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at 6 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 62nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KABORE (Burkina Faso)

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The meeting was called to order at 6.25 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)

Draft resolution A/C.3/44/L.88

1. Mr. RASTAM (Malaysia), speaking on behalf of the members of the Group of 77, said that draft resolution A/C.3/44/L.88 had been drawn up in the hope of achieving consensus on the issues involved and that careful consideration had been given to the views of all delegations which had taken part in the lengthy consultations on the draft resolution. The consultations had unfortunately ended without consensus having been achieved. The Group of 77 regretted that a recorded vote had been requested on the issue and expressed the hope that such a vote would not constitute a precedent for the Committee's future work on the item.

2. At the request of the representative of the United States of America, a recorded vote was taken on draft resolution A/C.3/44/L.88.

In favour: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Democratic Kampuchea, Democratic Yemen, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, German Democratic Republic, Germany, Federal Republic of, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Somalia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against: Israel, Japan, United States of America.

Abstaining: None.

3. The draft resolution was adopted by 133 votes to 3.

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4. Mr. MALGINOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation had supported the draft resolution on the understanding that the question would be considered seriously and in detail by all concerned. It was to be hoped that the discussions would lead to a consensus which would be acceptable to all regional groups and would enhance the efficiency of United Nations activities in the field of human rights. The question should be studied further in the Commission on Human Rights, which had a good record of dealing with such an issue in the past.

5. Mr. WILENSKI (Australia), speaking also on behalf of Canada and New Zealand, regretted that it had not been possible to achieve consensus on an issue of such importance to all countries and peoples throughout the world. The three countries had worked hard towards a consensus, believing as they did that compromise on the part of all interested parties was the basis of multilateral work, particularly in the field of human rights. Furthermore, previous decisions to expand the membership of the Commission on Human Rights had been taken following consideration by the Commission itself and the three continued to believe that that was the most appropriate course.

6. All three countries had decided to support the draft resolution, given the priority they attached to the work of the United Nations in protecting and promoting human rights and to efforts to enhance the role of the Commission on Human Rights in that area. They particularly supported the references in the draft resolution to the contribution of the Commission on Human Rights to the cause of human rights and to the importance of further improving its functioning. They supported the resolution on the understanding that it reflected the readiness of countries from all regional groups to work together to agree on measures to enhance the effectiveness of the Commission. They hoped that a spirit of co-operation would prevail in further discussions on the expansion of the Commission and on ways and means of making its work more effective.

7. Mr. BOUTET (France), speaking on behalf of the 12 States members of the European Community, said that the Twelve had had some misgivings about voting in favour of the draft resolution because it failed to emphasize the very important link between expansion of the Commission and enhancement of its efficiency through appropriate changes.

8. A change in the composition of the Commission on Human Rights would be meaningful only if it was accompanied by further improvements in its functioning, as mentioned in the fourth preambular paragraph. It was only because such a link was implicit in the draft resolution that the Twelve had voted in favour of it. The reform of the Commission set in motion by the draft resolution was wide-ranging and its purpose was to ensure greater respect for and the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the world, particularly in areas where violations were committed.

9. The Twelve also wished to draw attention to the increased costs which the proposed changes would entail for the Organization and hoped to engage in a constructive discussion with all interested parties on the additional resources which would need to be redeployed to the Centre for Human Rights.

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(Mr. Boutet, France)

10. In conclusion, the Twelve considered that it was vital that consensus should be achieved in the discussions which would take place the following year in the Commission on Human Rights and the Economic and Social Council on the entire issue. They would themselves spare no effort towards that end.

11. Mr. DUHS (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that, in voting in favour of the draft resolution, those countries had recognized the need for co-operation and goodwill on the issue of the expansion and more effective functioning of the Commission on Human Rights. In their view the final preambular paragraph applied only to the Commission on Human Rights. They agreed with the reference in that paragraph to the need to strengthen the role and efficiency of the United Nations and to reinforce United Nations mechanisms. They would have wished to see the link between efficiency and an increase in membership brought out more clearly in the operative part of the draft resolution.

12. Mr. MARKS (United States of America) said that the Third Committee had that day concluded intense negotiations on the issue of improving the effectiveness of the United Nations as the guardian of international standards in the field of human rights. The Third Committee had adopted a resolution calling upon the Economic and Social Council to expand the membership of the Commission on Human Rights. Regrettably that decision had been taken without consulting the Commission itself. An opportunity had been lost to move beyond the question of the Commission's size to focus on a broad range of institutional issues affecting the human rights activities of the United Nations. In a period of budgetary stringency, it would have been well to consider an increase in the number of members in the wider context of the need to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations in dealing with human rights violations everywhere in the world. His delegation had been prepared to support a draft resolution which gave due attention to institutional reform but could not support the draft resolution just adopted.

13. His Government hoped that the process of dialogue had not ended with the current vote. Rather, it looked to the Commission in 1990 as a forum for serious and co-operative discussion of the best means of achieving common goals in the field of human rights. It would be ironic if, one year after the fortieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the body mandated to protect the values embodied in the Declaration were to be undermined.

14. Mr. ZIADA (Iraq) said that his delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution because the geographical distribution of seats in the Commission on Human Rights represented a grave injustice, particularly to the Asian region. The need for better geographical balance in the Commission had nothing to do with the work of the Commission. The same result in terms of geographical balance could have been obtained by reducing the number of Western members of the Commission.

15. Mr. ITO (Japan) said that his delegation had voted against the draft resolution as a matter of principle, because it was opposed to the idea of enlarging the membership of intergovernmental bodies without thorough review of the problems involved by all parties concerned. His delegation had noted that, in the

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(Mr. Ito, Japan)

past, when the membership of certain intergovernmental bodies had been increased, there had been adverse consequences for the United Nations system as a whole. For example, the functioning of some enlarged bodies even deteriorated. There were also the increased administrative costs to consider at a time when the United Nations system as a whole was facing its most difficult financial crisis.

16. The Commission on Human Rights was one of the most important intergovernmental bodies in the entire United Nations system and a decision to change its basic structure should be taken by consensus. His delegation also believed that primary responsibility for a decision on that matter lay with the Economic and Social Council. The Commission itself must be requested to consider the matter first and to formulate its own views; only then would the Economic and Social Council be in a position to take a decision. The General Assembly should not take a decision which could prejudge the outcome of the deliberations of the Commission on Human Rights and the Economic and Social Council.

COMPLETION OF THE COMMITTEE'S WORK

17. After an exchange of courtesies, the CHAIRMAN declared that the Committee had completed its work for the forty-fourth session.

The meeting rose at 7.15 p.m.