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President: Mr. Ismat T. KITTANI (Iraq).

AGENDA ITEM 30

International Year of Disabled Persons: report of the Secretary-General (*continued*)*

REPORT OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE (A/36/764)

1. The PRESIDENT: The report of the Secretary-General on this agenda item [A/36/471 and Add.1-3] includes the report of the Advisory Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons on its third session. In this connection, members will recall that the General Assembly, at its 57th plenary meeting, on 13 November 1981, agreed that the Third Committee should be permitted to deal with some of the matters relating to the item, such as the preparation of recommendations and draft resolutions and their submission to the General Assembly for adoption. The report of the Third Committee on this item appears in document A/36/764.

2. I should like to propose that the list of speakers on this agenda item be closed at 12 noon today. If I hear no objection, it will be so decided.

It was so decided.

3. The PRESIDENT: In this connection, I should like to recall that in 1976 the General Assembly proclaimed 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons, with the following basic objectives: to help disabled persons in their adjustment to society; to promote all efforts aimed at providing disabled persons with proper assistance, training, care and guidance, and with opportunity for suitable work; to educate and inform the public of the rights of disabled persons; and to promote prevention of disability and the rehabilitation of disabled persons.

4. The decision of the General Assembly to proclaim the International Year was a confirmation of a deep-rooted faith in human rights, fundamental freedoms, the dignity and worth of the human person and the promotion of social justice as proclaimed by the Charter of the United Nations.

5. At the same time, the General Assembly recalled the Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons of 1971 [resolution 2856 (XXVI)] and the Declaration on

the Rights of Disabled Persons of 1975 [resolution 3447 (XXX)]. Subsequently, the Year was given the theme "Full participation and equality". At its thirty-fifth session in 1980, the General Assembly decided, by its resolution 35/133, to include in the provisional agenda of the present session the item entitled "International Year of Disabled Persons" and that, in view of its importance, this item should be considered in plenary meeting in observance of the Year.

6. The disabled population forms a very large group, estimated at approximately 10 per cent of the world population, and it appears that the number is increasing. Disability is often caused by wars, accidents in industry or negligence as regards public health. We should not forget, as a matter of social justice, that disabled persons are often those who pay the costs in suffering caused by human activity or negligence.

7. The International Year of Disabled Persons is now drawing to a close. It has raised public awareness of the problems of disabled persons and the prevention of disability and has contributed to creating a positive atmosphere around a basic and serious human problem that affects millions of people throughout the world.

8. In the very complex field of disability and its prevention, we have seen widespread activity, both in Member States and on the part of many United Nations bodies and agencies, as well as extraordinary efforts by non-governmental organizations.

9. The International Year of Disabled Persons has raised expectations that we can greatly improve living conditions for the disabled. I should like to express the hope that Member States will join in efforts to meet these expectations.

10. I call now on the Secretary-General.

11. The SECRETARY-GENERAL: As we come to the end of the International Year of Disabled Persons, it is appropriate that we should review the progress that has been made and reaffirm our resolve that further efforts should be made to ensure for the disabled their rightful place in society.

12. The two themes which have received special emphasis in our approach to the problem are respect for the human dignity of disabled persons and their participation on a basis of equality in the economic and social life of their societies. We believe that action for the welfare of disabled persons is to be promoted not out of a sense of compassion or charity but in full recognition of the useful and productive contribution they are capable of making to the well-being of their communities.

13. There is no doubt that the problem of disability is one of great magnitude. Though available figures are far from adequate, the world-wide total of mentally or physically disabled persons is estimated at approximately 500

* Resumed from the 57th meeting.

million, one third of them children. Eighty per cent of the disabled live in developing countries where less than 1 per cent receive any trained help. It is obvious that the issue cannot be dealt with in isolation from other social, economic and cultural problems. The greatest single cause of disability in the world is malnutrition. Our efforts, therefore, must also be related to initiatives to increase food production and improve child nutrition.

14. The United Nations had long been concerned with the needs of the disabled before the General Assembly designated 1981 as the year during which attention should be focused on their problems and action intensified on their behalf. In 1948 the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness and disability was affirmed in article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A decade later the Declaration of the Rights of the Child [resolution 1386 (XIV)] called for special treatment, education and care for children who are physically, mentally or socially handicapped. This was followed, in 1971, by a Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons and, in 1975, by one on the Rights of Disabled Persons.

15. The response to the International Year has been encouraging. I am pleased to note that national committees have been established in 127 countries to further its cause. Regional meetings have been held in various parts of the world to explore long-term solutions to the problems of prevention of disability, the rehabilitation of disabled persons and equalization of opportunities for them. At the international level, among other activities, a symposium of experts on technical assistance has formulated useful recommendations, which deserve our most serious consideration. The preparation of the draft world programme of action concerning disabled persons is being actively undertaken in consultation with Member States and organizations concerned and will be available to the General Assembly next year. The Advisory Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons continues, under the able chairmanship of Mr. Muntasser, to provide valuable assistance to our concerted endeavour to promote the objectives of the Year.

16. A trust fund for the International Year of Disabled Persons has been established and it has received generous contributions from several Member States to finance a wide range of activities, particularly in the developing countries. It is my sincere hope that Member States will increase their support to this fund and thereby assist in the implementation of programmes and projects relating to disability.

17. Much has indeed been accomplished during this Year and I have asked my Special Representative for the International Year of Disabled Persons, Mrs. Shahani, to provide the Assembly with more information in this regard.

18. I should like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the specialized agencies within the United Nations system for their significant contributions to activities relating to the Year. I also wish to convey my gratitude to the non-governmental organizations concerned for their tireless efforts to ensure the success of the Year.

19. The United Nations alone cannot solve the innumerable problems of the disabled the world over. What the United Nations can do—and is doing—is to offer an international forum to draw attention to these disadvantaged members of society, to promote international co-op-

eration in alleviating their problems and to serve as a catalyst for action at various levels.

20. The designation of a Year in itself is of course not enough. I should like to recommend that Governments, organizations concerned and the public in general take full advantage of the awareness and interest that have been aroused and embark upon practical, viable and longer-range programmes of action. We must seek not only to remedy particular disabilities but also to ensure that disabled persons have what most of us take for granted, namely, the opportunity for full and equal participation in society. It is of the utmost importance, therefore, that the momentum and the interest generated by the Year are sustained and carried forward at all levels. The year 1981 must indeed be the start of a continuous campaign for the disabled.

21. The PRESIDENT: I now call on the Chairman of the Advisory Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons, Mr. Ali Sunni Muntasser of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

22. Mr. MUNTASSER (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), Chairman of the Advisory Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons (*interpretation from Arabic*): It is a privilege for me, as Chairman of the Advisory Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons, to speak at a meeting of the General Assembly devoted to this International Year. I am happy to note, first of all, the sincere response of the international community to the initiative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, which led to the proclamation by the General Assembly of the year 1981 as International Year of Disabled Persons. Such a response is an indication of the importance of that International Year, which is considered to be one of the most successful of the many Years proclaimed by the General Assembly thus far. It has drawn attention to, and made the world public aware of, the fate of hundreds of millions of disabled persons, who, according to the latest statistics, make up 10 per cent of the world population.

23. The international response was immediately reflected in the establishment of national committees for the International Year of Disabled Persons in a large number of countries which have worked to make the national public more aware of the right of disabled persons to be integrated in society and to participate in all social, economic and political activities. They have also sought to develop new concepts in such fields as the prevention of disability and rehabilitation.

24. There has also been an intensification of international co-operation aimed at achieving the objectives of the International Year through the implementation of relevant General Assembly resolutions, thanks to the co-operation of the United Nations and the specialized agencies, which co-ordinated all activities relating to disabled persons with the other international organizations, governmental and non-governmental organizations, disabled people's organizations and Member States.

25. Activities in the International Year have emphasized certain categories of disabled persons, such as children, women, old people, victims of war and victims of crime. That is why there is now a greater awareness of the problems afflicting all those categories of individuals.

26. For the practical implementation of the theme of this year, "Full participation and equality", an appropriate in-

ternational climate is necessary, especially in the remote areas of the world where most disabled persons live.

27. The General Assembly decided, by its resolution 33/170, to set up an Advisory Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons, composed of 23 countries appointed on the basis of equitable geographic distribution, in agreement with the regional groups. The main mandate entrusted to that Committee and provided for in its statutes was the study of a programme of action for the International Year, in consultation with member States and specialized agencies. However, that mandate was broadened in accordance with General Assembly resolutions.

28. The Advisory Committee has held three sessions since its inception. At the first, from 19 to 23 March 1979, the Committee drew up the Plan of Action for the International Year. At the second session, from 20 to 29 August 1980, the Committee considered the implementation of that Plan of Action and its public information programme and methods of participation by the disabled in the Year's activities. The third session, from 3 to 12 August 1981, was devoted to the study of follow-up activities for the International Year, including the establishment of a draft world programme of action as well as the possibility of continuing the activities of the International Institute for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons in Developing Countries. The work of those sessions is summed up in the report of the Advisory Committee [A/36/471/Add.1].

29. I do not wish to dwell in detail on the draft world programme of action because the General Assembly will consider the details of that programme at its next session. However, at this stage we wish to emphasize in general that the aim of the draft world programme is to achieve the full participation of disabled persons in social life and in community development in the areas where they live, to grant disabled persons the same rights as other citizens and to ensure the application of these ideas in all countries, independent of their living standards or state of development. The draft programme of action tackles the questions of prevention of disability, rehabilitation and equal opportunity for disabled persons. The programme was established in order to take into account whatever possibilities exist at all levels in all countries. However, the time necessary for the assessment of priorities and their implementation will vary according to the country, its degree of development, the availability of resources and the social and cultural customs particular to that country.

30. The Advisory Committee, in its resolution 7 (III), which it adopted at its third session, requested the Secretary-General to distribute without delay the draft world programme of action to allow ample opportunity for States, international organizations and organizations for disabled persons to comment on it. The Secretary-General was also requested to prepare, in the light of those comments, an amended draft programme and to submit it, with the original draft programme, at the fourth session of the Committee so that the final version of the text could be submitted to the General Assembly, at its thirty-seventh session, for adoption.

31. I take this opportunity to pay a tribute to all Member States and to all the organizations concerned, and I appeal to them to send their comments and proposals to the Secretary-General so that he can prepare the text of the amended draft programme and send it to the States

members of the Committee in good time for them to be prepared in order to make a valuable and effective contribution to the discussions at the fourth session of the Committee.

32. Among the questions considered at the third session of the Committee was the very complete report of the Secretary-General on the possibilities of continuing the activities of the International Institute for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons in Developing Countries in the light of the experience of the International Year of Disabled Persons,¹ and in the context of its studies on support activities for development and for technical co-operation in preventing disability and in rehabilitating disabled persons, in order to provide equal opportunities to the developing countries. The Secretary-General was requested to take immediate measures to ensure that support until the end of the study of this question.

33. We note with great satisfaction that there was wide participation in all the sessions of the Committee and that the level of discussion demonstrated the importance which the international community attaches to this humane cause and to the need to apply its theme. In this connection we should point out that discussions in the Committee were always kept at a human level, removed from political or ideological considerations; even in those rare cases where there were some divergent views, these were readily reconciled. In spite of the dramatic political situation which prevails in the world today, we hope that this spirit will continue to reign in our future work, for it is evident that the discussion of this question is a factor of *rapprochement* rather than of division, a point that is in itself extremely important in today's world.

34. In conclusion I should like to express my appreciation to all those who have participated directly in the work connected with the International Year of Disabled Persons and who have enabled the tasks entrusted to them to be accomplished. I should like to thank the representatives of the member States of the Advisory Committee, who worked with such great devotion and sincerity in order to fulfil their mandate. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Mrs. Shahani, as well as his collaborators, who have given proof of great skill in accomplishing the mandate of the Committee, and the Department of Public Information, which played a very important role in publicizing the objectives of the International Year of Disabled Persons. I should also like to thank all the specialized agencies and all international and regional organizations which have contributed to the success of the International Year. Lastly, I should like to thank the participating non-governmental organizations, organizations of disabled persons and the disabled persons themselves, who took up the challenge posed by the Year, made their opinions known and participated throughout the world in celebrating the International Year of Disabled Persons. May God help us to fulfil our mandate in the service of the lofty ideals of the United Nations.

35. The PRESIDENT: More detailed information, which I am sure members of the Assembly will welcome, will be provided, as the Secretary-General said in his statement, by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the International Year of Disabled Persons, Mrs. Leticia Shahani, on whom I now call.

36. Mrs. SHAHANI (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the International Year of Disabled Persons): The Secretary-General, in his statement, asked me

to provide the Assembly with more information with regard to the achievements of the International Year of Disabled Persons. I am happy to have the privilege of meeting his request.

37. Since the official launching of the Year last January much valuable work has been done at both the national and the international levels to benefit disabled persons throughout the world.

38. Judging by the results achieved at the national, regional and global levels, I believe that the Year has served its purpose well. It has also proved to be a uniting theme in the world community. The Year has responded to a deep-seated need of the 500 million handicapped all over the world—the majority of whom live in the rural areas of developing countries and comprise 10 per cent of the world's population—to be able to achieve the goal of the International Year of Disabled Persons, which is full participation and equality.

39. Part of the Year's activity is reflected in the report on this item [A/36/471], which is before the Assembly. However, since that report covers only the period until the end of July 1981, three addenda to the report have had to be issued to cover two important events which have taken place since that time: the third session of the Advisory Committee from 3 to 12 August 1981 and the World Symposium of Experts on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries and Technical Assistance in Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation, which was held from 12 to 23 October 1981. Both meetings took place at the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs at Vienna. To give representatives an idea of the intensity of the activity at the national and the international levels in the period from 1 August 1981 to the year 1984 a calendar of events has been distributed to them.

40. I should like at this stage to deal with the activities at the national level. As has been stated, 127 national committees for the International Year of Disabled Persons have been established by Member States in accordance with General Assembly resolution 34/154. These national committees serve as catalytic agents in raising public awareness of the existence of disabled persons and of their problems. The committees also assist their respective Governments in co-ordinating and strengthening activities and programmes for this disadvantaged population group. Along with non-governmental organizations, national committees promote new concepts and techniques in the field of disability prevention and rehabilitation, and they form an important link between the national level and the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs in Vienna. The national committees also have a crucial role to play in the follow-up action of the International Year of Disabled Persons. I am also pleased to inform the Assembly that more than 90 national programmes of activities have been received by the Centre.

41. A series of meetings has been held at the regional level. The first regional meeting was held in Bangkok in September 1980 under the auspices of ESCAP. Next, a meeting was convened in Addis Ababa in October 1980. In November 1980 a meeting organized by ECLA was held in Santiago. In April 1981 an Arab regional conference was held in Kuwait, organized by the Kuwait National Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons with the technical assistance of ECWA. That conference was a forerunner of the ECWA session held in May 1981 in San'a. The final meeting was organized by the United Nations in co-operation with the Government

of Finland and was held in Finland in May and June 1981 for the countries of ECE.

42. I should like at this juncture to discuss the World Symposium of Experts on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries and Technical Assistance in Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation, which was one of the major events organized during the International Year of Disabled Persons. The Symposium was attended by 51 experts from all regions of the world, invited in their individual capacities, 126 observers from 41 Member States and the representatives of non-governmental organizations. A good number of the participants and observers, I am happy to report, were disabled persons.

43. The Symposium devoted its deliberations mainly to the promotion of technical co-operation among developing countries in the field of disability prevention and rehabilitation. A major achievement of this meeting was the adoption of the Vienna Affirmative Action Plan, which underlines the need for more effective technical co-operation and assistance in the field of disability matters. The report of the Symposium and the Vienna Affirmative Action Plan will be available to delegations in the near future.

44. I should like to inform the Assembly that one of the high points of the activities of the International Year of Disabled Persons was the preparation of the draft World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. The Chairman of the Advisory Committee, Mr. Muntasser, has already ably informed the Assembly of the work of the Advisory Committee in this respect. We hope that this basic draft document will serve as the basis for future activities of the United Nations system in the field of equalization of opportunities for disabled persons, including disability prevention and rehabilitation.

45. The draft World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons is not a detailed blueprint for action. Each country has its own methods of dealing with its disabled population within its own cultural and social traditions. We hope, however, that this draft programme of action will offer guidelines for many years to come to individual countries for strengthening their future activities on behalf of disabled persons. In this connection, the national committees in the various countries should play a crucial role.

46. Furthermore, the draft World Programme should strengthen international efforts in matters relating to disability. I should like at this stage to point out the extensive collaborative efforts of the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system and of the non-governmental organizations. I should like to express my deep gratitude to all members of the United Nations system for their collaboration and to congratulate them on their respective undertakings. I also wish to thank the non-governmental organizations for their co-operation.

47. I should like at this stage to mention some of the major ideas and elements in the draft Programme of Action which will be considered for adoption by the General Assembly next year.

48. One of the most notable emerging trends in the field of disability is the growing role which disabled persons themselves are taking in solving their own problems and in playing an active role in community life. Organizations of disabled persons have already distinguished themselves in the way they have collaborated with national and inter-

national organizations in promoting the goals of the International Year of Disabled Persons. I firmly believe that the International Year has done much to encourage disabled persons to work on their own behalf and this will have to be taken into consideration in future planning. We at the United Nations will give high priority to policies which will enable the handicapped to become more self-reliant and participate in decision-making processes which affect their very lives.

49. The two major ideas which have emerged as the focus of concern throughout the events of the Year are the prevention of disability and the equalization of opportunities of disabled persons. The concerns relating to prevention range from the prevention of wars and armed conflicts to eradication of diseases and the prevention of disabilities developing into social handicaps. The equalization of opportunities by removal of social, attitudinal and physical barriers to the socio-economic life of the disabled is the next important concern. The draft World Programme of Action gives priority to those two issues.

50. Rehabilitation has an important role within a national disability programme. Appropriate rehabilitation and treatment services must be found for the many millions of people who suffer disability. There is a compelling need, however, to consider new approaches. There is much evidence that the traditional approach of institutional care is not very effective. It is costly and requires highly trained professional personnel and expensive equipment. The inescapable conclusion is that Governments in many countries must develop new approaches to rehabilitation which de-emphasize the institutional approach. Many developed countries have already embarked on such a course. Increasingly, there is recognition of the need to introduce community-based services to provide the full range of essential rehabilitation services. Such an approach, moreover, can facilitate the integration of disabled and handicapped people into society.

51. I should like to mention also the importance of ensuring employment opportunities for the disabled. We must encourage the fullest possible involvement of employers and organized labour in creating and safeguarding jobs for disabled workers. This is at the same time one of the most important ways to make people, both disabled and non-disabled, learn to live together in a spirit of harmony and tolerance.

52. The activities of the Year have proved that the area of disability is a field of world-wide support and professional methodology which can become an important object for development and technical co-operation.

53. The International Year of Disabled Persons proclaimed by the United Nations has unleashed hopes for 500 million handicapped people the world over. It is our responsibility, collectively and individually, to ensure that the achievements of the Year will be translated now and in the future into public policy and concrete programmes.

54. Thus, a new chapter can begin in the evolution of human society when it can be said that the international community, because of the International Year of Disabled Persons, has begun to assist the disabled to achieve more meaningful lives; and the able-bodied themselves, through their association with the disabled, have become richer and more sensitive members of the human community.

55. Mr. FUJII (Japan), Rapporteur of the Third Committee: It is a great honour for me to present to the General

Assembly the report of the Third Committee on item 30, relating to the International Year of Disabled Persons [A/36/764].

56. In accordance with a decision of the General Assembly, the Third Committee began its consideration of this item on 19 November and, as in previous years, adopted a draft resolution on it without a vote. The Committee recommends that the General Assembly adopt that draft resolution, which is contained in paragraph 12 of the report.

57. The contents of the draft resolution are self-explanatory.

58. I hope that the general debate on item 30, which will take place today and tomorrow, will be fruitful and that the International Year of Disabled Persons will be a truly worthwhile and significant effort.

59. Mr. CORRÊA DA COSTA (Brazil): The Government of Brazil, mindful of its obligations towards disabled persons, and in response to the recommendations made by the United Nations in resolutions adopted by the General Assembly during the last five sessions, has established a Brazilian national committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons, working under the Ministry of Education and Culture. The National Committee is composed of delegates representing the different Ministries involved in the programme, non-governmental organizations in Brazil that are dedicated not only to educating and rehabilitating the disabled but also to preventing accidents leading to disabilities, and high-level consultants, some of whom are themselves disabled. All those delegates were carefully chosen in order to make the National Committee a truly representative body.

60. The National Committee for Disabled Persons, in its Plan of Action for the Decade, has set itself goals in the following areas: raising the consciousness of the Brazilian people, establishing preventive measures, developing education, rehabilitation, vocational training, improved access to work for the disabled, encouraging appropriate modification in traditional architecture, and working for the passage of helpful and relevant legislation.

61. The responsibility for attaining those goals has been assigned to seven sub-committees that report back to the National Committee, where the information they submit is duly analysed. In addition, state and municipal committees were created and given the task of studying the problems of the disabled at their own level of government, following the guidelines set for them by the National Committee.

62. According to information presented by the National Committee, the following progress has been made in those different fields of activity.

63. Throughout the country, particular emphasis was given to consciousness-raising, since it is felt that any measures to be adopted will depend to a large extent on the public's awareness of the problem.

64. The strategy being used to help make the Plan of Action operative is to give it widespread publicity so that the public in general, government authorities, commerce and industry, the disabled themselves and their families will become more receptive to the idea that the disabled have needs, rights and obligations. Publicity is being given to this in many different ways, according to partic-

ular circumstances, through the media—press, radio and television—and in conferences, seminars, meetings, campaigns and contests, or through the distribution of printed matter.

65. In the area of prevention, the Ministry of Health and the State Health Secretariats, in an effort to reach the high-risk element of the population, have started special programmes for a chain of posts supplying basic health services. In these programmes, special attention is to be paid to the seriousness of high risk, to cases of severe malnutrition, to diet deficiencies, to the rehabilitation of lepers through simplified techniques, to improving the quality of medical attention offered and to expanding the network of basic health services. Particular emphasis is laid on detecting the causes of accidents leading to disabilities. Immediate as well as long-term programmes are being set up for inoculation, early diagnosis of malformation, prevention of work-related accidents, control of industrial pollution and research on the aetiology of disabilities.

66. The Ministry of Education and Culture has a national centre for special education, which was set up in 1973. This centre has gradually been increasing its technical and financial assistance to all the State Secretariats of Education in Brazil, as well as to private institutions. Since the centre's objective is to expand and improve the kind of assistance it is equipped to provide, it develops projects such as advancement training for professors and technicians, helping to improve the level of human resources available, and is reorganizing both the school for the blind, called the Benjamin Constant Institute, and the National Institute for the Deaf.

67. The preparation of the Second National Plan for Special Education is part of the general scheme for medium- and long-term action, which includes making statistical surveys and analyses, conducting research and developing centres for the production of special psychopedagogical materials, and establishing a cultural centre in the Benjamin Constant Institute.

68. Rehabilitation is included in general programmes for community development. Under this heading, as priority items, special mention should be made of the following activities: the preparation of a document on the subject of employing the handicapped, the organization of centres for the production of orthopaedic equipment and prostheses, the simplification and expansion inland of the process of vocational rehabilitation developed by the National Social Security Institute and the enforcement of the regulation making it compulsory for general hospitals to maintain rehabilitation centres.

69. In the medium and long range, the following projects are to be carried out: small units for vocational rehabilitation will be set up in the interior of the country for the purpose of rendering assistance to the disabled, making full use of available community funds; special workshops will be built for severely handicapped workers and more courses will be given to improve the knowledge of professionals directly involved in rehabilitating the disabled; international agreements will be signed, facilitating the importation of technical aids and articles for which no nationally produced equivalents are available, and which are deemed necessary for disabled persons, and supply centres will be set up to provide articles and technical assistance for them.

70. At the present time the National Social Security Institute maintains 19 centres and six small units for vocational rehabilitation. In 1980 approximately 30,000 disabled persons sought assistance there and, of the 30,000, some 11,000 have already rejoined the work force, that is, more than one third.

71. As far as vocational training and access to work are concerned, the integration of the disabled into the labour market is one of the most important objectives of the programme, since job openings are not always adjusted to the needs or vocational training of the disabled. Moreover, employers tend to be doubtful about the handicapped person's capacity for work.

72. A pilot project called the "Job Bank" was co-ordinated by the Ministry of Labour and has already been launched with the co-operation of the television industry. The results so far are now being analysed. A study is also being made of several medium-term and long-range projects, such as the development of programmes for occupational analysis, vocational orientation and vocational training and the possibility of setting up vocational rehabilitation workshops within large-scale industries, with the assistance of the National Service for Industrial and Commercial Training.

73. In regard to removing architectural obstacles, studies are being made of the feasibility of improving conditions of access to public buildings and the mass transportation system for handicapped persons so as to make it possible for them to participate to the fullest extent in professional and social activities. There are projects for the construction of passages and ramps, for the revision of regulations and blueprints, for building special parking places, for revising urban building codes and for adapting urban residential buildings to accommodate the disabled. For the medium and long term, the following are being considered: the creation of facilities that will be free of architectural barriers and the removal of existing ones in present facilities. Another area to be developed is the possibility of including in the curricula of schools of architecture thematic material on free access for people with various types of handicaps to the different types of buildings planned.

74. As far as legislation is concerned, existing Brazilian legislation is being subjected to profound scrutiny in order to determine what is needed to enable it to give more adequate coverage to the fundamental rights of disabled persons in the fields of education, rehabilitation and labour. The studies will concentrate on the creation of more uniform, more comprehensive laws that will make it possible for the disabled person, scientifically defined as such, to receive the necessary medical care, including whatever he needs in the way of rehabilitation, access to work and special education at all levels, in order fully to develop his personality.

75. All the efforts being made to obtain recognition for the fundamental rights of the disabled have as their point of departure one basic theme: awareness. This was certainly why the General Assembly proclaimed 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons. Many years of work still lie ahead, work that must be done at many different levels—international, national and individual—to ensure that the fundamental rights of the disabled are respected as they should be.

Mr. Soglo (Benin), Vice-President, took the Chair.

76. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): I now call on Mrs. Imelda Romualdez Marcos, Special Envoy of the President of the Republic of the Philippines.

77. Mrs. MARCOS (Philippines): A few weeks hence our observance of the International Year of Disabled Persons will be history, and we shall turn our attention to a new agenda. It is entirely in the nature of the work of the Organization that its focus of concern should change periodically, for truly the United Nations is a home where many world problems seek answers. Yet, before this happens, I believe it is fitting that we in this Assembly should pause now and reflect on whether and how it has truly made a difference that we singled out this year for international attention to the plight of the disabled and whether and how our policies and our programmes can continue well past this year of concerted effort and caring.

78. There is a message sent to us by a young paralytic that evokes vividly the nature of our cause and our concern. She wrote, "Think of me as a person who hurts and loves and feels joy, and know I am a child to encourage and direct. Smile and say 'hello'. Even that is enough."

79. Through much of human history this plea for understanding has often been heard, but only rarely assuaged; but now at last we are beginning to understand. Without a doubt, it is already an achievement that the General Assembly proclaimed 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons. That act of faith, coupled with the historic 1975 Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons, focused international concern as never before on the plight of the one tenth of all humanity who today suffer various forms of disability and handicap in life.

80. Throughout the year now passing there have been many experiences and stories to tell of people, agencies and nations responding to our call to action, which, taken all together, speak of a change from where we were a year ago. In the assessment of the Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, Mrs. Shahani, the year may be regarded as one of the most successful years proclaimed within the United Nations system. Yet, despite this perceptible change which has been accomplished, we should not be in any doubt that we have made at best only a beginning. The challenges remain, and there is work for all of us to do here within the United Nations system, within our regional councils and within our own national communities.

81. The situation is especially critical in developing societies, where encouraging starts have been made but there is urgent need to follow up with sustained efforts. In this I speak from the experience of our people and Government, whose national committee has been supportive of the objectives and strategies of the International Year of Disabled Persons.

82. There is some apprehension on our part that once our year of international observance is over our efforts will fragment anew, co-operation will wane and resolution will waver. This must not happen. Our work, clearly, must go on, though perhaps in the shadow of lessened attention and publicity. The vital question is to know the direction which we must take in order that we can truly put into practice our brave declarations and principles.

83. I would venture to suggest that the answer lies in the adoption of a world programme of action concerning

disabled persons that will continue and expand what we have begun and embrace activities for the rest of the decade. This idea has been much in the minds of many of us, but obviously there is need for will and decision in order to get things going. The preparation of a global programme will allow us not only to engage in a more sustained effort for the disabled but also to refine our institutional and programme responses to problems and objectives.

84. Our priorities then are clear. Our supreme responsibility as the world Organization is to rally the world community to sustain the concerted effort to reflect and effect meaningful improvements in the lives of an estimated half billion disabled persons. Our task is to pursue this in the fields of prevention, rehabilitation and integration, and our basic policy is to provide participation and equality for all disabled persons.

85. Institutionally, we must clearly continue to anchor our global programme in the work of our national committees and to encourage indigenous structures and approaches. But we must strongly stress that action at the regional and international levels should provide potent platforms of support for national activities and programmes.

86. At the regional level consideration might be given to the establishment of regional institutes in the field of disability, just as we have established our own national institute for the disabled in our country.

87. In the area of technical co-operation we have barely begun to tap the tremendous wealth of new knowledge and technology that makes possible more effective schemes of intervention in the plight of disabled persons. An effective programme for the transfer of technology and knowledge is seriously needed. In this, the co-operative action of United Nations agencies can serve as a key starting-point.

88. But this is not all. Beyond what the United Nations system can do, we must also tap a little more of what individual countries can do to help in every aspect of technical aid and exchange. Related to this is the United Nations Trust Fund for the International Year of Disabled Persons, which we believe must now be employed for achieving the aims of our long-term programme of action. Here, more than anywhere else, we can see that our proclamation of concern has raised expectations that are not easily filled by the present extent of our resources and machinery for intervention.

89. Finally, it bears emphasizing that our programme of action for disabled persons is not and should not be isolated from other development objectives. We need ever to keep in mind that poverty, malnutrition and conflict abet the disability problem. Whenever and wherever we create development and peace we also contribute to the attainment of our objectives in this area. In the final analysis this is really to say that our sense of caring about the plight of the disabled is but another phase of the interlinking life on our planet of nation with nation, of rich with poor, of privileged with underprivileged, and of strong with weak.

90. In the recent work of the United Nations system we have perceptively given ever more emphasis to the status and role of various groups in human society: children,

youth, women, the elderly, workers and, now, the disabled. I see in this the very encouraging sign of a new human order coming into being, that we are now looking to people and addressing our concerns to human beings, our most potent and most precious resource. For too long have we looked in vain for answers in technology and ideology for the travails of our time; and when we have considered human beings and peoples it has often been to see them as problems.

91. In this most humane of causes, which reaches out to those who are regarded by many as educationally and socially lost to society, we see, however, an alternative view of the human prospect. For if we believe enough that disabled persons have something vital to contribute to well-being and progress, so can we ardently believe again in the great potential of human answers to human problems.

92. Let us with our understanding and compassion make the disabled whole. Let us accept their humanity. For only in doing so can we ourselves be truly human.

93. Mr. HASSAN (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It is written in the Koran: "Truly it is not their eyes that are blind, but their hearts which are in their breasts." It is my pleasure and privilege to speak today in the Assembly about a human problem which preoccupies the whole of mankind—the question of the disabled. My country's concern about this question is motivated by our deep belief in the noble humanitarian principles contained in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the third universal theory in volume 3 of the Green Book.

94. At the thirty-first session of the General Assembly, my country took the initiative of proposing that 1981 be proclaimed the International Year of Disabled Persons with the theme "Full participation and equality". I am happy on this occasion to offer to the international community from this rostrum the greetings and the appreciation of the great 1 September Revolution and of the people of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and our thanks for the response given to this initiative at the national, regional and international levels, to help achieve the goals of the International Year of Disabled Persons.

95. This response of the international community to the initiative confirms the awakening of the human conscience, in spite of the apparent prevalence in some places of selfishness and materialism.

96. Our initiative is not only a demonstration of sympathy for a definite human cause but also an expression of our conviction that Libya, which is a small State belonging to the group of developing countries, can play a positive role in the humanitarian and social field at the international level. It is a role that is consistent with Libya's glorious past, its aspirations and the ideals and values of the Moslem religion and the social theory of the third world.

97. Regrettably, the number of disabled persons in the world has reached, according to the latest international statistics, 500 million, about 80 per cent of them in the developing countries. A large proportion of the disabled are the victims of wars, violence and terrorism.

98. It is also regrettable that we live in a world where some put their selfish material interests above all humanitarian considerations and, in order to defend those interests, they have recourse to the force of arms and domina-

tion, not to the force of law and the ideals which have conferred on the human being his right to live a free and dignified life in peace and happiness.

99. In beginning our statement in this way, we have sought to clarify why the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya took this initiative and why it invited all the States in the world to celebrate the International Year of Disabled Persons. We should like to share our experience in this field with the Assembly in the hope that others will benefit from it, as we shall benefit from theirs and from their opinions, with a view to adopting the best proposals and developing existing facilities in order to find a solution to this problem which afflicts so many.

100. Our Arab, Libyan, Moslem society has been characterized by close social interdependence. Despite colonialism and all the ignorance and backwardness it imposed on our people, we have kept our authentic traditions; we have taken care of the disabled and the poor, protecting them and ensuring for them a dignified life with their families, their relatives or their neighbours. For all those reasons and many others, we did not find it necessary to establish homes and other social institutions. However, the terrible armed struggle of which Libya was the theatre of operations during the Second World War left thousands of victims, including disabled persons, among our people. That devastating war was waged on our soil, but it was not of our making. Although it ended in the mid-1940s, we are still suffering its after-effects. Many explosives and minefields remain on our soil—we know not where—and in spite of the great efforts exerted by Libya to defuse them, they are still a threat to the life of Libyans.

101. When we began taking an interest during the past few years in the cause of the disabled, we faced a basic problem—the lack of reliable demographic statistics on the number of disabled persons. We discovered that available official statistics did not reflect the facts. Recent statistics indicate that the disabled make up not more than 3 per cent of the population, whereas, according to international statistics, the disabled number not less than 10 per cent. Thus the former percentage does not represent the real situation. The reason is perhaps that the demographic statistics did not place the disabled in specific categories in accordance with scientific definitions.

Mr. Kittani (Iraq) resumed the Chair.

102. Nevertheless, these statistics can be useful since they indicate that there are many disabled persons in Libya among the elderly; the elderly represent roughly 50 per cent of the total number. About 15 per cent of disabled persons are over 60 years of age and 25 per cent are between 25 and 60. Children and youth make up the remaining 50 per cent, and among these 28 per cent may be regarded as young people who can do productive work.

103. The absence of precise statistics was the reason for the neglect of the problem by our society in the past. As a result, the whole burden of ensuring the welfare of members of the family was borne by the family. Society and the community looked after the disabled in a very limited way. Indeed such activities were almost nonexistent during the years preceding the Revolution. Some efforts were exerted but they remained insufficient until 1970, which we may regard as the starting-point for serious attention to and action on the problems of the disabled. Some legislation concerning the disabled had been adopted before 1970, but in practice it had not provided

the desired protection to them, and some of the laws had in fact not been implemented at all.

104. In 1961 and 1962, thanks to certain national efforts, two associations for the blind were established. They have achieved tangible success in taking care of this category of disabled persons. They have helped them to educate themselves, to get training and to find work. They have also played a great part in making public opinion in the community aware of the problems of the blind.

105. After the great 1 September Revolution and in keeping with its social and humanitarian content and the importance it attached to bringing about desirable social changes, in conformity with the new philosophy of social action to establish a community of self-sufficiency and justice, the Council of Ministers adopted a decision in 1970 to set up a committee to study the means of caring for disabled persons and rehabilitating them. As a result of the recommendations made by that committee, the Ministry of Education devoted special attention to two categories—the mentally retarded and the paralysed—and practical steps were taken to give them an opportunity for education. The Ministry of Health took an interest in the category of the deaf and dumb and in 1972 a specialized institute was created to deal with their welfare. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the general social security authority played a role in regard to the other categories, persons disabled by occupational accidents or by illness or infirmity. Welfare and rehabilitation services were provided and compensation for damage was paid to a large number of these handicapped persons. Labour laws and social security laws were adopted and the disabled were given material assistance.

106. The scope of social welfare was extended to include all categories of disabled persons. Under the new social security law No. 13 of 1980, and the terms of reference of the People's General Committee for Social Security, the relevant institutions were placed under that body. Many modern buildings were constructed to house such institutions.

107. As we have said, our services for the disabled did not start to function seriously until 1970. In the short time that has elapsed since then, the social content of the third universal theory has helped and encouraged us to achieve great success in this field. The new system of government in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya—that is, government by the people—allows every citizen to exercise his right to voice his opinion and his needs and the needs of his community, through the people's committees. These people's committees, which are selected by the citizens, execute their wishes. Thus there is now no differentiation between governmental efforts and private benevolent efforts.

108. But in spite of all this, we consider that the problem of disability requires still greater efforts in order to determine its real dimensions and apply the necessary remedies on the basis of research and sound planning so as to develop all the necessary means and services and to develop methods to allow maximum benefit from relevant technological progress.

109. Libyan society, in its march towards socialism and social justice, considers the concept of social welfare as a right to be guaranteed by the community to all members of society, able and disabled. We regard the disabled person as a citizen and as a human being with absolutely the same rights and responsibilities as any other citizen. That

is why our revolution has removed the word "disability" from the dictionary. Our society is ready to offer the necessary welfare services to all citizens, regardless of the degree of their disability, so that they may be productive and self-reliant, and even make a contribution to society, rather than being considered a burden on it. Our society is also concerned with disability-prevention and rehabilitation programmes. We hope that these programmes will favour our work with and for the disabled in the general interest of the community, allowing the disabled to rehabilitate themselves and achieve professional and social integration and the able-bodied to accept them as citizens and human beings who can play a role in the activities of the rest of the community. If there is a difference in performance, it is a relative difference, such as may be found between the work of two non-handicapped persons.

110. In preparing the five-year plan for the period 1981 to 1985 we have earmarked about \$270 million for the establishment in Libya of professional rehabilitation centres and workshops for the manufacture of prostheses. The centres will undertake, besides rehabilitation and training activities for the disabled, the training of specialized technical personnel in this field, in order to be able to increase the services provided for the disabled.

111. The plan also provides for the establishment of two sanatoriums for mentally and physically retarded children. Moreover, two institutes for the deaf and dumb have been set up to provide them with education and rehabilitation services.

112. In addition to all these institutions there exist already two for the blind and two for the deaf and dumb. We have two hospitals for the mentally retarded, two for paralysed children, two institutes for the care of mentally and physically handicapped children and a social institute for the care of the disabled and the elderly. We also have an institute for those suffering from leprosy, two for young delinquents and a number of health centres and hospitals specializing in the care of diabetics and patients suffering from heart disease and from other chronic diseases which may cause them to be invalids or prevent them from accomplishing their duties and obligations in the community.

113. The establishment of such social institutions is not an end in itself but a means of ensuring social, health and educational protection which allows the individual to adapt himself psychologically and socially. Persons should stay in them only when absolutely necessary in particular cases, for we feel that the handicapped individual should live with his family, which should take care of him, because the family is the normal environment for the individual, in accordance with volume 3 of the Green Book, where it is declared that a prosperous society is one where the individual grows in the family in a normal way and where the family prospers, the individual remaining in the human family like the leaf on the branch or like the branch on the tree, which becomes useless if it separates from the tree and loses its material life. The same is true for the individual if he separates from the family.

114. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 31/123, of 16 December 1976, a national committee was set up to prepare for the International Year of Disabled Persons in the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. This developed into a permanent committee, called the National Committee for the Welfare of the Disabled. It was entrusted with the task of establishing programmes and leg-

islation relative to the welfare of the disabled and to the organization of activities for the Year.

115. In connection with the celebration of the International Year, among the outstanding activities of this Committee, which I have the honour to preside over, were the following: first, Law No. 3 concerning disabled persons was promulgated in 1981. It is considered a progressive law in the field of the care of the disabled, since it guarantees the following: the right to shelter; the right to subsidized home services; the right to prostheses; the right to education, training and rehabilitation; the right of rehabilitated disabled persons to an adequate job; the right of the working handicapped person to follow-up services; the right to exemption from income tax; the right to facilities in public transportation by land, air and sea; the right to exemption from customs duties on articles for the disabled which have to be imported; the right to facilities in public places. In fact the disabled already have the right to facilities in public transportation by land, air and sea, and we are beginning to apply the rules to implement the right to subsidized home service and exemption from income tax and customs duties on imported equipment for the disabled. To confirm the role of the family in the care of the handicapped, article 9 of the law provides that they should stay with their families unless that is absolutely impossible. To ensure this, article 10 provides that the disabled person living with his family is entitled to receive the services and cash benefits due to him under the social security law and also a monthly allowance, in conformity with regulations contained in an annex to that law.

116. Secondly, the first National Congress for the Disabled was convened in Benghazi from 3 to 7 May 1981, with the theme "Full participation and equality". Among the most important subjects which the congress dealt with were: information and consciousness-building regarding all programmes of activity for the disabled; an assessment of the present situation of disabled persons in Libya, the establishment of necessary statistics and a study on specialized centres; discussion of the provisions of Law No. 3 of 1981, to which I have already referred, and consideration of recommendations for its implementation; and the participation of disabled persons themselves in decision-making.

117. Thirdly, a number of meetings were held between the National Committee for the Welfare of the Disabled and certain secretariats concerned with various categories of disabled persons, to examine the problems and find appropriate solutions.

118. Fourthly, a large number of pamphlets, posters and stamps relating to the International Year were published.

119. Fifthly, a series of information seminars on the disabled and on disability prevention were organized, as well as sports events, and a special standing committee on sports for the handicapped was set up.

120. Sixthly, an international seminar on disabled persons was held at Tripoli from 27 September to 4 October 1981 under the theme "Protection and integration". Many international specialists and experts from the United Nations and other international, regional and national organizations participated. The seminar dealt with two main subjects: prevention of disability and related subjects, and social rehabilitation of the disabled. Under those two items a series of papers on special issues were discussed, focusing on the explanation and analysis of the compre-

hensive character and benefits of Law No. 3 relating to disabled persons, the influence of genetic factors on the occurrence of disability, the development of human factors in the care of the disabled, the facilitation of sports activities for the disabled, the integration of the disabled into the family and the prevention of accidents at work.

121. The seminar adopted a series of important recommendations, among which I would mention the following.

122. First, having taken note of Law No. 3 of 1981 concerning disabled persons and of studies on it, the seminar recommended that it be taken as a model for each State, according to its possibilities, because it defined disability and specified the various categories of the disabled and the benefits that should be granted to them.

123. Secondly, in view of the lack of technical, material and human possibilities in the countries of the third world for the care of the disabled, States with experience and with such possibilities should assist developing countries in the preparation and implementation of programmes for the disabled.

124. Thirdly, in view of the human suffering and destruction caused by wars and the great number of victims, including disabled persons, resulting from situations such as that existing in Palestine and Lebanon now on account of the constant barbaric Israeli air raids, it is necessary to arouse world public opinion and invite it to respect human rights and to provide the assistance necessary to rid the world of the consequences of war, one of the main causes of disability. The seminar urged the designation of an international day of solidarity with disabled Palestinians and Lebanese.

125. Fourthly, given the importance of the human element in training, prevention and treatment, a plan should be drawn up for carrying out training at different levels, with one State at least undertaking research with regard to the education of the family at various levels.

126. Fifthly, in confirmation of the role of the family in society and with a view to safeguarding and promoting family relations and hence social interrelationship, the seminar considered it essential that disabled persons stay with their families except when absolutely impossible. Therefore, centres for disabled persons should not be established unless that is strictly necessary. Families should be assisted in looking after the disabled person, and the disabled person should be given every opportunity for education and training, using simplified methods.

127. Sixthly, one or more States should sponsor a plan to set up an experimental centre to provide information on preventing disability and to draw up programmes for rehabilitating the disabled person and reintegrating him in the community, with a view to establishing other international, regional or national centres and institutions and providing them with data consistent with the cultures of the various States.

128. The National Committee participated in several conferences and seminars organized in other States in connection with the International Year, in order to acquaint others with the achievements and the plans of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in this field. It also co-ordinated all activities and organized co-operation among experts.

129. The Advisory Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons, which my country has the honour to preside over, has had and still has an important and positive role to play in promoting activities relating to the International Year. The World Programme of Action, which the Committee will study at its fourth session, will be of special importance for the future policy of the international community regarding the care of the disabled and their participation in all aspects of life, like other citizens. We commend the efforts exerted by the Committee and hope that it will give serious consideration at its coming meeting to the ideas contained in the draft resolution that the Third Committee adopted without a vote at its 68th meeting. Among those ideas is that the period 1983 to 1992 should be proclaimed the United Nations decade for the disabled. We consider that that would provide the necessary framework for a serious follow-up and effective implementation of the results of the Year. We would note that this idea is not new; it was submitted to the World Symposium of Experts at Vienna by a large number of participants, in particular the representative of the Organization of African Unity. It was also put forward at the World Conference on Actions and Strategies for Education, Prevention and Integration held recently at Torremolinos.

130. We also support the idea of issuing an international identity card permitting the disabled to travel more easily. That is in conformity with measures taken in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, where, since the beginning of this year, disabled persons have not had to pay for transportation within the cities and have had a reduction of 50 per cent on travel between Libyan cities or between Libya and foreign countries. The companions of disabled persons who cannot travel alone are also given this reduction.

131. We cannot let this opportunity pass without commending the efforts made by the Secretary-General and his colleagues in promoting the activities related to the International Year, in spite of a limited administrative machinery and modest financial resources. We should like to re-emphasize the necessity of enabling the Secretariat to take all the necessary steps to ensure that the activities of the Year continue, including the present information activities of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Public Information. There is no doubt that these activities, in addition to those of Member States and the mass media, are the main ways to acquaint the various strata of the population, especially in the developing countries, with the aims and objectives of the Year.

132. I take this opportunity also to express our appreciation to the specialized agencies, the other international organizations, the non-governmental organizations and the organizations of disabled persons for their contributions to the success of the Year.

133. We attach great importance to technical co-operation in the field of care of the disabled, especially co-operation between the developed and the developing countries to permit transfer of technology and exchange of information, expertise and research concerning the disabled. In our view this must not merely be co-operation between rich and poor States; it should be based on the transfer of experience and techniques from the countries that have them to the countries that do not. As for co-operation and co-ordination between developing countries, the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya affirms its readiness to extend all the help it can to other developing countries in carrying out national programmes for the dis-

abled, especially in the field of prevention of disability and rehabilitation.

134. Before concluding, I should like to emphasize certain points I have already mentioned. First, the recommendations of the International Symposium on Disabled Persons [see A/36/809] must be taken into consideration, especially recommendation No. 23, namely, that Law No. 3 of 1981 concerning the disabled should, because of its comprehensive nature, be taken as a model, to the extent possible in each State. Secondly, the large majority of disabled persons in Libya are victims of the remnants of the war. For that reason we again appeal to the international community to co-operate with us to eliminate these remnants of war and to oblige the responsible States to submit the necessary documents and information on them.

135. In conclusion, I should like to emphasize that the end of the International Year should not mean the end of the effort. It should be only the starting-point of a rich future for mankind, in which all human rights will be guaranteed to the disabled and they will be able to live freely, in dignity.

136. I am also happy to inform the Assembly that, as a token of its concern that continued importance should be attached to the problems of the disabled, and in application of its principles and commitments, the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has made an additional contribution of \$250,000 to the United Nations Trust Fund for the International Year of Disabled Persons.

137. Mr. HAMMANI (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): The Algerian delegation is pleased to take part in the debate on the question of disabled persons as it is a question of great humanitarian importance in which Algeria is particularly interested. Over and above our own difficulties, we are meeting here today to seek together appropriate solutions to this essentially human problem which afflicts millions of persons.

138. The international community, by proclaiming 1981 the International Year of Disabled Persons, gave practical expression to its awareness of this phenomenon and its profound human, economic and social implications. In that regard Algeria, in addition to the measures it had already taken to protect disabled persons, set up a National Council for the Disabled in 1981, thus manifesting at the national level the importance Algeria attaches to the protection, integration and socio-professional encouragement of the disabled.

139. As the Assembly perhaps knows, the number of disabled persons in our country is very high. It has reached the impressive figure of 600,000 persons, which provides clear evidence of the magnitude of the challenge facing our society. We intend by means of various measures to create the conditions for their integration into the building of a new society and for their participation in the tasks and benefits of the development of the country. Those measures include, in particular, free education, free health care, vocational training for disabled persons and access to higher education.

140. While that represents an ambitious programme, we hope to achieve it, because our country is prepared to use all the necessary legal, human and material means to eliminate the spread of this phenomenon.

141. Among these means is a national charter, adopted in 1976, which is the basis for all policies and decisions

taken in the country. Within the framework of human advancement, that charter advocates the protection and social and family integration of all persons in difficulty. Apart from the guidelines contained in that reference document, the Algerian Constitution recommends, in its article 6, the preservation of the dignity of all disabled persons. For its part, the Public Health Code guarantees free and appropriate medical care. Finally, the General Labour Statute establishes the obligation to integrate all disabled persons into the national development system so as to safeguard their dignity and improve the quality of their lives.

142. Algeria, which has set up a legislative and constitutional system, intends to draw up a programme of action, with four main directions, namely: the provision of information to disabled persons on all their problems; medical care aimed at social and professional adaptation; specialized education and the organization of sport and recreational activities; and the establishment of a legal system providing for the financing and organization of the care and social integration of disabled persons. I should like briefly to describe my country's experience with regard to the implementation of that programme of action.

143. The first point has to do with prevention and information. With regard to the prevention of disabilities, there are four focal points. The first is at the family level. Such prevention will be achieved in various ways, including the raising of the social and economic standard of living, nutritional and health education, family planning within the framework of maternal and child protection, the establishment of a family code with due respect for our values and traditions and the provision of properly staffed child-birth facilities. The second focal point for prevention is in the schools. It requires improved school hygiene, based on an increase in screening tests as well as the inclusion of health education in the school curriculum. The third focal point for prevention is at the environmental level—today an imperative necessity. It calls for the establishment of a national code of hygiene which would protect everyone from the ill effects of toxic products. It also calls for an intensified struggle against the "highway disease"—automobile accidents—which disables many people, often at an active age. The final level on which prevention must be developed is the supervised medical inspection of the workplace, and the establishment of a sanitary and safety code at work, which will protect workers from the disabilities that threaten them in a country engaged in the battle of development.

144. With regard to information, the first need is to set up a data centre for the storage of many aspects of knowledge about the disabled person and his environment. The most important sort of knowledge is that to be provided to the disabled persons themselves and to their families so that they may be made more aware of the problems and how to deal with them. Such information is also the basis for ongoing public awareness campaigns, which must be sustained in order to combat ignorance. At the same time people must be taught to think and act in terms of prevention and assistance. It is also necessary to carry out a census of disabled persons in the various categories of disability and age.

145. For a planned approach to the problems of disabled persons, what is needed in the short term is a census programme with a decentralized follow-up of the statistical data. To this end it would be necessary to create a permanent system of data collection for the information provided by local communities, whose investigations

would focus on a compulsory declaration of disability and, above all, on evaluations of the indicators. This objective should be feasible in the medium term.

146. Knowledge of the causes and consequences of a disability should not be a matter for specialists only. Of course, the role of specialists is decisive, but it would be inadequate, if not ineffective, if it were not supported by society as a whole—a society which today has at its disposal all the means for learning about and understanding the problem we are discussing.

147. Newspapers, radio and television—each medium in its way, by the publication of articles, through films, audio and video broadcasts, documentaries and filmed reporting—can help make the most of this campaign so that it may attain its objectives. This important aspect of the problem has received the attention of the Algerian authorities, who throughout 1981, the International Year of Disabled Persons, granted it an important place within the national information organs.

148. The second item for the programme of action for the coming decade is medical care and the rehabilitation of all persons in difficulty. In this regard Algeria is making efforts in the following directions: medical care is facilitated in our country by the fact that diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation are provided free of charge; but those three facets call for five types of action.

149. The first is the creation of specialized, decentralized medical structures, equipped with adequate and effective human and material resources. An important place for this is reserved in the current five-year plan. The second type of action centres on the provision of flexible, specialized structures such as out-patient hospitals, so as to promote family participation in patient care. The third action in the realm of medical care involves a considerable development of schools for pupils with medical and psychological problems. Another important aspect involves promoting mobile teams which can make artificial mobility aids and other devices available to disabled persons in remote areas. Given the size of Algeria, that is particularly important, because permanent and far-reaching coverage is required. Lastly, we also encourage the training of specialized personnel for the treatment of disabled persons in all medical and psychological fields.

150. Nevertheless, such care can be complete only if it culminates in social and family readaptation, thus avoiding the psychological distress which is commonly found in disabled persons. It is hardly necessary here to emphasize the extent of the psychological effects if they are left untreated. That is why in our country we have chosen to elevate social and family rehabilitation to its proper level, with emphasis on the following points.

151. First, human and material resources must be provided to the social action offices to help persons in difficulty, at the neighbourhood level in towns and at the level of the commune in the countryside. That decentralization of efforts is a prime condition for any rehabilitation. Such decentralization is already well under way in our country. Harmonious family integration can be encouraged by the State by means of financial benefits through social security funds or communal and mutual aid funds, particularly for the disinherited levels of the population. We have been carrying out such measures for many years now in our country. Rehabilitation also implies reintegration over the short term of mildly disabled persons in vocational training programmes. That is one of our objectives. There

is also a need for vocational training units for disabled persons working in co-operation with numerous departments and organs for the development of the country. Lastly, a regulatory framework is needed for vocational training for disabled persons, with diplomas awarded for training undertaken. The validity and credibility of those diplomas on the labour market must be ensured. This would allow real reintegration and would reconcile the interests of the individual and those of society.

152. The third item on our programme of action for the International Year of Disabled Persons can be summarized as the mounting of a specialized educational health system and a system of recreational services.

153. All education has to be specially adapted to meet the particular handicap of the disabled person and, to avoid serious difficulties with rehabilitation, three principles must be borne in mind.

154. First, there is the principle of acceptance. Education must be carried out in perfect harmony with the disabled persons, their family and the specialists involved, on the one hand, and the organ providing follow-up of such education, on the other. That principle is strictly respected in our medical-pedagogic centres because it is crucial if any success is to be achieved.

155. Action programmes should be set up which would be duly adapted to the special features of the psychology of the disabled person in order to aid those with difficulties. For children, this should lead to the establishment of special school legislation, different from that for non-disabled children. Our legislators have started to work on this task and we are quite sure that such legislation will soon be enacted.

156. In the framework of specialized education for disabled persons capable of receiving training, we feel that leisure, which is a fundamental element of modern society, should be integrated. In that respect there are two types of activities: cultural activities, which take into account local values and traditions; and sports, which often require specialized equipment. In our country, those two types of activities have made international contacts possible for our disabled persons during this International Year. We have had enormous success in the organization of vacation camps and international sporting events for disabled persons.

157. The fourth and last item on our programme of action up to the year 1990 involves the legal system providing for the financing of the social and professional integration of disabled persons. That is the most difficult aspect because it depends on national determination, which should not be an act of charity nor a burst of solidarity, but an obligation of the State towards its disabled citizens. That policy is already very much a fact in our country.

158. I have given a brief account of the progress achieved in my country in regard to disabled persons. We are nevertheless aware of the inadequacy of the means compared with the size of the task.

159. The year 1981 has been proclaimed International Year of Disabled Persons, but our efforts should not stop at the end of the year. They should be sustained and increased to ensure that our hopes will not be frustrated. In this regard, disabled persons throughout the world are entitled to expect from the specialized agencies of the

United Nations system a larger contribution, in co-ordination with national organs. Those agencies, whose experience and knowledge of the specific problems have been proved, can make a valuable and, indeed, indispensable contribution in helping each of our countries to find effective solutions.

160. The social and professional fulfilment and integration of persons in difficulty are the conditions necessary for the participation of disabled persons in the development of their country. Those objectives can be achieved only if there is a clearly affirmed political will which is given concrete form through meaningful legislation.

161. The debates in the Assembly are evidence of the interest which the international community takes in the problem of disability. This is an important phase in the process leading to better prospects for the achievement of our common objectives.

162. The PRESIDENT: I now invite the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, Mr. Bradford Morse, to address the Assembly.

163. Mr. MORSE (Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme): It is a high honour to be invited, with other executive heads of United Nations organizations, to address the General Assembly during this series of plenary meetings in observance of the International Year of Disabled Persons.

164. In my statement at the 3rd meeting of the Second Committee, I expressed my conviction that the development of human resources is the fundamental prerequisite of development. I believe that many of the shortcomings in the development process are directly traceable to a continuing imbalance in the ratio of investment in physical infrastructure to investment in human resources and that important capital infrastructure investments can and do falter for want of the trained human resources which are indispensable to their cost-effectiveness. As I pointed out in the Second Committee, these human resources must come not from some perpetual external sources, but from a dynamic human and technical framework within the developing countries themselves—if we are to see those countries achieve the self-reliant, self-sustained, self-generating development which is their goal.

165. This necessarily implies that countries must mobilize all their human resources. By focusing on what an individual who happens to be blind or deaf or perhaps unable to walk can do—instead of emphasizing what he cannot do—we are able to tap and benefit from a wealth of human talent, ability and potential that for too long has been wasted. One aspect of this objective is to equalize opportunities so that disabled persons may enter into the mainstream of economic and social life and develop the skills necessary fully to participate in the activities of their society, thus enabling them to make their contribution to national development. An essential corollary of that objective is that disabled persons themselves should be directly involved in deciding how their participation and their equality are to be achieved. Each of these measures will help to shatter the attitudinal and physical barriers which have too often segregated disabled persons in the past.

166. The vast majority of disabled persons in developing countries, especially those in rural areas, are still not reached by health, nutrition, rehabilitation, training and other programmes which can help reduce the effects of

their disabilities. Moreover, the single principal cause of disability in the poorest countries—those with a per capita gross national product of under \$200—is widespread malnutrition. In such countries, many of which have population growth rates in excess of 2 per cent, the low increases in food production have meant little real increase in average per capita food consumption, and in some countries per capita consumption has actually declined in recent years. From these rough indicators it becomes obvious that disability prevention and rehabilitation must be viewed as an integral part of the development process as a whole and accepted as fundamental components of two of the most important technical co-operation objectives of the 1980s: that is, ensuring adequate food supply and providing basic health services at the community level.

167. It is in this light that the contribution of UNDP can best be seen. For UNDP provides financial support for Governments' actions in prevention, rehabilitation, training and education, in formal employment policies, and in production and income-producing activities in the informal sector. Notwithstanding this, requests for UNDP assistance in the planning and execution of disability action programmes have been modest at best. Prior to 1980 just under \$10 million of UNDP resources had been devoted by Governments to projects directed towards rehabilitation.

168. The record of UNDP support for prevention, however, is more positive. For example, over 1,000 projects have been completed or are now under way in preventive and community-based health and nutrition activities. Among the several particularly large-scale efforts in preventive action let me cite just two which indicate the relative order of magnitude of UNDP's involvement. In Africa, where onchocerciasis is the major single cause of blindness, with more than half the adult population rendered blind in some onchocerciasis-ridden zones, UNDP is devoting \$10 million to prevention, control and resettlement projects. This programme is carried out in co-operation with WHO, FAO and the World Bank and covers parts of Benin, Ghana, the Ivory Coast, Mali, the Niger and Togo and all of the Upper Volta, an area of 700,000 square kilometres and about 10 million inhabitants. Similarly, to combat trypanosomiasis, the African sleeping sickness which WHO estimates threatens some 35 million people, UNDP is at present expending \$14 million on research and measures for the treatment of people afflicted by this dread disease. An additional \$13 million is being spent in various African countries on the eradication of the tsetse fly, the principal carrier of trypanosomiasis.

169. From UNDP's point of view, the timing of the International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981 is fortunate since it coincides with the period in which most Governments are preparing their country programmes for the third UNDP cycle, 1982-1986. Recognizing the potential assistance that UNDP could provide to Governments in this area in the more than 150 countries and territories where UNDP is privileged to work, I asked resident representatives in July 1980—six months in advance of the Year—to consult with Governments on the possibilities of including disability projects in their country programmes.

170. As a result of the increased awareness generated by the International Year of Disabled Persons, country programmes for the 1982-1986 period reveal that some Governments are proposing increased allocations of UNDP resources for activities in disability prevention and rehabilitation. The first draft country programme prepared after these initiatives—that of Burma—has been received

at New York Headquarters and shows a 100 per cent increase, to \$10 million, in the resources to be devoted to community health. Of this amount \$1.2 million will be devoted to community-based services in disability prevention and rehabilitation. I sincerely hope that this is an indication of a trend in country programmes in the 1980s. We shall know more clearly early next year when all country programmes which will be submitted to the Governing Council in May 1982 will have been received.

171. At a time when we are all concerned that the impetus created by the Year be maintained—indeed, accelerated—perhaps the most important contribution of UNDP to the International Year's objectives will be the disability prevention and rehabilitation projects which are now being designed for execution over the next five years. In addition, I see a particular role at the country level for the UNDP resident representative, in her or his capacity as resident co-ordinator of the United Nations system, to assist the Government in putting together the individual United Nations-assisted projects in a comprehensive framework to combat disability in the country.

172. In the past too many projects were designed to create institutions, copied after models in industrialized countries, which segregated disabled persons from the mainstream of social and economic activity and reached only a tiny percentage of the disabled population at a very high cost per participant. The draft world programme of action concerning disabled people implies that a broader, more coherent approach is called for in the next decade. The approach to disability prevention and rehabilitation will have to be better integrated into the process of development as a whole. Technical co-operation has a decisive role in this process and our efforts will require the joint support of several agencies of the United Nations family. For example, the UNDP-supported project in Burma to which I referred a moment ago is to be jointly executed by WHO and the ILO. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, WHO, UNICEF and UNDP are collaborating on a nation-wide survey on disability in the country and ESCAP has expressed interest in joining in this effort. In Bangladesh, UNDP, together with the ILO, WHO and UNICEF, have joined together with the Government to support a national seminar on disability prevention and rehabilitation.

173. UNDP resident representatives are always available to advise Governments on how to develop projects which complement and reinforce each other across sectoral lines. Many have been asked to look at projects to determine whether disability components can be incorporated or if they lend themselves to the integration of disabled participants. For example, in countries developing a primary-health-care system, existing personnel whose training does not include the treatment and prevention of disabilities can be retrained at a relatively low cost. Similarly, in countries which lack a rural health system but possess a traditional midwife network, the training of midwives could be upgraded at minimum cost to enable them to educate women to care for the disabled and to prevent or reduce maternal and infant mortality and related disability by practising household hygiene, boiling unclean water, giving priority to the breast-feeding of infants and advancing the understanding of basic nutritional needs. We in UNDP stand ready at the country level to advise Governments on how to put together these important objectives into an integrated development approach through which technical co-operation can contribute to the development of all of the country's human resources.

174. I will not take time to detail all the initiatives which UNDP has taken during the Year to support the objectives of the International Year of Disabled Persons. I should like to observe, however, that UNDP has worked closely with the Secretary-General's Special Representative for the Year, Mrs. Shahani, and the secretariat of the International Year of Disabled Persons. I should like to take this opportunity to thank Mrs. Shahani for her effective leadership in guiding the work of the Secretariat during this most critical designated Year. In particular we were pleased to be able to support in a substantial way the recent World Symposium of some 50 experts from all parts of the world held in October to explore opportunities for technical co-operation among developing countries across national and regional lines.

175. In closing, let me reiterate my earlier thought. In striving for the creation of equality of opportunity for all, a nation's human resources are a key element of development. The development of these human resources is the primary role of technical co-operation. UNDP is prepared

to give the necessary support, as a result of its rather extensive experience, to this most fundamental objective. We simply cannot afford to waste the precious talents of one tenth of all the potential development talent in the quest for self-reliance. As we move on through the 1980s, having been sensitized by the International Year of Disabled Persons to the need to help disabled persons everywhere to help themselves, let us together pledge to ensure that they will move rapidly into the economic and social mainstream, where they can contribute to national development objectives side by side with their non-disabled equals.

The meeting rose at 1.35 p.m.

NOTES

¹ A/AC.197/10 and Add.1.