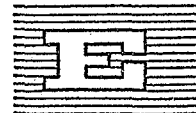


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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Thirty-third session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1392nd MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva
on Wednesday, 16 February 1977, at 4 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. BOZOVIC (Yugoslavia)

Question of the realization of the economic, social and cultural rights contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and study of special problems relating to human rights in developing countries (Commission resolution 2 (XXXI) (agenda item 7) (continued)

Further promotion and encouragement of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the question of the programme and methods of work of the Commission (Commission resolution 7 (XXXII)) and Economic and Social Council resolution 1992 (LX) (agenda item 9)

Status of the International Covenants on Human Rights (Commission resolution 12 (XXXII)) (agenda item 18)

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QUESTION OF THE REALIZATION OF THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS CONTAINED IN THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND IN THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, AND STUDY OF SPECIAL PROBLEMS RELATING TO HUMAN RIGHTS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: (COMMISSION RESOLUTION 2 (XXXI)) (agenda item 7) (continued) E/CN.4/1227; E/CN.4/1108 } Rev.1
E/CN.4/1131 }

1. Miss BLYBERG (International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations), speaking at the Chairman's invitation, said that the discussion by the Commission of the present agenda item had in general aimed at relating the realization of economic, social and cultural rights to the general world economic and social situation - an approach which her organization supported. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights stressed the importance of international co-operation for the realization of those rights, and consideration of its contents involved world-wide as well as national issues.
2. Her organization felt that, of all human rights, the right to food - laid down in article 11 of the Covenant and article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - deserved the Commission's concern first and foremost. The choice of any single item for priority might seem arbitrary; yet the various bodies of the United Nations system often focussed on a specific critical topic within a wider mandate.
3. Food was the most essential requirement in the right to life. The lack of it had effects more immediate and more serious than those of any other shortages. The right to food clearly deserved first place in any order of priority within economic, social and cultural rights.
4. In giving priority to the question of food, the Commission would by no means be undertaking a narrow inquiry. The broad scope of the topics covered by the resolutions adopted by the World Food Conference, and the role of those topics in the efforts to achieve a new international economic order, illustrated the extent and importance of the questions raised by the problem of hunger. The relevant topics included the reduction of military expenditure and its diversion towards increasing food production, food aid to victims of colonial wars, debt relief for developing countries, and the social and economic impact of transnational corporations. Food was also an essential element in the right to self-determination; article 1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights stated that in no case might a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence; and the most basic of those means were food and agriculture.
5. Planning was also involved in consideration of the questions of hunger and malnutrition. During the recent International Labour Organisation conference on world employment it had been stated that the satisfaction of basic needs should have priority in national development plans. Food was an obvious basic need.
6. Her organization considered it of crucial importance that action should be taken as quickly as possible on economic and social rights. During the ten years in which the Commission had been studying economic, social and cultural rights, those rights had constantly been violated in many areas with impunity. The Commission, as well as the international community and individual Governments, had the responsibility of improving conditions for those millions whose rights were still denied them.
7. If the Commission focussed its attention on the right to food and the right to be free from hunger, there would be earlier consideration of violations of the economic and social rights of people throughout the world. Otherwise, there would be little hope or impetus for any change.

FURTHER PROMOTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF THE PROGRAMME AND METHODS OF WORK OF THE COMMISSION (COMMISSION RESOLUTION 7 (XXXII) AND ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1992 (LX)) (agenda item 9) (E/CN.4/1168 and Add.1, E/CN.4/1189, E/CN.4/1190, E/CN.4/1191, E/CN.4/1192, E/CN.4/1193, E/CN.4/1243; E/CN.4/L.1324)

STATUS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS (COMMISSION RESOLUTION 12 (XXXII)) (agenda item 18) (E/CN.4/1227; E/CN.4/L.1341)

8. Mr. MAXIMOV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that in his delegation's view the Commission's approach to the whole field of human rights and fundamental freedoms should reflect the measures aimed at strengthening international peace and security and the establishment of better conditions for international co-operation on human rights questions and for success in the struggle against gross and flagrant violations of human rights. The Commission's programme of work should feature those problems which would call for concentration on measures to eliminate such violations, thus reflecting the alarm and concern felt by most of the United Nations Member States, as well as on measures to promote the realization of basic human rights, foremost among which were those whose fulfilment would put an end to unemployment, destitution, oppression, illiteracy and other social evils still suffered by millions. The questions should also include the violation of human rights in the Arab territories occupied by Israel, the gross and flagrant violations of such rights in southern Africa and the flouting of human rights by the military junta in Chile. Of foremost relevance and concern were questions related to the struggle against racism and racial discrimination, implementation of the right of peoples to self-determination, and the negative effects on human rights of political, military, economic and other forms of aid rendered to the racist régime of South Africa. It was on effective measures to eliminate all such violations that United Nations efforts in the field of human rights should chiefly concentrate.

9. Of prime importance were also such questions as the guaranteeing of economic, social and cultural rights, the detrimental effect on human rights resulting from the operations of transnational corporations and monopolies and the application of science and technology to the safeguarding of economic, social and cultural rights, as also protection of the rights and freedom of trade unions.

10. The entry into force of the International Covenants on Human Rights had been a historic step in the struggle to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms. His delegation was pleased to note from the Secretary-General's report (E/CN.4/1227) that the number of States parties to those Covenants was steadily growing. By the end of 1976, 42 States had become parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and 40 States parties to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Those Covenants reflected the basic principles of the United Nations Charter, of which they were a logical extension. The Byelorussian SSR had been among the first States to sign and ratify the Covenants - a fact consonant with his country's consistent and active role in guaranteeing fundamental rights and freedoms and in the creation and constant improvement of State bodies, social organizations and legal procedures to ensure civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights. Socialism had eliminated national oppression, ensured women's equality with men and given to all citizens the right to employment, education, social security, free medical attention and recreation.

11. In the present year, the sixtieth anniversary of the October Revolution, the Soviet people could point to new achievements in all fields of economic, cultural and political life, further strengthening and developing the socialist State. The Soviet people had sole and rightful ownership of the country; all the most important matters relating to political, economic, social and cultural life were decided on by the workers, peasants and intelligentsia, with the widest participation. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in its report of 31 January 1977, had stated that socialist democracy was a unity of rights and obligations, fundamental freedoms and civic responsibility, and the harmonious linking of the interests of society, collective and individual. Soviet democracy reflected not only the citizen's rights but also his obligations to the general interests of his society. Any failure by a citizen to meet his obligations to society ran counter to the principles of humanity and justice on which the society of the State was built. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union, at its 25th session, had stated that the responsible approach of each citizen to his obligations was the only reliable basis for a fuller implementation of the principles of socialist democracy and of freedom of the individual.

12. His country invited as many other States as possible to sign and ratify the International Covenants, thus guaranteeing the upholding of inalienable human rights and fundamental freedoms. His delegation would support a decision by the Commission to call on all States to become parties to the Covenants.

13. Mr. ZORIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation felt that the question of further promotion and encouragement of human rights and fundamental freedoms should take a leading place in the Commission's deliberations, a view which had been reflected in Soviet statements and decisions in other fora relating to human rights, and it felt that progress could be achieved if the Commission concentrated on that and other main items.

14. The preparation of the Commission's programme on the subject was a difficult task, not least because the Commission was composed of representatives of States differing in their economic, social and legal systems. The effectiveness of the United Nations' role in promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms depended largely on the consistency with which its Member States themselves strove to implement the various international instruments, including the International Covenants on Human Rights. Experience had shown that the effectiveness of United Nations efforts to safeguard human rights depended directly on the prevailing international situation and could succeed only in an atmosphere of détente and growing trust among States and peoples - a view which had been expressed in the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

15. At its thirty-second session the Commission had reaffirmed the right of all peoples to live in peace and security. His delegation thought it important that the Commission should continue to give priority in its programme of work to measures designed to uphold the United Nations aims and objectives, especially the strengthening of international peace and security in order to create favourable conditions for improved international co-operation, on the essential basis of non-interference in the internal affairs of States. The Commission's programme of work should continue to stress measures against gross and flagrant violations of human rights such as wars of aggression, neo-colonialism and apartheid policies, the suppression of freedom movements and the capitalist exploitation of workers,

and to give particular attention to Chile, the Israeli-occupied Arab territories and southern Africa. Measures to reduce unemployment and illiteracy also deserved serious consideration.

16. Many of the topics mentioned were given due consideration in the Commission's agenda. There were other subjects, however, which deserved some priority - for example, steps to put an end to the arms race, to counteract the negative impact of transnational corporations and monopolies on the economies of developing countries and to provide legal guarantees designed to ensure enjoyment by all of economic, social and cultural rights, including trade-union rights, in keeping with relevant international conventions. His delegation hoped that those subjects would receive consideration by the Commission at its future sessions.

17. The Commission was not entitled to stand aloof from consideration of measures designed to end the arms race, which, being a threat to world peace and security, was an obvious threat to basic human rights. A further point was that resources freed from armaments production could be used for the benefit of developing countries.

18. It was recognized that the entry into force of the international Covenants opened a new stage in international co-operation and in respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. For the first time, respect for those rights and freedoms had become legally binding - a fact which the Commission's long-term programme of work would have to reflect. As a further consequence, all the United Nations bodies dealing with questions of human rights would need to standardize their procedures - for example, by adopting a unified method of considering communications on human rights.

19. His delegation felt that the Bureau had carried out a useful task in preparing a suggested programme of meetings and future methods of work; in general, it could accept the Bureau's recommendations, which it hoped would be acceptable to the Commission as a whole. With regard to the suggestion that the Commission's session should be extended to six weeks, his delegation recalled that the General Assembly had passed resolutions relating to limitation of expenditure connected with organization of the work of the various United Nations bodies and mentioning the extension of sessions, conferences and other meetings. The Soviet Union, having firmly supported those resolutions, would find it difficult to agree to that suggestion.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.