were therefore essential.

The PRESIDENT said that the Council would now hear observers for non-governmental organizations working in the field of human rights, in accordance with the decisions adopted earlier in the session.

Ms. SCHENSE (Human Rights Watch) said that human rights violations continued to escalate in different parts of the world. The most effective way for the United Nations to fulfil its human rights agenda was to ensure the active and continuous participation of all components of the system, by mainstreaming the agenda. There was a need to increase coordination on human rights within the United Nations system and, in particular, to strengthen the Commission on Human Rights by providing it with the necessary human and financial resources to enable it to carry out its mandate.

The work of the Commission's human rights monitoring mechanisms deserved substantial support and expansion. The issue of the implementation of the recommendations made by the mechanisms also required attention. The United Nations system should ensure their implementation, as they alerted the system to dangerous trends and suggested concrete measures to avoid human rights violations. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had a central role to play in communicating recommendations to the relevant entities and coordinating the United Nations system's response.

Mr. LEVINE (Amnesty International) said that his organization welcomed the Secretary-General's determination to mainstream human rights by placing them at the centre of United Nations system activities. It represented a real opportunity to demonstrate that respect for human rights was essential for peace, security and development.

Moreover, a human rights approach could have a major impact on the prevention and resolution of conflicts and other crises, as well as on the recovery from such events. Amnesty International remained deeply concerned at the Security Council's reluctance to recognize the crucial importance of human

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rights when considering country situations and called on the Economic and Social Council to request that all future Secretary-General's reports to the Security Council regarding countries on its agenda should include an analysis of the human rights situation.

Amnesty International endorsed the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action's call to the Secretary-General and the General Assembly to provide sufficient resources to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to enable it to carry out its work effectively.

It urged all organs and agencies of the United Nations system to develop joint work plans with the Division for the Advancement of Women to ensure gender mainstreaming. Moreover, they should provide the United Nations human rights bodies with gender-desegregated data so that measures taken to ensure women's human rights could be monitored. In addition, more needed to be done to ensure that children's rights were taken seriously by all in the United Nations system. Lastly, it urged the Economic and Social Council to recommend the speedy adoption of an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child prohibiting those under 18 years of age from participating in hostilities in any way.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.