

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE EIGHTEENTH MEETING
held on Saturday, 4 May 1968, at 3.30 p.m.

President:

Mr. KHALAF

Iraq

REVIEW OF 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) (concluded)

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) (concluded):

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

General debate (concluded)

Mr. CASAL (Argentina) said that it was a felicitous decision which the General Assembly had taken (resolution 2081(XX) of 20 December 1965) to hold the International Conference on Human Rights at Teheran in 1968. As Ambassador of Argentina to Iran, he had been able to see the political, social and economic achievements in the country, under the enlightened leadership of H.I.M. the Shahinshah.

Argentina, a young country, had been independent for more than 150 years, and the first concern of its founders had been to ensure the protection of human rights for all its citizens. Freedom of the press had been decreed in Argentina as early as 1811, and in 1813 the Constituent Assembly had enacted a law abolishing slavery. With such a history, the Argentine Constitution could hardly fail to be one of the most liberal in the world. As an example, he quoted articles 14, 19 and 20 of the Constitution. Human rights had been won in Argentina without violence, by a perhaps slow but nevertheless effective process of evolution. Women had gradually attained the same political and social rights as men. Education in Argentina was free and compulsory, and the illiteracy rate was very low. Very recently, some of the provisions in the Argentine Civil Code had been amended in certain respects: the age of majority, formerly 22, had been lowered to 21; young persons could work without parental permission as from the age of 18 years; and the law made provision for the separation of husband and wife under certain conditions. The labour legislation had been improved; workers enjoyed social benefits and their right to strike had been recognized.

In Argentina, the respect for human rights was part of the spiritual heritage of the nation and was firmly rooted in the minds of all citizens. When the United Nations General Assembly had proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, Argentina had welcomed it with a deep satisfaction, for its objectives and principles

were in complete accord with the concept of the dignity of man. After the passage of twenty years since that memorable date, it was the business of the Teheran Conference to review and evaluate the progress achieved and prepare a programme of future action. His delegation sincerely believed that the United Nations had positive achievements to its credit in the field of the protection of human rights.

The guarantee of respect for human rights was a political fact of universal importance, for it implied that the legislation in every country was based on principles and norms governing relations between individuals and those between the individual and the State. The emergence of those normative principles was one of the signs of the process of accelerated evolution in the world brought about by the technological revolution of recent years which was constantly multiplying and strengthening inter-State relations. As a result, collective security was based on the principle that world peace was indivisible, and that was why a vast international organization had been set up with a view to co-operation between States in a multitude of fields. Admittedly, in some parts of the world social, political and economic conditions were at variance with respect for human rights. In general, however, there was no doubt that man's lot had improved in recent years. Among regional achievements, there were the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, approved by the ninth International Conference of American States, and the European Convention of Human Rights adopted in 1950, which had set up a European Court of Human Rights. In addition, there was a better understanding between nations, which was reflected in the material and technical assistance supplied by industrialized countries to developing countries.

Argentina, which had always shown great interest in all problems brought before the United Nations by Member States, had subscribed to most of the agreements concluded and resolutions adopted, in accordance with its democratic traditions and policy of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other States. It had always upheld the values of civilization and human freedoms and would continue to co-operate enthusiastically in endeavours to ensure the protection of human rights, in conjunction with all countries which, at the national level and in international bodies, were fighting for the respect of the human person. One of the objectives of the Conference was to endeavour to determine the main obstacles preventing man from achieving his true purpose. In that connexion, he referred to the inaugural address of H.I.M. the Shahinshah, who had said that until recently human rights had meant first and foremost the political and juridical equality of individuals, whereas today political rights without social rights, justice under the law without social justice, and political democracy without economic

democracy no longer had any true meaning. It was obvious that for the salvation of civilization, the independence of human communities was essential, in the form not only of the freedom of the individual but also of the free functioning of collective groups within the State. No effort should be spared to safeguard peace and promote the welfare of man by developing cultural and intellectual activities and relations between peoples.

Mr. LOPEZ SCHUMMER (Spain) said that Spain had been the first European Power to have experience of decolonization: in the course of the nineteenth century, twenty nations, which Spain had endowed with sound social and legal structures based on the respect of the dignity of the human person, had attained independence. Because it had for many centuries been the connecting link between Europe and America on the one hand and between Europe and Africa on the other, Spain was better placed than any other country to understand the serious problems of modern times, the dramatic confrontation of races, classes and nations, the urgent need for the affirmation and defence of all the political, social, economic and cultural rights of the human person.

In support of the United Nations initiative, the Spanish Government had officially declared 1968 as "International Year for Human Rights"; it had expedited the process of acceding to the various conventions on human rights and the depositing of its instruments of ratification - it would have signed at least nine of the conventions before the end of the year - and had set up a special committee to prepare, formulate and carry out a vast programme of practical measures and activities for the co-ordination of the many non-governmental organizations interested in human rights. Spain considered it symbolic that the United Nations had commissioned a Spanish musician, Cristóbal Halfter, to compose the hymn for the twentieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration.

His delegation had listened with great interest to the statements by the representatives of the Holy See, the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Switzerland, the countries of Latin America, the Arab States and the socialist countries; it had been particularly impressed by the speeches, sometimes harsh but always fair, by the representatives of Tanzania and Algeria, who had well expressed the very pure feelings of the youth of the world, opposed to any insincerity or hypocrisy.

The surest means of hastening the triumph of human rights was undoubtedly to meditate on the parable of the mote and the beam: how few thought to remove the beam that was blinding them before trying to take the mote from the eye of their neighbour. On the subject of human rights, it always seemed to be the other one who was wrong, and everyone thought himself justified in throwing the first stone. The United States representative had given a remarkable example of humility in that connexion. Spain for

its part realized how much remained to be done to provide the rising generation with the spiritual and material conditions for its full development. The task was arduous but exciting, and there could be no better proof of the will of the Spanish Government to discharge it sincerely than its recent proposal that one of the articles in the new constitution of Equatorial Guinea - shortly to attain independence - should specifically state that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was incorporated in the text of the constitution.

His delegation hoped fervently that peace would at last be restored in Viet-Nam and that the Palestine Arab refugees would at last be given fairer and more humane treatment; violence could engender nothing but rancour and despair.

Mr. ESSARO (Cambodia) said that Cambodia, which had become a stable and modern nation since attaining independence in 1953 and a people's socialist community since 1955, and whose successive Governments had always been inspired by the Buddhist philosophy based on respect for life, the equality of living beings, compassion and tolerance, had never experienced the disastrous upheavals engendered by disregard for fundamental rights.

The present constitution and legislation granted all the rights set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to all Cambodian citizens and foreign residents without any distinction whatsoever. For example, with regard to the right to education, the Government was concentrating on developing secondary and higher education; since 24 per cent of the budget was allocated to national education, illiteracy would soon be a thing of the past in Cambodia. The Cambodian woman, who traditionally played a predominant role in the Khmer family, enjoyed all civic and political rights.

At the international level, he said that the United Nations and its specialized agencies had for twenty years been doing constructive work in the human rights field and that Cambodia had always fully collaborated in the efforts of those international bodies. However, a long road lay ahead. One of the principal obstacles to the full exercise of human rights at the international level was without a doubt the domineering spirit of certain States or human groups. For example, his Government considered that placing the People's Republic of China outside the pale of the international community was an act of discrimination which might well have unfortunate repercussions and jeopardize the stability of the structure that was being built in the human rights field. In South-East Asia, the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were being violated in the most flagrant manner by a nation which, paradoxically, had inspired and signed that Declaration. The United States of America,

whose people had shed so much blood for the noble cause of freedom and where only recently Martin Luther King had paid with his life for his faith in fundamental freedoms, was guilty of genocide with respect to the Viet-Namense people and was attacking Cambodian frontier villages almost daily. He hoped that, despite the difficulties, negotiations would finally bring peace to that part of the world. In the Middle East, the armed aggression of 1967 against the Arab countries and the occupation of their territories constituted an act condemned by the United Nations Charter. If no voice was raised against such armed aggression, subsequently aggravated by the terms imposed by the aggressor for consenting to withdraw its occupying forces, a most unfortunate precedent would be set which might be exploited by nations with expansionist ambitions, and there was every reason to fear a recrudescence of the imperialism and colonialism which had done so much harm to mankind.

Cambodia condemned the policy of apartheid practiced by the Government of the Republic of South Africa, which persisted despite the action taken by the United Nations and the specialized agencies and which constituted a clear threat to international peace and security. Only the solidarity of all peoples in the application of enforcement action to South Africa could bring about at least appreciable, if not decisive, results.

With respect to the possible means for translating human rights at last into reality, the Cambodian delegation, like most other delegations, considered that the establishment of new organs such as an International Court for Human Rights or the appointment of a High Commissioner for Human Rights would only add to the complexity of the existing administrative machinery. Referring to the emotional discussions in previous meetings, he said that the Cambodian delegation was proud to be participating in the work of the Conference solely in fulfilment of the tasks clearly set forth by the General Assembly in its resolutions 2081 (XX) and 2217 C (XXI) of 19 December 1966 and wished to state that it would refuse to sit either as jury or as judge in a judicial body that might be asked to deal with problems arising from individual differences. The Conference should be looked upon as a gathering whose mission was one of reflexion and which should endeavour to work out new methods and measures capable of strengthening the application of the principles proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He hoped that it would not disappoint the hopes which had been placed in it by all those human beings who were still deprived of their rights and freedoms.

Mr. WALDRON (Ireland) hoped that, if an international conference on human rights was convened in thirty years' time to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration, the issues before the Conference currently meeting at Teheran on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary would no longer be on the agenda. His delegation associated itself with those which had affirmed that the time had come to go forward from theory - the stage of the definition and elaboration of human rights - to action, the stage of the establishment of efficient machinery for ensuring the respect of those rights; in keeping with that approach his delegation was willing to support any resolution which would produce that effect.

Reviewing the situation with respect to the exercise of human rights in Ireland, he said that on the occasion of the International Year for Human Rights, the Irish Government had especially emphasized the educational aspects of those rights, particularly by developing civic training in the secondary schools. Ireland had signed and ratified many of the international instruments for the safeguard of human rights. The Irish Government, which systematically entered into those commitments only which it could be sure of honouring, was considering the possibility of acceding to the remaining instruments to which Ireland was not yet a party. He pointed out in that connexion that Ireland was proud to be the first State to have agreed, in response to a complaint by one of its own citizens, to bring before an international court an issue arising from the application of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which was doubtless the finest achievement in the last twenty years in the human rights field. The Irish Government sincerely hoped that, as the Secretary-General had said in his opening address to the Conference, "a great confrontation of cultures, historical traditions, political conceptions, religious and philosophical outlooks" might make possible a better understanding of the problems and a clearer view of the path ahead, and that it might give rise to an unflagging and sincere determination to contribute to the universal application of human rights.

Mr. DEMETROPOULOS (Greece) said that without the passionate and life-long dedication to the cause of human rights of such men as René Cassin, such progress as was being reviewed at the Conference could not have been achieved. In that field, Princess Ashraf Pahlavi also took a rightful and honoured place.

Human rights were utterly meaningless to those who for lack of sufficient education were unable to comprehend, to claim or to fully exercise those rights. He was impressed by the "crash" programme to give the people of Iran freedom from want and ignorance.

War was another destroyer of human rights. Besides the destruction of liberties, it also led the victors to become arrogant and the defeated ruined and resentful - - a condition hardly conducive to freedom and tolerance.

Recently, Greece and its neighbours had made a modest contribution to the preservation of world peace. That preservation was a prerequisite for the implementation of human rights.

The question of Cyprus had for a number of years disrupted relations with Turkey, neighbour and ally of Greece. The year before, after reaching the brink of war and looking into the abyss, a page had been turned and a series of negotiations had been initiated in a sincere spirit of accommodation, which boded well for their ultimate success. An immediate effect had been an improvement in the conditions of the people of Cyprus.

The Conference was not another meeting convened to deal with an immediate situation or a particular aspect of a long-standing problem. Much remained to be done in the field of implementation and there was need for more dissemination of information. But above all, the world expected not a further proliferation of resolutions inspired by particular contingencies and imposed by voting majorities, however precarious, upon minorities, however unwilling, but to blend all the constructive ideas expounded at the Conference into a comprehensive document. That document should be inspired by lofty ideals; should be legally sound and consonant with the Charter, and should be practical, taking into account the present state of the evolving concept of national sovereignty.

In short, it should be a document to which all could unreservedly subscribe. He hoped that the Conference would be capable of producing such a document, which would stand as another proud milestone on the road to human betterment. To that end, he pledged his delegation's unconditional support.

The PRESIDENT stated that the discussion under agenda items 9 and 10 was closed.

The meeting rose at 5.5 p.m.