



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 37th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. GARVALOV (Bulgaria)

CONTENTS

- AGENDA ITEM 69: INTERNATIONAL YOUTH YEAR: PARTICIPATION, DEVELOPMENT, PEACE
(continued)
- AGENDA ITEM 81: POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES RELATING TO YOUTH (continued)
- AGENDA ITEM 71: PROBLEMS OF THE ELDERLY AND THE AGED (continued)
- AGENDA ITEM 73: QUESTION OF A CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (continued)
- AGENDA ITEM 79: INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF DISABLED PERSONS (continued)
- AGENDA ITEM 70: PRESERVATION AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL VALUES, INCLUDING
THE PROTECTION, RESTITUTION AND RETURN OF CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC PROPERTY (continued)
- AGENDA ITEM 68: ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE (continued)
- AGENDA ITEM 72: HUMAN RIGHTS AND SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS
(continued)
- AGENDA ITEM 76: INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS (continued)
- (a) REPORT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE
 - (b) FURTHER MEETINGS ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE
 - (c) STATUS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL
RIGHTS, THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS AND THE
OPTIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL
RIGHTS

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 69: INTERNATIONAL YOUTH YEAR: PARTICIPATION, DEVELOPMENT, PEACE
(continued) (A/34/855, A/35/361 and Add.1; A/C.3/35/3)

AGENDA ITEM 81: POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES RELATING TO YOUTH (continued) (A/35/503;
A/C.3/35/3)

AGENDA ITEM 71: PROBLEMS OF THE ELDERLY AND THE AGED (continued) (A/35/130 and
Add.1 and Corr.1; A/C.3/35/3)

AGENDA ITEM 73: QUESTION OF A CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (continued)
(A/C.3/35/L.14)

AGENDA ITEM 79: INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF DISABLED PERSONS (continued) (A/35/274 and
Add.1, A/35/291, A/35/444 and Add.1; A/C.3/35/5)

AGENDA ITEM 70: PRESERVATION AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL VALUES,
INCLUDING THE PROTECTION, RESTITUTION AND RETURN OF CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC PROPERTY
(continued) (A/35/349, A/35/419; A/C.3/35/L.22)

AGENDA ITEM 68: ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 72: HUMAN RIGHTS AND SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS
(continued) (A/35/202)

AGENDA ITEM 76: INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS (continued) (A/35/65,
A/35/96), A/35/132, A/35/137 and Corr.1 [English only]; A/35/173, A/35/185,
A/35/288, A/35/434, A/35/457, A/35/462)

(a) Report of the Human Rights Committee (A/35/40; A/C.3/35/4);

(b) Future meetings on the Human Rights Committee (A/35/417);

(c) Status of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,
the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Optional
Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
(A/35/3/Add.24, A/35/195)

1. Mrs. ROSER (Federal Republic of Germany) said that her delegation welcomed the efforts undertaken to elaborate a convention on the rights of the child, which should make an effective and lasting contribution to the protection of children wherever needed. Such a basic legal framework had to take into account a multitude of different legal, social and cultural situations all over the world and therefore would need extensive and thorough consideration by experts.

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(Mrs. Roser, Federal
Republic of Germany)

2. The draft convention addressed itself to three different subjects, which should be dealt with separately: the individual rights of children, State obligations, and objectives and methods of education. Each of those subjects might need a different approach. Some of the problems, such as the very important right to citizenship, would by no means be easy to solve. Precedents which had been set in other legal instruments should be carefully examined and taken into account. Consideration should be given to the rights of groups of children who were suffering particular disadvantages, such as children born out of wedlock or children growing up in foster homes. One of the foremost tasks of the convention should be to seek to eliminate discrimination wherever it was found, in order to prepare all children on an equal basis for life, to give them equal chances, and above all, to guarantee their human rights. A convention on the rights of the child could have a lasting effect only if it offered comprehensive protection of all rights for all children, and her Government was prepared to co-operate fully in efforts towards that goal.

3. Mr. BLEACH (United Kingdom) said that although young people in the United Kingdom were criticized for their idiosyncratic way of life, they had the freedom to be as individualistic as they chose. It was important that their elders should not attempt to tell young people what they ought and ought not to do. There was a danger that the ideals behind the International Youth Year might rebound against their creators and that young people might feel they were being told what to do rather than being given an opportunity to decide for themselves. Young people should be actively involved in the Year's formulation, and since the Advisory Committee was the best forum for such discussions, it was important that the Committee should consist mainly of young people. The Year should concentrate on practical and concrete issues, with strong emphasis on activities of direct benefit to young people. Most important, the theme of the Year should not be one imposed upon the young. The present theme was lacking in imagination. He believed that the theme should be decided at the local, regional and national levels by voluntary and non-governmental organizations.

4. In the United Kingdom, organizations such as the British Youth Council worked to promote the social and formal education of young people by offering them opportunities in their leisure time to mix socially and develop and enlarge their interests. Young people were not organized into one national movement but were free to express themselves in whatever way they wished by joining voluntary youth organizations. There were 4,000 full-time youth workers in the country, assisted by many thousands of part-time youth workers, many of whom were unpaid. The Government attached a high priority to the provision of services for young people and maintained its level of support for recurrent expenditure on the voluntary youth service. Youth organizations in the United Kingdom not only performed a social service for youth but also took part in community services to assist those in need, including the elderly and the disabled. For that reason, his Government felt that youth organizations and other non-governmental organizations should be accorded a larger role in the Year than current proposals envisaged.

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(Mr. Bleach, United Kingdom)

5. His delegation believed that it would be useful to have an opportunity to assess which aspects of the International Year of the Child had been most successful before considering the preparation of a draft programme for the International Youth Year. In other words, the purposes of the Year would best be served by a longer time-scale for its preparation than that proposed by the Secretary-General. Of course, specific suggestions should be produced and considered as quickly as possible, and the United Kingdom believed that the Secretary-General's proposed strategy should be considered by the Advisory Committee as soon as that body was set up. The Year should be carefully prepared to maximize impact and reduce cost; his delegation believed that the proposals before the Third Committee should contain a reference to the Secretary-General's report on the criteria for international years contained in document E/1980/64 and Add.1.

6. Mrs. NOWILL (Brazil) said that disabled persons, their families, directors of agencies for the disabled, and professionals working in programmes of education, welfare and rehabilitation in Brazil had welcomed General Assembly resolution 34/154, which had proclaimed 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons, with hope and optimism. That optimism had increased as people became aware that the major themes of the International Year would be "full participation" and "equality", two of the many objectives proposed by disabled persons themselves.

7. In general, a large proportion of Brazilian society had shown an over-all rejection of generally adopted prejudices and had encouraged efforts in favour of disabled persons. However, in order to achieve "full participation", it was vital that "equality" of rights and duties should be the same for all persons, disabled or not, and such equality could be achieved only if the Government and the people were aware of the real meaning of social justice and its practical application to daily life.

8. The Brazilian Minister for Foreign Affairs had said at the current session of the General Assembly that the work of the Organization necessitated the adoption of a just scale of priorities in the consideration of today's problems. Lack of "equality" could be found all over the world: of every 14 children who lived in developing countries, only one was receiving adequate assistance. Lack of "equality" could also be seen in the lack of specialized education, which restricted disabled children in their learning, so that they were less prepared to cope with either their academic lives or their work and were not accepted on equal terms by the rest of society. According to the Secretary-General of Rehabilitation International, of the 450 million disabled persons in the world, over 300 million did not receive any type of help. As a result, disabled persons' aspirations were below their potential, and their self-esteem was lowered. That "social barrier" could be eliminated through public and social information and through the world-wide and continuous application of the principles of equality.

(Mrs. Nowill, Brazil)

9. Her Government had consistently demonstrated its unprejudiced attitude towards disabled persons. During the joint meeting of the Intergovernmental Copyright Committee (UNESCO) and the World Intellectual Property Organization held at Paris in December 1977, it had brought up the problems caused by difficulties in the circulation of books for the blind at the national and international level and had proposed that the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind should be a permanent observer in the Committee; that proposal had been duly approved. The Brazilian Constitution contained an amendment that guaranteed disabled persons special education, assistance, rehabilitation and social integration into the economic and social life of the country and prohibited discriminatory measures relating to working conditions, remuneration and the guarantee of access to public buildings and places. However, legal compliance was far from complete, mainly because of the discriminatory social barriers which existed in the community. The Brazilian social security system maintained vocational rehabilitation centres in several cities, but their services were provided only in the case of work-related accidents.

10. Most developing countries had three urgent problems of relevance to disabled persons: prevention of disabilities, training programmes for those who educated and rehabilitated the disabled, and assured access to materials and equipment. The development of programmes to solve those and other related problems depended on the setting up of priorities on a national basis, with the specific provision of funds in the budget of each nation, depending on its own level of development and other major priorities of the moment.

11. According to the World Health Organization, prevention was particularly relevant to blindness. Over 50 per cent of all cases of blindness or limited vision were either preventable or curable.

12. Three basic reasons for giving attention to disabled persons' problems were: (1) the number of affected people, estimated at 10 per cent of the population in every country; (2) the intrinsic value of the human being; and (3) the disabled person's labour volume and capacity.

13. At the national level, it was essential that in each country higher and higher priorities should be gradually established, so that disabilities could be reduced. That national task would depend upon the continuous action of interested groups, including organized efforts by disabled persons themselves. In Brazil, associations of disabled persons had arisen, culminating in the first national meeting of physically disabled persons' organizations, held at Brasilia in October 1980. At the international level, a permanent committee for the organization of a world-wide coalition of disabled persons had been formed at Winnipeg, Canada, in June 1980.

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(Mrs. Nowill, Brazil)

14. It was vital that people in developing countries should recognize the need to give priority to programmes designed to give disabled persons adequate assistance according to cultural conditions. Her delegation suggested that:

(1) disabled persons should be encouraged to participate more and more in all activities and initiatives related to them; (2) all States Members of the United Nations should be advised to consider the establishment of a specific governmental agency to be responsible for the co-ordination of official policies in respect of the disabled, setting up regulations and assistance systems for all disabled citizens, defining assistance policies, supporting research and training specialized personnel; (3) national co-operation should be attempted on an internal basis, in privileged as well as underprivileged geographic areas, by developing a programme for technical assistance and stimulation of needed activities; and (4) international technical assistance should be effectively assigned to train technical personnel and improve established programmes.

15. Maintaining those priorities at the national level depended directly on the continuous and definite support of international organizations, not only in terms of resolutions and recommendations but also in terms of the substantial allocation of funds for technical assistance programmes. It was essential to maintain and encourage the technical assistance priorities established by the United Nations Development Programme; to develop and maintain priorities to support special research and technology-demonstration and personnel-training projects conducted by agencies which were not bound to the international system of intergovernmental organizations to organize and maintain pilot training centres for experts in simplified rehabilitation, through interagency projects, so that such technology would become accessible to countries with a large rural population; and to establish international rules through which the cost of indispensable equipment for disabled persons' special education and/or rehabilitation would no longer be prohibitive for developing countries.

16. Mrs. LITVINOVA (Ukrainian SSR), speaking on agenda item 71, said that the problems of the elderly and the aged had important social and economic dimensions. The consideration of the question in the United Nations and in some of the specialized agencies was important in achieving international co-operation in solving the problems of that age group in a number of areas of the world. It was quite natural that different States, depending on their socio-economic systems, approached the problems of the elderly and the aged in different ways. A number of countries had already accumulated considerable experience in dealing with those problems. Since a trend towards the aging of the population had developed in recent years even in developing countries, it was relevant to recall that the General Assembly, in resolution 32/131, had recommended, inter alia, that the Secretary-General should conduct seminars and workshops and undertake studies on special issues in the field, in particular those faced by the developing countries concerned with the problem. In accordance with that recommendation, an interregional seminar on questions of aging had been held at Kiev, from 14 to 25 May 1979 and had been attended by representatives of 26 countries, mostly developing countries. The seminar had helped acquaint the representatives of those countries with the experience acquired in various regions of the world in organizing social and medical services for older persons, and the participants had

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(Mrs. Litvinova, Ukrainian SSR)

also learned about experience in solving socio-demographic, scientific, medico-social and other problems of gerontology in the Ukrainian SSR. They had visited the laboratories of the Institute of Gerontology of the USSR Academy of Medical Sciences at Kiev, which was concerned with problems of gerontology, the aging process and the role of social factors in longevity, and had also viewed State establishments providing services for the older generation. The conclusions and recommendations adopted at the seminar were extremely valuable, since they could be used by developing countries in drawing up social programmes for the elderly and the aged. It had been noted at the seminar that the trend towards the aging of the population was global in nature; according to current forecasts, the number of people over 60 years of age would increase from 300 million to almost 600 million between 1970 and 2000, and a particularly sharp increase was expected in the developing countries.

17. In the capitalist countries, economic crises, declines in production, and inflation affected the elderly and the aged in particular, as the most vulnerable sector of the population. In those countries, old age for millions of people meant fear and uncertainty about the future and often involved loneliness, poverty and a sense of uselessness. It was well known that by no means all working people in capitalist countries were covered by social security systems, and even for those who were, social security was adversely affected by the exploitation of the workers by entrepreneurs and monopolies.

18. The situation was very different in the socialist countries, where concern for the elderly was an unshakable law of life. In the Ukrainian SSR about 15 per cent of the population was over 60, and the steady improvement in the well-being of the entire population favourably affected their lives as well. Under the tenth five-year national development plan (1976-1980) expenditure on pensions and allowances had amounted to over 25 billion roubles. The new Constitution adopted in 1978, along with other vital rights, proclaimed the State-guaranteed right to material provision in old age. A decree adopted in January 1980 provided for an increase of 10 to 20 per cent in old-age pension supplements for continuous service at a particular enterprise, establishment or organization. The elderly and the aged not only enjoyed the broad rights and freedoms guaranteed to everyone under the Constitution, including the right to work, leisure, health care, housing and social security, but also, in many cases, had significant special privileges. Even after retirement, pensioners participated in the life of the country and, as far as possible, performed constructive and socially useful work. Socialist society did everything possible to enable older citizens to share their wisdom and experience with others, to the obvious advantage of all members of society.

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(Mrs. Litvinova, USSR)

19. The Ukrainian SSR believed that the most important conditions for solving the problem of the elderly and the aged and of other groups of the population were the strengthening of international peace and security, the implementation of specific disarmament measures, and the elimination of the vestiges of colonialism, neo-colonialism, racial discrimination and apartheid. The establishment of those conditions, the introduction of radical progressive socio-economic changes at the national level and the elimination of the acute social injustice to which the elderly and the aged were subjected in a number of countries could bring a solution to the problems of that age group.

20. The views of the Ukrainian SSR concerning the convening of a World Assembly on the Elderly could be found in its reply to the Secretary-General's questionnaire on the subject. It believed that the World Assembly should formulate and adopt measures aimed at drawing the attention of the world public to the indigent situation of the older generation in many parts of the world and should work out recommendations to enable Governments of particular countries to eliminate that injustice.

21. Her delegation was prepared to participate in future international co-operation in that important sphere, which affected the interests of millions of older people who had worked hard in their time and were fully entitled to humane treatment, care and assistance.

22. Mr. ADOSSAMA (International Labour Organisation) said that young people had an important part to play in the work of establishing the New International Economic Order at both the national and international levels. At the national level the young made up half the population and constituted the most active segment of the labour force.

23. Since 1920, a year after its establishment, ILO had been seeking to improve working conditions for young people, and a number of conventions and recommendations on the subject had been adopted at various sessions of the International Labour Conference, covering such subjects as the minimum working age, young people on night shifts, protection of young people against industrial accidents, medical examinations for new workers, vocational and pre-vocational training and equal pay for equal work.

24. ILO regional conferences had also dealt with the same subject: the African Regional Conference at Abidjan in 1977, for example, had considered employment problems of young people in rural and urban areas. In 1979 a report on young people and employment had been submitted at the Third European Regional Conference. Subjects covered at that Conference had included changing conditions of employment for school leavers, possible alterations in regular and adult education curricula to prepare students for changing structures of employment, methods of facilitating the transition from school to employment, priority areas for research with a view to introducing such reforms, changes needed in the work environment to meet the legitimate aspirations of young people, and the roles of employers' organizations, employees' associations and Governments in planning reforms. The problems of young people deserved attention because their moral

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(Mr. Adossama, ILO)

education and their technical and industrial training would determine the future of tomorrow's world. The decline of moral values in young people reflected to some degree the indifference of some parents and of nations and international bodies towards them.

25. With respect to the elderly, he said there was close co-operation between ILO and the United Nations. Useful work had been done by the ILO Committee on Older Workers. It had discussed a possible international instrument covering the subject, and in 1979 had recommended that the document should cover equal opportunity and treatment for older workers, measures to enable older workers to continue working in suitable conditions and opportunities for a progressive transition between the working life and retirement.

26. Turning to the subject of the International Year of Disabled Persons, he said that on 26 June 1979 the Conference of ILO had adopted a resolution on that subject, which followed up earlier recommendations and pointed out that the return to a working life and the integration into society of an increasing number of disabled persons would be a matter of major concern to all States in the years to come.

27. Mrs. THANH (Viet Nam) said that as a result of 35 years of continuous war due to imperialist, colonialist and hegemonist aggression and occupation, Viet Nam had over a million disabled persons in the country. The problem was aggravated by conditions of great poverty in an under-developed economy that had been ravaged by war and lacked the means to fight disease. Since the 1945 revolution Viet Nam had striven to improve the situation of the disabled so that they could live a decent life and be gradually absorbed into the productive sector. Many diseases that had resulted in such handicaps as blindness or paralysis had been gradually eliminated through preventive education, mother and child welfare services and nation-wide vaccination campaigns. Infantile paralysis had been reduced from 3.1 per 100,000 in 1961 to 0.75 per 100,000 in 1975 in North Viet Nam. With aid from the German Democratic Republic, the Government had built a plastic surgery centre at Hanoi, and established a network of similar centres producing semi-finished surgical appliances for the rehabilitation centres. Tens of thousands of disabled persons had received vocational training and were being incorporated in the economic life of the country.

28. Viet Nam fully endorsed the ideas underlying the proclamation of the International Year of Disabled Persons. It was a member of the Advisory Committee for the International Year, and had established a national committee which had agreed on the aims of the programme of action for the International Year in Viet Nam (A/35/274 and Add.1). The activities planned for 1981 included a campaign to ensure full participation by all in implementing that programme; a basic study on the situation of the disabled, the establishment of a network of orthopaedic and rehabilitation centres, the strengthening of existing establishments for the disabled and an increase in the number of those establishments, promotion of legislation on the rights and duties of the disabled, and a widening of the scope of foreign relations in order to establish more favourable conditions for the observance of the International Year in Viet Nam.

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(Mrs. Thanh, Viet Nam)

29. The country was greatly handicapped by the lack of resources, funds and equipment for the disabled in comparison with other countries. Her delegation therefore reiterated the appeal made by the General Assembly at the thirty-fourth session for the organization of exchange of experience, for bilateral material and technical aid, and for further voluntary contributions through the Fund for the International Year of Disabled Persons (resolution 34/154), and Viet Nam welcomed the decisions by the various specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies concerned to undertake special activities in observance of the International Year. Only joint action could bring about a genuine improvement in the conditions of life of the 450 million disabled persons in the world, and give real meaning to the theme of the International Year: full participation and equality.

30. Mr. ENKHS AIKHAN (Mongolia) said that human rights and dignity could be guaranteed only through concerted efforts at both the national and international levels. Mongolia, for its part, had taken decisive and far-reaching socio-economic measures to ensure steady development of the country and to create systems of public education, culture, health and so on.

31. The second essential element in ensuring universal respect for human rights was international co-operation of States, an objective closely intertwined with the question of maintaining and strengthening international peace and security. The arms race and the tension resulting from the policies of imperialist and other reactionary forces imperilled the basic rights of every human being, and the United Nations should move towards guaranteeing to every individual the right to live in peace and security. On the other hand, his Government recognized United Nations achievements in the human rights field, in particular, the international instruments elaborated on the subject, which Mongolia had signed and ratified.

32. His delegation supported the majority view reflected in General Assembly resolution 32/130 that the United Nations should deal first and foremost with the mass and flagrant violations of human rights which resulted from the policies of colonialism, fascism, racism, apartheid, genocide, aggression, expansion, hegemonism and foreign occupation and domination. Striking evidence of such violations of human rights could be found in the current situations in South Africa, in the Arab territories occupied by Israel, in Chile, in Northern Ireland and in South Korea. Mention should also be made of the crime of genocide committed by the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary clique against the people of Kampuchea.

33. His delegation wished to express its satisfaction that since 1979, a number of States had become parties to the International Covenants on human rights. It was gratified that several States had submitted their initial reports on the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Human Rights Committee had done constructive work in considering the reports of various countries. The consideration of Mongolia's report had once more demonstrated that the effective enjoyment of human rights depended to a great extent on the social system existing in a given country. The socialist structure of Mongolia's society provided the fullest guarantee of rights and freedoms and the steady improvement of the welfare of the people.

(Mr. Enkhsaikhan, Mongolia)

34. His delegation noted with satisfaction that the Sessional Working Group on the Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights had considered the reports submitted by States parties under the first stage of the Programme covered by articles 6 to 9. Mongolia had been among the first States to submit its report to the Group and had received a positive assessment of that report. Mongolia believed, however, that since all human rights and fundamental freedoms were indivisible and interdependent and since the full realization of civil and political rights without the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights was impossible, it would be preferable if the reports on the two Covenants be given equal treatment, especially as regarded reproducing the summaries of the discussion on those reports. Mongolia was convinced that given the goodwill of States the reporting procedure could effectively serve its purpose. It therefore could not support the proposal to create a new post for humanitarian affairs; the creation of such a post would only result in unnecessary duplication of the work of the Secretariat and would certainly involve additional cost.

35. His delegation could not but express its deep indignation that a person who had been one of the engineers of the premeditated extermination of millions of Kampuchean had signed the Covenants on behalf of that country. The Kampuchean people had found that person to be a common criminal and had sentenced him to death in absentia as an enemy of the people. It would be difficult to find any provision of the two Covenants that had not been grossly violated by the Pol Pot clique. The Government of Mongolia considered the signing of the Covenants by the representatives of the so-called Democratic Kampuchea as null and void; only the persons duly appointed by the genuine legitimate representatives of the Kampuchean people, the People's Revolutionary Council, were authorized to represent the Kampuchean people and thus assume international obligations on their behalf.

36. In conclusion, his delegation expressed the hope that the effective co-operation of States in the field of human rights would contribute to the promotion of universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and freedoms.

37. Mrs. CASTRO de BARISH (Costa Rica) said that Costa Rica had consistently supported measures on behalf of the elderly and the aged. Her Government was convinced that the question of the elderly and the aged was of great importance not only for that sector of society but for dynamic development. As stated in the report of the Secretary-General, that problem of the elderly was world wide. In all regions of the world, the numbers of people of advanced age had increased, with serious economic and social implications. It was a relatively new phenomenon, particularly in the developing world, and underscored the urgent need for an exchange of views and experience.

38. The Chief of the Social Development Branch of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs had stated at the 35th meeting of the Committee that the Centre had decided to hold technical regional meetings on gerontology and the problems of aging before holding intergovernmental regional meetings to compile specific data on the conditions and needs of the aged. Obviously, those needs and conditions varied from region to region and discussions and exchanges of views were therefore necessary at the regional level prior to the

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(Mrs. Castro de Barish, Costa Rica)

holding of the World Assembly. In that connexion, she was happy to inform the Committee that Costa Rica would host the technical meeting for Latin America on gerontology and the problems of aging. In addition, as an indication of its interest in the World Assembly, the Government had established a National Committee on the Aged, presided over by the First Lady of the Republic. Costa Rica was also interested in hosting the intergovernmental regional meeting for Latin America in 1981 and the President of Costa Rica had sent a letter to the Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs to that effect.

39. In response to General Assembly resolution 31/123, Costa Rica had established a National Committee for the International Year for Disabled Persons. In that connexion, her delegation wished to pay a tribute to the delegations of Belgium and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya for their important contributions in drawing attention to the problem. It also shared the views expressed by the representative of Denmark at the 36th meeting that since the initiative had come from the United Nations, the problems of disabled persons would attract world attention because the Year would provide an opportunity for a general evaluation of all related problems. In Costa Rica, work on the problem had progressed satisfactorily and a National Register of Disabled Persons had been established for the compilation, analysis and classification of statistical data on physically and mentally disabled persons. In addition, Costa Rica had taken preventive measures in the form of vaccination campaigns, nutrition programmes, campaigns for the prevention of blindness and against smoking, drug addiction and alcoholism. The action taken, particularly the vaccination and nutrition campaigns had helped to reduce the number of physically and mentally disabled persons.

40. Her delegation would support any proposal in the Committee on behalf of the disabled and would be very honoured to sponsor the pertinent draft resolutions.

41. Mr. KOMISSAROV (Byelorussian SSR), speaking on agenda items 76 and 73, said that the Byelorussian SSR consistently supported the equal international co-operation of States in promoting and developing respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the United Nations Charter; furthermore, it believed that such co-operation should be based on the International Covenants on Human Rights, which occupied a central place among the documents of international law on human rights formulated in the United Nations. The Covenants included many vitally important provisions ranging from the right of peoples to self-determination to each individual's right to work and placed on States Parties the obligation to ensure those rights. The accession of States to the Covenants and to other international agreements in the sphere of human rights and the strict fulfilment of their obligations were the main criteria of the willingness of States to co-operate in promoting and developing respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. His delegation noted with satisfaction the steady increase in the number of States Parties to the International Covenants on Human Rights; the Byelorussian SSR had been one of the first States to ratify them, and it was rigorously complying with its obligations.

(Mr. Komissarov, Byelorussian SSR)

42. In conditions of mature socialism the rights and freedoms of citizens were fully guaranteed by the very essence of the socialist system. That was reflected in the new Constitution of the Byelorussian SSR, adopted in 1978, which confirmed the equality before the law of all citizens without exception. At the same time, equality of rights was ensured in all areas of economic, political, social and cultural life. The Constitution of the Byelorussian SSR fully confirmed the socialist concept of the unity and interdependence of civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights. The Constitution attached great importance to socio-economic rights because the implementation of those rights was a necessary condition and basis for the implementation of all other rights. Thus, the right to work, education, leisure, health care, material provision in old age and illness, and housing and the other rights guaranteed under the Constitution were ensured in the context of the full satisfaction of the individual's material and spiritual needs. For example, the Constitution guaranteed the right not simply to work but to work according to vocation so as to ensure that each individual was able to develop his abilities and talents.

43. The political rights and freedoms guaranteed to citizens under the Constitution ensured the access of the broad masses to the management of State and public affairs. A striking example had been the elections in February 1980 to the Supreme Soviet of the Byelorussian SSR and the local soviets of people's deputies, as the result of which over 80,000 workers, collective-farm members and representatives of the national intelligentsia had been elected. The people's deputies regularly held meetings to report to the electors on their work.

44. In addition to political and socio-economic rights, the Constitution of the Byelorussian SSR also afforded citizens a broad range of personal rights and freedoms, whose enjoyment was guaranteed by the State. His delegation had noted with satisfaction that the Human Rights Committee had received favourably the report on the implementation in the Byelorussian SSR of the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The consideration of the report of the Byelorussian SSR on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights at the Sessional Working Group of the Economic and Social Council had confirmed the Republic's commitment to the fulfilment of its international obligations. His delegation believed that the constructive work of the Human Rights Committee on the basis of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights made a positive contribution to the co-operation of States in that sphere. The results of the work of the Sessional Working Group of the Economic and Social Council were encouraging and served the Working Group's main purpose of assisting the Council in considering reports from States Parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. His delegation further believed that the existing system for considering reports from States on the implementation of that Covenant's provisions was fully consistent with part IV of the Covenant and that there was no need for a review of the organizations and methods of work of the Working Group.

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(Mr. Komissarov, Byelorussian SSR)

45. The Byelorussian SSR deplored the continuing attempts to undermine the concept of the indivisibility of political and socio-economic rights proclaimed in General Assembly resolution 32/130. Those attempts were a continuation of the old course pursued by certain States which had originally imposed the division of a single international legal document into two covenants. The reason seemed to be that those States preferred to proclaim human rights without providing the necessary political, economic and social guarantees. For example, despite the obligation under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to protect the right to work, in certain countries which possessed the necessary economic potential, unemployment was nevertheless increasing. A similar situation prevailed in respect of the guarantee of other basic human rights in those countries. The attitude towards international obligations could hardly be regarded as a conscientious attempt to contribute to international co-operation in promoting respect for and observance of human rights and freedoms.

46. His delegation believed that as many countries as possible should accede to the International Covenants on Human Rights, since they played an important role in international co-operation in the sphere of human rights. The General Assembly should therefore once again call upon States which had not yet done so to become parties to the International Covenants, so as to make those instruments truly universal.

47. The farce of the so-called signing of the International Covenants by Ieng Sary, the butcher of the Kampuchean people, who had long ceased to represent anyone except himself, could only be regarded as a mockery of the very concept of human rights. The Byelorussian SSR believed that that action had no legal force, and it would continue to hold that position.

48. On the basis of its position of principle that an important part of the work of the United Nations in the socio-legal sphere was to strengthen further the legal basis of international co-operation, the Byelorussian SSR fully supported the initiative of the Polish People's Republic in proposing the elaboration of an international convention on the rights of the child. That proposal was particularly timely in the context of the International Year of the Child, observed on the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of the Child, which had drawn attention to one of the burning problems of modern times, that of improving the situation of children in many areas of the world.

49. In Byelorussian society the younger generation was given the best the people had to offer, and children were surrounded with constant care. Care for children was legally enshrined in the Constitution of the Byelorussian SSR, which, inter alia, afforded all citizens the right to health care; that encompassed the provision of free medical care at State health-care establishments and also special concern for the health of the younger generation, including the prohibition of child labour. The Constitution afforded all citizens the right to education; all forms of education were free, and secondary education was compulsory for all young people. Under the Constitution, the family enjoyed the protection of the State and the State demonstrated its concern by setting up an extensive network of establishments, providing services and paying allowances and benefits. Ample

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(Mr. Komissarov, Byelorussian SSR)

provision was made for extra-curricular activities for children, who had access to pioneers' and schoolchildren's palaces and homes and other children's facilities. Almost all State organizations and establishments, as well as enterprises and public organizations, concerned themselves with questions of child care. In accordance with a decision taken by the Supreme Soviet of the Byelorussian SSR in November 1976, a permanent commission on women's working and living conditions and mother and child protection had been established; it was concerned with questions of health protection for mothers and children and with helping families in the maintenance and upbringing of children. The Byelorussian SSR had created all necessary conditions for the harmonious physical, spiritual and moral development of children. Their education inculcated in them an aspiration towards lofty social goals, ideological conviction and a genuinely creative attitude towards work. The measures implemented in the Byelorussian SSR for the benefit of children went far beyond the provisions set forth in the Declaration on the Rights of the Child.

50. It was vitally important to make every effort to ensure that the children of all nations did not experience war and enjoyed an untroubled and happy childhood. The Byelorussian SSR intended to do everything possible to attain that noble goal. At the same time, it believed that the speedy completion of the draft convention on the rights of the child, its adoption by the General Assembly and its entry into force would be an important step in ensuring the protection of children. It had therefore become a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.3/35/L.14, and, as a member of the Commission on Human Rights, it would continue to contribute to the formulation of the draft convention on the rights of the child.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

51. Mr. O'DONOVAN (Ireland) said that his delegation understood that draft resolution A/C.3/35/L.23, submitted on behalf of the Group of 77, was an initial text and was open to negotiations. His delegation hoped to take part in those negotiations in order to arrive at a consensus on the text.

52. Draft resolution A/C.3/35/L.17 had been referred to the General Assembly by both the Economic and Social Council and the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women. It was an important matter because it took the form of a solemn declaration. In the interest of orderly work and the credibility of the United Nations, it should be approached seriously and he hoped that a working group would be established to study the text.

53. Mr. CARDWELL (United States of America) associated his delegation with the views expressed by the representative of Ireland and said that he hoped that draft resolution A/C.3/35/L.17 could be given more serious consideration because some delegations would encounter difficulties if it were merely considered perfunctorily.

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54. The CHAIRMAN said that time did not permit the establishment of a working group at such a late stage. Delegations interested in the text would have ample opportunity to discuss it with the sponsors.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.