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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL  
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Agenda item 10  
HUMAN RIGHTS

Regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

1. In its resolution 1984/40 of 24 May 1984, the Economic and Social Council requested States members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) that had not yet done so to communicate their comments on the report of the Seminar on National, Local and Regional Arrangements for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Asian Region, held at Colombo from 21 June to 2 July 1982 (A/37/422, annex) to the Secretary-General in time for submission to the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session.
2. As at 1 October 1984, no new or additional comments had been received.
3. However, after consideration of this item by the Economic and Social Council, the Government of Sri Lanka submitted comments in response to the request made by the Secretary-General in his note verbale of 21 September 1983 circulated in accordance with General Assembly resolution 37/171 of 17 December 1982 to all States members of ESCAP. The comments are reproduced in the annex to the present report.

ANNEX

Comments of States members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on the Report of the Seminar on National, Local and Regional Arrangements for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Asian Region (A/37/422)

SRI LANKA

[Original: English]

[10 July 1984]

1. The importance of promoting discussion on the need to establish regional commissions on human rights where no such arrangements existed was emphasized by the Commission on Human Rights in resolution 7 (XXIV) of 1 March 1968. a/ This was subsequently reiterated by the Commission and reached an action-oriented stage with the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 36/154 of 16 December 1981 in which it requested the Secretary-General to organize a seminar in Colombo in 1982 to consider appropriate arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights in the Asian region and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its thirty-seventh session.
2. In 1982, the Government of Sri Lanka served as host to the Seminar on National, Local and Regional Arrangements for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Asian Region, which was well attended by members of the Asia and Pacific region. The report of the Seminar was transmitted to the Secretary-General (A/37/422). The General Assembly adopted resolution 37/171 of 17 December 1982 in which it took note of the report and requested that it be referred to the Commission on Human Rights with comments from Asian and Pacific States.
3. The Government of Sri Lanka is of the view that the significance of education in human rights and the need to create awareness of human rights issues among all people must be emphasized. In itself, particularly in the long run, it would make an enduring contribution to the promotion of human rights. Enjoyment of human rights can be assured by the education of citizens in the equality and dignity of all human beings. The proper education of children and the inculcation of a respect for human rights thus becomes vital. Young minds must be developed free from prejudice unsullied by distinctions of caste, creed, race and colour, a condition particularly imperative in multiracial and multireligious societies.
4. In Sri Lanka, national organizations, such as the Sri Lanka Foundation Institute and the Human Rights Centre of Sri Lanka, have played a major part in promoting the teaching of human rights as a subject in the school curricula. It has also promoted adult education in human rights and has disseminated material designed to encourage and sustain an interest in human rights. Those organizations have also arranged seminars and discussions and have promoted such widely accepted and successful programmes as poster competitions among schoolchildren on the theme

of human rights. The Human Rights Committee at Geneva recognized the value of such programmes as the poster competition because of its graphic appeal to people of all ages. The Human Rights Centre of Sri Lanka has translated into local languages the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other important documents on human rights. It has also used the mass media to popularize a concern for human rights among all sectors of the population.

5. Such national organizations have also made arrangement for seminars in which participation from the ESCAP region has been invited, thus encouraging important regional initiatives in the promotion of human rights.

6. Similar national organizations exist in other parts of the Asia and Pacific region and they need support from various organizations in the United Nations system, particularly from regional institutions, which will best be able to assess accurately the special needs relevant to each region having consideration for its particular characteristics.

7. It is essential that the experiences of one region be studied by other regions. Consideration of the various modalities already successfully adopted by other regions of the world, such as, for example, Africa, and a study of those aspects best adaptable to the special needs of the Asia and Pacific region would be helpful.

8. Sri Lanka suggested the establishment both of a body or institution designed to promote respect for human rights in the Asia and Pacific region as well as a regional organization for protective functions. A suggestion was also made for an Asian charter on human rights, keeping in mind the special requirements of the region. Those proposals were discussed at the seminar, which was of the opinion that it was perhaps premature at this stage to consider the establishment of protection-oriented machinery, but recommended a regional arrangement for the promotion of human rights.

9. As a first step, it is suggested that depository centres for United Nations documents and other material relating to human rights be set up on a regional basis. This would assist greatly in providing documentation and other support for educational programmes in the field of human rights and thus encourage within the region the wider dissemination at all levels of information on human rights.

10. In the view of the Government of Sri Lanka, the United Nations system should also hold periodic workshops/seminars of government representatives as well as recognized experts designated by States of the region. The experts seminar held in June 1983 at Geneva provided a rich exchange of views and the pooling of experiences by experts on human rights from different parts of the world. That inter-reaction of ideas has been most useful. Similar seminars with a particular regional emphasis would enable experts of government representatives from a particular region to share their experiences and discuss different modalities tried by their respective Governments when faced with common problems.

11. Sri Lanka will be ready to consider supporting any proposal which promotes United Nations initiatives towards the establishment of a regional arrangement for the promotion of human rights, including, if so required, the provision of host facilities in order to help implement the ideas and proposals indicated in the present note.

Notes

a/ See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 4 (E/4475), chap. XVIII.

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