

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIFTEENTH MEETING

held on Wednesday, 1 May 1968, at 12 noon

President:

Mr. DAPHTARY

India

In the absence of the President, Mr. Daphtary (India), Vice-President, took the Chair.

REVIEW OF THE PROGRESS ACHIEVED AND IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED, AT THE INTERNATIONAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS, IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS SINCE THE ADOPTION AND PROCLAMATION OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN 1948, PARTICULARLY IN THE PROGRAMMES UNDERTAKEN BY THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES (agenda item 9) (A/CONF.32/4, A/CONF.32/5 and Add.1, A/CONF.32/7 and Add.1 and 2, A/CONF.32/8-10, A/CONF.32/12, A/CONF.32/13 and Corr.1, A/CONF.32/16; A/CONF.32/L.9-L.11) (continued)

EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF METHODS AND TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS AT THE INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS (agenda item 10) (A/CONF.32/6 and Add.1) (continued):

- (a) INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS: CONVENTIONS, DECLARATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS;
- (b) IMPLEMENTATION MACHINERY AND PROCEDURES;
- (c) EDUCATIONAL MEASURES;
- (d) ORGANIZATIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

General debate (continued)

Mr. MEHDI ben ABDELJALIL (Morocco) said that Teheran was a worthy choice of venue for the present Conference, which offered a unique opportunity for an examination of conscience, an opportunity to determine whether the high hopes engendered twenty years earlier had in reality been fulfilled. In all frankness, the situation of mankind today gave little cause for reassurance. Certainly, some progress had been made by the United Nations in the form of solemn agreements, covenants and conventions whose basic principles had been incorporated by Member States in their constitutions and national legislation. In some cases that might be simply a cynical concession to the world's conscience; nevertheless, the profession of faith often ended by engendering the reality of faith.

Unhappily, on every side people were still living in conditions of misery, despair, persecution and total deprivation of the most elementary of human rights. Certain States in Africa had set up apartheid and racial segregation as their policy of government. In Angola, Southern Rhodesia and so-called Portuguese Guinea, human rights and the principles of the United Nations Charter were being violated day after day and the people kept in a state of virtual slavery. Even that great democracy, the United States, which had made such immense sacrifices to put an end to racism in combating the Nazi tyranny, must redouble its vigilance and endeavours in order to root from its soil the anachronistic remnant of that criminal phenomenon. The sad loss of Dr. Martin Luther King had been the result of his daring to proclaim his faith in his country's democratic destiny.

In Asia and the Middle East dangerous situations were nullifying the implementation of human rights and, even worse, creating tensions which threatened world peace and security. The Palestinian people were fighting a heroic battle for their very existence and lost freedom. The Moroccan people, indeed the whole world, was profoundly concerned and deeply disappointed at the course events were taking in the Middle East, where Israel was adopting the very methods practised by the erstwhile executioners of the Jews, using force and aggression in defiance of United Nations resolutions and decisions. Mass massacre of women and children, concentration camps, profanation of holy monuments and places - nothing was being spared the Palestinian people.

His own country had never known or practised racism in any form throughout its long history. The Islamic precept of tolerance and respect for the rights of others had become its basic law. The large Jewish section of the population had always enjoyed peaceful co-existence and lived in perfect harmony with the Muslim and Christian groups. Indeed, during the Second World War, Morocco had been a haven for persecuted Jews from Europe, and the right of the Jewish population there to non-discrimination had been faithfully upheld against the Vichy French and Nazi authorities.

It was therefore with a clear conscience that his delegation, moved neither by hatred nor passion, denounced Israel's continued defiance of the collective will, as expressed in United Nations decisions. Morocco was not denying to Israel the right to constitute a State, nor to the Jewish people the right to live. But the same right belonged to the Palestinian people, and Israel's true intentions in their regard had been amply demonstrated by its latest aggression against the Arab countries: the disruption brought about by Israel's aggression in the Middle East contained all the seeds of a major conflagration. His delegation appealed to the Great Powers to act and prevent the efforts of the United Nations from ending in tragic failure. Morocco felt that the day would come when representatives of the free people of Palestine would be welcomed in the United Nations as a State ensuring to all its citizens, irrespective of religion or race, the sacred rights of freedom and human dignity.

In some areas of the world, despite a genuine desire to respect human rights, that term still remained devoid of all meaning. What significance could it have for peoples that were periodically threatened by famine or deprived of the means of

achieving minimum material security? The matter of the distribution of the world's means of producing wealth needed urgent review if peace and security was truly to reign and men everywhere were to enjoy their fundamental rights; but recent international conferences on the subject had been disappointing.

Reviewing the implementation of human rights in his own country, he said that the basic rights laid down in the Universal Declaration had been reaffirmed in Morocco's constitution and legislation. Specific legal enactments dealt with such matters as separation of powers, equality as between men and women and equality of all citizens before the law. Freedom of speech and of association, trade union rights and the right to strike, were guaranteed to all by the public code of freedoms. A further vast programme of political and social reform had nevertheless been undertaken. More than two-thirds of the total budget was devoted to the social sector. A vast school-building operation had been launched, and adult education was being provided at all levels in an effort to root out illiteracy and ignorance.

Social security for all workers had been made compulsory by decree. And to reduce unemployment and utilize its human potential to the full, Morocco had set up a special institution to mobilize the masses for projects of national or regional interest. Industrial development under the third national plan had led to the creation of a large number of new jobs. Lastly, agrarian reform was beginning to be implemented. Land was to be redistributed in such a way as to give the peasant the necessary means for a free and prosperous existence.

Obviously, much still remained to be done. Morocco continued to suffer from chronic unemployment and the lack of capital to attain all its objectives. It had, however, from the outset a clear notion of its aims and means, and it had realized that there could be no guarantee of freedom and dignity without a reasonable living standard.

The situation throughout the world concerning the implementation of human rights was in some respects reassuring and in others disquieting. So long, however, as confidence in the United Nations was maintained, there was hope that the worst would be avoided, for the United Nations offered the possibility of maintaining a dialogue, and that was half the battle to safeguard peace.

Mr. CHIKVADZE (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) outlined the origins of the Charter and the Universal Declaration, which were the outcome of the struggle

of the nations against fascist and nazi tyranny and its complete rejection of fundamental human rights and freedoms. The Charter was the symbol of the triumph of democracy and lofty human ideals.

There was no doubt that the United Nations had done useful work in human rights over the twenty years since 1948 preparing and adopting a number of international instruments, of which he listed the most important. However, there were serious gaps in some international instruments. Among the shortcomings of the Universal Declaration, for instance, was its failure to include articles on the struggle against colonialism as proposed by the Soviet Union but rejected like other proposals by socialist States, as a result of opposition from colonial Powers.

It was only with the change in the racial balance in the United Nations with the advent of newly-independent States, which had won freedom from colonial rule, that the situation had improved. The adoption of such important instruments as the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Races and Peoples, the International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and on Civil and Political Rights, and the Declaration and Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, prepared on the initiative of the socialist and developing countries, had been impeded by many Western countries, and it had been almost twenty years before the International Covenants on Human Rights were adopted. Even so, the same Powers had refused to sign them. The position was much the same with respect to the Declaration and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

While the adoption of the international instruments to which he had referred was a constructive development, legislation in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries was far in advance of the comparable United Nations instruments and of international practice. The October revolution had set an example to the world, for it was one of the noblest duties of a sovereign State to care for the welfare of its citizens.

There was certainly a need for a review of United Nations activities in the field of human rights and an assessment of the results achieved. The situation with respect to implementation in many regions of the world was still unsatisfactory. The most serious concern was caused by the policy of imperialist aggression and interference in the domestic affairs of other States.

Of what freedoms could there be talk, when towns and hospitals, schools and dams, children, women and old people were being destroyed systematically with all the might of modern American weapons of mass destruction? Of what human rights and freedoms could there be talk, when, as a result of Israel's aggression, hundreds of thousands of Arabs, oppressed by the invaders, had been deprived of their homes, land and other means of subsistence? Such violations always led to brutal violations of human rights and must be terminated forthwith.

The Soviet delegation was not prepared to discuss problems related to the implementation of human rights in general terms without regard to the existing international situation, at a time when whole peoples were being liquidated or were living in conditions akin to slavery. Aggression, an international crime against peace and humanity, was prevalent everywhere where the policies of colonialism, racism and apartheid prevailed. Imperialists were trying to maintain colonialism as a way of life. The policy of racism was being pursued in South Africa, Southern Rhodesia, Angola, Mozambique and other countries, where the people were suffering cruelly simply because they wished to be free. Racism penetrated all aspects of political, collective and individual life. Discrimination on racial grounds started even before birth and did not even end with death, the United Nations had evidence to show that the exponents of racism had even planned to celebrate the International Year for Human Rights by a new series of executions and a reign of terror.

The Conference must protest vigorously and demand an end to the policies of apartheid and racism. All peoples had to be free to decide their own destiny and to develop independently. Otherwise fundamental freedoms and rights throughout the world were meaningless. The Conference should condemn the criminal policy of aid to racists by militarist circles and the monopolies of western States. It could not remain silent in the face of political terrorism and reprisals against those who were fighting for freedom in many countries.

One of the most dangerous threats to fundamental human rights was the revival of nazism. The emergence of neo-nazi organizations was a matter for grave concern and the Conference should consider what measures could be taken to ensure that nazism did not constitute a fresh threat to human rights.

The action so far taken by the United Nations to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination, the activities of racist organizations, and racist propaganda, had

not been satisfactory. More than a hundred years ago, Karl Marx had warned the Americans that it was a matter of urgency that they should grant civil rights to the negro population of the country; yet the racial problem had still to be solved in the United States.

The United Nations had as yet no effective instrument to implement human rights and fundamental freedoms. The reasons for that included the efforts of a number of countries to paralyse the activities of the United Nations in that sphere. Certain countries attending the Conference continued to talk about the noble task of ensuring all fundamental human rights without showing the slightest intention of co-operating in the struggle against racism and colonial regimes. His delegation was convinced that if all the Members of the United Nations genuinely co-operated there would be an end to racist regimes. They continued to exist only because they received outside assistance. Another imperialist device to hamper the United Nations was to divert its attention towards questions which were of no importance in comparison with fundamental human rights. Hence, many United Nations bodies worked to no purpose, producing meaningless reports and engaging in pointless research. It was essential to improve the organization and efficiency of United Nations activities.

A number of representatives at the Conference had referred to the desirability of appointing a United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights or an international tribunal for human rights and to the need to establish regional commissions to investigate private complaints of violations of human rights. There was nothing new in those proposals; they had been rejected as long ago as 1948 as attempts to use international bodies to interfere in the internal affairs of other States; and there was little chance of adoption for such proposals at the present time. They were contrary to the provisions of the Charter and would prevent genuine co-operation among sovereign States. Moreover, nothing had been advanced which would testify to their efficiency. What could a High Commissioner achieve in the struggle against the policy of apartheid, when the racist regime in the countries concerned completely ignored the decisions of the Security Council and the General Assembly? What could he do in the struggle against police reprisals and persecutions in those countries? States putting forward that proposal were shirking their responsibility with regard to the practical implementation of human rights and freedoms, which lay in the observance by all States of the standards and principles laid down in the international instruments relating to human rights. Unless there was strict and

unswerving respect for the Charter and the Universal Declaration, and unless colonial countries and peoples were granted independence and all forms of racial discrimination were eliminated, it was impossible to ensure the observance of fundamental human rights and freedoms.

The Conference should carefully consider why the many United Nations decisions concerning human rights had not been implemented and name the countries which had sabotaged its efforts. Public opinion wanted to know how long imperialist circles would be allowed to thwart the United Nations in its work, and if no action were taken, the prestige of the United Nations would fall. The Conference should state categorically that aggression and imperialistic interference in the internal affairs of other States were a flagrant violation of human rights and freedoms and incompatible with the principles of the Charter; that all aggression must cease immediately; and that States guilty of aggression should be made to bear the consequences. It should condemn nazism outright and develop effective measures to prevent its recurrence.

The colonialist States should be brought to book for failing to conform to the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, and the Conference should call for an immediate cessation of all aid to racist regimes. The United Nations should concentrate on those issues and refrain from engaging in useless activities.

The International Year for Human Rights and the Conference must instil new energy into the struggle of the nations to achieve democratic human rights and freedoms, and social and economic progress, till complete victory for the principles of humanism, equality and fundamental human rights and freedoms was achieved.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.