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FORTY-FOURTH SESSION

*Official Records*

THIRD COMMITTEE  
2nd meeting  
held on  
Monday, 25 September 1989  
at 3 p.m.  
New York

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 2nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KABORE (Burkina Faso)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

#### OPENING STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

1. The CHAIRMAN said that it had been possible, despite their generally controversial character, to ensure the fairly smooth adoption of certain resolutions dealing, inter alia, with racism, racial discrimination and mass violations of human rights, as a result of the spirit of dialogue and conciliation prevalent in the Third Committee in recent years. However, the imminent independence of Namibia and the change in the South African leadership should not take the edge off the Committee's deliberations on the subject of racism and racial discrimination, even if a certain tone of moderation was in order. As for the question of human rights, it should be approached without recourse to propaganda if prompt conclusions were required.

2. He was pleased to note that the forces determining developments in human society appeared, for the time being, to have accepted dialogue and co-operation as the engine for progress, rather than war and domination. The thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Rights of the Child would be celebrated next 20 November. It was therefore desirable that the General Assembly should adopt the international convention on the rights of the child on that occasion.

#### ELECTION OF OFFICERS

3. Mr. GALAL (Egypt) nominated Mrs. Sherman-Peter (Bahamas) for the office of Vice-Chairman.

4. Mr. SALAZAR-SANCISI (Ecuador) nominated Mr. Ogurtsov (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) for the office of Vice-Chairman.

5. Mrs. Sherman-Peter (Bahamas) and Mr. Ogurtsov (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) were elected Vice-Chairmen by acclamation.

6. Mr. CASAJUANA (Spain) nominated Mr. Grolig (Federal Republic of Germany) for the office of Rapporteur.

7. Mr. Grolig (Federal Republic of Germany) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.

#### STATEMENT BY THE UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

8. Mr. AHMED (Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs) said that the diversity and unprecedented speed of change in the current world socio-economic scene were striking. While economic progress and growth had been quite remarkable and sustained in some regions, many countries, particularly in Africa and Latin America, remained locked in stagnation or were sliding into ever greater impoverishment. Although economic growth generated its own social dynamics, the vast majority of the world's population were concerned first and

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foremost with problems of poverty and survival. For them, the changes of recent years had not been for the better.

9. The introduction to the Report on the World Social Situation 1989 (E/CN.5/89/2), which was before the Committee for consideration, highlighted some of the social consequences of the severe economic setbacks experienced by many developing countries during the 1980s. Those countries had been caught in a pincer movement between declining terms of trade and sharply increased international interest rates. As a result, they were markedly poorer and, in the case of heavily indebted countries, less able either to service their external debts or to maintain investment levels. In Africa and Latin America, per capita incomes had declined by 1 per cent each year for almost 10 years. Most social groups had experienced sharply reduced living standards and Governments had made substantial cuts in spending on health and education, by as much as one half in some of the poorest countries. Absolute poverty had become more acute in sub-Saharan Africa and relative poverty had intensified in Latin America. Furthermore, the burden of adjustment tended to fall on the most vulnerable elements of society.

10. The long-term repercussions of such negative socio-political trends were a cause of serious concern. Economic stagnation, by increasing unemployment and fuelling inflation, had created a climate of instability and despair in many countries, which were in danger of becoming ungovernable.

11. The only way to reverse those trends was to revive sustained and sustainable growth. A substantial easing of external debt burdens, increased financial flows, an expansion of market access for exports and a stable international economic environment were critical to the success of developing countries' efforts to restructure their economies, mobilize local human and material resources and create the infrastructure and institutional basis for sustained development. Furthermore, development policies should be both sufficiently broadly based to be of benefit to all population groups and designed to alleviate poverty.

12. Accelerated development was also essential in order to protect the environment, because poverty in the developing world was the principal cause of pollution and environmental degradation. Growth must, however, be sensitive to environmental conservation. One of the principal lessons of the 1980s would be that the economic, social and environmental aspects of development were inseparable.

13. All those concerns had come to the fore in the course of discussions concerning a new international development strategy over the past year. A widely shared perception was emerging among Governments with respect to the need to revive and accelerate growth and development in the 1990s by means of concerted national and international policies designed to enhance the stability and predictability of the global economy, to strengthen development co-operation, to resolve the debt problem, to promote human resources development, taking into account the need for women to participate in and benefit from the development process, to integrate environmental aspects into development policies and to strive to eradicate

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poverty. He hoped that the Report on the World Social Situation and the deliberations of the Third Committee would make a major contribution to the formulation of the new international development strategy.

14. In addressing the relationships between economic and social issues, the Report showed not only that economic developments had social repercussions but also that, in order to be economically successful, a society must act on many fronts: advancement of the status of women, strengthening of the family and protection of children, conservation of the environment and reduction of sources of conflict. An attempt had been made to outline national and international action in those fields, with emphasis being placed on the importance of international co-operation and the various forms which it might take.

15. The rapid diffusion of technology throughout the world had brought peoples closer together and produced profound changes in society. It had also given rise to new perceptions of social development. Accordingly, the role of the State in almost all its aspects, but particularly as an economic agent and provider of social services, was being reassessed. Moreover, the vital importance of increased popular participation was winning further recognition.

16. As an addendum to the Report, the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs was preparing an in-depth study of the situation in countries where economic difficulties had prevented many members of the population from gaining access to the most basic necessities. In some of the most heavily indebted countries, key social indicators were in decline. The addendum would provide a more detailed analysis of trends in those indicators and of the impact of structural adjustments and the external indebtedness of developing countries on their social situation.

17. With regard to the role of women in development, the Department had, as requested by the Economic and Social Council, included a special section in the World Economic Survey 1989 (E/1989/45) on the socio-economic situation of women, which described their contribution to development and, inter alia, their role in the labour market, the nature and importance of their participation in economic activity and ways in which their right to fuller participation in different sectors - agriculture, services and manufacturing - could be enhanced. The Department would be preparing another section on women and development for the 1990 Survey.

18. The Department's Population Division studied the demographic aspects of the question. It was currently undertaking four mutually reinforcing projects financed by UNFPA. The first was to assemble a computer-usable database on population policies relating to the status of women. The second was to study the effects of international migration policies on the status of women. As part of that project, a group of international experts would meet the following year in Pisa, Italy. The third project was an investigation of the effects of changes in the status of women on family planning practice, fertility and child-bearing patterns in developing countries. Finally, a fourth project had just been launched to provide a better understanding of why there were more and more women among migrant streams in developing countries, especially between rural and urban areas.

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19. He wished to draw the Committee's attention to the cross-organizational programme analysis of the activities of the United Nations system for the advancement of women (E/1989/19), which had been submitted to the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Economic and Social Council. Those bodies had found it to be the most comprehensive review of activities by the United Nations system concerned with the advancement of women in the framework of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, and could serve as a baseline for verifying and monitoring the system-wide, medium-term plan for 1990-1995. It also provided a detailed review of the legislative mandates and policy approaches of the United Nations system concerned with the advancement of women.

20. The anniversaries of a number of advances in human rights and social progress fell in 1989. Two hundred years previously, George Washington had become the first President of the young American democracy. The first 10 amendments to the Constitution which he had sworn to uphold and respect represented a notable advance in human rights and fundamental freedoms. It was also the bicentenary of the adoption in France of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. Finally, 1989 was the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration on Social Progress and Development. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 41/142, the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs had drawn up a detailed report based on replies from Member States and various specialized agencies (A/44/116), on possible ways and means of increasing the contribution of the relevant parts of the United Nations system to the full realization of the principles and objectives of that Declaration.

21. The report entitled "International co-operation for the eradication of poverty in developing countries" had been prepared by the Department pursuant to General Assembly resolution 43/195. It analysed the impact of the economic crisis of the 1980s on poverty in developing countries, and proposed international and domestic policy measures to raise the earning capacity of the poor as soon as possible and make them less vulnerable to future crises.

22. The document entitled "National experience in achieving far-reaching social and economic changes for the purpose of social progress" (A/44/86), also before the Third Committee, had been drafted on the basis of information supplied by 29 Member States. Those replies emphasized actual experience rather than planned or intended changes. In general, they reflected a tendency on the part of Governments to re-examine existing social policies in the light of reduced revenues and resources and, thus, to give increased importance to incentives and self-help approaches in the application of national policy.

23. One of the main functions of the United Nations was to collect, compile, disseminate and analyse socio-economic data. The Statistical Office was continuing to develop its programmes on statistics relating to women and special population groups, in close collaboration with other parts of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs and the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development at Headquarters and in Vienna. Besides women, groups such as the disabled, the elderly and the young were identified as deserving the highest priority in economic and social policy-making.

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24. The Department of International Economic and Social Affairs had issued a global compendium of statistics and indicators on women the previous spring, and had released a shorter version on Africa a matter of weeks ago. The Statistical Office was preparing compilations of statistics and indicators on the disabled and the young, and one on the elderly was planned. In 1988, micro-computer databases of statistics on women had been compiled in co-operation with UNFPA and on the disabled, in collaboration with the United Nations Office at Vienna, for public use - among the first of their kind in the United Nations system. The Statistical Office, again in co-operation with other units, would in late 1989 hold interregional workshops on statistics and indicators on the situation of families in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and on statistics relating to the elderly in Malta.

25. In every region with the exception of Africa, the population was growing older; demographic aging had become an economic and social issue of primary importance, but one which gave rise to a number of misconceptions. Problems associated with aging populations were generally thought to be chiefly a matter of concern to developed countries. It was true that, in developed countries, some 16 to 17 per cent of the population was aged over 60, whereas in the developing countries the figure was no more than 7 per cent. Nevertheless, the number of older people in developing countries was increasing twice as fast as in the developed countries (almost 3 per cent yearly, as against 1.7 per cent yearly in developed countries). In developing countries, moreover, the number of older persons was growing much more rapidly than the population of persons of all ages. Taking age, sex and region into account, the population of older persons, older women especially, in developing regions was the most rapidly growing of all world population sectors.

26. To help understand and respond to the issue, several projects had been undertaken by the Population Division. A conference of international experts had recently been held in Sendai, Japan, to consider in greater depth the question of aging populations in the context of urbanization. Three case-studies had been undertaken, in Argentina, India and Morocco, on the economic and social effects of demographic aging in developing countries, and the findings would soon be published. The question of aging was also examined in the Department's biennial estimates and projections of populations by age and sex for all countries and regions of the world, and the findings were published regularly.

27. The work of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs in providing a broad socio-economic perspective on development, such as was found in the Report on the World Social Situation, the Report on the Socio-Economic Perspectives of the World Economy to the Year 2000 (A/44/554) and the World Economic Survey, was the result of considerable interaction between staff in various parts of the Department with each other and with staff from the World Bank, the specialized agencies, the regional commissions, non-governmental organizations and the academic community. The Department regularly exchanged information with the regional commissions, UNICEF, UNFPA and the United Nations Office at Vienna, working closely with them and with the World Bank on such social issues as the

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effects of structural adjustment on the social situation and the development of social indicators.

#### ORGANIZATION OF WORK

28. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the recommendations concerning the organization of the session set out in section II of document A/44/250, which had been adopted by the General Assembly at its third plenary meeting. He wished to stress in particular that meetings must begin on time so that full use could be made of the time allocated; a meeting could be opened once one quarter of the members were present. Where explanations of vote were concerned, he wished to recall General Assembly decision 34/401, which provided that a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, i.e., either in the Committee or in plenary meeting, unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting was different from its vote in the Committee. The General Assembly had also decided that statements made in a Main Committee should not be reproduced in extenso. Similarly, to save time, the practice of making concluding statements was to be dispensed with, except for statements by the presiding officers.

29. As to questions related to the programme budget, draft resolutions with financial implications could not be adopted unless they were accompanied by a statement of financial implications drawn up by the Secretariat. Sufficient time must be allowed for the preparation of the estimate of expenditure and for its consideration by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee.

30. He also wished to draw attention to paragraph 6 of resolution 35/10 A, in which the General Assembly had decided that all proposals affecting the schedule of conferences and meetings made at its sessions should be reviewed by the Committee on Conferences. Furthermore, he wished to remind delegations that regulation 4.9 of the Regulations Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (resolution 37/234, annex) provided that no Council, Commission or other competent body should take a decision involving either a change in the programme budget approved by the General Assembly or the possible requirement of expenditure unless it had received and taken account of a report from the Secretary-General on the programme budget implications of the proposal.

31. Owing to the Organization's continuing financial difficulties and to the reforms that were under way, the General Assembly had not decided upon a closing date for its current session. Every effort should be made to curtail the session to the maximum extent practicable.

32. With regard to the programme of work (A/C.3/44/L.1), a provisional timetable - which was the same as the timetable for the previous year, but updated - had been drawn up in accordance with the usual criteria: items had been grouped together and would be considered in the same order as in the past. The Secretariat had been obliged to reduce by one day the time allocated for consideration of the first and third clusters of items, and had added two days for

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consideration of the cluster of items on issues relating to social development and criminality, which contained four additional agenda items. Only one day had been allocated for consideration of the fifth cluster, whereas an additional day had been set aside for consideration of the sixth cluster of items, to which three agenda items had been added.

33. In order to make the best use of conference services every effort should be made to adhere to the timetable, particularly with regard to the deadline for submitting draft proposals, which was 3 p.m. It was therefore particularly important that resolutions, which were generally the subject of lengthy negotiations, should be drafted by their main sponsors as soon as possible, and that representatives should put their names on the list of speakers promptly. He wished to suggest that the practice of limiting statements to 10 minutes per cluster of items should be continued, on the understanding that a somewhat flexible approach would be taken.

34. It was so decided.

35. He wished to suggest that rights of reply should be limited to five minutes in the case of the first statement and to three minutes in the case of the second statement.

36. It was so decided.

37. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 43/146, the Working Group on the Drafting of an International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families should meet at the beginning of the current session. The Department of Conference Services had assured him that the Working Group could meet from 26 September to 6 October 1989. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to decide that the Working Group should meet during that period.

38. It was so decided.

39. As an economy measure, 24 hours' notice was required for night meetings and for extensions and cancellations of meetings. Furthermore, in the absence of funds to pay for overtime, the summary of meetings that appeared in the Journal of the United Nations would often be issued with a time-lag of one day.

40. Ms. KAMAL (Secretary of the Committee), referring to the document on the state of preparation of documentation (A/C.3/44/L.1/Add.1), said that the Secretary-General's report on assistance to refugees and returnees in Ethiopia was to be issued on 26 September, under symbol A/44/482.

41. With the exception of item 12, all agenda items were now one number lower; the numbering of the items was correct in documents A/C.3/44/L.1 and Add.1 and A/C.3/44/2.

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42. Mr. VIRENKEL (Austria) said that Austria, which was chairing the meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women in 1989, wished to inform the members of the Committee that preparations were under way for the extended session that the Commission was to hold in 1990 to review and appraise progress in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women; in that connection, he wished to draw attention to Economic and Social Council resolutions 1989/32 and 1988/19, both of which had been adopted by consensus. The Council had requested the Division for the Advancement of Women to provide guidelines for the formulation of draft conclusions and recommendations on the preliminary results of the review and appraisal, which would be included in the overall report, and it had requested that the information in question should be made available to an open-ended group of Member States that was to meet informally in New York at the current session, during consideration of the issue of the advancement of women. On 6 September 1989 the Director of the Division had sent invitations to participate in the group's work to all Governments. His delegation hoped that it would soon be possible to announce the arrangements made for holding the informal consultations, and that the necessary conference services could be made available to the group.

43. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the programme of work for the session set out in document A/C.3/44/L.1.

44. It was so decided.

45. Mr. MORA (Cuba) said that since 1985 the Committee had devoted several meetings at each session to the consideration of the subject-matter of item 96. In 1988 the issue had been considered concurrently with the question of the new international humanitarian order. However, only one day was set aside in the timetable for the current session for consideration of item 96. His delegation therefore reserved the right to request that at subsequent sessions the Committee should set aside more meetings for consideration of the subject in question.

46. The CHAIRMAN said that he wished to read out the list of the special rapporteurs of the Commission on Human Rights who had been requested by the General Assembly to submit a report to it at the current session. Under agenda item 12, Mr. Fernando Volio Jiménez (Costa Rica) would report on the human-rights situation in Chile; Mr. José Pastor Ridruejo (Spain) would report on the human-rights situation in El Salvador; Mr. Reynaldo Galindo Pohl (El Salvador) would submit a report on the human-rights situation in Iran; and Mr. Felix Ermacora (Austria) would submit a report on the human-rights situation in Afghanistan. Furthermore, under item 105, Mr. Enrique Bernales Ballesteros (Peru) would submit a report on the question of the use of mercenaries as a means of impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination.

47. The Committee would begin its substantive debate on 9 October, when it would take up consideration of the first cluster of items, concerning racism and racial

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discrimination, which would be introduced by the representative of the Centre for Human Rights. He wished to invite all delegations wishing to participate in the general debate on the first cluster of items to contact the Committee secretariat without delay.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.