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**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

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**THIRD COMMITTEE, 1825th
MEETING**

Friday, 1 October 1971,
at 10.45 a.m.

NEW YORK

Chairman: Mrs. Helvi SIPILÄ (Finland).

AGENDA ITEM 53

World social situation: report of the Secretary-General (continued) (A/8380, A/8403, chap. XV, sect. A; A/C.3/XXVI/CRP.1, E/CN.5/456, E/CN.5/456/Add.1 and Corr.1, Add.2 to 4, Add.5 and Corr.1, Add.6 and 7, Add.8 and Corr.1, Add.9 to 16)

GENERAL DEBATE

1. Mr. VAN WALSUM (Netherlands) recalled that his delegation had already clearly stated its position regarding the *1970 Report on the World Social Situation* at the twenty-second session of the Commission for Social Development. It had been particularly pleased with the fact that the document contained a wealth of data on countries which did not yet have adequate machinery for the registration and processing of statistical data.

2. Among the many subjects that demanded the attention of the international community, not all of which could be considered in the Committee, he chose, admittedly arbitrarily, to stress the question of the significance of the social forces at work within a developing society and the need for mobilizing those forces. In his delegation's view, there was too often a tendency to emphasize exclusively the role of Governments in the development process. Governments, to be sure, had both the responsibility and the means to carry out a policy, but they should not assume that they alone could decide on the policy to be pursued. As a society developed, new social forces emerged which might lead to a power struggle, but which might also have the effect of accelerating development.

3. In introducing the *1970 Report on the World Social Situation* at the previous meeting, the Director of the Social Development Division had pointed out that some of the issues discussed in the report went beyond the scope of the Third Committee, but he considered that inevitable in view of the close interdependence of certain aspects of economic and social development. Moreover, during its twenty-second session, the Commission for Social Development had produced a draft resolution¹ recommended for adoption by the Economic and Social Council which likewise dealt with clearly economic matters, such as targets for trade and the transfer of financial resources to developing countries. His delegation therefore suggested that future reports on the world social situation should be

submitted not to the Third Committee, but rather, in compliance with the requirements of an integrated approach to development, to the organ or organs that would be established to conduct the review and appraisal of the Second United Nations Development Decade as a whole. If those reports continued to be discussed in a body limited by its terms of reference to the social aspects of development, it would not be possible to consider social development in the context of development as a whole. That did not mean, of course, that it was pointless to emphasize social development, but merely that it was often impossible to consider it in isolation.

4. Mr. NENEMAN (Poland) said that the *1970 Report on the World Social Situation* showed that the social aspects of economic development had now won the recognition they deserved in the judgement of the international community. That came as no surprise to the socialist countries, which, even in their constitutions, had formulated basic social guarantees and established appropriate institutions to ensure the practical realization of social policy. They were expanding their social infrastructure every year with the aid of a public consumption fund used for the financing of the social infrastructure and the social security system. Like all pioneers, they might have made some mistakes, but experience had proved that their method brought results.

5. On the basis of their experience, the socialist countries believed that the development of integrated social and economic programmes depended first of all on the introduction of structural reforms. Thus, a conservative social structure based on the power of a few privileged groups consuming a considerable share of the national income and investing abroad was obviously a stumbling block to the development of a country having such a structure. On the other hand, countries with a progressive structure, which had eliminated such privileged groups and limited excessive consumption and capital export, and were at the same time mobilizing their human resources, were succeeding in the harmonious achievement of their economic and social aims.

6. In developing countries which had inherited a truly feudal agricultural system from colonial régimes, land reform and the organization of agricultural production on a co-operative basis were essential preconditions for harmonious development.

7. In his delegation's view, the report left a number of serious gaps, especially in chapter V, relating to social development in eastern European socialist countries (E/CN.5/456/Add.5 and Corr.1). The social policy of those countries was based on a socialist system, and the authors of the document seemed to have overlooked that fact. It was impossible to analyse a social situation without describing its basic principles: public ownership of the

¹ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 3, chap. X, draft resolution II.

means of production and centrally planned guidance of social and economic processes.

8. Moreover, since the methods adopted in presenting the different parts of the report were not uniform, it was not possible to make comparisons between the major regions of the world. In addition, the part of the report which dealt with the socialist countries, unlike that relating to western Europe, for example, was not very well documented. The author had also neglected the qualitative aspect of the analysis of development, providing merely an enumeration of rather superficial and colourless facts.

9. While he had noted with appreciation certain pertinent remarks relating to Poland itself, he felt that the document could have given greater prominence to a country which was, after the Soviet Union, the largest and most populous in the region and whose social development, in certain aspects, might be of interest to many other countries.

10. Nevertheless, in the opinion of his delegation, the 1970 report was a considerable improvement on the 1967 report. It was to be hoped that the next one would be still better, and, with that end in view, it would be helpful for the authors to bear in mind the following points: expansion of source material; improved systematization of statistical information; wider utilization of qualitative analysis; clear definition of the meaning of the term "social development" and the utilization of a unified method of presentation of the comprehensive social situation in different regions, permitting a valid comparison between them and utilization of the results of the planned appraisal of progress in the implementation of the Declaration on Social Progress and Development.

11. Mr. BOURGOIN (France) said that he felt that the 1970 *Report on the World Social Situation*, which provided a very complete picture of the situation in respect of all the matters with which it dealt owing to its combined sectoral and geographical presentation, was not, on the whole, very optimistic, because the problems were increasing in gravity and required national and international action. The report showed that there were two types of social problems which existed side by side nearly everywhere in the world: social problems which were directly related to economic development, and those which were not necessarily the result of economic development or which were only indirectly or vaguely related to it.

12. Obviously, the Third Committee should focus on social development. That did not mean that economic development should be ignored; actually, social development should keep pace with it. Man should not be the instrument of economic development, but its beneficiary. In that connexion, his delegation noted with interest one passage in the introduction to the report (E/CN.5/456), which stated: "Until now, the United Nations approach to social development matters had had a predominantly sectoral... emphasis and has not been balanced by adequate attention to questions of social policy *per se*, or to the social aspects of economic policy." It was to be hoped that that gap would be filled. That did not mean that his delegation would be inclined not to attach to economic development, and particularly the economic development of the developing countries, the importance it deserved;

indeed, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs had stressed that point on 28 September 1971 before the General Assembly (1942nd plenary meeting). His delegation was therefore pleased that considerable emphasis had been placed on a unified approach to economic and social development for the Second United Nations Development Decade. It should be recognized, however, that the practical effects of that principle were limited and that the system for the appraisal of the progress made during the Second Decade was still only in the planning stage. The studies on social indicators carried out by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development should be pursued in greater depth. At that stage, it could not be said that the social objectives approved by the General Assembly were entirely satisfactory; for that reason, the planned appraisal should at the same time serve as the occasion for a review of the objectives of the Decade.

13. Future reports should allow for an evaluation of the results of the Second Development Decade in 1975 and 1979. The French delegation considered that several chapters of the report should be devoted to intersectoral elements which had been identified as both factors and indicators of development.

14. In any case, the 1970 *Report on the World Social Situation* was also a more general source of inspiration, that went beyond the framework of the Decade, showing the gaps in social development and pointing up the areas in which a special effort was required. Social problems that arose outside the context of economic development, such as population, youth, crime, drug abuse, etc., should also be borne in mind. The French delegation also wished to emphasize the special problems relating to the mentally retarded and was in favour of the draft Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons proposed by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1585 (L). It would discuss the point further when the Economic and Social Council report was examined.

Organization of work

15. The CHAIRMAN drew the attention of Committee members to document A/C.3/625, which outlined the Committee's detailed programme of work.

16. She asked Committee members for their co-operation and assistance in helping her to fulfil her duties as described in rule 108 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. Annex IV to the rules of procedure reproduced General Assembly resolution 1898 (XVIII), which contained recommendations for the improvement of the methods of work of the General Assembly and for the strict application of the rules of procedure. It was obvious, however, that an excessively rigid application of the rules sometimes caused difficulties, and she therefore intended to be flexible where necessary. Nevertheless, she thought it would be helpful to establish certain rules from the start which would help the Committee to adhere to its schedule of work. She therefore asked Committee members to be as punctual as possible to avoid wasting the time available to them. She also asked members who intended to speak to enter their names as soon as possible on the list of speakers, which she would try to close quite early. Draft resolutions should be submitted as soon as possible. Another way to

speed up the work would be to fix a time-limit for speakers and for those exercising the right of reply. She would not suggest such a measure, however, unless it became imperative. She recommended that delegations should resort to informal consultations as often as possible in order to reach agreement, or should form small working groups, which would be able to discuss a point at issue while the Committee continued its work.

17. The officers of the Committee intended to review the status of the schedule regularly and keep Committee members informed as to their findings. She, meanwhile, would be guided by the wishes of the Committee and she hoped that, with everyone's co-operation, its work could be terminated within the appointed time.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.