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HUMAN RIGHTS AND SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

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BURKINA FASO

[Original: French]

[19 September 1984]

1. Despite the significant scientific and technological advances and major developments in recent years, science and technology have not always been used to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms.
2. Some of the results of science and technology tend to restrict fundamental human freedoms: such is the case in, for example, genetic engineering, the use of certain psychiatric procedures to interfere with and alter peoples thinking, thus affecting behaviour and the capacity to exercise free will. While science and technology can contribute to man's social, economic and cultural well-being, man himself must work to ensure that scientific and technological developments are not used to restrict his fundamental freedoms and rights.
3. However, it should be stressed that human freedom and rights do not exist in a general way but only in relation to a specific situation; in the case in point, human freedom and rights depend on a concept of class, since a people that is, for example, exploited does not have the same concept of human freedom and rights as a people that exploits. Therefore, there appears to be an urgent need for the international community to organize a struggle against those peoples that oppress, like South Africa, through science and technology.
4. In this context, for example, the delivery of nuclear power stations as examples of scientific and technological development by the technologically more advanced countries to countries that oppress peoples should be condemned and resisted, so as to ensure basic human rights: the right to obtain employment, to eat one's fill, to have decent housing, to have access to health care, to obtain education, to organize and to express oneself freely.
5. Basic human rights cannot be had for the asking, cannot be obtained by begging and cannot be negotiated; it is for peoples, aware of their rights and organized, to appropriate scientific and technological developments in order to seize their rights. In all countries where the vestiges of colonialism or the forces of feudalism persist, scientific and technological developments should assist in pushing back the boundaries of ignorance, superstition and obscurantism and promote full personal development through basic human rights and freedom.

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