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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 53rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KABORE (Burkina Faso)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (A/44/3, A/44/402, A/44/403, A/44/404, A/44/426, A/44/440, A/44/462, A/44/482, A/44/573, A/44/600, A/44/620, A/44/622, A/44/635, A/44/657, A/44/669, A/44/671, A/C.3/44/1 and 4; A/44/67, A/44/68, A/44/71, A/44/99, A/44/119, A/44/153, A/44/171, A/44/238 and Corr.1, A/44/320, A/44/325, A/44/355-S/20704, A/44/367, A/44/377, A/44/378, A/44/381, A/44/466, A/44/504, A/44/580, A/44/706, A/44/728 and A/C.3/44/8)

AGENDA ITEM 109: EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS, INCLUDING REPORTING OBLIGATIONS UNDER INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS (continued) (A/44/98, A/44/539, A/44/668, A/44/171, A/44/409-S/20743 and Corr.1 and 2 and A/44/689-S/20921)

1. Mr. FORTIER (Canada), reviewing the events which had recently taken place in Eastern Europe and which had much improved the human rights situation, noted that in Romania, however, many people, including Doina Cornea, Laszlo Tokes and Dan Desilu, had been the victims of repressive measures for having exercised their right to freedom of speech. The Romanian Government had continued to refuse to allow the United Nations Rapporteur, Dumitru Mazilu, to leave the country in order to complete his work. It was deplorable that international officials, such as members of UNRWA staff in Lebanon and the territories occupied by the Israelis, should be the victims of acts of violence.
2. Turning to the particularly alarming events which were taking place in Central America, he noted that in El Salvador, five Jesuits had been assassinated on 16 November 1989 and that leaders of student, trade union and human rights movements and religious and refugee organizations continued to be harassed.
3. In Guatemala, there had been a renewal of disappearances and the activities of death squads. The Commission on Human Rights should examine that situation at its next meeting.
4. In Nicaragua, the restrictions imposed on freedom of expression might jeopardize the preparation and holding of the coming elections.
5. In Cuba, the authorities were refusing to allow the relatives of Canadian citizens and permanent residents of Canada to leave the country.
6. In Haiti, although the Government of General Avril had taken steps to improve the situation and had announced that Presidential elections would be held at the end of 1990, violations of human rights had taken place recently in which members of the Haitian army were in all likelihood implicated.
7. In China, the security forces had killed demonstrators in the autonomous region of Tibet in March 1989, and at Beijing in June 1989. Martial law remained in effect. The severity of arrests and executions seemed, however, to be declining, and his delegation hoped that positive changes would begin to take place shortly.

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(Mr. Fortier, Canada)

8. In Myanmar, torture and arbitrary arrests were practised systematically. Freedom of assembly and freedom of speech were suppressed. That country had not yet accepted the fact that the protection of human rights was the sine qua non of democratization.
9. The use of special rapporteurs and the machinery for thematic investigation established by the United Nations evoked varying reactions from Governments. It was regrettable that the Chilean Government refused to co-operate with the Special Rapporteur, particularly since the human rights situation had recently improved in that country. He hoped that the next Government, which would be democratically elected, would meet the wishes of the Chilean people and the international community with regard to the protection of human rights.
10. His delegation appreciated the work carried out by the United Nations Special Rapporteur for the human rights situation in Iran, where it seemed that the fundamental right to life and dignity and the rights of minorities had been repeatedly violated. It was awaiting the reply of the Iranian Government to those charges with interest.
11. The case of Sri Lanka was particularly alarming. All the participants in the civil conflict were guilty of flagrant violations of human rights and the proclamation of a state of emergency gave the security forces almost complete freedom of action. Although the Indian peace-keeping forces were being withdrawn, Canada would continue to advocate a search for a peaceful solution to that ethnic conflict.
12. His delegation deplored the recent violations of human rights by the Iraqi Government, particularly the exile imposed on groups of the population and the denial of justice to persons imprisoned for alleged security violations.
13. Expressing his concern regarding the allegations of serious violations of human rights in Syria, he appealed to that country to respect the principles of due process and protection of the rights of accused persons.
14. His delegation was distressed at the situation in the Horn of Africa, where drought and famine had been added to the incessant civil wars. It welcomed the beginning of peaceful negotiations in Ethiopia, Somalia and the Sudan, where the full restoration of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights would unquestionably have to be preceded by reconciliation and reconstruction.
15. In South Africa, it was clear that in spite of the change in the political climate, the ignoble system of apartheid remained intact. His country intended to continue to put pressure on South Africa in order to induce it to abolish the state of emergency, to free the political prisoners and to enter into dialogue and negotiation with the black leaders, as well as to help the victims and opponents of apartheid.

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(Mr. Fortier, Canada)

16. His delegation welcomed the recent diplomatic activity aimed at a lasting solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Protection of the fundamental rights of Palestinians was the responsibility of the international community and the Israeli Government. His Government again called on Israel to apply the fourth Geneva Convention, whose provisions it continued to violate, in particular by carrying out the demolition of houses, deportations and arbitrary detentions and by employing deadly force.

17. His delegation favoured the extension of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Afghanistan. While it welcomed the withdrawal of Soviet troops, it deplored the continuation of a bloody civil war and the widespread violations of human rights in that country, and remained convinced that the conflict should be resolved through negotiation.

18. Concerned at the situation of the Turkish ethnic minority in Bulgaria, whose sudden exodus in the summer of 1989 had been the largest movement of population in Europe since the Second World War, his delegation hoped that the new Bulgarian Government would continue to protect human rights, in particular by allowing minorities to speak their own language and practise their customs and religion without fear of persecution or repression.

19. His delegation was convinced of the essential role of the Special Rapporteurs and the machinery of thematic consideration in protecting human rights, and would support efforts to promote their work. It attached great importance to the advisory services programme intended to establish in those countries which wished to have them the necessary structures for the promotion of human rights, and it was preparing a co-operation project with Zaïre within the framework of that programme.

20. He drew attention to the recommendations in the report of the independent expert on ways to enhance the effectiveness of United Nations bodies supervising the implementation of international instruments on human rights and, in particular, to the need for giving those bodies financial resources adequate to the tasks they had been entrusted with.

21. His delegation considered it necessary for the United Nations to react more quickly to emergency situations, by utilizing the good offices of the Secretary-General or the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights or through action by the Commission's officers between sessions. Above all, it called on Governments to respect their commitments to their own people and to the international community.

22. Mrs. ATTAH (Nigeria) said that the Nigerian Government was all the more committed to the promotion and defence of fundamental human rights because it was a member of the Commission on Human Rights. All human rights were interdependent and indivisible. However, there were frequently obstacles - underdevelopment, disease, ignorance, and poverty - to the enjoyment of those rights. The international community should endeavour to eliminate those obstacles by combating illiteracy, resolving the debt problem and establishing an equitable international economic

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(Mrs. Attah, Nigeria)

order that would create suitable conditions for the enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms.

23. In view of the relationship between human rights violations and the conflicts, mass exoduses and instability which occurred in many areas of the world, she fully supported the action taken by the Secretary-General, outlined in paragraphs 6, 7 and 8 of document A/44/622, to encourage various forms of international co-operation designed to avert new flows of refugees.

24. She described as pitiful the attempts at reform made by South Africa, which maintained its apartheid régime, persisted in denying the indigenous majority the right to vote and be represented, continued to ban the African National Congress (ANC) and had not yet released Nelson Mandela.

25. Her delegation deplored and strongly condemned the flagrant violations of human rights committed in the occupied Arab territories, as well as in many other parts of the world.

26. It was convinced that respect for human rights was closely linked to the strengthening of international co-operation and national development. It stressed the importance of the work of the Special Rapporteurs, with whom there should be greater co-operation, of the international instruments and monitoring mechanisms, which should be strengthened, and of the advisory services, which should be expanded.

27. Her delegation urged greater support for the World Public Information Campaign on Human Rights and renewed the appeal it had made at the forty-fifth session of the Commission on Human Rights at Geneva in favour of the following measures: an increase in the volume of advisory services to the African region; an increased supply of basic international human rights instruments to that region; the translation of those instruments into more African languages; and increased attention to regions with a statistically greater number of individual and mass violations of human rights.

28. Her delegation called on Member States to seize the opportunity offered by the current international climate to bring about a radical improvement in the human rights situation. The international consensus in favour of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which her delegation had joined, gave grounds for some optimism. Her delegation was aware of the need to continue and to co-ordinate the efforts being made to promote the full exercise of human rights and would do its utmost to discharge its obligations in the matter.

29. Mrs. BICH LIEN (Viet Nam) said that, while the world political situation was evolving towards co-operation, the new outlook presented both opportunities and challenges.

30. Flagrant mass violations of human rights were continuing in different parts of the world, particularly in South Africa, which maintained its apartheid régime,

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(Mrs. Bich Lien, Viet Nam)

the most inhuman manifestation of racism. As that system could not be reformed, it must be eradicated. Her delegation hoped that the General Assembly, at its special session on apartheid, would adopt effective measures towards that end. Comprehensive mandatory sanctions were necessary, in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. Her delegation fully supported the conclusions contained in the updated report presented to the Committee by Mr. Khalifa, which warned against the adverse effects for the enjoyment of human rights by the South African population of any form of assistance to the racist régime.

31. Her delegation considered that the increase in frequency and intensity of human rights violations in the occupied Arab territories by the Israeli forces, which had resulted in the death of hundreds of people and the injury of thousands of others, including children, women and the elderly, demonstrated the need for the early convening of an international conference on the Middle East, with the participation, on an equal footing, of all parties concerned, including the State of Palestine.

32. The promotion of human rights and the search for peace and security were interdependent. It was therefore necessary, in the interests of all, to continue to strive to achieve those common objectives.

33. As a developing country, Viet Nam attached special importance to the right to development. As part of its efforts at national reconstruction and development, Viet Nam had for several years been implementing a programme of economic reforms which had made it possible to improve the standard of living of the population. Faced with different kinds of interference, political pressures and an economic blockade, which compounded the difficulties left by the wars, Viet Nam reaffirmed its sacred right freely to choose its own way to development, without foreign interference.

34. Recalling the adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 10 years after the atrocities committed by the Nazis, she said that, despite the international community's hope that such a catastrophe would never happen again, the same fate had been inflicted on Cambodia between 1975 and 1978 under the rule of the infamous Khmer Rouge. In three years, the Pol Pot régime had massacred nearly 3 million Cambodians out of a population of 7 million. Pol Pot and his associates should be brought to trial before a tribunal of the Nürnberg type and duly punished so that they would be unable to commit further atrocities. After the total withdrawal of Vietnamese volunteer troops, there was a real danger that the Khmer Rouge might start a civil war and return to power in Cambodia. Those responsible for genocide were continuing to be given sanctuary abroad and to be provided with assistance which enabled them to intensify their military activities along the Thai-Cambodian border. The United Nations should not allow itself, as in previous years, to be manipulated by some countries and should intervene urgently in order to prevent Cambodia from being once again subjected to genocide.

35. Mr. BARKER (Australia) observed that, as the Charter of the United Nations had been accepted by all Member States, fundamental human rights should be of universal application. Australia could not therefore accept the argument that any denunciation of a flagrant violation of universally accepted human rights constituted interference in a country's internal affairs.

36. It was the duty of all Member States to work together to improve the human condition and to ensure respect for the dignity and freedom of all persons and, to that end, to co-operate with the Special Rapporteurs and working groups established by the United Nations. The thematic rapporteurs, whose mandate was not restricted to any one country or single event, also had an important role to play.

37. Where the human rights situation in a given country became disturbing, the United Nations appointed a special rapporteur or made arrangements - as in the case of South Africa and the territories occupied by Israel - to report on the abuses committed.

38. In 1974, the United Nations had begun to monitor the human rights situation in Chile. During the past two years, there had been positive developments towards the restoration of democratic traditions in Chile and a decrease in the number of human rights abuses in that country. However, the Special Rapporteur drew attention, in his report, to continuing instances of abuses and violations, which gave due cause for concern.

39. The situation in El Salvador was disturbing. The escalation of violence during the past two weeks, including the slaying of priests and civilians, was further evidence that a political solution was the pre-condition of any improvement in the human rights situation. His Government appealed to all parties to the conflict to resume the dialogue and to reach such a solution.

40. The end of the war in the Gulf gave reason to hope for a process of reconstruction and improvement in Iran and Iraq. The Special Representative on Iran had characterized the amnesty decree in February 1989 as an extremely important first step in that direction. It seemed, however, that violations continued to be committed in that country. At the forty-third session of the General Assembly, the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran had made a commitment to co-operate fully with the United Nations in the area of human rights. In the opinion of his Government, such co-operation was fundamental and it therefore deplored the fact that Iran had not respected its commitment. It was essential that the Special Representative on Iran should encounter no obstacle in the exercise of his mandate.

41. The situation in Iraq was of deep concern to Australia. Well-documented evidence testified to the massacre of some 5,000 persons in Halabja and to the use of chemical weapons. According to some reports, thousands of Kurds had been relocated, had seen their villages destroyed and had lost their means of livelihood. Given the number of reports of this kind, it was imperative that Iraq should open its doors to permit an objective assessment of the situation. Australia noted the fact that members of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of

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(Mr. Barker, Australia)

Discrimination and Protection of Minorities had been invited to visit Iraq. A reliable investigation should be carried out.

42. His Government welcomed the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan but noted with concern that the hostilities were continuing and involved violations of human rights. It believed that the Special Rapporteur should continue his work in Afghanistan.

43. As a rule, great caution was necessary before deciding to end the mandate of a special rapporteur. The appointment of a rapporteur was a decision never taken lightly, and several years were usually required before his work succeeded in improving the situation with respect to human rights. Guatemala was a case in point where it had been thought that the situation would improve after the election of President Cerezo but where it was now undergoing a serious deterioration.

44. In the case of China, the Australian Government had condemned and continued to condemn the massacre of students and civilians during the June events. It had expressed its profound concern to the Chinese authorities and hoped that they would co-operate fully with the United Nations in examining allegations of individual human rights abuses.

45. It welcomed the announcement of national elections in Myanmar for May 1990. At the same time, it was worried by the fact that opposition leaders and political activists had had their freedom restricted. His delegation requested the Government of Myanmar to ensure the full participation of all parties and personalities in the election process and to release all political prisoners.

46. The phenomenon of refugees was very often linked with violations of human rights, and his delegation supported the idea of establishing an early-warning system to enable the Secretary-General to draw attention to situations which might cause an outflow of refugees.

47. The Australian delegation stressed that in many parts of the world the human rights situation had improved. It welcomed the recent changes in most countries of Eastern Europe: the Soviet Union, Hungary, Poland and the German Democratic Republic. Encouraging steps had been taken in Bulgaria. It also welcomed the greater freedom of expression and of association in the Baltic Republics. It was however regrettable that in some countries of Eastern Europe, in particular Romania, the situation was not so satisfactory.

48. Mr. BUZO (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic), quoting the words used by the Secretary-General in his annual report (A/44/1), noted that while the United Nations had done much to illuminate the interrelationship of peace, justice, freedom and human rights, it was nevertheless Governments that must realize that interrelationship in their laws and legal procedures. In 1989 a new instrument, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, had joined the battery of international human rights instruments. However, no matter how perfect those instruments, their effectiveness was measured by the number of States which genuinely undertook to

(Mr. Buzo, Byelorussian SSR)

apply them. That was why the task of the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary organs must be to examine what was preventing those instruments from becoming truly universal and to provide advisory services for States which requested them.

49. The new political outlook was now bringing about improvements in the international political climate. For example, in 1989 the delegations of the USSR and the United States had submitted a draft resolution on the strengthening of international peace, security and co-operation, of which the Byelorussian SSR was a sponsor and which had been adopted unanimously at the present session of the General Assembly. States seemed to have greater confidence in the capacity of the United Nations to settle regional conflicts which had a negative influence on respect for human rights.

50. The importance of the November elections in Namibia was not limited to the Namibian people. They marked an important stage in the elimination of the vestiges of colonialism and in the establishment of peace in southern Africa.

51. In South Africa, the measures taken recently by the apartheid régime - ending segregation on public transport and on the beaches - were purely superficial, and the United Nations must continue to ostracize South Africa in order to eliminate apartheid.

52. His delegation had supported all the resolutions in which the Commission on Human Rights and the Economic and Social Council had expressed their support for the Palestinian people in its struggle for national liberation and self-determination. The countless victims of the intifadah were a reminder to the United Nations and the international community of the need to find a speedy solution to the Middle East problem.

53. It was to be hoped that the political events in El Salvador would lead to a dialogue and to national reconciliation. In Chile, the 1988 plebiscite had raised hopes for progress towards democracy in that country. However, the terror which the régime continued to use to eliminate its opponents showed that it was ready to do anything to maintain the status quo. Hence the need to continue to monitor closely the situation in Chile.

54. In Central America the United Nations was to monitor the implementation of the Esquipulas II Agreements, which offered a solid basis for the settlement of the conflict in that region of the world. In Nicaragua, the preparation and the holding of the elections ruled out any interference in the country's affairs.

55. As for South-East Asia, his delegation thought that the settlement of the conflict in Cambodia required non-intervention by foreign Powers, prohibition of the return to power of the genocidal Pol Pot régime, and the establishment of an independent and sovereign Cambodian State.

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(Mr. Buzo, Byelorussian SSR)

56. The policy of national reconciliation in Afghanistan was opening the way to the re-establishment of a society based on freedom, equality and justice. Strict compliance with the Geneva Agreements by all countries was an essential condition for the success of that policy.

57. In the opinion of the Byelorussian SSR, the question of human rights was a sensitive element of international relations, for it related to the specific historical development of countries and peoples. However, the joint efforts of all States must be aimed at the attainment of the goals and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations, i.e., to put an end to the scourge of war, to strengthen respect for fundamental human rights, especially the equality of rights of peoples small or large, and to establish an international structure designed to achieve economic and social progress.

58. Mr. BADJIE (Gambia) said that the world's current troubles were caused by the structural imbalances in the world economy. The developing countries were going through a particularly difficult period in an unfavourable international climate (deterioration of the terms of trade, persistent slump in commodity prices, increasing protectionism, net transfer of resources from the poor to the rich countries, etc.). Those obstacles to the economic growth of the developing countries had harmful political and social repercussions and also endangered international peace and security.

59. In the light of those difficulties, several developing countries, including his own, had initiated structural adjustment measures, but not without a social cost. It was therefore necessary for the economic reform programmes to be given sufficient support by the international community.

60. The strengthening of international economic co-operation, to which UNCTAD, currently celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary, was dedicated, was of major interest to the developing countries. In that connection, Gambia welcomed the entry into force of the Common Fund, within the framework of the Integrated Programme for Commodities, which should enhance the exports of the developing countries on the world markets. Gambia urged the international community to contribute towards the effective functioning of the Fund.

61. Gambia welcomed the various initiatives taken at the world level - the special session of the General Assembly devoted to international economic co-operation, the new international development strategy for the 1990s, the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the United Nations conference on the environment and development and the new African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes - all of which demonstrated the international community's awareness of the need to promote development.

62. Turning to agenda item 109, he said that, 40 years after the adoption of the Declaration of Human Rights, those rights continued to be violated world-wide. The reports of the United Nations and organizations such as Amnesty International proved that the adoption of human rights instruments had not been matched by their

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(Mr. Badjie, Gambia)

implementation. His delegation did not intend to engage in name-calling but would simply note that the reporting system had not proved adequate and that monitoring compliance with international human rights instruments was a very difficult task. Gambia therefore considered that new arrangements should be developed. Above all, it regretted the lack on the part of many countries of the political and moral will required to put an end to the massive abuse of human rights.

63. Gambia, for its part, in line with its commitment, had taken the initiative of establishing an African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies. It had also provided the necessary infrastructure for the headquarters of the OAU Commission on Human and People's Rights in Banjul. He thanked the Commission on Human Rights for its assistance in that connection.

64. In conclusion, Gambia supported the call by many delegations for the appointment of a United Nations high commissioner for human rights and the establishment of an international court of human rights.

65. Mr. KITTIKHOUN (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that massive violations of human rights continued to occur in many parts of the world. In South Africa, despite certain recent positive developments, the odious system of apartheid was still in force and States had a moral duty to do everything in their power to dismantle it. In that connection, his country had great expectations of the next special session of the General Assembly. In the Middle East, where the Palestinian people continued to suffer human rights violations, the occupying Power must comply fully with the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. In Latin America, massive violations of human rights and bloody conflicts that also affected innocent civilians called for a redoubling of effort to ensure the full implementation of the Tela Declaration and to promote a political solution by means of dialogue and negotiation.

66. In a pluralistic world, where human rights were being discussed everywhere, all States must co-operate sincerely to ensure that the human rights standards established by the United Nations were respected while avoiding using human rights issues as a pretext for interfering in the internal affairs of other States.

67. No country could claim to be ideal from the standpoint of the enjoyment of human rights. Those which focused their attention on civil and political rights must realize that economic and social rights were also essential. In his delegation's view, all those rights were interrelated and formed an integral whole.

68. In conclusion, the Lao People's Democratic Republic believed that the progress of international co-operation, including in the humanitarian field, could continue only if there was full respect for the independence and sovereignty of States regardless of their social and political systems.

69. Mr. MEZZALAMA (Italy), speaking on agenda item 109, said that his delegation was particularly concerned about the procedures to be adopted to make the system for monitoring the implementation of international human rights instruments more

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(Mr. Mezzalana, Italy)

effective. In its view, the reporting procedure should be rationalized and the work of the monitoring committees and of the Geneva Centre for Human Rights simplified.

70. Italy had taken an initiative aimed at creating a computerized system within the Centre for Human Rights. The aim in view was to lighten the burden of the work of the Centre and of the Commission on Human Rights and the monitoring bodies. Italy was also a sponsor of resolution 1989/46, adopted by the Commission on Human Rights, which provided among other things for setting up a task force to study the feasibility of computerizing all activities connected with reporting obligations and the work of the Geneva Centre for Human Rights. The task force was to submit a preliminary report to the next session of the Commission.

71. In his delegation's view, it was of paramount importance to improve the system of national reports, which were tending to proliferate. He commended the studies already carried out on the subject (document A/44/668).

72. A co-ordinated system would facilitate the examination of texts by making possible the direct comparison of reports. The States parties to international agreements would benefit from a uniform treatment of basic information. Such a system would make it possible to eliminate as far as possible lengthy "dead times" in the process as a whole. His delegation hoped that Member States would look with interest at the report that the task force on computerization was to submit to the Commission on Human Rights.

73. Since the item under discussion was the effective implementation of human rights, particularly civil and political rights, which it regarded as fundamental, his delegation wished to commend the work of the Human Rights Committee in that connection. In so doing, it did not intend to imply that the coexistence of a plurality of committees could not be of some help. It merely wished to emphasize that co-ordination was of paramount importance in the field of human rights. It also considered that multiplying human rights standards would not necessarily lead to effective implementation.

74. The United Nations already possessed a large set of international conventions, each with its own monitoring body. It was therefore necessary to look very carefully at any new initiative in that field. What must be avoided was confusion through proliferation. The target should be to make the standards in force more coherent.

75. Mr. DING (China) said that it must be accepted, in a world where different systems, cultures and ideologies coexisted, that views should differ on the concept and interpretation of human rights. Furthermore, human rights had never been static in content; they had developed and acquired new dimensions alongside the development of society. Since the founding of the United Nations, human rights had been the subject of dozens of declarations and conventions; once regarded as the rights of individuals, the recognition of economic, social and cultural rights had conferred on them a collective dimension. In addition to the Universal Declaration

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(Mr. Ding, China)

of Human Rights and the corresponding international instruments, there were regional human rights instruments, formulated in accordance with regional characteristics and needs. In order to promote co-operation in the field of human rights, the international community must be alert against an unhealthy tendency to reject or even attack the views of others and to seek to impose one's own values.

76. China was convinced that the principal responsibility for promoting and protecting human rights rested with the sovereign States, which codified them into their national legislation. Emphasis necessarily varied. Whereas in the developed countries there was much talk of abolishing the death penalty, for example, or whether women should have the right to abortion, in many developing countries priority was given to combating subversion, maintaining social stability and birth control.

77. The principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries should also apply to the issue of human rights. Unfortunately, in the Third Committee and other United Nations forums, there were those who used human rights as a pretext to voice unwarranted criticism of the political systems and ideologies of other countries. Such practices not only ran counter to the protection of human rights but also constituted a gross violation of the norms governing international relations.

78. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/130, the United Nations should accord priority to the search for solutions to such mass and flagrant violations of human rights as racism, colonialism and hegemonism. To remain silent in the face of those violations while pointing one's finger at other countries, particularly developing countries, because of supposed human rights violations compromised the credibility of United Nations efforts in the area.

79. In China, human rights had concrete meaning. With a population of 1.1 billion and a very limited amount of arable land, its priorities were clear: food, clothing, health, development of productive social forces, an improved standard of living and the building of democracy. That required domestic stability and unity and a peaceful international environment.

80. Speaking recently in the Third Committee, a number of Western countries had accused China of suppressing the democratic movement and violating human rights. In reality, certain major Western countries, through their interference and their support of subversive elements, were attempting to alter China's socialist system. For that flagrant violation of sovereignty they, and not China, deserved condemnation, because those countries were thereby infringing the principles on which the Charter of the United Nations was based.

81. For its part, China was determined to respect the objectives and principles of the Charter, as, indeed, it had always done, to support United Nations efforts to promote human rights and to contribute to creating an international environment of peace, justice and co-operation.

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82. Mr. TEP (Democratic Kampuchea), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the situation in Kampuchea as it had just been described by the representative of Viet Nam in his statement did not square whatsoever with the actual events. A week previously, the General Assembly had adopted, by an overwhelming majority of 124 votes in favour, a draft resolution on the situation in Kampuchea calling upon Viet Nam to withdraw all its forces from Kampuchea and to allow the Kampuchean people to exercise its right to self-determination through free elections under United Nations supervision. It was clear to all that the so-called withdrawal of Viet Nam had been orchestrated merely to conceal the real situation. There were currently 1 million Vietnamese settlers in Democratic Kampuchea and, what was more, between 2 and 6 November 1989, hardly a month after its supposed withdrawal, Viet Nam had sent 6,000 men as reinforcements into Kampuchea. Furthermore, the Vietnamese occupiers were using the scare tactic of a supposed return of the Khmer Rouge to justify their continued presence in the country. Fully aware of that danger, the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, under Prince Norodom Sihanouk, continued to affirm that only a comprehensive settlement based on the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces, complete disarmament of all forces present and the holding of elections under United Nations supervision would enable a settlement of the situation in Kampuchea to be found. However, that peace plan had been rejected by Viet Nam, which wanted to force the international community to accept its occupation of Kampuchea indefinitely.

83. Mr. ZIADA (Iraq), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that a number of delegations had referred to Iraq in their statements in connection with the question of human rights. The negative stance taken by those delegations during the vote on the Third Committee's draft resolution on the elimination of racism and racial discrimination and on the self-determination of peoples showed that those delegations were not truly interested in human rights, but were merely using that question for political purposes. With regard to the question of the Kurds, Kurdish collaborators had been used to prevent Iraq from assisting such fraternal countries as Syria and Jordan in triumphing over the Israeli aggressors; that was corroborated in the memoirs of Mr. Kissinger. The Kurdish community of Iraq was the only one in the Middle East to enjoy real autonomy. His delegation categorically rejected the allegations according to which the Kurds of Iraq had been transferred to desert areas. In actual fact, in order to secure its frontiers, Iraq had been forced to create a depopulated zone 3 kilometres deep along its borders with Iran and Turkey. His Government had given land free of charge to Kurdish families, who had had the opportunity to resettle either in Erbil or in Sulaymaniyah in new housing sites equipped with a modern infrastructure.

84. His Government sternly warned those States that persisted in interfering in Iraq's internal affairs that such actions might well prejudice the bilateral relations between Iraq and those countries. He called upon all States that had adopted a negative stance on 30 October 1989 during the vote on the draft resolution on racism and racial discrimination to change their position during the vote in the plenary. If they were not so inclined, that meant that they were nothing but a pack of hypocrites and liars.

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85. Mr. ALFARO (El Salvador), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, thanked the representative of Canada for recognizing the efforts made by his Government to protect human rights in the current difficult situation in his country. Although the extreme right might have committed abuses, the atrocities perpetrated by the FMLN, particularly the numerous mutilations of children brought about by the explosion of mines planted by the guerrilla force, should not be disregarded either. The latter did not hesitate to take entire families hostage, as pointed out in an article in The New York Times on 24 November 1989. Certain delegations had also denounced attacks against student and labour unions. During recent events, many members of those unions had spontaneously joined the guerrilla force, proving that those organizations had merely been a façade used by the terrorists. As to the blind air attacks against civilians denounced by Australia, his delegation pointed out that those attacks had been directed against members of the FMLN, who had no compunction about setting off car bombs in crowded areas and were attacking the country's infrastructure.

86. Mr. BARKER (Australia), replying to a statement by the representative of Iraq, who had questioned the sincerity of Australia in the area of human rights, pointed out that his country co-operated fully with the United Nations in the area, had ratified the main human rights instruments, duly paid its contributions and regularly submitted its reports. His delegation asked the representative of Iraq to describe how his country had been co-operating in that area.

87. As the representative of Iraq had seen fit to quote The New York Times, his delegation referred to an article that appeared in that newspaper on 24 March 1989, which had given an account of Iraqi attacks against civilians. In any case, in the area of human rights the best procedure was to rely on independent studies, and his delegation therefore called upon all countries to co-operate fully with the special rapporteurs designated by the United Nations.

88. Mr. ZIADA (Iraq), replying to the representative of Australia, said that his country had already given the Security Council a clear explanation about the Halabjah massacre, to which the representative of Australia had alluded. His delegation repeated that, if it wanted to be credible, Australia would have to change its position on racial discrimination, racism and self-determination.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.