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

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AGENDA ITEM 72: WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

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

1. The CHAIRMAN announced that the Central African Republic, the Congo, Lesotho and Tunisia had become sponsors of draft resolution A/C.3/31/L.15.
2. Mr. PALACIOS (Mexico) said that social conditions could not be studied separately from economic conditions because a country could not improve the living conditions of its people without the necessary economic resources. Development meant not just the formation of wealth but also social progress. Mexico had made considerable advances in that respect, most notably in such areas as women's rights, public investment, petroleum production, land reform, communications, transport, social security, education and housing, which it hoped would be duly reflected in the next Report on the World Social Situation.
3. With respect to the 1974 Report, his delegation objected to the wording of the paragraph on page 35 which stated that the traditional migration from Mexico continued to be a matter of concern to United States authorities, since his Government shared that concern and was seeking a common solution. It also objected to the fact that the section on agrarian reform programmes in Latin America (p. 41) contained no information on Mexico's significant achievements between 1970 and 1976, which included large-scale irrigation and land redistribution and substantial increases in agricultural investment and credit.
4. Mexico hoped that its efforts at social reform would not be hindered by the inequities in international trade which resulted from economic colonialism. He emphasized the importance of the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States as a crucial element in the establishment of the new international economic order which was essential to any strategy of internal development.
5. Mrs. FREDGARDH (Sweden) said that the 1974 Report on the World Social Situation provided an objective and valuable basis for future discussions. The persistence of poverty, hunger, illiteracy and the arms race indicated that progress in improving the world social situation had been very slow and that a radically changed strategy based upon an unprejudiced perception of problems was required. It was especially important that such a new approach should focus on the vast untapped potential which women and youth offered for social development. Their increased participation in social planning and decision making could be usefully channeled through their own national and international organizations, which often had the grass-roots contacts that were required for a United Nations initiative to receive wide support.
6. Other matters which urgently required attention were the usually neglected rural areas, where most of the world's population lived, and the need to integrate them into every social and economic development plan in such a way as to ensure social stability and equilibrium in the face of urbanization and industrialization; the serious problem of widespread unemployment, which had especially serious consequences for women and youth; and a reorientation of educational systems to make them more practical, in particular by adapting them to the needs of rural youth. Those problems were basically the same for developing and developed /...

(Mrs. Fredgarth, Sweden)

countries, but only the developed countries had the resources to solve them. The only way to provide equal opportunities for developing countries was through the new international economic order, the establishment of which was an obligation that all the developed countries had to share.

7. Mr. FAURIS (France) said that, as noted in the report, growth and technology were continuing to reduce economic and social distance and contributing to the internationalization of problems. The economic and social dimensions were obviously interdependent. The objective of development was first and foremost to increase national income so that it could benefit all in an increasingly equitable way. That was what the international community had had in mind when it had sought to establish the new international economic order. France had co-operated in that effort, as was shown inter alia, by the holding in Paris of the Conference on International Economic Co-operation.

8. United Nations efforts during the Second Development Decade were guided by the International Development Strategy (General Assembly resolution 2626 (XXV)). At its two special sessions held in New York, the General Assembly had striven to organize the change-over. The many sectoral world conferences held in recent years under the auspices of the United Nations were revealing: there had been conferences on the environment, population, the status of women, human settlements, employment, income distribution, social justice and the international division of labour. The fourth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), held at Nairobi, was also worthy of note. Discussion and negotiation had been proceeding at an almost unprecedented rate in many different forums; but even world conferences would be pointless unless the participants came with the intention of observing, obtaining information, and studying problems. The United Nations Secretariat, particularly the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, was to be congratulated on the work it had done in that respect.

9. The Report on the World Social Situation, published every four years, was a valuable and thought-provoking document. For the report to be useful, the basic data must be carefully presented by Member States and must be accurate, objective and comparable. Social indicators could not be defined unless the data on which they were based were strictly accurate and objective. A knowledge of national legislations and international norms was also required in order to reveal intentions and trends.

10. When all the data were considered as a whole, the picture that emerged was not encouraging. Despite some successes, the gap between the developing and the industrialized countries was still wide and was, in fact widening. The recent crisis and recession in the industrialized countries had had repercussions on the economies and societies of the developing countries. Action must be taken to deal with the most urgent problems, without prejudice to long-term development strategy. A possible answer was to be found in the World Employment Conference held at Geneva in June 1976 under the auspices of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), where a strategy of essential needs had been worked out within the tripartite framework of ILO. The new approach involved two things: firstly, a turning point in the policies of the developing countries when they established objectives and selected models; and secondly, a new conception of the development of international co-operation.

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(Mr. Fauris, France)

11. At the national level, the experience of the developed countries must be adapted to actual conditions and the local situation. The transfer of technology must be accompanied by the training of manpower, and for that, it was necessary to prepare the teachers who would do the training. A respectable income and access to basic community services went hand in hand with an effective employment policy.

12. On the international plane, the strategy of essential needs was not a matter for the developing countries alone but involved profound modifications of structure in the industrialized countries. Those changes should make it possible to give more attention to social matters by, inter alia, organizing the primary materials markets and improving the regularity and volume of the transfers of resources from the industrialized to the developing countries. That implied organizing the changes so that development would be beneficial to all.

13. The 1974 Report, while not perfect, was a remarkable effort, and it should at least provide material for objective consideration and careful scrutiny. He hoped that sterile polemics about the past or the future could be avoided. One essential thing, the Report did, was to force all countries to become aware of the links of solidarity stemming from interdependence. Care must be taken to avoid any possibility of interfering with international dialogue, precipitating clashes or indulging in ideological diatribes.

14. His delegation had reservations about systems which believed that it was necessary to support individual activities at all levels by administrative intervention. However laudable such intervention might be, it too often led to a stifling bureaucratization. His delegation was also concerned about measures which restricted the worker's freedom to choose his trade and field of activity. A middle path must be sought between legitimate State intervention and respect for the fundamental rights of the individual in the economic and social field, particularly the individual's right to choose his work, to dispose freely of his wages and to use his creativity, which was the mainspring of economic development. Everyone who had followed the discussions on the present item over the years knew how strongly the French delegation favoured the preparation of the new strategy. It considered it essential to continue research into the methods of analysis, particularly with regard to the links of interdependence between different regions of the world and to the various sectoral fields of application of economic and social policies.

15. Mr. ALBORNOZ (Ecuador) said that the 1974 Report on the World Social Situation should be considered in the light of other basic United Nations documents, particularly the World Economic Survey, since social and economic

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(Mr. Albornoz, Ecuador)

considerations were intertwined. Such world-wide studies would not be made without the United Nations, and the responsibility of those who prepared them was enormous.

16. The Secretariat was to be congratulated on its preparation of the Report. Although it was voluminous, did not go deeply enough into social problems and contained some errors, it was a valuable piece of work. However, the Secretariat should not continue to work solely on the basis of old figures, which were often out of date. It might be necessary to use provisional figures obtained from the regional commissions, from Governments' answers to questionnaires and also from the offices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office of Public Information (OPI) in order to bring the figures more up to date. The data would naturally be revised when the final figures became available.

17. A striking fact was that mere economic growth did not necessarily bring social changes in its wake. The Report should go more deeply into that important problem, which was the key to bringing the new international order into being, since, as the International Development Strategy stated, the ultimate objective of development was to give everyone an opportunity for a better life. The Report therefore sought to appraise the significant repercussions of economic changes on the social situation. His delegation hoped that the Report would help to bring more concrete advances on such social indicators as the population and the sectors most affected by social change, employment, urban concentration, food and its impact on the growth and intellectual level of the individual, life expectancy, housing, health, infant mortality, access to education, the status of women, the exercise of human rights, and social security systems.

18. As the Report was a valuable reference document, the comments that had been made during the debate for its improvement should be borne in mind in the preparation of future reports. The best part of the Report was the introduction and global overview, which outlined the situation without going into specific cases. It was precisely in the discussion of particular cases that many errors and inadequacies had been noted. Although the sources on which the Report was based were reliable, they could not provide all the information required for such a document. Nearly all the information on Latin America appeared to have been taken from the documents published by the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA). Other sources used were works by non-Latin American authors who, although expert in their field, could not have the first-hand information they required and usually obtained what they needed from ECLA or some specialized agency. In any case, the data were out of date and lagged far behind the changes taking place in Latin America. The Report was a primarily economic document, and its conclusions did not reflect the impact of economic matters on social questions, thus making it difficult to measure social change.

19. The United Nations tended to emphasize economic questions at the expense of social matters, which was unfortunate, since it was social rather than economic progress that would reduce national and international tension and improve the quality of life for the backward majorities of the developing world.

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(Mr. Albornoz, Ecuador)

20. Turning to the chapter of the Report dealing with Latin America, he said that there were grave errors and omissions not so much in the figures as in the basic information and concepts, which meant that the facts relating to the Latin American countries had not been properly checked. One example was the information on the status of women in Ecuador, mentioned in chapter XV of the report; it was obviously based on out-of-date information which took no account of Ecuador's revision of the Civil Code in 1970. Under the revised Code, married women had the right to sign contracts and to contract obligations, to act for themselves or represent their minor children in court proceedings and to travel freely within the country or abroad without requiring authorization from their husbands. Another error in the same chapter was the reference to the need for married women in Ecuador to obtain their husbands' consent before taking employment; the truth was that the Ecuadorian woman's right to work was enshrined in the Constitution.

21. Ecuador was devoting large sums to social progress. Thirty per cent of the national budget was devoted to education, which was free of charge from the primary-school level through that of higher education, 19 per cent to environmental sanitation and preventive medicine, and 14 per cent to low-income housing.

22. His delegation hoped that the 1978 Report would reflect the comments made during the debate and that an effort would be made to obtain reliable information on the measures being taken to ensure social progress directly from Member States.

23. Mr. AL-HUSSAMY (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the extent of the gap between the rich and poor countries was only too well illustrated by the indicators given in the 1974 Report on the World Social Situation. He noted, for example, that the mortality rates in the Upper Volta and Guinea-Bissau, which were typical of the smaller developing countries, were 29.1 per thousand and 29.9 per thousand respectively (p. 57 of the Report), as compared with 8.7 per thousand for Switzerland and 9.6 per thousand for Finland (p. 133). He further noted that the average life expectancy in the Upper Volta was 31.6 years, as compared with 74.1 years and 70.1 years for Sweden and Austria respectively. It was hard to see how countries could be expected to promote their development when most of the population did not live beyond 30. Other indicators in the Report made clear the lack of education, adequate nutrition and health care in the developing countries.

24. Even developing countries rich in natural resources had been unable to build up their social services, and the reason lay in the economic under-development which was a legacy of the colonial era. Admittedly, the developed countries had social problems too, but those resulted from different indicators, one being wastage. Developing countries were often urged to be self-reliant, but in fact they were already doing their best to help themselves. However, the task was so enormous that they could not manage without the aid of the international community, and particularly of the technologically advanced countries, which could no longer evade their responsibility in the matter. That was why the sixth and seventh special sessions of the General Assembly had been held and why the developing countries had declared their intention to introduce measures for a new international economic order.

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(Mr. Al-Hussamy, Syrian Arab Republic)

25. With regard to Western Asia, he said that the report submitted to the Commission for Social Development in 1975 had omitted any reference to a vast segment of the population in that region, namely, the Arabs who lived under the yoke of Zionism in the occupied territories of the West Bank, the Golan Heights and the Gaza Strip. Their sad lot, which was well known to all, had been the subject of numerous resolutions. As had been pointed out to the Secretariat, the fact that the area was under foreign domination was no justification for disregarding the dire plight of hundreds of thousands of people. He therefore repeated the request for a report that would shed more light on the matter and for a study of social indicators that took account of the operative factors. The occupation of the territories in question was in flagrant defiance of the Charter, which it was the duty of the Secretariat, even more than of Member States, to defend. The Secretariat's explanation had been that it had been unable to compile the necessary data because the relevant information was not available to the Economic Commission for Western Asia and could be obtained only from Israel.

26. The Report before the Committee now included a brief section entitled "The Palestinian Refugees" (page 104), which dealt mainly with the work of UNRWA. It was regrettable that while Western Asia was in flames, the Secretariat had not asked the Economic Commission for Western Asia, as it had asked other Commissions, to prepare a report, for there was no reference to social conditions in the areas in question, nor to the hardships caused by Zionist aggression. The Report paid more attention to certain minorities in the region than to the majority, seemingly ignoring the reports of international committees and the numerous General Assembly resolutions on the matter. Moreover, if one read between the lines, there seemed to be a certain note of approval for the Israeli effort. He therefore urged the Secretariat to study the whole matter more carefully with a view to obtaining a clearer picture of the living conditions of the Arabs in the occupied territories and of the effects of Israeli aggression.

27. He noted, with regard to the part of the report dealing with Syria, that the statement on the ratio between income and population was based on the situation obtaining in 1963; the Secretariat had apparently ignored the socio-economic revolution which the country had undergone since that time.

28. Israeli aggression in Western Asia had hampered the region's economic and social development, and for over a quarter of a century, Arabs had suffered the ill-effects of that aggression in terms of health and education. The international community should face up to its responsibilities and put a stop to the occupation of the areas in question, so that the people could work for freedom and prosperity.

29. Mr. OWONO (Equatorial Guinea) said that the world social situation remained alarming, despite encouraging progress in other areas. Seventy-five per cent of the world's population were still afflicted by hunger, disease and poverty, and the inequitable social and economic conditions that were responsible for that situation also explained the economic difficulties confronting the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. It was therefore imperative to introduce new rules forthwith to regulate economic and social relations between the developed and the developing world.

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(Mr. Owono, Equatorial Guinea)

30. The valuable report before the Committee showed clearly that Africa, Asia and Latin America were in a particularly unfortunate position. The increase in their rates of infant mortality, malnutrition, unemployment and illiteracy, together with the problems stemming from migration to urban areas, called for increased international aid. The immediate introduction of an international economic system designed to further the emancipation of peoples would do much to improve the social situation in the third world. There could be no lasting peace while two thirds of the world's population lived in the depths of degradation.

31. In considering the world social situation, the Committee should not dissociate itself from the situation prevailing in southern Africa and the repugnant practice of apartheid, which was an open violation of human rights. Vorster's racist régime had unleashed a reign of terror against the innocent African population, and the Soweto massacre, the bantustanization policy and the increase in repressive measures perpetrated by that régime were crimes against humanity.

32. His Government, which held that the freedom and well-being of man were all-important, had mobilized its resources in the task of rebuilding the nation, and its people would enjoy a fair share of the fruits of their common effort, without discrimination of any kind. Under the guidance of the National Workers' Party, a policy had been drawn up to promote the social well-being of the urban and rural working masses. Further, his Government had introduced a national education programme at the primary and higher levels, and, with the construction of a number of hospitals throughout the country, had taken steps to promote public health.

33. Under the State Constitution and the Statutes of the National Workers' Party, women now enjoyed the same rights as men and were taking part in the administrative, social and political life of the country. His Government had also concerned itself with the problems of youth, organizing seminars and teacher-training and other courses.

34. Despite his Government's determined effort to modernize its means of production and thus to develop the precarious economy it had inherited from the colonial era, his country remained among the least developed of the developing countries and its social services were deficient. International programmes to assist in developing the infrastructure and basic social services of third-world countries would be highly beneficial.

35. In conclusion, he said that the relations which the developing countries enjoyed with the socialist countries were in keeping with the principle of interdependence and would help to improve the standard of living of the peoples of the developing countries.

36. Mr. SHERIFIS (Cyprus), stressing the urgency of the need to achieve social progress, said that the interdependence of peace and social development was a reality that the world could not afford to ignore.

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(Mr. Sherifis, Cyprus)

37. The world social situation presented a disquieting picture, since many of the age-old social problems remained. The disparities that persisted in many countries were an indication that the goal of "equitable distribution of income and wealth", as laid down in the Declaration for Social Progress and Development, was still far from attainment. The failure to make any real progress towards bridging the gap between the developed and developing countries was undoubtedly a source of international tension. Social progress had been further hampered by the world economic crisis and by various forms of aggression, foreign domination and apartheid. Those unacceptable practices had been rightly condemned in the Colombo Declaration, since a country whose sovereignty was threatened or which was under foreign occupation could hardly be expected to devote all of its resources to development.

38. In connexion with the repeatedly stressed need for a new international economic order, he noted that the Introduction to the Secretary-General's report (A/31/1/Add.1) stated that the possibilities that now existed for a political and economic dialogue represented a positive trend. The United Nations family and the international community had an important role to play in that regard, as also in the application of the unified approach to development with a view to ensuring that economic and social activities complemented, rather than competed with, each other.

39. He agreed that, in keeping with General Assembly resolution 2131 (XX), progress depended mainly on the efforts made by Governments themselves. At the same time, if results were to be achieved, the guidelines laid down in declarations or strategies should be adhered to by both recipient and donor countries.

40. Lastly, he expressed the hope that the Committee would adopt a resolution which reflected all shades of opinion and would thus lend itself to co-operation rather than confrontation. His delegation would do all it could to help in achieving that result.

41. Miss MELCICKA (Czechoslovakia) said that the problems of social development, which could not be separated from those of international security, disarmament and international co-operation, were extremely important; her country had made significant progress in that area under a socialist system which had eliminated exploitation and established equality and economic security for everyone.

42. In the period covered by the 1974 Report on the World Social Situation her country could boast of a Constitution which guaranteed basic social rights to all citizens without discrimination. It had been a period of increased production and of rising living standards resulting from increased wages and income, increased output and increased labour productivity. Progress had been made towards reducing differences in living standards between urban and rural residents and between industrial and agricultural workers. Substantial resources had been devoted to improving working conditions, housing and educational opportunities for all sectors of the population. Family assistance programmes and maternity care had also benefited from vast improvements, in the form of various forms of aid to expectant and working mothers. As a result of improvements in the living standards of families and children, Czechoslovakia in 1974 had had the

(Miss Melcicka, Czechoslovakia)

highest birth-rate of any developed industrial country in Europe. It had also made notable advances in the fields of environmental protection, health and social insurance for the aged and infirm.

43. The 1974 Report on the World Social Situation contained much interesting information but tended to be purely descriptive and failed to analyse the major trends in the world social situation. It had other short-comings as well. In terms of methodology, it applied to the socialist countries criteria which were applicable only to capitalist countries. For example, it classified various regions and countries only on the basis of their level of economic development, without regard to their social structure. It did not indicate differences in social and economic situation between the capitalist and socialist worlds and failed to compare the social development of countries having different social structures. It failed to reflect the current economic and social situation of the world, since its analysis was based upon the situation in the past, and therefore its conclusions and recommendations could not be used effectively. It ignored the effects which the crisis of capitalism produced on social progress in the world and underestimated the importance of general political developments for improving the material and cultural standards of the people. It ignored the fact that economic and social progress was possible only through reforms which strengthened national independence, so as to make possible the effective use of domestic resources and the distribution of national income and wealth in the interest of developing the national economy.

44. It ignored important political factors such as the relaxation of international tension and the promotion of peaceful coexistence in order to release the vast resources required for social development.

45. It failed to reflect sufficiently the growing problems which resulted from poverty, backwardness and illiteracy, such as chronic unemployment, under-employment and disease. It offered no concrete proposals for solving urgent problems. It failed to mention the adverse effects of the activity of transnational monopolies as a factor contributing to the growing economic instability which exacerbated the plight of the developing countries.

46. The Report said nothing of the harmonious development of the economic and social situation in the socialist countries, which did not suffer from economic crises and were improving the material, social and cultural condition of their peoples. In some instances it used data from Western sources rather than official information from the socialist countries, and in other cases data from socialist publications were taken out of context so as to produce an unfavourable impression of the social situation in the socialist countries. The sections on education and health lacked concrete data and comparisons, which would have certainly reflected the advantages of the socialist system. The section on the environment emphasized technical rather than social aspects and lacked information on what steps Governments were taking to improve the environment.

47. She hoped that the next report would duly reflect those observations, as well as the statement on the World Social Situation in the first half of the Second United Nations Development Decade, adopted at the twenty-fourth session of the

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(Miss Melcicka, Czechoslovakia)

Commission for Social Development in January 1975, and also that her delegation's recommendations with respect to the preparation of the next Report on the World Social Situation would be reflected in the Committee's final document on the item under discussion.

48. Miss BEAGLE (New Zealand) said that she would not give a description of the social situation prevailing in New Zealand, since the Committee was charged with the important task of providing guidelines for global social development. She fully endorsed the remarks made by the representative of the Philippines at the 31st meeting regarding the Committee's responsibility for giving social problems the priority they deserved. As the Secretary-General had noted at the opening of the sixty-first session of the Economic and Social Council at Abidjan in June 1976, the United Nations system must remain highly adaptable to new conditions and new challenges, and the world community must watch over the whole range of economic and social issues as they related to and interacted with each other.

49. The debate on the world social situation centred naturally on the Report on the World Social Situation, which was always an important and voluminous document meriting close attention but, because of its very size and scope, somewhat difficult for delegations to discuss in depth. Commenting on the last Report at the twenty-sixth session of the General Assembly, the representative of New Zealand had expressed doubt that a worth-while exchange of views on its contents could be generated without some particular focus for attention. New Zealand's position had not changed. It had already had an opportunity to express some views on the Report in the Commission for Social Development. In considering the Report again for the present session of the General Assembly, her delegation had been conscious of the need to keep in mind the objectives of the United Nations in that very broad field, as laid down in the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade (General Assembly resolution 2626 (XXV)) and the Declaration on Social Progress and Development (General Assembly resolution 2542 (XXIV)) and of the need for the Report to contribute to the review and appraisal of social progress towards those objectives during the first half of the Decade.

50. As to whether such a report did indeed make a contribution towards the realization of those objectives, her delegation had mixed feelings. If its main purpose was merely to monitor the situation in individual countries or groups of countries, it did not seem to serve a very useful purpose. If, on the other hand, it promoted the elaboration of instruments to evaluate progress, reflected changes and emerging trends in the social fabric of societies, identified new objectives and provided policy guidance on the interrelationships between economic and social development and guidelines for the integration of all aspects of development planning, then it might serve a very important purpose.

51. The mixed feelings of her delegation were reinforced by the chapter entitled "Australia, Japan and New Zealand". A cursory reading of the section dealing inter alia with New Zealand revealed broad generalizations, meaningless comparisons, incorrect and obsolete statistics and much superficial commentary. Her delegation therefore supported the proposal put forward by the United States

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(Miss Beagle, New Zealand)

that the regional analyses should be omitted from future reports. As the representative of the United States had pointed out, much of the material they contained was duplicated in the chapters on sectoral developments which could, if necessary, be enlarged. There was much that was of value in those chapters, which were prepared by the specialized agencies and the Secretariat divisions concerned and provided detailed information on specific subjects. New Zealand had found valuable information in those chapters both on areas in which its own policies were well advanced and on aspects of development in which it was just beginning to evolve a national policy, as, for instance, in the field of social indicators. She welcomed the inclusion of chapters XV and XVI, which dealt with a number of groups frequently neglected in social development planning.

52. The comprehensive global overview which served as an introduction to the Report provided an encouraging example of the kind of analysis of the interrelationship between economic and social trends in development which was essential if there was to be any real progress towards a unified approach. It was in that section of the Report that the extent to which the objectives laid down by the international community were being met and the areas in which action was most urgently required could be analysed in depth.

53. In conclusion, she proposed that the Secretary-General should carefully review the objectives of the Report and suggested a possible survey of the use which Member States had made of previous reports and of the kind of information and assistance they required. A restructured report comprising an expanded global analysis and omitting the regional sections could be of considerable practical use to decision-makers, planners and administrators in formulating social development policies and priorities at the national level. In the longer term, it should represent a positive step forward towards a co-ordinated approach and an interdisciplinary framework of diagnosis and action.

54. Mrs. MEHDI (Pakistan) said that, as far as it went, the Report described fairly accurately the trends and developments in social conditions in various parts of the world. The elimination of social disparities was a pre-condition for political stability in any country or community. Both the developed and the developing countries recognized that a durable and democratic social and political system could be constructed only on the basis of human equality and equal opportunities. The working class had gained appreciable advantages in the Western developed countries and had assumed control in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe and Asia and the third world was conscious of the need to resolve the class struggle; yet disparities and inequalities continued to exist, not only in the developing countries but also in some of the most affluent and advanced States. Although her delegation did not wish to do so, since it was a matter within the domestic jurisdiction of the affluent countries, it might be relevant to inquire into the reasons for their failure to ensure equal opportunities for their peoples. In her view, the social divisions in those countries were merely a reflection of the unjust and inefficient operation of the world production and distribution system.

55. It was often implied that the developing countries had neglected the social

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(Mrs. Mehdi, Pakistan)

sector for purely economic goals. They were urged to eradicate mass poverty, to reorder their priorities for that purpose and to develop a basic strategy for meeting human needs, and many developing countries were engaged in translating those concepts into action. However, in actual fact, the social programmes being implemented in certain developing countries were far ahead of the comparable programmes in some developed countries. Although Pakistan had one of the lowest per capita incomes in the world, over the last four years her Government had undertaken far-reaching programmes for social development and the elimination of historic inequalities. She outlined the measures it had taken in the fields of land reform, agricultural credit, protection for agricultural and industrial labour, the redistribution of income and the elimination of regional differences. The major effort, as was natural, was concentrated on the rural sector, where the major portion of Pakistan's generally poor and underprivileged population was concentrated. The current financial year 1976-1977 was being observed as the Year of Social Welfare and Rural Development to generate development consciousness among the rural population. There was therefore no doubt that Pakistan fully realized the need for social development to go hand in hand with economic progress. In an article on the third world, Mr. Bhutto, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, had placed the challenge before the developing countries in perspective. He had pointed out how rapidly the countries of the third world had to effect the necessary changes. In trying to create an environment of opportunity and an ethos of dignity and hope for the underprivileged majority, the developing countries cheerfully accepted a life of toil and the denial of immediate comforts. However, he had added, they could not allow the value of their sacrifice to be jeopardized by institutions and practices which operated against them. The labour of the masses in those countries was constantly being devalued by unequal economic relationships between them and the richer countries. They lived on a thin margin, and the inescapable radical changes in their societies permitted them little room for manoeuvre.

56. The social development of the developing countries could not be divorced from their historical experience or the present world economic environment. The world economic system of the present day was built on the basis of the colonial structure and of inequality between rich and poor, developed and under-developed. For the newly independent countries of the third world, the international economic environment had been hostile even when they had attained sovereign statehood. Furthermore, in the decades since they had achieved political independence, the economic inequality between them and the affluent countries had grown immeasurably. The result was that, in real terms, they had lost ground in economic and social development. In most cases their Governments, faced with the constant deterioration in their terms of trade over the last three decades and the resulting trade deficits, the stagnation of concessional assistance from the developed countries, indebtedness and the blocking by tariffs and quota of all avenues for trade expansion and increased export earnings, found that their primary concern now was survival, i.e., meeting their people's needs for food, clothing and shelter. The internal and external resources at their disposal were hardly sufficient to meet even those primal needs. Moreover, it was difficult for them to plan in face of uncertainty about their export earnings due to the fluctuations of prices on the world market,

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(Mrs. Mehdi, Pakistan)

and of further uncertainty about the amount they would have to pay for imported manufactures. The emphasis on profit and commerce evident in most of the international dealings of the advanced nations operated against the poorest countries and against the most deprived sections of their peoples. Furthermore, the domestic policies adopted by some developing countries to redress social inequities were strenuously opposed if they impinged on commercial interests.

57. It was nothing but hollow moralism to urge the developing countries to eradicate absolute poverty when the developed countries were unwilling to take effective action to correct the existing economic order. Unless that pattern of dependence and inequality was eliminated, the possibilities for peaceful social change in the developing countries would continue to be limited. The Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order and the Programme of Action for that purpose (General Assembly resolutions 3201 (S-VI) and 3202 (S-VI)) had set out the principles and measures by which the inequality between the developed and the developing countries could be corrected. Those provisions had been further elaborated in the resolution on development and international economic co-operation (resolution 3362 (S-VII)) adopted at the seventh special session of the General Assembly. The world social situation could hardly be evaluated in its proper perspective if it was seen as something unrelated to the new international economic order and the goals and policy measures of the International Development Strategy. It was regrettable that the Statement on the World Social Situation adopted by the Commission for Social Development in 1975 made no mention of the new international economic order. The Committee should not content itself with the reiteration of accepted concepts. It must focus its attention on the system of relations which perpetuated poverty and social disparities, the need to usher in the new international economic order and the responsibility of the developed countries to respect their obligations and commitments to bring that about. To argue that economic considerations were irrelevant in dealing with the world social situation would violate the concept of the integrated approach to economic and social development which underlay all the deliberations on the present item.

58. Mr. ABU BAKAR (Malaysia) said that, although social progress and development did not always attract the most attention, it was one of the United Nations fundamental goals.

59. Agreeing that some aspects of development had to be dealt with at both the national and the global level, he said experience had shown that the commitment to the eradication of poverty and to the expansion of social services could be increased if additional resources were generated by trade and economic growth. Since the economy of most developing countries was dependent on the export of a few primary commodities, price and income stabilization were vital to their development effort. An unstable economic situation, such as that experienced in the early 1970s, seriously retarded the implementation of their development programme. Structural changes were introduced into the economy at the national level to allow for fluctuations in external conditions, but the need for wider international co-operation remained acute. The commitment to the attainment of the objectives

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(Mr. Abu Bakar, Malaysia)

laid down in the relevant United Nations resolutions should therefore be renewed. His delegation hoped that rich and poor countries alike would dedicate themselves to that end, so that a decent standard of living could be shared by all.

60. Mr. RONN (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, deplored the fact that the representative of Syria had seen fit to inject a political and bellicose note into the debate. That representative had exaggerated when he had claimed that Western Asia was in flames; the only country that was indeed in flames was Lebanon, where people were being killed every day as a result of Syria's military intervention. His delegation understood perfectly well that the representative of Syria was anxious to divert attention from that unfortunate situation, but people in glass houses should not throw stones.

61. Mr. AL-HUSSAMY (Syrian Arab Republic), also speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of Israel was following the traditional Zionist policy of trying to mislead the Committee, divert attention from Israel's misdeeds and justify its occupation of the Arab territories of Palestine. Such an attempt was doomed to failure, since the resolutions adopted by the United Nations over a period of thirty years could not be ignored. The facts spoke for themselves and were amply documented in seven different reports on Israeli practices in the occupied territories considered by the Special Political Committee.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.