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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Sub-Commission on Prevention of  
Discrimination and Protection  
of Minorities  
Fortieth session  
Agenda item 11

HUMAN RIGHTS AND SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Written statement submitted by Human Rights Advocates,  
a non-governmental organization in consultative status  
(category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[15 August 1988]

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND PEACE

1. How, most effectively, might the Declaration on the Use of Scientific and Technological Progress in the Interests of Peace and for the Benefit of Mankind be implemented, as to PEACE? (See this session's annotated agenda, E/CN.4/Sub.2/1988/1/Add.1, para. 153.)

2. This year the Commission on Human Rights in resolution 1988/60 "called upon all ... appropriate organs of the United Nations ... to take measures to ensure that the results of scientific and technological progress were used exclusively in the interests of international peace, for the benefit of mankind and for promoting universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1988/1/Add.1, para. 155; emphasis added). In resolution 1988/61 the Commission "called upon all States to make the necessary efforts to use the achievements of science and technology in order to promote peaceful social, economic and cultural development and progress and to put an end to the use of these achievements for military purposes" (emphasis added).

3. Among the documents presented to the Sub-Commission this session is the Secretary-General's report on "the interrelationship between human rights and international peace" (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1988/2). Implicit in that report is the reminder by the Sub-Commission four years ago, in resolution 1984/30, that "the maintenance of international peace and security for all peoples and individuals is vital ... for the full realization of human rights and vice versa" (fourth preambular paragraph). See too E/CN.4/1987/NGO/61: "A reasonable inference is that armed conflicts too often lead to gross violations of human rights, just as gross violations of human rights too often lead to armed conflicts." Accord: E/CN.4/Sub.2/1987/11, p.20 (statement of International Commission of Jurists).

4. Paragraph 168 of this session's annotated agenda concerns the disclosure by transnational corporations and enterprises of information regarding hazards of their processes, products and technologies. We urge that needed disclosures by entrepreneurs engaged in the manufacture and the alarming distribution of nuclear, chemical, biological, and other weapons of mass destruction specifically be addressed. Compare this comment by the Human Rights Committee:

The Committee shares the concern expressed during successive sessions of the General Assembly that "the development and proliferation of increasingly awesome weapons of mass destruction ... not only threaten human life but also absorb resources that could otherwise be used for vital economic and social purposes, particularly for the benefit of developing countries, and thereby for promoting and securing the enjoyment of human rights for all". (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1987/11, p.18)

5. In order to begin work on these almost overwhelming problems, Human Rights Advocates proposes that the Sub-Commission consider now what significant contributions it might make in the near future, given its distinct competence and special experience with implementation machineries - machineries that remain unexplored by most other United Nations bodies. They include inter alia working groups, rapporteurs, advisory services, and early warning systems.