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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 32nd MEETING

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

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The meeting was called to order at 11.30 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. SOYLEMEZ (Turkey) said that economic growth and rapid technological development continued to reduce economic and social distances and disparities between various continents and among peoples of the world. In the first half of the 1970s, average life expectancy had increased both in the developed and the developing countries as a result of the decline in infant mortality and major advances in medicine. The emphasis in population policy in many countries was on limiting family size through birth control. At the same time, however, the migration of rural populations to urban settlements was creating serious problems, especially in developing countries. Large cities and suburban areas were facing critical bottle-necks in essential services such as energy, supplies, transport and housing. It was estimated that approximately one third of the urban population in developing countries lived in transitional settlements, which were growing at an alarming rate of 12 per cent per annum.
2. Each year, thousands of workers migrated to neighbouring countries to work for a number of months. In 1972, over 7.5 million foreign workers had been living in the member countries of the European Economic Community. Such workers came, in particular, from Italy, Portugal, Spain, Yugoslavia, North Africa and Turkey. As the volume of workers had grown, the concomitant human and social problems had become evident. Those problems were exacerbated when migrant workers were involved in or exploited by illicit and clandestine trafficking. Foreign workers were sought by many industrialized countries for obvious economic reasons, but the costs involved in starting a process of social integration were considered too high. Efforts designed to improve the living conditions of foreign migrant workers were hampered by the fact that most of them were employed as unskilled workers at low levels of remuneration. The situation was potentially dangerous, and international co-operation was required in order to assist foreign workers and their families and to avert conflicts which might arise if they remained a marginal group.
3. The first half of the 1970s had been a period of economic prosperity and rising standards of living everywhere. However, with inflation and high-level unemployment, the oil shortage, higher costs of living and balance of payments pressures, new social questions and issues had arisen. A new economic order was definitely required, and reform was necessary in the relations between developed and developing countries. Living standards were expected to continue to improve throughout the rest of the century, but that would depend largely upon: the occurrence of major structural changes in the developing countries with regard to agriculture, land reclamation, irrigation, investment and credit facilities which would make it possible to double or triple land productivity; more rapid change in relative prices of primary commodities as against those of manufactured goods; an increase in the share of the developing world in exports of manufactured goods; and the possibility of a larger flow of financial and capital investment.

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(Mr. Soylemez, Turkey)

4. Drug addiction and alcoholism were social problems of international concern which could not be analysed in a vacuum and which were closely related to other phenomena such as suicide attempts, running away from home and the total absence of motivation at work or at school.

5. Any comprehensive view of the world social situation was bound to be selective, and the only possible way to deal with the wide variety of issues and problems was by comparative analysis. Differences and discrepancies would persist, but the will to cope with such problems would determine the degree of ultimate success.

6. Mr. SAMHAN (United Arab Emirates) said that a reading of the 1974 Report on the World Social Situation (E/CN.5/512/Rev.1 (ST/ESA/24)) elicited concern over the fact that the social situation of the developing countries was steadily worsening and that the disparities between the poor and the rich countries were growing ever greater. The root of the current world social situation was the fact that most of the States Members of the United Nations had achieved their independence in the past 10 years after a long period of subjection to political and economic colonialism. As a result, the social and economic situation of those countries on achieving independence had been deplorable.

7. Experience demonstrated that in recent years the poverty of the poor countries had worsened, while the wealth of the rich countries had increased. Although the developing countries accounted for 70 per cent of the world's population, their combined income, including that of the oil-producing countries, was less than 30 per cent of the world total. The countries which exported raw materials received only 10 per cent of the proceeds from their exports, while the multinational companies made maximum profits. The developing countries received 4 per cent of bank loans, and their share of world industrial production was 7 per cent. All those factors had led to a situation in which the external debt of the developing countries had increased enormously. Most of the developing countries were suffering from the ills of economic imperialism. Foreign monopolies constituted the major obstacle to economic and social development because such development did not benefit their colonialist interests. A great many third-world countries were plagued by malnutrition, poverty and illiteracy, and the United Nations, with the co-operation of the wealthy countries, had the duty to establish and carry out effective programmes in the areas of employment, education, health and housing in order to help the developing countries achieve their objectives.

8. His delegation welcomed the part played by the United Nations in improving the status of women. Women's participation was essential in all projects to improve the social situation. His delegation also welcomed the assistance given by the specialized agencies, which represented a valuable contribution to the establishment of a new international economic order in accordance with the recommendations of the General Assembly at its sixth and seventh special sessions.

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(Mr. Samhan, United Arab Emirates)

9. Those paragraphs of the Report on the World Social Situation which dealt with the situation of the Palestinian people aroused considerable concern, for they were indicative of a worsening of the situation of the Palestinian refugees in the areas of nutrition, housing and education. That situation was becoming increasingly critical, and the only solution was for the Palestinian people to return to their homes, which had been expropriated by the Zionists. The United Nations must meet its responsibilities and restore to the Palestinian people their legitimate rights.

10. His own nation was a small country whose people had for many years suffered from poverty, ignorance and disease, and it was only now beginning to break free from those burdens with optimism and hope for the future. It was fully confident of the wealth of possibilities inherent in the developing countries and was convinced that they had a promising future before them. The economic possibilities of his own country were based on its principle natural resource, petroleum, which played an important part in its diplomatic activities and in the development of its national and international relations. The natural resources of the developing countries, on which the well-being of their peoples was based, must be put to optimum use. Equitable distribution of such resources was an important factor in dispelling the spectres of poverty, hunger and disease and guaranteeing a standard of living which was worthy of the peoples of those countries.

11. In 1975, the Arab countries had devoted 25 per cent of their total income to assistance to the developing countries. The contribution made by his country was proportionately twice that of the wealthy countries. His country was fulfilling its responsibilities in that regard and was convinced of the need to establish a new international economic order in the world, whereby income would be used for peaceful purposes and for reducing the disparities between rich and poor countries. Social equality could only come about through the equitable distribution of opportunities that would result from the establishment of a new economic relationship among countries and the elimination of the unsatisfactory economic system which was now in force. The Secretary-General had stated at the Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Colombo, that the world outlook made it apparent that the progress of mankind was closely linked with the co-operation which was a duty incumbent upon the entire international community.

12. Mr. LI Wen-chuan (China) maintained that the study on the world social situation should not be divorced from the basic realities of the political and economic situation of the contemporary world. Questions such as the distribution of social wealth, balanced social and economic development, and the like could not be discussed in isolation. Rather, the study should go into the root causes of the various social problems. For instance, why were the peoples of southern Africa still living in dire misery under the iron hooves of colonialism and racism? Why were the numerous third-world countries which had rid themselves of colonial rule still in a state of poverty and backwardness? Why, if the developing countries were demanding the establishment of a new international economic order, were their efforts being obstructed? Why did the peace aspirations of the peoples of the world remain unfulfilled? Although the 1974 Report on the World Social Situation cited numerous statistics, it was unable to come to a correct conclusion, let alone offer a solution to the problems involved, because it evaded the root cause of such problems.

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(Mr. Li Wen-chuan, China)

13. The present world situation was characterized basically by various fundamental contradictions. On the one hand, there was the rise of the third-world countries and the struggles of the peoples against colonialism, imperialism and hegemonism; on the other hand, the rivalry between the two super-Powers for hegemony was increasing. The two super-Powers were the biggest oppressors and exploiters of present times and could unleash a new world war. Imperialism, colonialism and the two super-Powers in particular were oppressing and exploiting the peoples of the world and were the root cause of their poverty and misery. The numerous third-world countries and peoples were the most heavily oppressed and exploited and also represented the main force in the fight against imperialism, especially super-Power hegemonism. Only when all countries and peoples subjected to super-Power aggression, subversion, interference, control, oppression and exploitation united and consolidated their own national independence, would those peoples be able to take firm control over their natural resources, develop and strengthen their economies and further their mutual co-operation, thus improving their peoples' livelihood and solving the social problems which now faced them. In the words of Mao Tsetung, "The people, and the people alone, are the motive force in the making of world history, and all the reputedly powerful reactionaries are merely paper tigers. The reason is that they are divorced from the people." The course of history had proved and would continue to bear witness to that incontrovertible truth.

14. For all the above reasons, his delegation had reservations concerning the entire report.

15. Mr. DAMMERT (Peru) said that one of the main tasks of the international community was to face four-square the problems set out in the 1974 Report on the World Social Situation. Under-development was not just an economic phenomenon, for its effects were felt mainly in the social sector. In the various fields dealt with, the report described situations which were completely unsatisfactory not only in absolute terms but also by reference to the objectives of the Second United Nations Development Decade. Generally speaking, General Assembly resolution 2771 (XXVI) was still fully applicable, but while development was primarily the task of the developing countries, the developed countries also had a responsibility to contribute to its achievement.

16. At the present time, the crucial problem facing mankind was the widening gap between the developed and the developing world in terms of economic and social inequality. Faced with the possibility of a real social disaster if those differences were not corrected, the developing countries had discovered that they must vigorously promote horizontal co-operation among themselves in all spheres. However, it was also clear that the obstacles to development were the result of deficiencies in the international economic structure. That had led the third-world countries to call for the establishment of a new international economic order which would take due account of the interests of the developing countries.

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(Mr. Dammert, Peru)

17. The existing order was indefensible from a moral standpoint and precarious in terms of practical realities. In the view of his delegation, the main lesson of interdependence was that it revealed the existence of a demonstrable historical link between development and under-development, between the wealth of the few and the poverty of the many. It was therefore essential to correct the present situation in the third world as soon as possible, and his Government hoped that the developed countries would abandon their suicidal selfishness and demonstrate the necessary flexibility and the essential political will to participate effectively in overcoming under-development. His delegation felt that it was vital to mobilize world public opinion in favour of international development and justice. That was the essential basis for creating the political will which would make possible a concrete, effective response to the challenge of under-development.

18. Mr. DOBROSIELSKI (Poland) said that the 1974 Report on the World Social Situation did not provide an in-depth explanation of the root causes of the deteriorating social conditions in some parts of the world, nor did it clearly indicate the political, economic and other obstacles to social progress or the ways and means of eliminating them. It also failed to indicate clearly that the positive development of social conditions in the socialist countries was a direct consequence of the basic principles of socialism, namely, full implementation of the principles of social justice. His delegation deplored the fact that the research for the report had not been based on the aims and objectives embodied in the Declaration on Social Progress and Development and the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade and that its findings did not relate to the implementation of those aims and objectives. The report was mainly descriptive, dealing largely with symptoms without providing a concrete diagnosis or indicating concrete measures for improving the existing world social situation.

19. At the present time, peace, peaceful coexistence and international security were basic prerequisites for any comprehensive economic and social development programme at the national, regional or global level. In some areas, unfortunately, colonialism, aggression and threats to national sovereignty, racial discrimination, apartheid and other policies of oppression and exploitation were having a negative effect on social progress and development and constituted major obstacles to their achievement. The main barrier to social progress and economic development was the insane arms race unleashed and intensified by anti-Communist imperialist groups. Military spending had reached absurd proportions: the annual amount available to scientists and technicians for research into ways of perfecting and increasing means of destruction was six times as great as the world's total expenditure on medical research.

20. The report of the Director-General of the ILO to the World Employment Conference held in Geneva at the beginning of 1976 stated that almost half the world's population was forced to satisfy its needs with less than 7 per cent of the world's total income. A simple comparison of figures showed that a vast proportion of the quantitative and qualitative potential of human intelligence and energy was devoted to devastation, the destruction of life and the destruction of the achievements of human culture and civilization at a time when the whole

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(Mr. Dobrosielski, Poland)

world and, in particular, certain countries and regions were faced with urgent, complex, intricate social and economic problems whose solution called for a concentration of all the intellectual and material resources of mankind. There was an urgent need to end the arms race and achieve a relaxation of tension in the military field. That was the common aim of the foreign policy of the socialist States. Armaments had never solved and would never solve any of mankind's political, economic or social problems. All they did was to create and foster mutual distrust, waste resources and seriously impede social progress and economic development.

21. The time had come to adopt a series of concrete measures at the international, regional and national levels in order to ensure a unified approach to development in all the activities of the United Nations and its specialized agencies. The aims and principles of the Declaration on Social Progress and Development, particularly article 3 of the Declaration, should be universally observed. Article 6 of the Declaration stated, inter alia, that social development required the assurance to everyone of the right to work, and that right was reaffirmed in article 10. The report of the World Employment Conference noted that unemployment and marginality were universal concerns and affected at least one third of mankind. Insufficient and unequal access to employment was one of the major causes of poverty and inequality. It was well known that the principle of full and rational employment was one of the basic elements of the socio-economic strategy of the socialist States and that it was a living reality in those countries. The policy of full employment was not only a worthy social goal but also an extremely important factor in the realization by the individual of his full potential and one of the most effective means of ensuring a just and equitable distribution of income and of raising living standards. For those reasons, his country had proposed the drafting of an international convention on the universal right to work at the above-mentioned conference.

22. Article 8 of the Declaration referred to the role and responsibility of each Government in ensuring the social progress and well-being of its people. The Polish Government, like all other socialist Governments, assumed that responsibility with great seriousness. From 1971 to 1975, the main objective of Poland's socio-economic policy had been to bring about a steady rise in living standards and improved social and cultural conditions in Polish society. During that period, national income had increased rapidly, while industrial production had risen by 40 per cent and agricultural by 22 per cent. The number of employed persons had increased by nearly 2 million, and real salaries had risen by approximately 40 per cent. More than 1 million apartments had been built, and the social rights of the Polish people had been broadened through improvements in the conditions of work and recreation and the educational and health systems.

23. Mr. DABO (Guinea) said that the injustice characterizing international economic relations had a very adverse effect on social progress in the developing countries. In addition to the exploitation of the latter's wealth by transnational corporations, he noted the exportation of inflation to those countries from the capitalist countries, the expansion of arms industries at the expense of the

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(Mr. Dabo, Guinea)

production of consumer goods and socially useful items, the persistence of many sources of tension in southern Africa and the Middle East, the damaging after-effects of the war of aggression in Indo-China, and the unjust economic blockade organized against Cuba. All those circumstances had had a very negative impact on the world social situation.

24. His delegation felt that, in view of that situation, the developing countries should close ranks and reaffirm their ties of solidarity and co-operation in all areas. The efforts to hold the petroleum-producing countries of the developing world responsible for the present difficulties were aimed only at dividing them and weakening their struggle for a fair return for their raw materials.

25. The Republic of Guinea, for its part, had taken a number of measures since independence to ensure its development by establishing its own currency and reforming the laws governing the condition of workers in the public sector. Full employment was guaranteed to all young citizens who had completed their studies. Centres for the advancement of women had been established to integrate women's labour into the over-all development process of society. In an effort to overcome the food crisis, the Government had spent more than \$60 million since 1974 to purchase 2,000 tractors and 20,000 plows to improve farming. Concurrently, measures had been taken to improve the organization of work and, to that end, 1,700 production brigades had begun functioning. A reforestation campaign had been launched with the enactment of a law requiring every Guinean citizen to plant and maintain one fruit tree each year. In the health area, medical visits were free in all hospitals and dispensaries and a medical school had been in operation for eight years at the Gamal Abdel Nasser University in Conakry.

26. Faithful to its principle of preferring poverty in freedom to riches in slavery, Guinea had resolutely embarked on a course of independent development. Realizing that only public education could lay the foundation for that development, the Government had made far-reaching changes in the educational system through the socialist cultural revolution. Whereas there had been only two secondary schools in the entire country in 1958, that figure had risen to 29 in 1966 and stood at 260 at the present time. Outside the urban centres, the primary schools, known also as centres of revolutionary education, were the responsibility of the Local Organ of Revolutionary Power with regard to both their infrastructure and their installations. The second-level educational centres were administered by the District Organs of Revolutionary Power and the third-level centres by the Regional Organs of Revolutionary Power; the fourth-level centres, i.e. higher educational establishments and national technical institutes, were the responsibility of the Central Government or the Central Organ of Revolutionary Power. Education had thus become the concern of all the people. That social policy had enabled Guinea to increase its school enrolment from 42,000 in 1958 to 350,000 in 1976. Students at all levels spent part of their time receiving instruction and the rest in vocational training and production.

27. Mr. AHMED VALL (Mauritania) said that his country assigned the highest priority to social questions and its policy in that area was aimed at creating a "new man",

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(Mr. Ahmed Vall, Mauritania)

that was to say, a Mauritanian rooted in his socio-cultural realities and open to the outside world. His Government sought to create a suitable environment for that purpose with elementary, secondary and higher educational establishments whose curricula were in conformity with the country's socio-economic realities and options. One of his Government's priority objectives was full employment for Mauritanian workers, who enjoyed all rights and advantages, especially social security.

28. In recent years, Mauritania had suffered a prolonged drought which had decimated its stocks of cattle, sheep and goats. Nevertheless, despite an unprecedented influx into the towns, development plans continued to assign priority to the rural sector, which included the great majority of the population. The efforts being made under that policy required substantial financial support, and for that purpose Mauritania pursued a policy of austerity and of full utilization of national resources. However, like other developing countries, it was encountering other persistent and complex obstacles which were aggravated by an unjust international system. The poor countries were forced to sell their basic products at absurd prices and endure the dizzying rise in the cost of imported goods.

29. At the mid-point of the Second United Nations Development Decade, his delegation felt that it was necessary to join forces in establishing a more just and equitable new international economic order, which was the sole means of alleviating the suffering of the developing countries and enabling them to formulate, within the framework of their national or subregional policies, an integrated social development programme which would reflect their specific realities and the aspirations of their peoples.

30. Mr. WEISS (Austria) said that social progress was not determined only by economic development; fulfilment of the aspirations for self-determination of all peoples under colonial or alien rule and the abolition of apartheid would promote lasting and satisfactory social progress for the peoples concerned. However, economic changes, even those for the better, could often cause considerable strain in the social situation of nations.

31. His Government placed particular emphasis on the development of young people. Education at all levels, including the university, was free, as were textbooks and transportation to and from school. A well-developed system of vocational training facilities ensured that young people could enter their professional lives with a solid background in their fields. Where necessary, special help and facilities were provided for handicapped children and youth. Newlyweds received a grant of approximately \$1,000 when setting up their first home. A similar amount was paid in two instalments to young mothers at the birth of each child and on the child's first birthday. The health of the mother and baby were carefully checked during pregnancy and the first year after birth. Thanks to that system of services, infant mortality had fallen by 10 per cent since 1972.

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(Mr. Weiss, Austria)

32. Anyone residing permanently in Austria was entitled to family allowances paid in 14 equal instalments per year in differing amounts depending on the number of children. An additional allowance was paid for handicapped children. Austria provided its senior citizens with financial security through a nearly all-encompassing social security system. It offered - for working and retired people alike - compulsory health insurance, accident insurance, unemployment insurance and an old-age pension. A number of bilateral agreements guaranteed social security benefits to persons who had worked in different countries. According to a proposed amendment to the Social Security Act, persons who, through illness or accident, had become handicapped would be able to choose between rehabilitation treatment and a pension.

33. The Austrian Government had introduced free medical check-ups for everyone aged 19 or over and was taking steps to eliminate some still-existing inequalities between men and women in family law. In 1974, of a total labour force of 2.6 million, more than 1 million had been female workers. There were numerous regulations in force in Austria designed to protect working women, particularly mothers. Special attention was also given to the protection of the environment, and mention should be made in that context of the efforts of federal, state and local governments to ensure the purity of Austrian lakes and drinking water sources.

34. Mr. LAURENT (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that the introductory statement of the Assistant Director of the Centre for Development Planning, Projections and Policies had clearly outlined the main trends which had characterized the world social situation during the past three years; if FAO deemed it desirable to offer a few further comments on document E/CN.5/512/Rev.1, it was only because of the predominant place which the food and agricultural sector occupied in the subject under consideration.

35. First of all, tables 136 and 137 of the report reflected the situation in 1973. On the basis of new estimates, FAO had now updated the facts as follows: in table 136, the second period should read "1962-1975" instead of "1962-1972" and the per capita food production figures should read as follows: for Eastern Europe, 1.9 instead of 2.5; for Africa, 0.5 instead of 0.2. Table 137 could also be updated using new data which showed that, on the basis of global estimates, dietary supplies in 1965 and 1970 had been slightly above the requirements of the world's population. However, while the one third of the world's population living in developed countries had had about 120 per cent of its requirements, the remaining two thirds had shown an energy deficit of between 6 and 10 per cent in 1965. Those figures had improved only marginally during the following five years to 3 per cent and 8 per cent respectively. An updated table 137 was being submitted to the Committee.

36. Another point of a statistical nature was the step taken with respect to the gathering of quantitative data on the economic importance of rural women's activities with a view to correcting some of the gaps mentioned in the report.

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FAO had prepared guidelines for a deeper analysis of agricultural population and employment in agriculture by sex, which it planned to submit to Governments.

37. With respect to chapter XI, it was well known that in 1974 food production had declined in the Far East, North America, Eastern Europe, the USSR and Oceania. So had per capita production in Africa and the Near East. Despite governmental efforts, the poorest groups of the world's population had suffered considerably and there had been an increase in the number of small farmers and landless workers.

38. The recommendations of the numerous meetings and conferences held in 1974 and 1975, including the FAO Conference in November 1975, were a reflection of the intensive search being conducted by the international community for solutions to those problems. As a result of those meetings and conferences, FAO had readjusted its programme of work and budget in order to meet requirements which, in fact, fell within the framework of the new international economic order.

39. It would be relevant to mention the resulting positive changes which could be detected in many areas: there was a generally constructive attitude by Governments towards many of the recommendations of the World Food Conference and an increased understanding of the need for basic services and basic training as well as remarkable progress in food aid commitments and in furthering the concept of food security. It was perhaps the conjunction of remedies, forward planning and a stronger political will, associated with relatively more favourable weather conditions, which had brought about the immediate improvements noted in the past year and during the current year in the world food and agriculture situation. The developing countries had expanded their production in 1975, and since food prices had tended to fall, consumers in many developing countries had improved their intakes. For the first time in three years, the world's stocks of cereals had increased and a larger fish catch was expected during 1976. Export earnings from agriculture and fisheries in developing countries had improved slightly in 1975, and the total volume of assistance to agriculture had risen by 25 per cent.

40. Finally, it could be said that, viewed from the angle of the food and agriculture sector, the world social situation during the past three years had been characterized by painful experiences, arduous efforts and, in many ways, rewarding results. From the foregoing it could be concluded, for example, that attention should be concentrated on the agricultural and rural sector, where the poorest people could be found. Other suggestions might include giving special attention to programmes for small farmers, providing emergency food aid and other short-term measures, supporting food security, giving a greater measure of precision to the proposals envisaged in paragraph 75 of the International Development Strategy (General Assembly resolution 2626 (XXV)) and considering a target date for the final eradication of hunger. FAO was of the opinion that, because of the special nature of its institutional and social components, the food and agricultural sector was not as quick as others to react to policy measures. Hence, speed in implementing readjustments in that sector was essential if results were to be achieved before the end of the decade.

41. The CHAIRMAN announced that Bhutan, Botswana, Mozambique, Niger and Sierra Leone had joined the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.3/31/L.15.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.