

**Economic and Social Council**

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**Substantive session of 2000****Provisional summary record of the 44th meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 28 July 2000, at 10 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Wibisono ..... (Indonesia)  
*later:* Mr. Mbayu (Vice-President) ..... (Cameroon)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.*

### **Address by the Secretary-General**

1. **Mr. Annan** (Secretary-General of the United Nations) said that during the current session, the Economic and Social Council had shown itself to be a vibrant body, open as never before to new ideas and initiatives. In particular, the impressive roster of participants in the high-level segment on information technology for development had shown that, when the United Nations took the lead in discussing current pressing issues, stakeholders at the highest level were eager to come and contribute.

2. The high-level segment and the very interesting information technology exhibition which had accompanied it, had helped to raise awareness of the tremendous potential which the digital revolution held for economic growth, poverty eradication and development. However, access was crucial. Countries in which most people did not have access to information technology could not play a full part in the new global economy. And the longer they remained outside the global economy, the harder and costlier it would be to catch up. The “digital divide” must be bridged before it was too late.

3. The new information technologies must not be allowed to become another resource that divided rich and poor nations. The Council had done well to adopt a Ministerial Declaration focusing on the actions that were needed, at both national and international levels, to spread information technology and its benefits to the developing world. Success in that task would ensure that poor countries could join the knowledge-based global economy. Their people would thus be given a powerful tool with which to make their voices heard and to combat ignorance and disease.

4. Bridging the digital divide would not be easy. But the commitments made during the debates of the current session of the Council and at the summit of the group of eight major industrialized countries the previous weekend in Japan gave hope that it could be narrowed in the next few years if the entire international community remained committed to that goal.

5. With help from civil society organizations and the private sector, even the remotest corners of the globe could be connected to the new economy to ensure that

the rural poor were not left out. Investment in basic infrastructure was one key factor. But helpful government policies and transparent, consistent laws and regulations were also essential. In many developing countries, personal computers would remain out of reach for most individuals in the immediate future. But communal solutions could be found, and countries around the world had proved that it could be done. Information technology costs must be reduced and made affordable for all.

6. He wondered whether being connected to the Internet was of any value to those who could not read or write. The first step towards technological literacy was basic education. The international community must remain focused on its goal of ensuring primary education for all — girls and boys alike.

7. Similarly, promoting information technology could complement but not replace efforts to develop human capital and health services and to strengthen democratic institutions and the rule of law. Only healthy people, living in free, open and transparent democracies which provided for their basic needs, would be able to take full advantage of information technology.

8. Another major obstacle to the emergence of a real worldwide Web was content. Today, 80 per cent of the material available on the Web was in English. And most of it was aimed primarily at wealthy and well-educated people. Naturally, it reflected their interests. Automatic translation and the creation of local content must be encouraged to ensure that the Internet revolution brought real benefits to all.

9. Information technology could give many poor countries the chance to leapfrog some long and painful stages in the development process. But today, only 5 per cent of the world’s population was connected and half of the world’s population did not even have access to a telephone. Concrete initiatives had been announced in the Millennium report (A/54/2000) to help bridge the digital divide. But much more could be done. The United Nations could play a key role in expanding the impact of information technology on development and in promoting digital opportunities. The ministerial declaration of the high-level segment contained specific recommendations to that end. Those recommendations now needed to be translated into concrete and efficient strategies that would make a tangible difference in the lives of real people. A major

commitment of resources, intensified cooperation and strong partnerships between all stakeholders, including the private sector, were required. He expected the Millennium Assembly to further advance the vital work that the Council had begun.

10. Of course, it was not only information technology that needed resources. Resources were also needed to implement all the development goals agreed at the United Nations conferences of the 1990s. The previous month, the General Assembly had reaffirmed those goals at its special sessions devoted to five-year reviews of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the World Summit for Social Development, respectively. It had also identified ways to accelerate progress and overcome new challenges. The Council, too, had given important guidance to help the international community and the United Nations system achieve greater coherence and impact in following up the decisions of those conferences. The international community must abide by the commitments made and truly demonstrate global solidarity. The coming year's high-level intergovernmental event on financing for development would provide an excellent opportunity to do that and must be seized.

11. In order to make genuine headway, however, action must be taken to accelerate debt relief for poor countries. Pledges were no longer enough; concrete and immediate measures were needed. Donor countries and international financial institutions were once again urged to cancel the official debts of poor countries that were committed to poverty reduction and to expand the number of countries eligible for the so-called Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative by allowing them to qualify on grounds of poverty alone.

12. It seemed desperately wrong, for instance, that Nigeria under its new democratic Government should now be struggling to service all the debts contracted under military dictatorships in the 1980s and 1990s, and that it should be expected to devote a much larger share of its gross national product to debt servicing than to health, education and poverty reduction. That was surely a case where debt relief would also be a form of conflict prevention.

13. Similarly, debts owed by countries that had suffered major conflicts or natural disasters should be cancelled. Such countries went through terrible hardships. And international humanitarian aid, even

when it flowed generously, was in itself not enough to help them recover. As had been rightly underlined during the humanitarian segment, the international community must reinforce its prevention efforts and improve its response to complex emergencies. It must also build on the preventive and response capacities of those countries. But if it was decided, as a principle, to wipe out the debt of those countries, they would be given a real chance to rebuild their societies and start again.

14. People in poor and devastated countries placed great hopes on the international community to help them live a decent life. The current session showed how much was expected of the work of the United Nations. To live up to those expectations, adequate, stable and predictable funding was needed. He hoped that recent trends of stagnation and declining resources would be reversed, so that the United Nations was able to maintain its capacity to help countries make real progress towards the eradication of poverty, the overriding goal shared by everyone.

#### **Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation** (*continued*)

##### **(a) Follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council** (*continued*) (E/2000/L.14)

##### **(iii) Progress report on the implementation of the triennial comprehensive policy review** (*continued*) (E/2000/L.15)

*Draft resolution E/2000/L.14 and draft resolution E/2000/L.15*

15. **The President** said that draft resolutions E/2000/L.14 and E/2000/L.15 had no programme budget implications.

16. **Mr. Niehaus** (Costa Rica), Vice-President, introduced draft resolutions E/2000/L.14 and E/2000/L.15, which he was submitting on the basis of informal consultations. The texts reflected valuable consensus and the shared objective of strengthening the operational activities for development of the United Nations system. They would constitute an important contribution to the discussions to be held at the next triennial review of operational activities for development.

17. *Draft resolution E/2000/L.14 and draft resolution E/2000/L.15 were adopted.*

18. **Mr. Tomasi** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union, welcomed the adoption of the two draft resolutions by consensus. The European Union was encouraged by the spirit of partnership and will to succeed demonstrated by the Group of 77 and China. The European Union would approach the decisions with respect to the next triennial review of operational activities for development in the same spirit.

19. **Mr. Osio** (Observer for Nigeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group welcomed the adoption of the resolution on funding of operational activities (E/2000/L.14), which was important in many respects. While duly underscoring the primacy of core resources, which had been declining and thereby severely hampering the effectiveness of the United Nations system in delivering development assistance, it also rightly drew attention to non-core resources, which had been increasing. It welcomed the need for joint funding and called on all donors to make their contributions to the established multi-year funding frameworks for the funds and programmes so as to increase core resources and enhance the predictability of funding in order to facilitate meaningful planning.

20. The Group also welcomed the adoption of the draft resolution dealing with progress on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 53/192. Indeed, the simplification and harmonization procedures for projects and programming cycles adopted by the Boards should be responsive to the needs of developing countries. It was vital that further measures should be taken towards improving the effective incorporation of technical cooperation (TCDC) among developing countries into their programmes and projects, including support for the activities of the United Nations Development Programme Special Unit for TCDC. It was the Group's hope that those aspects, and others, would be favourably considered in the context of triennial policy review in 2001.

21. **The President** suggested that the Council should take note of the following: report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on the work of its regular session of 2000 (E/2000/34) (Part I); extract from the report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund

on its 2000 annual session (E/2000/L.8); report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on the first regular session 2000 (DP/2000/9); decisions adopted by the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund at its second regular session 2000 (DP/2000/19); decisions adopted by the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund at its annual session 2000 (DP/2000/28); annual report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund to the Economic and Social Council (E/2000/7); annual reports of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund to the Economic and Social Council (E/2000/20); annual report of the Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP), 1999 (E/2000/54); and report on the first, second and third regular sessions and annual session of 1999 of the Executive Board of the World Food Programme (E/2000/36).

#### **Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance** (*continued*)

22. *It was so decided.*

23. **Mr. Sotirov** (Bulgaria), Vice-President, reporting on the outcome of the humanitarian affairs segment, said that the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/55/82-E/2000/61) and the many briefings and side events had enabled delegations to broaden and enrich their knowledge and understanding of the theme for the segment: strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian response and the role of technology in mitigating the effects of natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies, including conflicts, with particular reference to the displacement of persons arising therefrom. The general debate on the basis of the report of the Secretary-General had eloquently underlined the increased importance which the international community was attaching to special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance. The theme had been thoroughly discussed and analysed during the two panel discussions on internal displacement and technology and natural disasters, as well as in the general debate and the preparation of the

agreed conclusions. Many interesting and constructive proposals had been made. Participation in the general debate and in the panels had been at a high-level; six delegations had been led by ministers.

24. The role of technology, particularly information, communication and space technology, had been highlighted as a tool that must be used in the process of early warning, prevention, preparedness, disaster mitigation, relief and rehabilitation. In that regard, the emergence of new partnerships with the private sector was encouraging. On the whole, the deliberations had underscored the need to strengthen the policy guidance and coordinating role of the Economic and Social Council in the field of humanitarian assistance.

25. A broad range of issues had been touched upon in the process of discussions and negotiations in an effort to reflect the theme for the humanitarian affairs segment in the draft text of the agreed conclusions. Representatives of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs had tried to provide appropriate assistance and clarifications of issues during the long hours of negotiations that had sometimes lasted well into the night and the weekends. After more than a month and a half of intensive consultations and negotiations, the participants had succeeded in preparing substantive paragraphs on coordination, natural disasters and the role of technology in disaster mitigation. However, the issue of assistance and protection of internally displaced persons had proved to be a delicate political issue for many delegations. The exchange of views had shown that more time was needed to allay suspicions in order to reach consensus on a compromise text. Despite the sincere efforts of delegations and various compromise proposals, the informal consultations were unable to come up with agreed language that would enable the text to be finalized.

26. However, the efforts had not been in vain. The exchange of views and ideas had been fruitful. The concerns of delegations had been heard, and the need for continuing the dialogue had been stressed. It was now particularly important to build on the positive results, avoid over-politicization, try to better understand the positions of others, be more trusting and demonstrate greater flexibility in order to overcome the existing difficulties.

27. It was vital that the Council should recognize the valuable activities undertaken by the United Nations in

the field of humanitarian assistance during the previous year and should continue to fulfil its guiding role in the coordination of activities in the important field of international cooperation. He therefore proposed that the Council should take the following draft decision on the activities of the humanitarian affairs segment:

“The Economic and Social Council,

1. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/55/82-E/2000/61) and welcomes the progress made in strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations;

2. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Economic and Social Council at its next humanitarian segment on further progress in strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations.”

Since the draft decision was based on already agreed language from previous years, he hoped that it would be endorsed by the Council.

28. **The President** said he took it that the Council wished to adopt the oral draft decision proposed by the Vice-President.

29. *It was so decided.*

30. **Mr. Osio** (Observer for Nigeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the humanitarian affairs segment taken up at the current substantive session was a vital aspect of the Council's deliberations, for which the Group of 77 and China wished the best of outcomes in the substantive session of 2001. It was most regrettable, that despite the best efforts of all parties it had proved impossible to reach the desired agreed conclusions for the draft resolution on strengthening the coordination of humanitarian response and the role of technology in mitigating the effects of natural disasters and other humanitarian emergencies, including conflicts, with particular reference to the displacement of persons arising therefrom. The fact that it had been impossible to reach consensus on 17 out of 26 paragraphs was indicative of the political and sensitive nature of the subject, especially as it related to sovereignty and territorial integrity, regarding which humanitarian response and recipients needed clear and common understanding. Every effort deployed to promote and sustain such

understanding in the future would therefore be most welcome. Meanwhile, the Group had found both the prior informal panel discussions on internally displaced persons and on natural disasters and the exchange of views with its partners during the informal negotiations an important step towards that goal.

31. In the circumstances, the Group welcomed the decision that the Council should take note of the Secretary-General's report on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations and request him to report on implementation of previously agreed conclusions to its substantive session in 2001.

32. **Ms. Carné de Trécesson** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the fact that the negotiations during the humanitarian affairs segment had not led to agreed conclusions, although regrettable, did not mean that the discussions had been futile. On the contrary, participation had been of a high quality and the discussion productive.

33. The European Union wished to stress that the agreed conclusions in the humanitarian affairs segment had been aimed at strengthening coordination of humanitarian assistance in the United Nations system, within the framework of the mandate given to those organizations by member States and the competent intergovernmental bodies. The European Union regretted that agreement had not been reached on that basis, in compliance with elements which had been agreed upon by all member States for several years. The absence of agreed conclusions during the current session should not, however, prevent the secretariat and the competent organizations from persevering in the fulfilment of the mission entrusted to them, nor should it prevent the European Union from continuing to make its contribution in responding to humanitarian emergencies.

34. The European Union hoped that the next humanitarian affairs segment would succeed in providing guidance for coordination of the United Nations system, with a view to strengthening the channels of multilateral humanitarian assistance. It therefore supported the draft decision presented by the Vice-President of the Council.

35. **Ms. King** (United States of America) said her Government regretted that the Council had been unable to reach consensus on agreed conclusions for the humanitarian affairs segment. Humanitarian assistance

within the United Nations system would continue to be guided by the agreed conclusions of the Council's first two humanitarian segments and the relevant General Assembly resolutions and Executive Board decisions.

36. United States support for the important work being carried out would continue undiminished, particularly in the areas of enhanced coordination, delivery of assistance and protection of the rights of populations affected by war. International support and concern for civilians uprooted by violence remained an imperative under international humanitarian law. The United States was ready to continue to work with all concerned parties to ensure that the most vulnerable groups would not be left completely to their own devices but would continue to benefit from humanitarian aid.

37. **Mr. Escanero** (Mexico) said it was not surprising that it had proved impossible to produce a document with agreed conclusions, given the differing views on defining the status of internally displaced persons. Strictly speaking, any change or redefinition of the status of internally displaced persons was not a question of humanitarian assistance but a political and legal question which required intergovernmental consensus. Discussion of the subject and of possible future action to that end rested with the General Assembly, not the Council or its subsidiary bodies. That was also true of the possibility of placing internally displaced persons under the system of protection offered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

38. Humanitarian assistance was one of the noblest expressions of human solidarity and a response to the growing challenges presented by the massive tragedies caused by natural disasters and the emergencies generated by the persistence and rise of conflicts. In that context, his delegation considered the strengthening of international cooperation to deal with natural disasters a high priority. It continued to give its full support to efforts to work out an international strategy to deal with natural disasters through an integrated approach and a long-term vision, within the framework of a genuine culture of prevention.

39. Humanitarian assistance was a complex task that required clear and well-defined parameters. For that reason, his delegation supported the guiding principles for humanitarian assistance established by consensus in General Assembly resolution 46/182. Humanitarian

assistance was an obligation for all which required the harmonious application of international law and the agreed-on framework of action and conduct, together with the promotion and extension of solidarity between peoples and nations. Those were and would continue to be the guiding principles for Mexico's contribution to that noble cause.

40. **Ms. Samah** (Algeria) said that the Group of 77 and China had worked tirelessly during the negotiations on the humanitarian affairs segment, but unfortunately its proposals on the issue of sovereignty, a concept to which Algeria attached great importance, had not been accepted. Regrettably, the constructive proposals of the Group of 77 on internally displaced persons and its efforts to resolve differences with respect to humanitarian action in Africa had also come to nothing.

41. **Mr. Belli** (Brazil) said that the theme of the humanitarian affairs segment, while both delicate and complex did not challenge the existing framework governing humanitarian assistance established by General Assembly resolution 46/182. His Government would continue to fully support all efforts to address problematic issues arising out of the discussion.

42. **Mr. Hynes** (Canada) said he wished to join the representatives of the United States and the European Union in expressing regret on the failure of the negotiations to arrive at an agreement. He was equally convinced that the humanitarian agencies of the United Nations were well placed to fulfil their mission of humanitarian relief.

43. He suggested that it might be an appropriate juncture at which to review the Council's working methods, including its attempts to achieve negotiated outcomes for the various segments. The experience gained during the humanitarian affairs segment had shown that such reflection might be in order.

44. **Mr. Sotirov** (Bulgaria), Vice-President, thanked all delegations and the United Nations Secretariat for their cooperation and support during the deliberations of the humanitarian affairs segment.

## **Coordination, programme and other questions** (*continued*)

### **(e) International cooperation in the field of informatics** (*continued*) (E/2000/L.27)

45. **Mr. Mangoela** (Lesotho), introducing the draft resolution contained in document E/2000/L.27, said that the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics had recommended the creation of the information and communication technologies task force because it felt that the United Nations should play a leadership role in the development of those technologies for development. The draft resolution noted several international initiatives taken to bridge the global digital divide and create digital opportunities, requesting the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Council on the implementation of the draft resolution.

46. The text of the recommendation, as detailed in the annex to the draft resolution, called on the Secretary-General to undertake consultations with all stakeholders and Member States regarding, inter alia, the mandate, composition, oversight and secretariat of the task force as well its modalities of operation. The timing of the establishment of the task force was optimal, especially in view of the Secretary-General's earlier statement to the Council on the important role to be played in helping developing countries to progress through certain stages of development. Moreover, the Working Group would be able to complete its task rapidly, thanks to the sound preparations made by the secretariat.

*Mr. Mbayu (Cameroon), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

### **Economic and environmental questions** (*continued*) (E/2000/L.26)

47. **Mr. Raichev** (Bulgaria) introducing draft resolution E/2000/L.26, on assistance to third States affected by the application of sanctions, said that the text was procedural in nature. He informed the Council that Greece had joined the list of sponsors to the resolution and that the words "a separate sub-item of" in paragraph 4 should be deleted.

**Social and human rights questions** (*continued*)  
(E/2000/NGO/1)

**(f) Implementation of the programme of action for the third decade to combat racism and racial discrimination** (A/54/855-E/2000/44 and E/2000/75)

**(g) Human rights** (A/54/855-E/2000/44; A/55/41 and A/55/139-E/2000/93; E/2000/22 and Corr.1, E/2000/23 (Parts I and II) and E/2000/23/Add.1, E/2000/75, E/2000/76, E/2000/83, E/2000/105, E/2000/106 and E/2000/107)

48. **The President** drew the attention of the Council to a letter from the Secretary-General to the President of the Council, contained in document E/2000/105. He recalled that the Council had decided to follow the matter of the advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice relating to Dato' Param Kumaraswamy, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers.

49. **Mr. Zacklin** (Assistant Secretary-General for Legal Affairs), in his update on the matter, said that the 7 July 2000 ruling, by which a judge of the High Court of Kuala Lumpur had struck out the writ of summons in one of four cases against the Special Rapporteur, had been an extremely welcome development. However, concern remained regarding the judge's decision that each party should bear its own costs in the proceedings, the possibility of appeal by the plaintiffs and the fact that three other cases were pending against the Special Rapporteur. Likewise, it was also disturbing that the Government of Malaysia had not taken any concrete steps to give effect to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 29 April 1999.

50. The Secretary-General would continue his efforts to ensure the full implementation of the advisory opinion and trusted that the Council would continue to be seized of the matter.

51. **Mr. Ndiaye** (Director, New York Office, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights), introducing the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to the Economic and Social Council (E/2000/83), said that the report covered some of the achievements of the year and the outstanding issues in human rights. It discussed the outcome of the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on Human Rights, the preparations for the World

Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, and the progress made at the five-year reviews of the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen + 5) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing + 5).

52. The High Commissioner emphasized the importance of preventive strategies: monitoring human rights situations, building national and regional capacities, ensuring accountability and strengthening economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development. She stressed that prevention has multi faceted and that all human rights were interrelated and indivisible.

53. Introducing the report on the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on Human Rights (E/2000/23 (Parts I and II)), he recalled that the Council had already taken action on some of the most important draft resolutions and decisions contained in the report including approval of two draft optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on involvement of children in armed conflicts and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Thanks to the Council's early action, the General Assembly had already adopted the protocols. In addition, the Council had already approved the Commission's recommendations on the appointment of a special rapporteur on adequate housing, the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on the right to food, the appointment of a special representative of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights defenders, the appointment of an independent expert on the effects of structural adjustment policies and foreign debt and the new procedure for dealing with communications concerning human rights.

54. The Council might wish to take action on the remaining 45 draft decisions and two draft resolutions recommended for adoption in the Commission's report (E/2000/23, Part I, sect. I), notably draft resolution 3 on the establishment of a permanent forum on indigenous issues. Also at its fifty-sixth session, the Commission had taken steps to rationalize its work by deciding (decision 2000/109) to implement all the recommendations contained in the report of the inter-sessional open-ended working group on enhancing the effectiveness of the mechanisms of the Commission.

55. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the Programme of Action for the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial



Discrimination and preparatory process for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (E/2000/75), he highlighted the fact that the Preparatory Committee for the Conference had taken decisions concerning the provisional agenda, the provisional rules of procedure, accreditation of non-governmental organizations not in consultative status with the Council and the participation of indigenous representatives.

56. Introducing the report on the twentieth and twenty-first sessions of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/2000/22), he reminded the Council that it had already endorsed the Committee's decision to hold two extraordinary sessions to reduce the backlog of reports of States parties. At its twenty-second session in April-May 2000, the Committee had adopted a new general comment on health.

57. **Mr. Shen** Guofang (China) said that, among the many positive results of the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on Human Rights, his delegation particularly welcomed the decision to appoint special rapporteurs on adequate housing and the right to food, the decision to implement all the recommendations of the working group on enhancing the effectiveness of the mechanisms of the Commission and the adoption of the two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

58. His delegation noted with satisfaction Commission resolution 2000/62 on promotion of the right to a democratic and equitable international order and on Commission resolution 2000/63 on human rights and human responsibilities, which reflected a relatively comprehensive and balanced interpretation of human rights concepts.

59. While the technical reforms adopted should increase the efficiency of the Commission's mechanisms, real improvement would not be possible until political confrontation was rooted out and all States could look objectively at their own human rights situation and then, without prejudice, at the situation in other countries. Views and experience should be exchanged on the basis of equality and mutual respect.

60. Most of the developing countries had long been advocating a greater emphasis on economic, social and cultural rights, but the rapporteurs in those areas had lacked political support and administrative assistance. The meeting of the working group on the right to

development had been delayed again and again. His delegation called on the Secretary-General, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and all Member States to implement the relevant resolutions in real earnest.

61. His delegation also hoped that the necessary human and financial resources would be allocated to the preparations for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance to ensure the expected results.

62. **Mr. al-Hariri** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation had reservations about paragraphs 30, 68 and 69 of the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (E/2000/83). Ideas about good governance differed from country to country, and what was considered good governance in one country might not be applicable in another. Legal and cultural attitudes towards polygamy and divorce also differed from country to country and in some places had religious roots. In imposing universal standards about which there was no established agreement among the Members of the United Nations, the Commission on Human Rights had gone beyond its mandate.

63. **Mr. Gray** (Observer for the Holy See) said that his delegation had reservations regarding certain paragraphs of the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (E/2000/83). First, he wished to stress that human dignity was the foundation of all human rights, not their corollary, as paragraph 44 seemed to imply. Second, it was stated in paragraph 63 that the Committee on the Rights of the Child had systematically raised issues of reproductive and sexual rights of girls, but his delegation could find no mention of such rights in the most recent report of the Committee (A/55/41). The sentence gave the false impression that such rights had been defined and agreed upon in United Nations forums.

64. The same paragraph referred to the right of children to obtain medical advice and treatment without parental consent, a concept that was inconsistent with article 26, paragraph 3, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which acknowledged the right of parents to choose the kind of education to be given to their children, and with articles 3, 5, 14 and 18 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which enshrined the rights, duties and responsibilities of parents.

65. **Mr. Chomarev** (Russian Federation) said that human rights issues were a matter of universal concern, but the unifying potential of the human rights issue had not been fully realized because of politicization and the application of double standards. Human rights issues should not be utilized as a pretext to exert pressure or exercise military force against sovereign States under the guise of humanitarian intervention. The international community had other constructive mechanisms available based on international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

66. With regard to the upcoming World Conference against Racism, his delegation supported the outcome of first session of the Preparatory Committee, including the recommendation that an inter-sessional open-ended working group should be established to work on the draft declaration and draft programme of action of the Conference. The Conference should stress prevention, and the new concept of racism should encompass all forms of racism, including national extremism and xenophobia, and so establish a basis for protecting national minorities against arbitrary measures sometimes enshrined in national policy.

67. **Mr. Al-Wasel** (Saudi Arabia) said that granting women full control over their sexual and reproductive activity would destroy family structures and social morality. It ran counter not only to the Islamic Sharia but also to the teachings of all the revealed religions and most social traditions. The international community needed to take extreme care when addressing the delicate issue of sexual and reproductive rights.

68. **Ms. Ahmad** (Sudan) said that her delegation was in complete agreement with the Syrian delegation with regard to the paragraph about good governance. It also objected to the disproportionate emphasis on women's reproductive health to the exclusion of other more important aspects of women's health, such as malnutrition and malaria (both particularly prominent in Africa), lack of clean water and proper health care, and the increase in maternal mortality rates. The use of the phrase "the sexual rights of girls" was particularly surprising in view of the fact that it had been excluded from the final document of the five-year review of the Fourth World Conference on Women had been rejected. The right of children to obtain medical advice and treatment without parental consent and the condemnation of polygamy were similarly unacceptable. Polygamy was legal in Islam and

explicitly permitted by a verse of the Holy Koran. It was not polygamy that violated the dignity of women but prostitution, poverty, ignorance, illness and underdevelopment.

69. **Ms. Samah** (Algeria) said that her delegation regretted that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in certain paragraphs of her report (E/2000/83), had highlighted controversial concepts, such as the notion of sexual rights and limitations on parental rights, on which no consensus had been reached within the United Nations, including at the five-year reviews of the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women. Her delegation had reservations regarding those paragraphs and hoped that future reports of the High Commissioner would reflect more faithfully the opinions of all Member States and be less selective in reporting the views of treaty bodies.

70. **Mr. Bhatti** (Pakistan) expressed concern that the report raised a number of issues on which no consensus existed, particularly in paragraphs 30, 33, 60, 63 and 68, and failed to approach those issues in a spirit which would have helped to advance the process of reaching consensus. In the case of paragraph 30, it would have been helpful if the High Commissioner had referred to the preambular paragraph of Commission on Human Rights resolution 2000/64 which clearly stated that good governance practices were the responsibility of the State concerned. It was puzzling that the High Commissioner, in paragraph 33, had brought before the Council an issue on which it had proved impossible at either Beijing + 5 or Copenhagen + 5 to reach consensus. Paragraph 63 raised a very sensitive issue on which, again, no consensus existed, while paragraph 68 attacked well-established practices and values. In the case of the rights of children, his delegation agreed with the Sudanese delegation that it would have been preferable for the report to emphasize those factors, such as malnutrition, which most directly affected the well-being of children.

71. **Mr. Abdallah** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that, although Islam was second to none among the world's religions in respect for human rights, the human rights issue was increasingly being used as a weapon against the developing nations. Some aspects of the report of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (E/2000/83), such as the provisions regarding women's rights and reproductive rights, were an attack on values of the revealed religions which were the

basis of law in human society, of the principles of the United Nations itself, and of the establishment of families based on licit marital relationships. It was hoped that one human right the Commission on Human Rights would pay more attention to in the future would be the freedom to teach religion, as guaranteed by numerous human rights instruments.

72. In recent years there had been an increase in the number of human rights organizations, many of which were guilty of applying a double standard. Most if not all of those organizations focused on political and civil rights to the exclusion of economic, social and cultural rights, even though the latter were a prerequisite for the former. In the process of imposing their Western conception of human rights on other cultures, those organizations often violated the right to freedom of religion. The Commission on Human Rights and other human rights organizations also focused on individual rights at the expense of the collective right of peoples to political independence. In order to be truly global, human rights needed to be based on the positive values of all civilizations, religions and cultures, not just one. Above all, the Commission needed to review basic human rights instruments, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which guaranteed the freedom to teach religion.

73. **Mr. Al-Sameen** (Oman) said that his delegation regretted the inclusion in document E/2000/83 of expressions and concepts that conflicted with its aspirations for human rights, and it agreed with preceding speakers who had addressed the issue, especially the representative of Pakistan. It registered its reservation with regard to all aspects of the report which conflicted with the religious and national law of Oman.

74. **Mr. Darwish** (Observer for Egypt) said that the report of the Commission for Human Rights (E/2000/83) contained valid points to which his delegation could subscribe, but that it also dealt with other issues on which no consensus existed in the United Nations, thereby failing to take into account the cultural and religious values of all Member States. His delegation had reservations with regard to paragraph 54, as human rights were not universal nor were they the same everywhere. There were human rights instruments that were not universally acceded to because of differing cultural and religious values. The norms referred to in paragraph 61, for example, should not be interpreted as allowing abortion in an

unrestricted manner; there were laws governing the conduct and legality of abortions in a number of countries, including his own. The recommendation concerning sex education made in paragraph 63 was contrary to the law and religion of his country and therefore unacceptable.

75. In connection with paragraph 64, he noted that in Islamic countries women were entitled to inherit but did not have equal rights to inheritances. Referring to paragraph 68, he said that the Human Rights Committee was not a body representative of the international community and should not attempt to override the rules and norms of international law. It should not state that polygamy violated the dignity of women. With respect to paragraph 69, his delegation believed it was unnecessary to go into details regarding responsibility within families. Paragraph 70 touched on an issue which had almost derailed the Beijing + 5 process and should be avoided. In paragraph 73 (e) it was not clear what involuntary activities were being referred to, and in paragraph 73 (g) it should be recognized that individual countries were guided by differing laws and regulations in their treatment of the subject.

76. **Mr. Al-Malki** (Bahrain) said that his delegation had reservations about several paragraphs of the report of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (E/2000/83), which went beyond the mandate of the Commission. In particular, paragraph 68 condemning polygamy was an offensive encroachment on the Muslim religion.

77. **Ms. Ukaeje** (Observer for Nigeria) said that her delegation wished to align itself with the comments by previous speakers regarding unacceptable references made in certain paragraphs of the report, including 53, 61, 62 and in particular paragraph 68, which contained comments on and criticism of polygamy to which it strongly objected. Paragraph 69 created the regrettable impression that the High Commissioner was attempting to regulate family life.

78. **Mr. Amaziane** (Morocco) said that his delegation recognized the importance of the report and welcomed its presentation but wished to express its reservations to paragraphs 60, 63, 68 and 69 for the reasons stated by previous speakers.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*