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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Seventh session
Item 8 of the provisional agenda

OLD AGE RIGHTS

(Welfare of the aged)

Memorandum by the Secretary-General

1. The Secretary-General draws the attention of the Commission on Human Rights to the action taken by various organs of the United Nations on the question of old age rights.
2. Consideration of this matter was initiated by resolution 213 (III) of the General Assembly, which reads as follows:

"The General Assembly
"Decides to communicate the draft declaration of old age rights submitted by the Argentine delegation (A/C.3/213/Rev.1) to the Economic and Social Council in order that the latter may make a study thereof and report thereon to the General Assembly at one of its future sessions."
3. The Economic and Social Council adopted, at its eighth session, on 2 March 1949, a resolution (198 (VIII)) requesting the Secretary-General: (1) to prepare, in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation and other appropriate bodies, a summarized documentation on the subject concerning in particular: (a) the basic features of measures, legislative and otherwise, for the benefit of aged persons, especially in countries with comprehensive old age security schemes including old age pension schemes; (b) the effect of such measures on their standards of living; and (2) to submit to the Social Commission and to the Commission on Human Rights at an early session the documentation prepared. These Commissions were also requested to report on this subject to a future session of the Council. In view of the short time available, the Secretary-General was unable to prepare the documentation for submission to the Commission at its fifth session, and suggested that the Commission should defer its consideration of the

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question to the sixth session (E/CN.4/163). The Commission accordingly decided to postpone this item (E/1371, paragraph 34).

4. The Secretary-General prepared a report giving a "Summarized documentation on measures for the benefit of aged persons and the effect of such measures on their standard of living" (E/CN.5/200/Add.1, E/CN.4/362/Add.1), which was submitted to both the Commission on Human Rights and the Social Commission at their sixth session, in accordance with resolution 198 (VIII) of the Council.

5. At its sixth session (3 April-5 May 1950) the Social Commission examined this report and also the report of the Secretary-General to the Social Commission (E/CN.5/200).^{1/}

The report of the Secretary-General showed that there was a lack of comprehensive material on the subject. The Social Commission thought that it would be desirable to initiate a programme of research, study and action to promote the welfare of aged persons, and to defer consideration of a declaration of old age rights until sufficient information was available. A draft resolution (E/1678, paragraph 69) to this effect was submitted by the Social Commission to the Council.

6. At its sixth session (27 March-19 May 1950), the Commission on Human Rights had before it the above-mentioned report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.5/200/Add.1, E/CN.4/362/Add.1) and a memorandum by the Secretary-General (E/CN.4/362), but decided to postpone consideration of those documents until the seventh session (E/1681, paragraph 80).

7. At its eleventh session, the Economic and Social Council considered the recommendation of the Social Commission on this question. The views of the members of the Economic and Social Council are contained in the summary records of the meetings of the Social Committee (E/AC.7/SR.125 and 126) and of the Council (E/SR.387).

8. It may be noted that certain representatives on the Social Committee were opposed to drafting a special declaration on the rights of the aged (E/AC.7/SR.125, pages 10, 12, 13; E/AC.7/SR.126, page 6). It was suggested that there should be consultation and full co-ordination with the Commission on Human Rights, to make sure there was good reason for drafting such a declaration, or possibly even to consider whether it might not better be incorporated, by way of a specific

^{1/} See documents E/CN.5/218, E/CN.5/L.35, E/CN.5/L.67 and E/CN.5/SR.133.

reference, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (E/AC.7/SR.125, page 13).

9. In support of the draft resolution recommended by the Social Commission, it was said that its adoption seemed important in a world where age distribution was rapidly changing, the old age group becoming substantially larger (E/AC.7/SR.126, page 18).

10. The Social Committee decided (E/1755) to recommend for adoption by the Council the draft resolution submitted by the Social Commission.

11. At its eleventh session, on 13 July 1950, the Economic and Social Council endorsed the views of the Social Commission. In resolution 309 D (XI), the Council noted the summarized documentation prepared by the Secretary-General, requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with governments and specialized agencies, to initiate an integrated work programme of research, studies and action for promoting the welfare of aged persons, taking into consideration any views expressed by the Commission on Human Rights and discussions of this subject at the sixth session of the Social Commission; and deferred any decision on the advisability of drafting a declaration of old age rights until completion of the necessary preparatory studies and reports.

12. Pending an expression of opinions by the Commission on Human Rights, preliminary consultations have been initiated by the Secretariat, through the Division of Social Activities, with some of the specialized agencies, with a view to planning an integrated programme of research, studies and action for the welfare of aged persons, as envisaged in the Council's resolution.