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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 24th MEETING

Chairman: Mrs. FLOREZ (Cuba)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 84: INTERNATIONAL YOUTH YEAR: PARTICIPATION, DEVELOPMENT, PEACE: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/38/460; A/C.3/38/L.12)

AGENDA ITEM 85: WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION: (continued)

- (a) IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 37/54 (A/C.3/38/4)
- (b) NATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN ACHIEVING FAR-REACHING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGES FOR THE PURPOSE OF SOCIAL PROGRESS: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/38/63, A/38/64 and Add.1)
- (c) POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN ITS VARIOUS FORMS AS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN DEVELOPMENT AND IN THE REALIZATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/38/338 and Corr.1 and Add.1)

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AGENDA ITEM 90: WORLD PROGRAMME OF ACTION CONCERNING DISABLED PERSONS: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/38/506)

1. Mrs. TOBING-KLEIN (Suriname) said that Suriname had supported programmes of action aimed at guaranteeing young people, the aging and the disabled active participation in society by encouraging the establishment of local, regional and national federations of peasant and worker associations and encouraging those associations to develop self-reliance at the community level by providing legal and financial aid and training their leaders, by promoting the participation of the rural population in the activities of rural development agencies and by mobilizing the energies of urban and rural youth for development activities.

2. In its plan of action for 1983-1986, the new Surinamese society had set itself the goal of making human beings the main beneficiaries of development, satisfying human needs and aspirations, harmonizing human relations with the social and physical environment, promoting social solidarity with the weak and ensuring the participation of the entire population in political decision-making. The Government had established a State health insurance system for the civil service, started housing projects for low-income groups and created a centre for industrial development and export promotion.

3. With 40 per cent of the population under 15 years of age, Suriname had good reason to support the objectives of the International Youth Year. The Government planned to create a national committee for the Year under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing. It had undertaken to build boarding homes

(Mrs. Tobing-Klein, Suriname)

for students from rural areas, as well as a sports and accommodations centre and to enact a new legislation which eliminated the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children. It had appointed a special ombudsman for youth problems. Referring to the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1924), she said that short-sighted economic policies, squandering of resources, political blunders and wars hurt children more than anyone, and that they therefore required special protection.

4. The Vienna International Plan of Action on Aging and the recommendations adopted by the World Assembly on Aging had inspired Suriname to take the necessary steps to ensure the well-being of the elderly. The Government had therefore already improved the old-age pension scheme and established an advisory council for policies on behalf of the elderly.

5. The 1981 census had revealed that 2.3 per cent of Suriname's inhabitants were disabled persons. Within the framework of the International Year of Disabled Persons, the Government had established a national committee, an advisory council for policies for the benefit of the disabled and a permanent fund for projects in that field.

6. The world social situation was characterized by poverty, disease and inequality, problems which made all talk of freedom ludicrous. Development was impossible without peace, which would make possible the mobilization of resources for economic growth and social well-being, and without full respect for human rights. Conversely, respect for human rights and peace were inconceivable without an improvement in the living conditions of the entire population, which could only be achieved through development. Referring to the declaration made by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77 on 10 October 1983, she called upon the developed countries to stop using restrictive and coercive economic measures to exert political pressure on the developing countries, because those measures were incompatible with the provisions of the Charter and impede the economic, political and social development of those countries.

7. Mr. OGURTSOV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the situation of the aging could be improved only by guaranteeing peace and security, ending the arms race and diverting the resources used for military purposes to economic and social development requirements. It also required elimination of the vestiges and policies of colonialism, neo-colonialism, genocide and racism and the various forms of discrimination against the aging and the restructuring of international economic relations on a just and democratic basis.

8. Governments and social organizations must seek to increase the participation of the aging in economic and social life and to utilize their rich experience in the national economy and social and cultural life in order to pass on traditions to the younger generations.

9. The Vienna International Plan of Action on Aging could not be implemented without international co-operation aimed at the establishment of a new

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(Mr. Ogurtsov, Byelorussian SSR)

international economic order and the implementation of the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade, which was based on the principles of peaceful coexistence among States with different social systems. In that connection, he recalled the General Assembly resolution on the aging in Lebanon which had condemned the military aggression perpetrated by Israel against that country, aggression which had caused untold suffering to Lebanese and Palestinian families. Under the pretext of promoting respect for human rights, the United States was attempting, through direct military intervention, to drown in blood Grenada's right to exist in freedom and sovereignty. His country roundly condemned that aggression as a crime against peace and humanity and demanded that it be ended immediately.

10. The recommendations on the United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs contained in the Vienna International Plan of Action on Aging, were intimately linked with improvement of the overall efficiency of the Secretariat's work within the limits of existing resources and should be examined in conformity with established United Nations practice. The Plan of Action must be carried out primarily at the national level.

11. In their statements, a number of delegations had stressed the link between solving international problems and the situation of the aging. His delegation hoped that the implementation of the General Assembly resolutions on the question of aging would assist Governments in solving problems connected with guaranteeing the rights of the aging to work, social security, education, medical care, housing, etc.

12. In their old age, citizens of the Byelorussian SSR enjoyed the constitutional right to social benefits in case of illness or total or partial disability. The worth of the elderly and their role in society were recognized and attempts were made to increase the life expectancy of the population and to prolong the active life and creative activities of the aging. Discrimination against the aging was prohibited and their right to work was fully implemented.

13. Many efforts were being made in the Byelorussian SSR to prevent disability, promote the rehabilitation of the disabled and allow them to live a normal life in society. Special attention was given to disabled veterans of the Second World War and to families of soldiers and members of the resistance who had died during that war. All disabled veterans with motor difficulties were provided with prosthetic devices to help make them ambulatory, and in some cases the State provided them with small motorized wheelchairs free of charge.

14. Ms. O'FLAHERTY (Ireland), speaking on agenda items 84 and 88, said that Ireland, which had a proportionately larger population of young people than most European countries with more than half of its people under 25, was particularly interested in the issue of youth. In the context of International Youth Year, her Government was undertaking an assessment and evaluation of services for young people and had requested the National Youth Policy Committee, on which youth organizations were represented, to submit a report which would be the basis for a

(Ms. O'Flaherty, Ireland)

national agenda for action reflecting the ideals and aspirations of young people. Unemployment was the most serious problem which confronted young people, and in order to spare those who completed their formal education the demoralizing effects of unemployment by offering them the opportunity of insertion in the economy or of receiving vocational training, her Government had created a youth employment agency, in which the Government, employers, trade unions and youth organizations were represented, and an advisory body intended to provide technical and financial assistance to young people wishing to set up their own business enterprises.

15. In Ireland, much preliminary work for International Youth Year had already been done by existing co-ordinating bodies. In addition, the Irish Government had created an International Youth Year Committee and Advisory Council which included representatives of the Government, youth organizations and other social groups. Her Government felt that, without the active participation of young people, whether or not they were members of youth organizations, it would be impossible to channel their energy and idealism for development and peace. It felt that the greatest stress should be placed on encouraging initiatives at the local and national levels. In that spirit, it encouraged non-governmental organizations, as was borne out by the creation of the National Youth Council of Ireland, a non-governmental co-ordinating body, and the provision that that body should meet with Government leaders four times a year and should be consulted on legislation affecting youth.

16. Since it felt that local and national initiatives should be encouraged, her Government saw no need for new organizational structures within the United Nations or for additional channels of communication between the United Nations and youth organizations. The strengthening of existing channels of communication should be the natural outcome of an increasing awareness on the part of young people of the problems facing the world, an awareness which would be enhanced by their involvement in efforts to solve the problems of their own communities.

17. Mrs. IDER (Mongolia), speaking on agenda items 85, 89 and 90, called attention to Economic and Social Council resolution 1983/8, which incorporated the views of States from all regional groups and socio-economic systems and in which the Commission for Social Development requested that the 1985 report on the world social situation should be focused on issues of international concern such as the relation between development and peace, the persisting imbalances in the world economy and the international economic crisis particularly affecting the developing world. The report should indicate the obstacles to the economic and social progress of peoples and the causes of their problems and should pay more attention to the differences between societies with different socio-economic systems.

18. Economic and Social Council resolution 1983/18 was of direct relevance to the preparation of the 1985 report on the world social situation. It stressed that existing and planned military programmes constituted a colossal waste of precious resources which might otherwise be used to elevate living standards of all peoples and solve the problems confronting developing countries in achieving economic and social development. The Economic and Social Council had also requested the Secretary-General to devote an entire section to that question in his future reports on the world social situation.

(Mrs. Ider, Mongolia)

19. The Mongolian delegation noted with appreciation that the report of the Secretary-General on national experience in achieving far-reaching social and economic changes for the purpose of social progress (A/38/64 and Add.1) had been prepared on the basis of information supplied by 17 States belonging to different socio-economic systems, of different levels of development and representing all regions. The interest thus displayed by a number of countries attested to the importance of further study of the question and of providing the opportunity for the exchange of experiences among States, mainly by holding regional and interregional seminars.

20. Mongolia supported the Vienna International Plan of Action on Aging adopted in 1982. It paid constant attention to improving the well-being of the elderly, who received a pension from the State and maintained close contacts with the organizations where they had worked all their lives. They could, if they wished, continue to work after retirement age and to receive, pensions in addition to their wages, provided that the total amount did not exceed the limits fixed by the State. In Mongolia, older persons were traditionally highly respected members of the family, which sought and followed their advice. Educational institutions, information media and public organizations educated the younger generation in respect for the aging.

21. Mongolia had also endorsed the decision to proclaim the period 1983-1992 as the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons and had submitted to the Vienna Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs detailed information on the measures it had taken for disabled persons, the disability prevention and rehabilitation of disabled persons.

22. Mrs. MENICO (Cyprus) said that, in spite of the pessimism inspired by the world social situation as a result of the international economic crisis, progress had been made in some fields. In education, for example, it could be noted that in Cyprus 90 per cent of the population over the age of seven was now literate. Primary education was universal and a high proportion of students went on to secondary and higher studies. In health care, Cyprus had shown an infant mortality rate of 17.2 per 1,000 in 1980 and a life expectancy of 73.4 years, 15 years more than the world average. Many countries, including Cyprus, had expanded the welfare component of public expenditure. Within the framework of its new policy, Cyprus had established a general health scheme and an expanded social insurance system in order to combat the social effects of unemployment. It was also evident from the reports of the Secretary-General that women's rights had achieved greater recognition, both in the home and in the work place, as had the importance of human rights in general.

23. It was, however, sad to note that, in some cases, technological progress had been used to create sophisticated war machines, that the increase in the capacity to produce food was not accompanied by a reduction in hunger, and that progress in the health field was in danger of being undermined by war. As was borne out by the experience of Cyprus, where the tragic events of 1974 had had devastating effects on economic and social progress, war brought about a catastrophic regression,

(Mrs. Menico, Cyprus)

leaving whole communities without shelter, without work and deprived of educational and health services, and sometimes forcing them to emigrate abroad. The Government of Cyprus had been compelled to borrow substantial amounts in order to finance the budgetary deficit resulting from programmes for the benefit of refugees and the reactivation of the local economy. The example of Cyprus showed that if international tensions were not lessened and if military rivalries and confrontations were not terminated, social progress would be seriously hampered. What was achieved after tremendous efforts could be destroyed in a short time. Peace and tranquillity were therefore essential prerequisites for social progress.

24. Mr. LIGAIRI (Fiji), speaking on agenda items 84 and 88, said that issues relating to youth were a major concern for Fiji, 63 per cent of whose population was under the age of 21. Although the situation varied from country to country, certain problems were common to many of them, such as unemployment, migration from the countryside, limited educational and other opportunities, limited access to health care, etc. Consequently, analysis of the problems of youth and strategies for their solution could not be viewed in isolation from the overall situation of the society in question.

25. International action could serve as a catalyst to stimulate awareness of and interest in those problems, but it was at the national level that action must be taken to solve them.

26. The Government of Fiji, recognizing the importance of participation of young people in development and in the decision-making process, took their special needs fully into account when formulating national plans and programmes. In that connection, the creation of employment opportunities was essential if the hopes and expectations aroused by advances in vocational training were not to be dashed and turned into potentially explosive frustration.

27. His Government promoted youth organizations and encouraged them to re-examine their role in the context of nation-building. It carried out programmes aimed at stimulating rural development by and for young people, promoting recreational, educational and training activities for youth in rural and urban areas, preparing young people for satisfying economic activity and encouraging membership in and formation of youth organizations. As a result of all those programmes, young people were playing a greater part in national life.

28. Despite the progress achieved in preparations for the International Youth Year, much remained to be done. The suggestions contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/38/460) would be very useful. In particular, his delegation believed that regional commissions had a leading role to play in achieving co-ordination between regional and national organizations, promoting exchanges of views and experiences between countries and ensuring that regional and national youth organizations were closely involved in the preparations for the Year. Efforts should be exerted to make the objectives of the Year known to young people, particularly rural youth and unorganized youth.

(Mr. Ligairi, Fiji)

29. He drew attention to the second, third and fourth preambular paragraphs of General Assembly resolution 34/151 and noted that peace was one of the themes of the International Youth Year. Fiji was proud of its active and direct participation, through the supply of volunteers, to United Nations peace-keeping efforts in various areas of the world. It was right that youth should be able to join with other groups committed to peace, since it was young people who would pay the heaviest price in any world conflict.

30. Lastly, it should be borne in mind that the crucial responsibilities which youth could assume in the development process would help to mature them.

31. Mr. POERSCHKE (German Democratic Republic), speaking on agenda item 84, said that he had followed with interest the preparations for the International Youth Year, including the work of the regional meetings on youth problems. The 1983 meetings in Africa, Asia and Europe had again shown that youth problems were closely connected with the major political and social issues of the times, and that the implementation of the rights of youth depended to a large extent on the solution of those issues. The maintenance of peace was of eminent importance in that regard, as young people themselves were becoming increasingly aware. An example was the appeal made at the Sixth Festival of Friendship between the youth of the German Democratic Republic and of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, to strengthen the solidarity of the youth throughout the world in the struggle for the cessation of the arms race.

32. In his view, all Governments should make use of the programmes already elaborated for observance of the International Youth Year in order to formulate appropriate measures, before and during the Year, according to their specific national priorities. Such measures should, in all cases, lead to socio-economic improvements for young people, promote the exercise of fundamental rights, such as the right to education and work, and foster the participation of young people in the social decision-taking process.

33. In conformity with the principles of the Constitution of the German Democratic Republic, the country's young people had every opportunity to develop their personalities and talents. They were guaranteed vocational training and a job. With the transition to socialism, such problems as drug abuse had been eliminated. The International Youth Year was an opportunity to undertake even greater efforts to integrate youth increasingly in the country's social and political life. The centenary of the death of Karl Marx, which coincided with the preparations for the Year, should stimulate the youth of the German Democratic Republic to make a special contribution to peace and to display active solidarity with peoples fighting against colonial oppression.

34. The time remaining before the opening of the Year should be used to evaluate the results of the regional meetings and prepare concrete proposals for celebrating the Year. In his view, the International Youth Year secretariat was competent enough to carry out the admittedly complicated tasks entrusted to it, and there was therefore no need to establish new bodies to assist it.



35. Mrs. TAVARES (Dominican Republic), speaking on agenda item 89, said that the Dominican Republic, in participating actively in the preparations for and the work of the World Assembly on Aging, had begun to take a very close interest in the problems of age and aging. Her Government, in a desire to meet the essential needs of the elderly, had established within the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance a division for the protection of old age. At the same time, being aware of the need to prepare for the impact on national development that the aging of the population was bound to have, the Government wished to appraise and adjust its policies and programmes in order not to leave serious problems for future generations. In view of the limited economic and technical resources available to it for that purpose, it would be requesting assistance from the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. The Dominican Republic had designated 5 December as the Day of the Elderly.

36. She had carefully read the Secretary-General's report on the question of aging (A/38/470) and was concerned at the lack of any analytical study of all the information and data on aging which the Vienna Centre received. She drew attention in that connection to a seminar, organized by the French Government in Paris in March 1983, on the international follow-up to the recommendations of the World Assembly on Aging. The participants' recommendations had included the establishment of an international centre for the exchange of information on aging, and the French Government had proposed that the necessary steps should be taken to that end. She believed that the centre envisaged by the French Government could be an ideal means of collecting, comparing, analysing and disseminating data on aging at the international level, and she urged Member States to give the project their full support.

37. The Dominican Government was convinced that a special body should be set up within the United Nations system with the sole task of looking into the problems created by the aging of populations; it would perform the same role with regard to the elderly as UNICEF did with regard to children. Obviously, however, the current serious world economic crisis precluded not only the early establishment of such a body but even active implementation of the Vienna International Plan of Action on Aging. That made it particularly important to strengthen the Vienna Centre and to increase contributions to the Trust Fund for Aging.

38. She recommended that the General Assembly should regularly include the question of aging in the agenda of its session so as not to lose the impetus which the World Assembly on Aging had given to the solving of problems in that field.

39. Mr. BEIN (Israel), speaking on agenda item 89, reviewed the situation of the elderly in Israel and the actions taken by the Government to deal with their problems.

40. There had been a tenfold increase in the number of elderly persons in Israel over the past 35 years, and they now represented 8.8 per cent of the total population. That was due mainly to a considerable influx of elderly or middle-aged immigrants since the establishment of the State in 1948. The immigrants came from both traditional and modern societies and therefore had widely differing concepts of individual, familial and societal responsibilities for the aged.

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

41. Approximately 70 per cent of the elderly owned their own apartments, 25 per cent lived in rental housing and 5 per cent lived in housing owned by their children. One in five lived alone. Elderly persons with low incomes received a rental subsidy through the National Insurance Institute. Special housing projects for the elderly were currently being built with services such as the preparation of meals, laundry, housekeeping and others. The elderly could take advantage of those services whenever necessary, particularly when their functional capacities diminished. Changes in the structural aspects of intergenerational relations did not appear to have upset the content or intensity of intergenerational contacts. Mutual support still prevailed and, in some ethnic subgroups, parents continued to live with their children, even when they needed nursing care.

42. Work-related pensions paid by employers and old-age pensions paid by the National Insurance Institute were the two fundamental components of economic maintenance for the elderly. However, for the majority, the old-age pension was the only, or the major, source of income, either because they had not worked for 35 years in Israel so as to be entitled to a work-related pension or because the length of their service made them eligible for only the minimum pension. At the end of 1981, of the some 400,000 men over the age of 65 and women over the age of 60, 89 per cent had had a sufficiently low income to be eligible for an old-age pension, and 44 per cent had been receiving supplementary benefits. That situation reflected the economic vulnerability of the aged. The elimination of poverty among the elderly was a major goal of Israel's social policy.

43. Utilization of health services by the elderly was very high. In Israel, almost two thirds of elderly males and three fourths of elderly females had one or more chronic diseases. The annual hospital admission rate and average length of stay were twice as high for the elderly as for those under the age of 65.

44. Meeting the growing needs of the elderly required the effective planning of services. Two ministries had primary responsibility for care of the elderly in Israel. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs was responsible for planning, supervising and implementing national programmes of institutional and community care. In addition, it provided social welfare services, elaborated special community projects for the aged, supervised old-age homes and developed training programmes for professionals and paraprofessionals. The Authority for Retirees developed pre-retirement programmes, which were implemented primarily through major employers. The Ministry of Health provided medical and nursing care, both in the community and in institutional settings, for elderly persons who were not covered by medical insurance. Rehabilitation, maintenance and preventive care were provided in the context of a national programme: a multidisciplinary, interorganizational team, working in co-operation with the Social Service Bureaux and Sick Funds, located the elderly, assessed their condition, prepared an individual health care plan, made referrals and performed follow-up activities.

45. ESHEI, an association which operated as a partnership between three ministries and a voluntary organization, carried out medium-range planning and developed sheltered housing and community and institutional services for the elderly. It

(Mr. Bein, Israel)

also introduced innovative programmes, such as the construction of multidimensional homes for the aged. Those programmes were based on plans prepared by interorganizational and interdisciplinary teams and were carried out by regional and local associations for the aged.

46. The network of services for the elderly was therefore based on a comprehensive approach, which was directed towards strengthening the independent functioning of the elderly and enabling them to stay in their family and community setting for as long as possible, with the help of support services. That example could serve as a guide for other countries that were seeking to modernize while preserving the best aspects of their traditions.

47. The year 1982 had been proclaimed the Year of the Aged in Israel, and his country was proud of its elderly citizens, for they had laid the foundations of Israel's independence.

48. Mrs. MARTIN (Canada), speaking on agenda items 84, 85, 88, 89 and 90, said that she had carefully reviewed the reports of the Secretary-General on the world social situation and had found the statistical and analytical assessment of the progress of social development to be particularly valuable. However, she did wish to make a number of suggestions for the future. First of all, it was essential for the Commission for Social Development, which was the primary functional body of the United Nations for social questions, to be given an opportunity to review draft reports on the world social situation. Moreover, future reports could be streamlined by annexing to them the reports received from other sources. Such reports should also focus on social development issues, as such, or on issues closely related to it. For example, disarmament was only distantly linked to social development. However, human rights were an integral element of the world social situation, and they should therefore be analysed, not in isolation but in the context of other issues.

49. Canada tried to follow up the processes initiated by the organization of world assemblies and the commemoration of international years devoted to particular social problems. For example, Canada had recently held a National Conference on Aging, which had examined the International Plan of Action with a view to making concrete proposals to alleviate some of the problems of aging in Canada. Similarly, her Government had established a Special Parliamentary Committee to deal with the obstacles which prevented the disabled from participating fully in society. The new Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms included specific guarantees of equality for the mentally and physically disabled.

50. Canada was particularly concerned to ensure that those who were affected by a policy or programme participated fully in its elaboration and implementation. Accordingly, Canada provided financial support for the Disabled People International, an association organized by and for the disabled. By the same token, the activities marking the International Youth Year in Canada would be the product of the efforts of young Canadians, working either within existing youth organizations or within new ones. Of course, the federal and provincial

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(Mrs. Martin, Canada)

Governments assisted those efforts. Her Government had in fact created an International Youth Year Secretariat to co-ordinate observance of the Year. With regard to preparations for the Year at the international level, her Government viewed the documents drafted at the regional meetings of the States of Europe and Latin America, at which States proposed specific measures to be taken in the context of the Year, as useful catalogues from which Governments could select those activities best suited to their circumstances. Moreover, in her Government's opinion, substantive action should take place at the national level, rather than at the international level. In addition, she reiterated her Government's concern that all the activities related to the International Youth Year should be financed from the existing resources of the United Nations.

51. With regard to the proposed declaration on the rights and responsibilities of youth, her Government firmly believed that such rights should not be compartmentalized through the adoption of specialized declarations. That approach would only lead to a proliferation of international instruments and would make it more difficult to monitor their application.

52. In view of the significance of the work performed by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, her Government felt that it should be strengthened in so far as possible.

53. Mr. MATHEWSON (United Kingdom) said that the intense activity carried out by the United Nations in 1981 and 1982 on the questions of aging and the disabled had generated a great deal of interest, which had inevitably diminished. Events such as international years and world congresses, if allowed to proliferate, would cease to be either appreciated or effective. The United Nations should concentrate on one good cause at a time, and for a limited period.

54. The prevention of ill health and disability would remain a major priority of his Government's policy at the national level and abroad. At the national level, the text of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons would be issued to all health and local authorities and voluntary organizations concerned. Abroad, the United Kingdom would continue to assist the Governments of developing countries in their efforts to prevent disease. A new international programme, for which the initiative had been taken by the United Kingdom, aimed to disseminate and apply low-cost techniques for the prevention and treatment of disabilities.

55. With regard to the question of aging, his Government was drawing the attention of all the appropriate public and voluntary agencies to the provisions of the Plan of Action. His Government's position on the Plan of Action was based on three general principles: first, that the circumstances of elderly people varied markedly between countries; second, that the principal follow-up action should therefore be at the national and regional levels; and third, that at the international level, efforts should be made to improve the performance of existing mechanisms rather than inventing new ones.

(Mrs. Mathewson, United Kingdom)

56. His delegation was concerned that the move of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs to Vienna had had an adverse effect on its activities, as indicated in a recent report by the Joint Inspection Unit (A/38/334, para. 44). In their report, the inspectors had recommended that the Centre should be moved back to New York. His delegation believed that their recommendation should be given careful and urgent consideration.

57. His delegation believed that the report submitted in 1982 by the Secretary-General on the world social situation was excellent and well-balanced. It welcomed the inclusion of a section on human rights. It hoped that the comments it had made in the previous year would be taken into account in preparing the next report, which was to be submitted in 1985.

58. As to agenda item 85, paragraph (c), he said that popular participation was a significant factor in the development process and in the realization of human rights. Popular participation meant the genuine transfer of power to people and their involvement in decision-making on matters affecting their well-being. It was of fundamental importance for the enjoyment of the rights set forth in the International Covenants on Human Rights and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

59. Miss BAZIYAKA (Rwanda) said that the proclamation of International Youth Year had been welcomed with great interest by the international community. However, the Secretary-General had noted that great efforts remained to be made to ensure the success of the preparations for the Year, particularly at the national level. Her delegation believed that the preparations for the Year should be carried out at all levels, and particularly at the local level to ensure the active participation of young people of all social categories.

60. Her Government was making every effort to equip young people, who made up half the population, so as to enable them to participate actively in the country's development. Rural development was organized so as to ensure the participation of young people, who thus became aware of their responsibilities in pursuit of progress.

61. Like other countries, Rwanda had established an advisory committee for youth problems, the functions of which were to formulate for the attention of the Government a specific programme of measures and activities to be undertaken to benefit young people, and to stimulate, co-ordinate and promote activities relating to International Youth Year at the national and sub-national levels.

62. Her delegation fully supported the recommendations of the African regional meeting concerning International Youth Year, in particular the regional plan of action for youth. It also supported the convening of a world conference on the problems of youth, under the auspices of the United Nations in 1985.

63. Her delegation supported the world campaign for the planting of trees launched in 1983. Intensive reforestation campaigns had been organized in Rwanda and 1983

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(Miss Baziyaka, Rwanda)

had been declared the "year of the tree". On the basis of its experience, Rwanda could not fail to join in the efforts of other countries of the world to ensure the effective implementation of the world campaign for the planting of trees and the protection of the environment.

64. Rwanda's efforts to benefit young people related mainly to education and training. School reforms had been undertaken. For young people not attending school, those efforts concentrated on the development of income-producing activities and improvement of the access of young people to paid employment.

65. Mr. DE MARTINO (Representative of the International Labour Organisation) said that child labour was still an enormous problem in many parts of the world, despite the measures taken by many countries to control it, at the instigation of ILO. It was believed that at least 50 million children under 15 years of age were economically active, and most of them were to be found in developing countries, where they were forced to work out of necessity. For those children the chances of receiving education were minimal. In order to eliminate child labour and progressively raise the minimum age for admission to employment, ILO accorded priority to action in the fields of health, general conditions of work, remuneration, labour inspection, welfare and education.

66. The question of youth employment was also of concern to ILO. Any employment policy should include two fundamental objectives: to increase the number of suitable employment opportunities for young people and to facilitate their placement by improving their skills. Youth unemployment should be seen as a medium- or long-term phenomenon which could not easily be tackled with ready-made solutions aimed at quick results. It was above all a local problem, and any initiative that met the requirements and employed the potential of the community involved must therefore be encouraged. Since full employment was no longer a realistic short-term objective, it might be worth while reconsidering the concept of "employment" and policies regarding employment, training and working conditions to see whether they could be broadened and adapted to new outlets and new activities.

67. The problems of aging workers, who numbered about 500 million in the world, were becoming ever more urgent in the Third World where those workers represented a quarter of the active population. ILO was trying to protect the right of aging workers to social security. Recommendation No. 162 on aging workers, which had been adopted in 1980, embodied a code of conduct based on three major principles: equality of treatment in all aspects of employment; the need to allow older workers to continue to work not only by facilitating their adaptation to new technology and structures but also by altering the organization and conditions of work to take into account their specific abilities; and a degree of freedom of choice to be accorded to individuals as they approached retirement through the adoption of a more flexible definition of the age of retirement and of pension provisions. That instrument should help meet some concerns shared by the majority of countries regarding promotion and protection, training, vocational guidance, equality of opportunity and working conditions for older workers.

(Mr. De Martino)

68. The 1983 International Labour Conference had adopted a convention concerning vocational rehabilitation and employment. That new instrument stressed the need to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment to all categories of disabled persons, in both rural and urban areas, with a view to their employment and integration into the community. The ILO had assisted a large number of countries in establishing basic vocational rehabilitation services and in remedying the shortage of trained staff in that field.

The meeting rose at 1.59 p.m.