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THIRD COMMITTEE
30th meeting

held on
Wednesday, 27 October 1976
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 30th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. von KYAW (Federal Republic
of Germany)

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 72: WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION (E/CN.5/512/Rev.1 (ST/ESA/24); A/31/198; A/C.3/31/L.15) (continued)

1. Mr. WINTER (Chile) requested that the book entitled Jaque Mate al Subdesarrollo, by the Chilean doctor Fernando Monckeberg, should be distributed to the Committee members. Two hundred copies, together with a note addressed to the Secretary-General, had been sent to the Secretariat.
2. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there were no objections, he would comply with the Chilean representative's request.
3. It was so decided.
4. Miss CAO-PINNA (Italy) said that the world social situation was one of the most important and complex items on the General Assembly's agenda. She considered that the 1974 Report on the World Social Situation (E/CN.5/512/Rev.1 (ST/ESA/24)) was a positive result of the effort to review the broad spectrum of social problems and to relate the social to the economic situation. It was necessary to stress once again the close connexion between economic and social problems and to adopt an integrated approach to development as a global process in which economic and social factors were closely interrelated. In the period under review, the concept that development was not only economic in content, but was a complex process of growth of the whole society, became more and more important. That perception of development as an integrated process characterized during that period both national policies and plans and a number of international initiatives of the United Nations and some specialized agencies. Suffice it to recall the recent special sessions of the General Assembly on development and international economic co-operation, the Stockholm Conference on the Environment, the Bucharest Population Conference, the World Food Conference in Rome, the World Conference of the International Women's Year in Mexico and the Geneva Conference on Employment convened by the ILO in July, which had adopted a Declaration of Principles and Programme of Action calling for strategies and national development plans and policies which would explicitly include, as a priority objective, the satisfaction of the basic needs of each country's population.
5. However, that positive evolution of thinking about development was not reflected in the existing situation. The persistence of mass poverty in a number of developing countries was well known, and it was also discouraging to find that many efforts to raise the standard of living in those countries did not primarily benefit the poor. The world social situation described in the report reflected, as had previous reports, the gap which continued to exist between the developed and the developing countries, and also markedly reflected the world-wide economic instability which characterized the period under review and which could be summarized briefly as decline in production, increases in unemployment and inflation in market economies, poor agricultural output in general in developing countries and countries with centrally-planned economies and a sharp increase in the prices of oil and several other primary commodities. The combination of all those negative factors could not but threaten the implementation of the development plans of a large number of developing countries.

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(Miss Cao-Pinna, Italy)

6. The Italian delegation was firmly convinced of the need for a new type of order at the national level leading to a progressive redistribution of income and wealth, a progressive elimination of hunger and malnutrition, a progressive reduction in unemployment and underemployment and, generally, the enactment of social justice in every society. Social policy-making was essentially a national political process, and the United Nations could only recommend to Member States guidelines on how to analyse the effects and potentialities of the existing system. The International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade, and a number of studies of the Committee for Development Planning, contained useful indications for planners. However, the 1974 Report on the World Social Situation suggested, in fact, that development planning was not yet fully effective at the implementation stage. If it was to become effective, three conditions must be met. There must be, first, a clear political will at the national level; secondly, the achievement of a more equitable economic order at the international level and, thirdly, an organic approach to development in all activities and programmes of the United Nations system and in bilateral programmes. All those conditions were underlined in a broad statement by the Commission for Social Development in which that body analysed the world social situation in the first half of the Second United Nations Development Decade (E/CN.5/L.420). The statement had been endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 1927 (LVIII) and, in the opinion of her delegation, offered a sound basis for the deliberations of the Third Committee.

7. The 1974 report was a considerable improvement on earlier reports in that it contained a fairly extensive introduction and a global overview of social trends resulting from the interaction between economic and social factors. As for the analysis of the social situation by regions, it would be noted that, since within geographical areas there were countries with different levels of development, the analysis should be based on a combination of various criteria, namely, geography, levels of development and type of economy. Moreover, the analysis of the social situation by sectors inevitably implied a sectoral approach to development and duplication of information. It was therefore to be hoped that the Centre for Development Policies, Planning and Projections and the specialized agencies which participated in the preparation of the Report on the World Social Situation would jointly consider those questions with a view to ensuring that the reports were based increasingly on a unified approach to development.

8. Mr. MAKSIMOV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the 1974 Report on the World Social Situation provided the basis for a suitable study of the situation in different parts of the world and of global social development trends and prospects. The report had been considered at the twenty-fourth session of the Commission for Social Development which had adopted a Statement on the World Social Situation in the first half of the Second United Nations Development Decade (E/CN.5/L.420). In the opinion of his delegation, that Statement should be given serious consideration by States Members of the United Nations. It rightly drew attention to the importance of the relaxation of international tensions to the improvement of the social situation. It also pointed out that the persistence

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(Mr. Maksimov, Byelorussian SSR)

of colonialism, aggression, foreign occupation of certain territories, racial discrimination, apartheid and all forms of imperialism continued to have a detrimental effect on the world social situation. It accurately described the economic crisis in the capitalist system with its characteristic results, such as unemployment, redundancy and reductions in social spending. That economic imbalance had adverse effects on all aspects of society in the capitalist countries, and exacerbated the class struggle and social tensions. The workers, being the weakest class within the system, had to bear the brunt of the consequences of the crises inherent in the capitalist system and, when unemployed, lost the only source of income and sustenance for themselves and their families, as well as their confidence in their ability to play an active role in society. According to ILO statistics, the number of workers who had taken part in strikes in the past five years amounted to 315 million as compared with 273 million during the previous five-year period. Unfortunately, the report did not deal adequately with that important question.

9. The report indicated that the developing countries were confronted with a series of complex socio-economic problems. In many countries the production system could not meet demand or satisfy the basic needs of the majority of the population. The developing countries had to contend with the opposition of a united front of international reaction, which feared the anti-imperialist, anti-racist unity of the peoples and their struggle for socio-economic progress. It also mentioned the growing concern in many countries over the activities of foreign corporations which constituted a threat to the national sovereignty and political authority of Governments and to traditional social and cultural values. The newly independent States were still struggling to take their rightful place in international relations. The Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order reflected the just aspirations of the developing countries which wished to eliminate colonialism, put an end to exploitation by Western industrialized countries and create favourable conditions which would enable them to overcome the problems of economic backwardness. The socialist countries provided assistance to the developing countries because they fully understood their vital interests.

10. The sections of the report dealing with the analysis of food production, the situation of foreign workers, income distribution, education, health and the participation of women and youth in work, were of particular interest. He wished to point out that the authors of the report had made a methodological error in analyzing the basic factors in the social situation by giving priority to demographic and environmental aspects in the introduction. It was a well-known fact that the economic, social and political activities of States were responsible for development features and trends. Certain international problems had had a direct bearing on the world social situation, and particularly the situation in certain countries. The arms race should be mentioned in that connexion. Yet the Report did not devote a single chapter to an analysis of the influence of that problem on the world social situation. Everyone knew that the arms race consumed enormous sums of money which, if used for peaceful purposes, could improve the living conditions of the people. Spending huge sums on armaments, the capitalist countries had reduced the sums allocated for social necessities, such as medical

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(Mr. Maksimov, Byelorussian SSR)

services and education. Moreover, armaments could not be used as consumer goods or as means of production, and consequently economic growth was retarded. The arms race served only to benefit the militarists and use up the basic resources of the people. A redistribution of those resources, and their transfer from the military field to the area of civilian production for the purposes of peace and social progress, would be a valuable contribution to the promotion of economic progress and would also reduce the risk of war. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union had stated some of those principles at its twenty-fifth Congress. Efforts to end the arms race and achieve disarmament were an essential component of the foreign policy of the Soviet Union.

11. The part of the report dealing with social trends in the Soviet Union and the socialist countries of Eastern Europe showed the great achievements made by those countries in the social field during the period 1970-1973. At its twenty-fifth Congress, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had assessed the achievements of the Soviet people during the period 1971-1975 and had highlighted the considerable social and economic development prospects for the next five-year period. Social policies occupied a prominent place in the programmes of the USSR. One of the objectives of communism was to improve social relations and the welfare and cultural level of all segments of the population, and to accelerate the elimination of differences between the urban working class and the rural population in terms of living standards. The Chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR, Leonid Brezhnev, in his final report to the twenty-fifth Congress, had stated that the Soviet Union had established a new crisis-free society with a growing economy, a society in which genuine freedom prevailed and which looked forward with faith and confidence to a future full of great prospects for economic development.

12. The Byelorussian people had achieved great successes in terms of their economic and social development. The enormous losses of human life and material resources suffered during the Second World War had not broken the spirit of the people, who had managed to increase production in various key sectors of the economy. That sustained economic growth had improved the condition of the workers, and social programmes led to an increase in salaries, pensions and social security coverage. Scholarships had been increased, and taxes reduced, and the sums expended in the cultural field during the current five-year period greatly exceeded earlier amounts. The main objectives of the next five-year plan would be to increase agricultural and industrial production, as well as family incomes and benefits, improve the situation of women and children, and increase pensions. Government policy was designed to ensure that the advantages of the Soviet way of life were reflected in the life of the people and also reflected their personality. Soviet man was fully convinced of his creative capacity and looked hopefully towards the future. The social security policy of the Byelorussian SSR guaranteed the solution of the basic problems of the country's workers. The new five-year plan would be marked by greater achievements in the building of communism.

13. His delegation attached great importance to the study of the world social situation and was prepared to co-operate in achieving economic and social progress for all peoples. In its view, the resolution to be adopted by the Committee on the item should embody those basic elements. In 1969 the General Assembly, in

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(Mr. Maksimov, Byelorussian SSR)

resolution 2542 (XXIV), had adopted the Declaration on Social Progress and Development, which mentioned peaceful coexistence, national independence, non-intervention in the internal affairs of States, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and the sovereignty of each nation over its natural resources as primary conditions for the achievement of that goal. States Members of the United Nations should not lose sight of the obstacles that were impeding social progress, such as the arms race, colonialism, racism, apartheid, foreign domination and occupation, wars of aggression and exploitation by international monopolies. It was essential to implement the provisions of the New International Economic Order and the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States. The purposes and principles proclaimed in those instruments had a direct bearing on the achievement of social progress. The resolution to be adopted by the Committee should therefore reaffirm the willingness and desire to institute a new international economic order based on justice, equality, sovereignty and co-operation in order to avoid disparities between developed and developing countries.

14. The CHAIRMAN requested the representative of the Byelorussian SSR to shorten his statement, pointing out that under rule 106 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, it was the function of the Chairman to ensure that the Committee made the requisite progress in its work. There were more than 50 speakers on the list for the general debate on the item, and the Committee ran the risk of being obliged to hold night meetings or limit the length of statements.

15. Mr. MAKSIMOV (Byelorussian SSR) expressed astonishment at the Chairman's remarks, since his delegation was making its statement for the very purpose of achieving progress on the item under consideration.

16. Resuming his statement, he said that the Statement on the world social situation in the first half of the Second United Nations Development Decade adopted by the Commission for Social Development at its twenty-fourth session and endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 1927 (LVIII) gave a balanced account of the world social situation, especially in paragraphs 7 to 13, which contained recommendations and conclusions aimed at promoting social progress. In drafting its resolution, the Third Committee should take into account the principles embodied in the Statement.

17. Mrs. IDER (Mongolia) said that since the publication of the preceding Report on the World Social Situation in 1971, fundamental changes had taken place in the area of social development, thanks to the continuous efforts of the socialist countries and other progressive Governments. First of all, the Vietnamese people had triumphed in its struggle against imperialist aggression. Furthermore, the peoples of Democratic Kampuchea, Angola, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and Cape Verde, having achieved independence, were laying the foundations for their social development.

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(Mrs. Ider, Mongolia)

18. The socialist countries themselves had achieved substantial progress, which could be seen from the increase in national income during 1971-1975 and the enormous increase in wages paid to workers, which was the most convincing proof possible of the advantages of socialism. Mongolia had succeeded in making education free and compulsory, and in recent years the number of students had risen by 32 per cent. There were 2,511 students per 10,000 inhabitants, and 94 of them were in higher educational establishments. Seventy-five per cent of the population between the ages of 13 and 49 had received higher education. Those achievements were especially noteworthy in the light of the fact that before the revolution of 1921 nearly the entire population of Mongolia had been illiterate and all the schools had been religious schools. In the health field, Mongolia had extensive medical services, and improvements in that sector had brought a marked increase in the national population growth rate. Furthermore, life expectancy had risen from 32 years in the past to a value of 65 years today.

19. There had also been a marked change in the legal and social situation of women, who were now participating in the construction of a new socialist life. The State attached special importance to achieving the conditions required for women to be able to participate in social labour and at the same time fulfil their maternal and familial obligations. To that end, they were granted generous leaves before and after the birth of a child, and measures were being taken to facilitate the care of children by setting up infant nurseries and children's day-care centres. Furthermore, beginning in 1977, working women would have the additional possibility of requesting leave with partial pay while their children were less than 6 months old. Social security played a basic role in dealing with the aged and the disabled. At the present time men were entitled to retire at 60 years of age and women at 55, although they had the right to retire at 50 years of age if they had more than four children.

20. All of those improvements in the social area were proof of the success of the socialist system and, what was more important, showed that it was possible to make the transition from a backward society to socialism without passing through a capitalist stage. The complex programme of socialist economic integration included special measures for increasing the efficiency of the Mongolian economy, despite the profound economic crisis, inflation and unemployment which had devastated the capitalist countries in recent years.

21. Mongolia, along with other socialist countries, supported the just demand of developing countries that the international economic order should be democratized and that the provisions of the Declaration on Social Progress and Development and the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States (General Assembly resolutions 2542 (XXIV) and 3281 (XXIX)) should be implemented, which required the joining of all the democratic and progressive forces of the world. It was also essential that economic relations between States should be restructured in favour of the real economic interests of the developing countries. In that connexion, her delegation supported the statement on the restructuring of international economic relations (A/C.2/31/2) submitted by the Soviet Union.

22. With regard to the 1974 Report on the World Social Situation, her delegation wished to point out certain defects which it hoped would be corrected in future

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(Mrs. Ider, Mongolia)

reports. Firstly, the causes for the unsatisfactory world social situation had not been thoroughly analysed, nor had recommendations concerning the adoption of effective measures for achieving social progress and development been prepared; the preceding report had suffered from the same defects. She quoted a provision of paragraph 10 of General Assembly resolution 2771 (XXVI) which she said had not been taken into account when the report had been prepared. Furthermore, future reports on the world social situation should reflect in their introduction the basic trends of social development in the various countries and should analyse the measures taken by States, since in its present format the document was very difficult to handle.

23. The Report also failed to show the results of income redistribution, land reform and other measures which would have been of great interest. Furthermore, the problems relating to the negative effects of foreign capital and the activities of transnational corporations in developing countries had not been dealt with. It should likewise be pointed out that the report often was not objective: for example, it had not been considered necessary to point out the positive effects of nationalization in certain countries. In the part devoted to Asia, no mention was made of the situation in the socialist countries. The next Report should duly reflect the experience of the socialist countries in the social sphere, and it would be appropriate to devote a chapter to that subject.

24. Ms. PICKER (United States of America) said that in the introduction to the 1974 Report on the World Social Situation the analysis of social trends reflected the efforts of the Secretariat to explore the interrelationship of economic and social trends in development. In the opinion of her delegation, the Report was one of the first to link the social and economic components of development in a comprehensive and successful way. That linkage reflected the present state of knowledge and the difficulties involved in a truly interdisciplinary approach, since it was easier to present separate data on social trends and on economic trends than to analyse the relationship between them.

25. The nine chapters devoted to developments in various sectors were based on data supplied by the United Nations divisions or specialized agencies responsible for those particular areas. Although often uneven in presentation, the chapters did present the kind of progress report in the specific areas that was needed by the Committee to assess the various trends in development.

26. However, the chapters devoted to a region-by-region analysis of social progress, for which the world had been divided into eight regions, gave rise to some concern on the part of her delegation as to their format and their content. The information had been gathered primarily from international sources and reports, but they in turn depended on data supplied by nations. The gathering of accurate and objective data was in itself a difficult and complex task. It was essential that each country should submit accurate and objective national data, so that international bodies could issue authoritative reports which could be considered objective and reliable. It was to be hoped that reports of such importance and significance would not be used by any Government to disseminate data which would merely serve narrow national purposes. Clearly the usefulness of the discussion in the Committee would be severely limited if attempts were made by countries with one

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(Ms. Picker, United States)

type of social system to denigrate other systems. Thus, shallow attacks on "capitalism" or on Western systems generally should be seen as nothing more than a form of self-serving propaganda.

27. In her delegation's opinion, the regional chapters referred to did not provide the best method of analysing the social aspects of development. In some regions there was a homogeneity of culture, development or political system which lent itself to regional analysis; in other regions, however, each country had its unique features, its own problems, weaknesses and assets. Furthermore, the regional chapters frequently duplicated the information given in the sectoral chapters. Her delegation therefore recommended that future reports on the world social situation should omit the regional analyses and that the introduction, which provided an over-all assessment of social changes against the background of economic trends, should be expanded. It recommended also that the sectoral analyses should be continued and enlarged to provide specific examples of social trends from the various regions. Another reason for eliminating the regional chapters of the Report was that the regional economic commissions were already reporting on trends of social change in their areas to the Commission for Social Development.

28. Her delegation commended the Centre for Development Planning, Projections and Policies for issuing the Report, which it hoped would continue to play an important role in the over-all assessment of development and to contribute to the review and appraisal of the International Development Strategy.

29. Mr. NOTHOMB (Belgium) introduced the draft resolution contained in document A/C.3/31/L.15. The draft was really a procedural text whose object was to call for the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons, which had been adopted unanimously in General Assembly resolution 3447 (XXX). The 52 sponsors of the draft resolution included the 51 sponsors of the Declaration and the delegation of the Libyan Arab Republic.

30. Paragraph 1 recommended that all Member States should take account of the principles contained in the Declaration in establishing their policies, plans and programmes. However, that recommendation was not addressed only to States; paragraph 2 recommended that all international organizations and agencies concerned should include in their programmes provisions ensuring the effective implementation of those principles. Special reference must be made to WHO and ILO, to which the sponsors were indebted for their assistance in the drafting of the Declaration, to UNDP and UNICEF, whose activities in that area could be of decisive importance, and to UNESCO, whose efforts in behalf of the disabled were well known. The sponsors expected a great deal from those organizations and felt sure that they would take appropriate measures in close collaboration with the Governments concerned. In paragraph 3, the Secretary-General was requested to inform the General Assembly, in summaries annexed to the reports on the world social situation, of the measures adopted by Member States and by the international organizations and agencies concerned with a view to ensuring the effective implementation of the principles contained in the Declaration.

31. The sponsors hoped that the draft resolution, like the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons, would be adopted by consensus.

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32. Mr. NEAGU (Romania) said that the 1974 Report on the World Social Situation, like the discussions held in the Economic and Social Council and other United Nations bodies, revealed that the discrepancy between the social situation in the developing and the developed countries strictly followed the pattern of a widening division of the world into rich and poor. The declining prices for the primary products exported by developing countries, widespread inflation and the maintenance of a deficient international monetary system and of inequitable economic relations directly hampered efforts aimed at furthering the economic progress of developing countries. In such circumstances, even the minimum social objectives established for the Development Decade were hardly attainable. If that state of affairs was to be remedied, it was imperative to take resolute action aimed at establishing a new international economic order, an undertaking which implied sustained national efforts and greater equity in economic relations among States.

33. Convinced that national effort was the decisive factor in achieving progress, Romania had embarked on the path of dynamic economic development, which had resulted in an 11.3 per cent growth of the national income during the 1971-1975 five-year plan. The foundations for that rapid rate of economic development had been laid through fundamental social reforms which had made it possible to turn to account all human and material resources. Romania set aside one third of its national income for accumulation and allocated two thirds for consumption. Its economic and social policy was aimed at gradually eliminating the differences in economic development between the different regions; to that end, 1.2 million new jobs had been created during the plan period 1971-1975, and a series of outstanding advances had been made in the social field. Since price levels had been kept within planned limits, the real incomes of workers had increased by about 20 per cent and those of peasants by about 29 per cent. The social consumption funds supplied by the State, which had made it possible to include all young people in the compulsory education system, had increased by almost 50 per cent in comparison with 1970. In Romania, education at all levels was free, the pension system was generalized, medical assistance was available free of charge for the entire population, and housing conditions were continuously improving. Those social achievements had a positive effect on economic activity; all citizens were aware that any improvement in living standards was closely connected with the active participation of each citizen in the building of a new socialist society. Of course, such achievements would not be possible without major economic and social reforms and a steadily implemented development programme supported by the entire nation.

34. Romania advocated the abolition of policies of domination, oppression and exploitation of other countries, the liquidation once and for all of colonialism and neo-colonialism and of racial discrimination and apartheid, and the establishment of new relations among States based on equality, mutual respect and the observance of national independence and sovereignty and of the right of every people to determine its own future freely. In view of the experience of the developing countries and the concept of a new economic order adopted by the United Nations, future reports on the world social situation should more closely associate economic and social progress and should thoroughly analyse the implementation of the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States and the execution of development programmes.

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(Mr. Neagu, Romania)

35. His delegation urged that due attention should be paid in the next Report to the basic steps in the Declaration on Social Progress and Development, with the aim of assisting developing countries in their endeavours to secure accelerated economic growth, accompanied by a more equitable distribution of income among all members of society; full productive employment and the elimination of unemployment; increased budgetary resources to finance economic and social development; the expansion and diversification of agricultural production through the implementation of democratic land reform; and the provision of free health services to the entire population. Concerted efforts should be made by the international community to secure a more equitable distribution between developed and developing countries of the benefits from scientific and technological advances and to adopt measures aimed at general and complete disarmament and the use of the resources thus released for the social welfare of peoples everywhere. Furthermore, it was important to adopt adequate measures aimed at ensuring equal working and living conditions for the broad masses of working people throughout the world and also to prevent the granting by some countries of political asylum to delinquents, spies and traitors.

36. With regard to the structure of the 1974 report, his delegation considered that appreciable improvements had been made, including the new chapter entitled "Introduction and global overview" and the greater attention paid to several sectoral aspects of social development such as the social condition of women and youth and the problems of the environment. Further efforts should be made to avoid overlapping and parallelism in tackling problems and, in that respect, his delegation wished to suggest that all references to contributions made by other United Nations bodies with regard to social trends in such fields as population, education, health, housing, and so forth, which appeared in part two of the report, should be transferred to the chapter entitled "Introduction and global overview", since what was of interest were the conclusions that could be drawn from a synthesis of those contributions.

37. Lastly, he drew the Secretariat's attention to the fact that the report failed to mention Romania among the developing countries. It was well known that Romania was a member of the Group of 77 and it should be noted that the relevant reports of IMF and the World Bank always listed it among the developing countries with a per capita GNP of less than \$1,000.

38. Mrs. EBANDA (United Republic of Cameroon) said that the world social situation was being examined at a time when the international community was evaluating the way in which the decisions of the seventh special session of the General Assembly, devoted to development and international economic co-operation, had been implemented, and when the United Nations was concerned with the review of the International Development Strategy. In her delegation's opinion, the social situation should not be examined independently of the world economic situation. There was a link between economic progress and social progress, particularly in the developing countries, in that economic prosperity led to an improvement in the social situation, which should in turn be examined in the light of the objectives of the United Nations, namely to create, as proclaimed in the Charter, conditions of stability and well-being and to ensure for all the inhabitants of the world a level of living in keeping with the dignity of the human person.

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(Mrs. Ebanda, United Republic of Cameroon)

39. The fact that a small part of mankind lived in affluence and luxury while a much greater part had to struggle in extreme poverty constituted a source of tension in the world and threatened international peace and security. In order to put an end to that disparity and injustice, the United Nations had proclaimed development decades and adopted precise and ambitious measures such as those in the Declaration and Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order, the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States and General Assembly resolution 3362 (S-VII) on development and international economic co-operation.

40. The economic crisis had undeniably had regrettable consequences in developed and developing countries alike, but while the developed countries were recovering slowly, the economic situation of the developing countries remained dramatic and constituted an obstacle to the achievement of social progress. In addition, that situation was becoming worse because the measures taken by the international community to improve it did not enjoy the political support of the developed countries, which was necessary for their effective implementation. It was well known that the targets of the International Development Strategy were far from being reached and that the decisions taken at the seventh special session had not been supported by action in such important fields as the maintenance of the purchasing power of the developing countries' exports, the external debt and food problems. Her delegation recalled those facts because it considered that economic growth was essential in order to satisfy basic material needs and constituted in the last analysis the sine qua non of social progress.

41. In view of that unfavourable international situation, the developing countries had been obliged to take measures to ensure a decent life for their peoples. The various action programmes adopted during the current year at Manila, Colombo and Mexico City were proof of the political will of those States to intensify their co-operation and their collective autonomy in order to guarantee their peoples a future free from the evils of hunger and illiteracy.

42. For its part, Cameroon had opted for development by the people and for the people, through which it was hoped to achieve three fundamental objectives: rapid growth; progress throughout the national territory and elimination of existing inequalities by means of a judicious balance of regional programmes; and the well-being of its population through a policy of social justice. That philosophy had guided and continued to guide the activities of Cameroon in the spheres of agriculture, health, employment and education.

43. Agriculture continued to be a priority sector, since it provided employment for more than 80 per cent of the population and constituted the main source of family income. In initiating the "Green Revolution" programme, the Government of Cameroon had wished to transform production structures with a view to accelerating and increasing agricultural output in order to satisfy the food requirements of the population, increase the income of farmers and provide foreign exchange for the economy. With a view to proceeding from a subsistence agriculture to a market agriculture, the National Fund for Rural Development had been created.

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(Mrs. Ebanda, United Republic of Cameroon)

Health was another question of great concern to the Government of Cameroon, which had spared no effort to ensure the provision of medical services to the whole population. To that end, there had been a great increase in the number of hospitals and dispensaries and special attention was being given to the training of health personnel.

44. With regard to social welfare policy, there had been a substantial increase in wages, family benefits and civilian pensions and measures had been taken to soften the effects of the economic crisis on farmers and the working classes. The State had also lowered taxes on the most necessary articles. In addition to the aforementioned measures, others had been taken whereby all workers, whatever their field of activity, enjoyed the same advantages and the same family and social protection. Mention should also be made of the programmes aimed at the re-education of delinquents and disabled persons in order to integrate them into the national life. Cameroon also had an old age, illness and life insurance scheme. With regard to education, an attempt had been made to adapt the educational system to national realities, devoting to that sector increasingly greater amounts, with the result that about 72 per cent of children were currently attending school. In 1973, a National Civic Service Act had been promulgated, under which youth participated in development.

45. Although considerable national efforts had been made to ensure decent conditions of life for the population, they could not be fully effective unless they were supported by measures taken by the international community within the context of the new international economic order. The time had come for those measures to be translated into deeds. Never before in the history of mankind had the imperatives of justice, equality and progress been so fundamental for the maintenance of international peace, since it was not possible for nations to live in tranquillity while the indignity and suffering caused by poverty continued to exist. Terrible in itself, poverty became intolerable when it was surrounded by over-abundance, excessive consumption and waste.

46. Mr. AZIZ (International Labour Organisation) expressed his gratitude to the representative of Belgium for his kind words and said that ILO was happy to support the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons.

47. The CHAIRMAN announced that the Ivory Coast, Equatorial Guinea, Iraq, Malaysia, Nicaragua and Uganda had joined the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.3/31/L.15.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.