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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 34th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KABORE (Burkina Faso)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 111: INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST TRAFFIC IN DRUGS (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 96: ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES AND WAYS AND MEANS WITHIN THE UNITED-
NATIONS SYSTEM FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND
FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 111: INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST TRAFFIC IN DRUGS (continued)
(A/44/572, A/44/601, A/44/119, A/44/235-S/20600, A/44/321, A/44/380,
A/44/409-S/20743 and Corr.1 and 2, A/44/415-S/20749, A/44/551, A/44/477, A/44/578,
A/44/598, A/44/607 and A/C.3/44/6)

1. Mr. BURCUOGLU (Turkey) said that the adoption of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, which his country had signed, marked a new stage in the fight against illicit drugs. In providing for the identification and detection of traffickers and the confiscation of their property, the Convention went to the heart of the problem and Turkey hoped that it would be ratified and would enter into force without delay.

2. The United Nations had a vital part to play in the fight against drug abuse and illicit trafficking and he welcomed in particular the work of the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control (UNFDAC), the Division of Narcotic Drugs, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the International Narcotics Control Board, although he felt that greater efficiency would be achieved with better co-ordination.

3. His delegation was concerned, however, that the Organization's anti-drug bodies were subject to financial constraints at a time when their activities were expanding, as mandated by the Convention. As indicated in document A/44/1, the monetary value of drug trafficking had recently surpassed that of international trade in oil and was second only to the arms trade. Those bodies must receive a greater share of the regular budget of the United Nations and of voluntary contributions.

4. Turkey had been highly successful in combating illicit production and use of drugs and repressing illicit traffic and transit. As indicated in paragraph 61 of the Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 1987 (E/INCB/1987/1) the control of licit production of poppy straw for alkaloids extraction, developed in the 1970s, had been functioning effectively and no opium was being produced in the country. The upgrading of investigative techniques of Turkish law enforcement agencies through training and modern equipment had forced most of the traffickers to change routes. The international community should be ready to support any request from the Turkish Government for assistance in preventing the current minor abuse problem from spreading.

5. His delegation had noted with satisfaction the importance that most delegations attached to the fight against drug abuse and trafficking and looked forward to the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly to consider the question of international co-operation against illicit production, supply, demand, trafficking and distribution of narcotic drugs.

6. Mr. AMNON BEN-YOHANAN (Israel) said that Israel was ready to co-operate and support efforts to alleviate the drug problem through bilateral and international co-operation. It was a party to the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs and since the International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, held in Vienna in June 1987, had taken decisive steps to standardize its national policy. In June 1988 an Anti-Drug Authority had been set up under the Drug Control Law of 1988, composed of representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations, to determine policy on prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, punishment and law enforcement, as a basis for Government action.

7. The drug problem in Israel was serious and since signing the 1988 Vienna Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances it had introduced the following amendments into the Dangerous Drug Law: confiscation of all property obtained directly or indirectly from drug-related crime; a minimum of 20 years' imprisonment for drug dealing; confiscation of driving and business licences of convicted dealers; and authorization for the police to search persons or property, without a court order, on reasonable suspicion of drug possession. The amended law also provided for a new leniency towards drug addicts, allowing them to be released on condition that they agreed to treatment and rehabilitation. Israel had also established jurisdiction enabling it to prosecute persons in its territory even in cases where the offence had been committed outside Israel.

8. The Anti-Drug Authority had initiated highly successful projects integrating addicts and ex-addicts into constructive activities and employment and had developed a number of treatment and rehabilitation programmes. In an effort to put a halt to the mounting demand for drugs in Israel it had also introduced a national policy on prevention and education. The greatest effort was being directed towards the nation's youth.

9. Mr. SAVUA (Fiji) said that Fiji, along with many countries of the South Pacific region, was fortunate in that the drug problem had not reached the alarming proportions seen elsewhere. The main problem was the use of the islands as transit points for trafficking. A further problem was the ease with which the traffickers could entice and corrupt the population for monetary reward. What the country required was assured markets for its goods, which created jobs and raised the standard of living. That would help the people to resist lucrative offers of drug money.

10. The South Pacific Governments had joined in preventive action through the Chiefs of Police Forum and its subsidiary, the South Pacific Islands Criminal Intelligence Network, aimed at co-ordinating the activities of the law enforcement agencies and educating the population at large concerning the destructive effects of narcotic drugs, including the connection between drugs and the spread of AIDS.

11. Fiji was experiencing difficulty in acquiring funds from international lending institutions, which tended to regard Fiji as having no serious debt problems and therefore not in the same need of assistance as other debt-distressed nations. The same attitude applied to the drugs problem. In his delegation's view, all efforts must receive an equitable share of funds and resources.

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(Mr. Savua, Fiji)

12. The financial and technical assistance given by Australia and New Zealand greatly assisted South Pacific efforts, but it needed to be expanded to include co-operation and co-ordination with South Asian and South-East Asian neighbours and with international organizations. Fiji supported the improvement and strengthening of existing organizations.

13. Mr. FISHER (Australia) said that Australia was naturally concerned about the drug situation in South Asia and South-East Asia and the Pacific, particularly in relation to heroin, which was a global problem that could only be solved through global co-operation. It fully supported current efforts, including a special session of the General Assembly, but stressed that they must be pursued globally, prepared carefully after consultation with and consensus among Governments of all regions, and draw fully on expertise already developed, particularly by the United Nations anti-drug bodies.

14. The alarm felt about the present situation was attributable in part to the international community's failure to effectively use machinery already in place. It was essential to avoid a cycle of well-intentioned large-scale conferences aimed at galvanizing international action, whose recommendations were then inadequately implemented for want of organization and resources, resulting in renewed calls for further conferences, with no significant impact on the problem. For example, the International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking held in Vienna in June 1987, at a high political level, had resulted in a political Declaration and a Comprehensive Multidisciplinary Outline - a wide-ranging set of proposals aimed at dealing with all aspects of the drug problem. Now, little more than two years later, a high-level comprehensive meeting was again being planned as the international community's response to the problem. While Australia supported that approach, it was imperative to ensure that it had a real impact. He hoped that one of the results would be a political commitment to an enhanced role for the United Nations in the drug area, with broad agreement, on sufficiently detailed lines, on policies providing a firm basis for carrying out that task.

15. Reduction in demand was primarily the responsibility of individual Governments and the special session should consider the need for strengthening global action to that end because if demand could be drastically reduced, the other drug-related problems would collapse. Precursor chemicals and money laundering were other important concerns and the international financial community must fulfil its role in reducing the availability of profits from drugs. There was an obvious link between the production of illicit drugs and the need for economic development. The special session should also set rigorous priorities, taking into account existing plans and resource constraints. The system-wide plan of action recommended by the joint meeting of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination and the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination should be an important element in its deliberations.

16. The International Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, which had already been signed or ratified by 79 States, was much more than a lowest common denominator approach. It was a comprehensive, complex but practical basis for strengthened international action against the drug

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(Mr. Fisher, Australia)

trade. To be fully effective it required the widest possible adherence and he urged Governments which had not yet signed it to do so and those that had signed it to ratify it.

17. Two further elements were required for the effective implementation of the Convention: first, time to develop the necessary expertise and systems of co-operation, and secondly, adequate resources. Although many of the provisions were being implemented bilaterally, it was the United Nations drug units that bore responsibility for monitoring the Convention, and regrettably, their resources were woefully insufficient. His delegation agreed on the importance of extrabudgetary contributions but also believed strongly that existing budgetary resources should be redistributed to ensure that the international community's priorities were reflected in United Nations drug operations.

18. The need for adequate resources for the United Nations drug units had been clearly identified as a priority in successive resolutions of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly and those resolutions had become more emphatic as staff levels in those units had come under strain. The Australian Government was also concerned that the United Nations was unable to allocate the resources needed for effective follow-up to the 1987 International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking and feared that new proposals coming from the 1990 special session would be similarly hamstrung and ineffective.

19. Constraints on resources especially affected work on demand reduction and most hurt countries that were less equipped to tackle the problems on their own. For example, budgetary allocations for the two drug units - the Division of Narcotic Drugs and the International Narcotics Control Board - had not grown in real terms since the 1979/1980 biennium and had been declining in real terms since 1988. As a proportion of the global budget, regular budget funding for those two units would fall from 0.5 per cent in the 1988-1989 biennium to 0.4 per cent in 1990-1991; and despite increased workloads, the authorized staffing for the Division showed cuts in excess of the average personnel adjustment for the United Nations system. He could only ask whether those actions demonstrated responsiveness to the international community's concern.

20. To raise the question was to reveal a general need for more effective priority-setting machinery within the United Nations, particularly regarding the allocation of resources. He hoped that Australia's voice and the voices of others would be heard. Otherwise, the prospects for effective implementation of any new proposals flowing from the special session within the United Nations would be dim indeed.

21. Mr. KOUNKOU (Congo) said that the ramifications of illicit trafficking were so complex that no country, however powerful, could deal with the eradication problem single-handed. The United Nations already had the appropriate machinery, with the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the Division of Narcotic Drugs playing a fundamental role and the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control providing

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(Mr. Kounkou, Congo)

funding. Its role was vital, above all, for the developing countries. The States which had the necessary means should make larger contributions to enable the Fund to carry out its task.

22. His delegation supported the proposals in document A/44/572 on provisional implementation of the 1988 Convention and was sure that implementation of provisions such as the confiscation of the property of drug traffickers would strike a decisive blow to the drug trade.

23. It was essential to strengthen international co-operation in order to resolve the drug problem. In that connection he referred to an international seminar on anti-drug legislation, held at Brazzaville earlier in the year, attended by 14 African countries, which had stressed the urgent need for national legislation to be aligned under the auspices of the United Nations. His country welcomed the decision to convene a special session of the General Assembly on drug abuse and drug trafficking.

24. Mr. SCIALOJA (Italy) said that each country must co-ordinate its own action in the drug war with those of the international community. The United Nations had already demonstrated a commitment to that war by adopting the 1988 International Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances; it should now assist States to bring their drug laws into conformity with the Convention. The master plan formulated by the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control (UNFDAC) was a useful step towards progress in the drug war. The Fund had become a focal point for anti-drug strategies and had proved effective in helping States implement such strategies. It deserved adequate financing for its future work. UNFDAC and the United Nations Office at Geneva were well equipped to implement United Nations anti-drug programmes, but must be buttressed by political will and adequate resources. The special session of the General Assembly on drugs would provide an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the extent of the international community's commitment to the drug war.

25. Mr. ELIADES (Cyprus), after paying a tribute to the Government of Colombia for its courage and uncompromising determination to wage a war against the escalating drug problem, pointed out that it was difficult to match the enormous financial resources of the traffickers in waging that war. The adoption of the 1988 Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, important though it was, must be supplemented by regional and international co-operation through the United Nations to co-ordinate drug-related activities. He endorsed the proposals and recommendations made by the representatives of Sweden and Jamaica to increase United Nations involvement in the drug war. His delegation hoped that the forthcoming special session on drugs would produce a comprehensive plan of action for mobilizing the necessary resources to meet the challenge of drug trafficking before the end of the century.

26. Mr. CEVILLE (Panama) also commended Colombia for its heroic efforts and sacrifices in combating the drug trade and said that Panama's commitment to the war against drugs was reflected in specific action to apprehend and severely punish those who committed drug-related crimes, in educational campaigns on the danger of drugs, in co-operation with other States to fight drugs and in banking regulations designed to prevent the laundering of drug money. His delegation had been pleased to sponsor the proposal to hold a special session of the General Assembly to deal with the drug problem.

27. As long as provision was made to safeguard the national sovereignty and independence of all nations, Panama would welcome the specific proposal for a multinational force to combat the drug trade. Indeed, in view of its widely recognized success in combating the international drug trade, it would be prepared to offer its own territory as the permanent headquarters and base of operations of such a force. Panama supported all United Nations efforts to combat drugs and faithfully implemented the relevant recommendations, but stressed that while joint efforts in the war against drugs were welcome, they should not be a pretext for some to become the monitors and judges of others, or a ploy for using the crusade against drugs for purely political purposes.

28. The drug war should not focus on the producer and transit countries alone but also on the rich consumer countries, particularly in North America, which financed drug operations from their inviolable positions; the war against drugs must be waged against those who bore ultimate responsibility for the drug problem. Moreover, international efforts to solve the drug problem should not degenerate into interference in internal affairs. Panama would do its utmost to attack the underlying causes of the drug problem and to reduce demand and profitability.

29. Mrs. TASKINUD-DIN (Pakistan) said that Pakistan was strongly determined to overcome the problem of drug abuse and proliferation in its territory, despite the wealth and power of the drug barons. Developing countries like Pakistan required the assistance of the international community in cracking down on the drug trade. The anti-drug bodies must do more to co-ordinate their efforts so as to increase their efficiency, maximize available resources and avoid duplication of work. A co-ordinated multilateral and multidisciplinary approach was needed to defeat drug traffickers and law enforcement agencies must be strengthened.

30. Each country presented a different set of problems and required different solutions. In Pakistan the poppy was cultivated because it could grow in poor soil and provide a cash crop sufficient for the needs of the family that tilled the land. Prohibition of poppy cultivation would not work until the farmer could be adequately compensated for turning to other crops yielding a comparable income.

31. Public opinion shall be mobilized against the illicit use of drugs through preventive education at all levels and in all educational institutions, and demand must be reduced by educating, treating and rehabilitating addicts. Law enforcement agencies also had to be strengthened, but the spraying of crops was not effective because it deprived the poor peasant of his livelihood without hurting the drug barons.

(Mrs. Taskinud-Din, Pakistan)

32. Pakistan had launched a media campaign against drugs, and preventive measures, through education and community mobilization, had been organized at local levels. A global plan of action to deal with the drug problem should also be formulated.

33. The United Nations must be supported by national Governments in developing programmes to fight the drug war and she hoped that global co-ordination of efforts to reduce drug demand would be improved.

34. Mrs. AKUNGU OLENDE (Kenya) said that Colombia's courage in dealing with the drug problem was inspiring and must be matched by an equally bold commitment by the other members of the international community. Demand-reduction strategies should be accorded high priority: more severe legal penalties for users; confiscation of property or application of the zero tolerance policy; use of peer group pressures, especially among young people; and public notice of the arrests of drug users or purchasers.

35. The one-crop economies created by colonialism were returning to haunt the international community. In the face of fluctuating demand for certain commodities and in the absence of viable alternative cash crops, peasant farmers naturally turned to the cultivation of the most profitable plants those from which illegal drugs were produced. While it shared the international community's preoccupation with the drug menace, her country was particularly concerned about the plight of farmers forced by economic circumstances into growing illegal crops.

36. Her Government had demonstrated its commitment to the drug war by establishing an office for a Regional Field Adviser in Nairobi and hosting a seminar on development of community resources for the prevention and reduction of illicit demand for drugs.

37. Since narcotics could not exist without the chemicals used to process the raw materials, anti-drug strategies should be directed not only at the growers but also at the large multinational corporations that manufactured chemicals and were generally based in the industrialized States, the major consumers of illicit drugs.

38. It was fruitless to compare the resources available to the United Nations for the drug war with the enormous resources available to drug traffickers. The role of the United Nations was to increase public awareness of the drug problem and to render assistance to Member States when called upon.

39. Her delegation agreed with the Executive Director of the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control that the drug strategies now in force should not be discarded until they could be replaced by more effective action. Member States needed to work together in implementing a co-ordinated and effective series of anti-drug measures.

40. Mr. CAVE (Barbados) said that the Caribbean countries, like the rest of the international community, were now directly confronted with the drug menace. His delegation was encouraged by the number and content of the anti-drug proposals that had been presented to the current session of the General Assembly. Each proposal had merit and deserved appropriate consideration. Together, the proposals reflected an acknowledgement that no State could deal effectively with the challenges of the drug problem single-handed.

41. The Caribbean States were at a great disadvantage in fighting the drug war. First, they lacked the resources to protect their vulnerable island borders. Secondly, since they were highly dependent on tourism, Caribbean societies had to be open and accessible to all. Thirdly, the Caribbean States were situated midway between production and consumption centres and were thus forced against their will to accommodate drug-related activities.

42. While enormous fortunes were being made from drug activity, it was important to remember that cultivation of illegal crops was often the result not of greed but of economic necessity. The impact of anti-drug measures on farmers should therefore be taken fully into account. Furthermore, the illicit drug industry was sustained not by poverty-bound producer communities, but by wealthy communities where demand was indulged and suppliers were protected. In essence, the industry - production, trafficking and demand - reflected a serious misuse of international trade avenues that would otherwise be utilized in the interest of international development and security.

43. His Government had taken measures which it considered essential to the containment and elimination of the drug threat in the region. They included educational programmes in schools and through the mass media; expanded measures for interdiction at all points of entry; legislation designed to discourage both drug use and trafficking; and special training in implementing anti-drug measures.

44. Barbados acknowledged with satisfaction the bilateral initiatives taken to increase public awareness of the dangers of drugs and to establish rehabilitation programmes for addicts. It commended the Government of the United Kingdom for its offer to host the 1990 conference on demand reduction. With adequate financial support, more could be done on the international level. Drug control and other agencies in the United Nations system could become more effective weapons in the drug war and should adjust their priorities to the dimensions of the problem. His delegation looked forward to the General Assembly special session on drugs, which could provide guidance and impetus to the campaign.

45. He drew the attention to the proposals made by the Prime Minister of Jamaica concerning the use of relevant resources in the international struggle against the drug trade. Those proposals had been endorsed by the Heads of Government of the CARICOM States and merited careful consideration.

46. Mr. ALLAEI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that, given its magnitude, the drug problem resembled the threat posed by nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and had become a major factor undermining the political stability and sovereignty of States.

47. The activities of drug traffickers were a clear warning and a challenge to the entire international community. Drug traffickers had no moral conscience, acknowledged no humanitarian principles and recognized no international frontiers. Traffic in drugs was an international problem requiring an international solution.

48. The methods adopted by the Government of Colombia in dealing with the depredations of drug traffickers deserved the full solidarity and support of the international community. The strengthening of international co-operation was the only way to win the war against drug traffickers. The various drug units of the United Nations could perform an important role and must be reinforced and provided with all the necessary resources.

49. The involvement of mercenaries with drug traffickers, as revealed by the bloody events in Colombia, increased the complexity of the problem and aroused great concern. It had become evident that certain régimes well known for their terrorist activities were involved in the recruitment, training and financing of mercenaries for participation in acts of terrorism and destruction organized by drug traffickers. That development should be given the highest priority in future discussions of the drug problem.

50. Although the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya did not suffer from drug-related problems to the same extent as some other countries, it nevertheless identified with the latter and particularly, with those on the front line of the war against drug traffickers. It declared its commitment to any action dictated by the common international responsibility and would continue to make the greatest possible efforts to support all international efforts for the elimination of the drug problem. In keeping with that commitment, it had sought to become a member of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and had been elected to the Commission for a four-year term beginning in January 1990. It would participate positively and actively in the work of the Commission and would co-operate closely with the other members to promote its objectives and ensure its success. The competent authorities in his country were also considering the question of acceding to the 1988 Vienna Convention. His country had been among the first to sponsor the idea of convening a special session of the General Assembly to consider international co-operation on drug-related questions. That idea having now become a reality, his country accorded special importance to the session and hoped that its work would be crowned with success.

51. Mrs. WARZAZI (Morocco) said that Morocco, which had been among the first signatories of the 1988 Vienna Convention, was committed to respecting the obligations of the Convention and was engaged in a merciless battle with drug traffickers, many of whom were foreigners. In that connection, Morocco wished to thank the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control (UNFDAC) for its assistance and to encourage that agency to continue to finance projects in Africa, which was

(Mrs. Warzazi, Morocco)

especially vulnerable to drug traffickers seeking unguarded transit routes or promoting illegal crop cultivation in impoverished farm communities.

52. She wished to associate herself with those delegations which favoured consolidation of recommendations instead of a series of draft resolutions on the drug problem.

53. It was imperative to provide adequate financial resources to UNFEDAC, producing and transit countries, and all drug control agencies. Furthermore, the importance of technology in controlling international drug trafficking should not be overlooked, given the increasingly frequent utilization by drug traffickers of containers and heavy goods vehicles. Her delegation also endorsed the recommendation for increased co-ordination of United Nations system activities. A restructuring of those activities should reinforce the capacity of existing bodies and increase their resource base.

54. At the same time that the international community was mobilizing forces to limit drug supply and demand, there were Governments which, far from taking measures against illicit drug consumption, were making facilities available to drug users or decriminalizing drug use. It was unacceptable that the producing countries should be making enormous efforts, and even sacrifices as in the case of Colombia, to eliminate the drug plague while other countries, for various reasons, permitted unrestricted consumption of illicit drugs and sustained demand.

55. All countries without exception had a moral responsibility to fight drug trafficking. Faced with the criminal activities of traffickers, which undermined the very foundations of society, it was inadmissible for countries to invoke national sovereignty to evade their obligations under the various international drug control instruments, in particular the 1988 Convention, which should be implemented as rapidly as possible.

56. Her delegation wished to commend all the drug control agencies and specialized agencies of the United Nations system involved in the campaign against drugs. It also commended international organizations such as Interpol for their role in implementing control and suppression measures. Consumer countries must make efforts to control demand and to find solutions to the problems which led young people into drug abuse. They had a vital interest in helping producer countries to find economic solutions which would frustrate drug traffickers and halt the cultivation of illegal crops.

57. Mr. HUYGHE (International Narcotics Control Board) said that as established in article 9 of the 1953 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, the International Narcotics Control Board was an independent organization. Reviewing the functions of the Board, he emphasized that under article 14 of the Single Convention, it was empowered to take the measures necessary to ensure compliance by the States parties with the provisions of the Convention. Article 14 bis of the Convention authorized it to give technical and financial assistance to countries having difficulties in complying with the provisions of the Convention and to alert the United Nations

(Mr. Huyghe)

specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies to those assistance needs. The Board's functions had been broadened under the 1988 Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances which provided, *inter alia*, with respect to the precursors of chemical substances, that it should take into account the relevant provisions set forth by the World Health Organization in previous instruments.

58. It was absolutely necessary for all States to ratify the 1988 Convention. There were many developed countries which had not yet done so. A number of developing countries which had ratified the Convention had not taken the necessary measures to ensure the implementation of all its provisions, leaving enormous quantities of psychotropic substances beyond the scope of legal regulation. States parties should enact legislation to ensure the implementation of all the relevant narcotic drugs Conventions, if necessary, on a provisional basis pending ratification.

59. Measures must be taken to reduce the demand for illicit drugs through preventive measures, the treatment and rehabilitation of addicts and programmes which took into account the important role played by families and schools. Further attention should be given to the abuse of legal psychotropic substances. Lastly, he stressed that the international consensus on the drug abuse problem should be speedily translated in practical terms.

60. Mr. SAAD (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he could not remain silent after having heard the representative of the Tel Aviv régime speak about the international campaign against traffic in drugs. The United States media had reported on a drug scandal involving Israeli army officers, particularly a certain Colonel Klein, who had been training members of the drug smuggling mafia in Colombia.

61. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had concluded its general debate on agenda item 111.

AGENDA ITEM 96: ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES AND WAYS AND MEANS WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS (A/44/118, A/44/119, A/44/158 and Add.1, A/44/409-S/20743 and Corr.1 and 2, A/44/525, A/44/551, A/44/660 and Add.1, and A/44/696)

62. Mr. MARTENSON (Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights) said that human rights violations and abuses continued to constitute a grave affront to the conscience of mankind. Nevertheless, the United Nations had made immense progress in developing new international human rights instruments and machinery for dealing with a wide range of situations and violations. With the return to multilateralism, it would be timely to reflect on the Organization's achievements in the human rights field, to identify areas for further progress and decide on new directions to be pursued with respect to machinery, criteria and priority areas of concern for the coming years. All of that could appropriately be done by convening a world human rights conference to deal at the highest level with crucial issues.

(Mr. Martenson)

Such a conference would be prepared by regional and NGO meetings and would help the Organization to prepare for the challenges of the coming century.

63. It was encouraging to note the remarkable increase in national institutions in all regions for the protection and promotion of human rights. The Centre for Human Rights had organized activities, both at the national and regional level, aimed at promoting the establishment of such institutions in the belief that they provided an indispensable bulwark against human rights abuses. Providing support for those institutions was one of the Centre's major objectives.

64. Referring to the right to development, he said that taking account of human rights in development planning would ensure that the strategy followed was relevant to the 1990s and the needs of people throughout the world. The enjoyment of human rights would constitute an essential element in evaluating socio-economic prospects. Factors such as the ratification of basic human rights instruments and the degree of respect for basic human rights would have to be taken into account in considering the extent to which development objectives had been realized. At its 1989 session, the Commission on Human Rights had focused its attention on the implementation of the Declaration on the Right to Development. Consultations on that question would have a significant influence on future United Nations development activities.

65. Since the launching of the World Public Information Campaign for Human Rights, the Centre for Human Rights had greatly enhanced its co-ordinating work for the promotion of information/education on human rights. Increased priority had been given to that aspect of the human rights programme because of the growing co-operation of Member States and non-governmental organizations with the Centre. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General on the development of public information activities in the field of human rights (A/44/660), activities for the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms within the framework of the Campaign were grouped into five major areas. The Centre had continued the programme of information materials started in 1988 in connection with the fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Part II of the report provided information on printed material, such as the fact sheets and issues of the Newsletter on Human Rights and the Bulletin on Human Rights. The Centre was also increasing the number of languages into which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had been translated.

66. Since January 1989, the Centre had held a number of workshops, training courses and seminars on various human rights issues in all parts of the world. Those meetings had also been used to disseminate information on the objectives of the World Public Information Campaign for Human Rights, thus promoting efforts to achieve the long-term goal of creating a universal culture of human rights. To that end, the Centre was also involved in some 80 workshops, seminars and meetings organized by academic and research institutions and non-governmental organizations throughout the world.

(Mr. Martenson)

67. The Centre for Human Rights had organized a meeting of the specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies in April to review ongoing activities in the areas of information/education and technical assistance and training in the field of human rights and make best use of scarce resources. Similar meetings would be held on a regular basis. With the assistance of the Department of Public Information, the Centre's staff had given radio and television interviews as well as press conferences on special occasions, such as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Human rights exhibits and round tables had also been organized.

68. The importance attached to human rights activities was an encouraging development. Nevertheless, resources had simply not kept pace with demands. Current activities were beginning to suffer because of the scarcity of human and financial resources. Time and again resource constraints had prevented the Centre from responding to requests for information and technical assistance. It was not feasible at the present stage to undertake any new tasks on the basis of "existing resources". On the contrary, additional resources commensurate with the new challenges facing the United Nations must be made available if the Organization was to respond to the needs of the international human rights community. It would be a wise investment for the future of the international community as a whole.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

69. The CHAIRMAN said that document A/44/688 submitted under agenda item 109 would not be issued before 20 November 1989. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee decided to defer consideration of agenda item 109 until that date, when it would be considered together with agenda item 12.

70. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.