

tions. Respect for the principle of national sovereignty did not seem incompatible with the preparation of international standards because, in that sphere as in others, such respect should, in his delegation's opinion, be the ultimate objective and *raison d'être* of the United Nations.

33. Mr. PAPADEMAS (Cyprus) supported by Mrs. WARZAZI (Morocco), requested that the statement by the Director-General of UNESCO should be

reproduced *in extenso* in the summary record of the meeting.

34. The CHAIRMAN said that if there were no objections, the statement by the Director-General of UNESCO would be reproduced *in extenso* in the summary record of the meeting.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

2025th meeting

Tuesday, 13 November 1973, at 3.10 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Yahya MAHMASSANI (Lebanon).

A/C.3/SR.2025

AGENDA ITEM 58

Question of the elderly and the aged: report of the Secretary-General (*continued*)* (A/9003 and Corr.1, chap. XXI, sect. A.7; A/9126 and Corr.1, A/C.3/L.2051, A/C.3/L.2053, A/C.3/L.2054, A/C.3/L.2056)

1. Mrs. WATANABE (Japan) said that the Secretary-General's report (A/9126 and Corr.1), which was excellent, raised some fundamental questions concerning the very concept and definition of aging. In view of the task which the General Assembly had entrusted to the Secretary-General in its resolution 2842 (XXVI), her delegation would limit its remarks to the manner in which the situation of the aged in Japan should be assessed in the light of recent changes in national and international socio-economic and cultural conditions and to determining the seriousness of the socio-economic problems of the aged in Japan.

2. To assess the development of the situation of the aged, the first factor to be examined was life expectancy. In Japan, life expectancy had increased by 15 years since 1947 and now stood at nearly 76 years for women and between 70 and 71 for men. That phenomenon was due to the decline of the death and birth rates since the Second World War. Japan was not only one of the countries with the highest life expectancy, but was also among those in which virtually all the people were covered by one or another of various retirement pension schemes; pensions were paid to all insured persons, including the self-employed. There were also social insurance schemes under which the insured were provided with medical care free of charge and at half-cost for their dependants. Those facilities were to be further improved in the near future.

3. Emphasizing that the progress of medical science, both curative and preventive, had contributed greatly to those developments, as had voluntary and public social welfare programmes, she said that her country owed much of its progress to the specialized agencies, especially to WHO and other commissions and non-governmental organizations. Japan's participation in international activities therefore supplemented its national and regional efforts.

* Resumed from the 2023rd meeting.

4. Despite those achievements, the gravity of the socio-economic problems of the aged in Japan should not be underestimated. The growth of the *per capita* income as a whole fell considerably short of the growth of the gross national product, and many problems needed to be solved in the near future to meet the needs of the aged; although those people still represented only 7 per cent of the population, that figure was expected to reach 8.5 per cent in a decade or so. The problem was becoming serious because life expectancy had increased too rapidly and because that increase had coincided with the initial period of the enforcement of the revised family code authorized by the new Constitution. The old system, based primarily on inheritance by the eldest son, had been abolished and replaced by a concept which took into account the rights of all the members of the family. That change had seriously affected certain elderly men, who had had little time to adjust to their new status in the family and in employment. Under the old system, they could take it for granted that someone in the family would look after them in their old age, whereas now they practically had to fend for themselves; the rapidity of the changes had made it impossible for them to foresee the problems with which they would be faced and to take steps to supplement their inadequate pensions from other sources. They found it very difficult to obtain new employment. Also hard-hit were the aged engaged in farming in remote areas and the aged who were mentally disturbed. As the result of a recent survey which had shown that only 58.4 per cent of people over 65 years old were in good health, the Japanese Government had urgently introduced a series of measures to improve services for the aged; at the same time, the social welfare organizations and the trade unions were trying to take similar action.

5. She drew attention to a characteristic feature of Japan which might prove to be an asset in the development of the situation of the aged: that was the traditional habit of the Japanese to continue to take lessons in everything that interested them, regardless of age. Those activities had the advantage of enabling the elderly to keep in contact with younger people and, in some cases, to earn a little money. A recent survey had shown that the participation of people aged 60 and over in cultural and sports activities was equal to that of

other age groups. In 1970, there had been 80,000 clubs for the elderly in Japan, not counting residential institutions, and nearly half of the population over 60 belonged to one or another of those clubs.

6. It was the duty of Governments, acting in the spirit of the guidelines provided in the Secretary-General's report, to adopt flexible and dynamic policies to meet the needs of the aged, with their diverse interests.

7. The CHAIRMAN said that the time-limit for the submission of draft resolutions and amendments on the question of the elderly and the aged would be 5.45 that afternoon.

8. Mrs. DE BARISH (Costa Rica) said that her delegation had taken an interest in the question of the elderly and the aged since the Maltese delegation had drawn the Committee's attention to the problem at the twenty-fourth session. Costa Rica had been among the sponsors of the draft resolutions which had served as a basis for the adoption of General Assembly resolutions 2599 (XXIV) and 2842 (XXVI).

9. Her delegation welcomed the excellent report that the Secretariat had submitted on the question and endorsed the suggestions made in that document. It also noted the contributions of the ILO and WHO to the report.

10. The sociological and psychological aspects of the problem of the elderly and the aged were linked with the phenomenon of modernization. That was also true of the physiological aspect of the question, owing to advances in medical science, especially preventive medicine, and to the development of gerontology and geriatrics. All those factors had promoted the increase of life expectancy throughout the world, but that victory of science over aging and death was the very source of the psychological and sociological problems that had arisen in that sphere. In industrial societies, with their excessively utilitarian view of human existence, elderly people, whose experience had always been respected in more traditional societies, no longer played an active part; that was the cause of the psychological problems of old age, which aroused profound feelings of isolation and uselessness in elderly people.

11. A plan of action must therefore be established, with due consideration given to all the dimensions of the problem. Countries where age was not yet a cause of insecurity and suffering would have to face the problem later, when they began to feel the effects of modernization, such as urban crowding, depersonalization and individual feelings of inadequacy. Her delegation was therefore pleased once again to join the Maltese delegation in submitting, with other delegations, a draft resolution (A/C.3/L.2051) which set out the principal points made in the report and recommended to Governments, in formulating their national policies and programmes regarding the elderly, to take into account the guidelines suggested in the Secretary-General's report and to take appropriate action. The draft resolution might be regarded as a logical consequence of resolution 2842 (XXVI), in which the Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to suggest guidelines for national policies and international action related to the needs and the role of the elderly and the aged in society in the context of over-all development, particularly in countries where the socio-economic problems of the elderly were marked.

12. Her delegation commended the draft resolution to the Committee and hoped that it would be adopted unanimously.

13. Mr. COSTA COUTO (Brazil) said that he had prepared a statement on the question of the elderly and the aged, but that after hearing the many statements that had already been made on the subject he had thought it wiser to try to draw some conclusions from those statements, rather than to describe what had been done in Brazil to improve the lot of the elderly. His delegation had already made a statement on the subject that year, in the Economic and Social Council; Brazil's situation was similar to that of other developing countries which were undergoing rapid industrialization and urbanization.

14. Two extreme positions had emerged in the debate—on the one hand, that of the highly urbanized countries where small families were the rule and where the situation of the elderly had deteriorated, not necessarily in economic terms but at least with regard to their position in society and, on the other hand, that of the less developed countries where the elderly in rural areas were not necessarily richer or in better health than in the developed countries but enjoyed the support, respect and affection of younger persons. Those two extreme situations were never found as such, for in each of the two groups of countries there were segments of the population where the reverse of what would be expected prevailed. Even in rural societies, to the extent that they were in the process of development, family ties were being weakened and the elderly becoming an increasingly heavy burden on society. In the long run no State would be spared. The Secretary-General had made an interesting observation in that regard in paragraphs 18 to 20 of his report to the effect that the changes would be significantly accelerated in the developing countries.

15. The function of the United Nations in the question under consideration should be to urge international organizations and countries themselves, developing and developed alike, to co-operate and to exchange the results of their experience with a view to improving the situation of the elderly throughout the world, as their status would probably continue to deteriorate for the remainder of the century. The Secretary-General had very wisely refrained from suggesting universal guidelines in his report, since the status of the elderly and the aged varied considerably from one country to another, particularly in relation to the degree of economic and social development of the country; within each country, too, there were regional differences.

16. With regard to draft resolution A/C.3/L.2051, introduced by the delegation of Malta on behalf of a number of delegations, he wished to put forward a number of amendments.¹ First of all, at the end of the third preambular paragraph he would like a reference to article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to be included, since that article mentioned old age. Furthermore, he proposed the addition of two new preambular paragraphs, which he read out and which were designed to formulate the idea that the participation of senior citizens in the mainstream of national societies was a matter of interest for all countries, irrespective of their stage of development, and to make it

¹ Subsequently circulated as document A/C.3/L.2057.

clear that the status of senior citizens varied from country to country, and even from region to region within the same country, a fact which made it impossible to elaborate universal guidelines. With regard to the operative part, he proposed a new text for paragraphs 3 (a) and (d), which he read out. The new text of subparagraph (a) was intended to stress the importance of the social integration of the aged in society, their participation in productive activities, as well as retraining and consulting activities. The new text of subparagraph (d) was intended to introduce more flexibility so as to take into account the diversity of the conditions existing in different countries with regard to employment. That amendment met the concerns expressed by the representative of Jamaica (2023rd meeting) and should also make it possible to have a more elastic application of retirement rules: in many developing countries there was a shortage of qualified personnel, and it was desirable for such persons to be able, if they so wished, to continue working after reaching retirement age. Finally, he read out the text of a new subparagraph which he proposed for inclusion in paragraph 4 following subparagraph (e). That amendment was intended to respond to the problems of the elderly who did not live in their own country, for while it was possible for them to receive their retirement pensions abroad, it was much more difficult for them to secure the benefit of the relevant social security programmes. Such problems should be settled by means of bilateral or multilateral agreements, but it was appropriate for the international community to encourage countries to give their attention to that problem, which was of great importance for the developing countries and, even more so, for migrant workers.

17. With regard to the draft resolution submitted by the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (A/C.3/L.2053) which, except for a minor change, was identical to Economic and Social Council resolution 1751 (LIV), he felt that the initiative taken by the Ukrainian SSR in the Economic and Social Council had at that time been of great interest, but he did not see any need to reproduce exactly the text of the Council resolution in order to have it adopted by the Third Committee. He did not see that the Committee could add anything to the text already adopted by the Council. The Ukrainian draft resolution did, however, include some relevant points; he therefore suggested that the Ukrainian representative should consider the possibility of getting together with the delegation of Malta with a view to combining the two draft resolutions in a single text by incorporating in the text introduced by Malta certain paragraphs of the Ukrainian text, such as paragraph 1 and paragraphs 3 (d) and (f), which would usefully round out the text. The other provisions of the Ukrainian draft resolution did not deal with the question of the elderly but with the more general question of social security. If the Ukrainian delegation wished to have the General Assembly endorse the resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council, it should proceed in the manner suggested and incorporate in a separate draft resolution the other paragraphs of its text which were more general.

18. He had some misgivings with regard to the wording of operative paragraph 3 of the Ukrainian resolution (A/C.3/L.2053): he saw no need to place special emphasis on the situation in the developed countries. That paragraph applied to all countries without distinction,

particularly since it was made very clear that the measures to be taken would fall within the framework of general planning.

19. He would support the amendments contained in document A/C.3/L.2054 and Corr.1, the purpose of which was to take account of the particular situation of the developing countries.

20. Mr. BADAWI (Egypt) associated his delegation with the Secretary-General's statement that a policy on aging was essential in order to assure the increasing numbers and proportions of older persons their basic human rights of full participation, as well as protection, in the society of which they were a part. On that subject, the Egyptian national Charter stressed the need to develop the system of social security as well as health services for the benefit of the elderly. The Constitution, pointing out that society was based on social solidarity, laid down in article 7 that the State would provide social security and health services and provide disability, unemployment and old-age pensions to all citizens. Although family ties were very strong in Egypt, wage-earners in the public and private sectors enjoyed the benefit of pensions, and elderly persons who did not fall within those two categories were entitled to an old-age allowance and social security. The Minister of Social Affairs had set up 26 old-age homes and institutions for the elderly, and 20 more were planned. Admission to 50 per cent of those institutions was free of charge. The Ministry of Social Affairs was also planning to set up 10 clubs for the elderly and 10 centres for old people without families.

21. His delegation supported all efforts at the national and international levels to solve the problems of the elderly and the aged. The co-operation of the international community was extremely important if States, particularly the developing countries, were to be able to put into effect programmes for the elderly which, while meeting their needs, reinforced the concept and the structure of the family since, ideally, it was in the family that the solution to the problem of the elderly should be sought.

22. Mr. MIKOLAJ (Czechoslovakia) said that the increasing longevity and the aging of the population had an impact on the whole society; an attempt should therefore be made to resolve the question of the elderly and the aged, having regard both to the economic and social position of that population group and to the relationship between that group and society. The process of the aging of population in Czechoslovakia was similar to that in other industrialized countries. The percentage of the population aged 65 and over had increased from 8.8 per cent in 1961 to 11.3 per cent in 1970 and would reach approximately 12.8 per cent in 1980. Both in absolute and relative terms, the number of persons aged 80 years and over had increased, and it was expected that the number of the aged would double in the next two decades. Those important changes in the age structure of the population would require the establishment of new priorities and a redistribution of the various social services.

23. The report of the Secretary-General contained a positive assessment of the services organized in Czechoslovakia for the aged and the elderly. In that country, social security services for the aged were the responsibility of the Government. The health services provided free of charge to that population group in-

cluded not only treatment by physicians and specialists, but also treatments and cures in various institutions and centres. Medicaments and dental care were also free of charge. In view of the increase in the number of the elderly and the aged and in the percentage of chronic and long-lasting diseases, home assistance services had been developed for the aged, who received regular visits from skilled nurses, and specialized institutions for the treatment of the diseases of the aged had been established. The standard of care for the elderly living in specialized institutions was extremely high. In Czechoslovakia, social policy for the aged was based primarily on their own needs. All wage-earners and their dependants and surviving relatives were granted retirement pensions. All other aged persons were entitled to old-age pensions. Moreover, every wage-earner had a right to a retirement pension provided that he had worked for 25 years and had reached the age of 65 years in the case of men and 53 to 57 years in the case of women, depending on the number of children of the woman concerned. Certain categories of wage-earners who worked under particularly difficult conditions were entitled to receive pensions at an earlier age. The particular needs of the aged were the subject of sociological work and applied research, which formed the basis for the elaboration of short-term and long-term care plans for that group. Those plans were an integral part of the national economic development plans. The planned development of the national economy and the high rate of employment created favourable conditions for the voluntary extension of the economic activity of the aged; since the right to a pension was acquired at a relatively early age, a number of the aged decided to remain employed if they were able to do so without risk to their health.

24. His delegation supported resolution 1751 (LIV) which had been adopted by the Economic and Social Council and proposed for adoption by the General Assembly by the representative of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

25. Mrs. WARZAZI (Morocco) said that the excellent report by the Secretary-General had the merit of meeting the wish of those who had been concerned with the problem of the elderly and the aged for many years and of arousing the attention of those countries which, in a few decades perhaps, would have to give consideration to the question. Currently, however, the problem of the elderly and the aged arose primarily in the industrialized societies, where a progressive breakdown of traditions and customs was taking place, owing, in part, to the increasingly complex economic and social changes brought by technological innovations and urbanization.

26. The problem of the elderly and the aged had been raised for the first time in the United Nations in 1948, when the General Assembly had included only a small number of countries from the third world. The Economic and Social Council, in resolution 198 (VIII), of 2 March 1949, had requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report on the basic features of measures for the benefit of aged persons, especially in countries with comprehensive old age security schemes including old age pension schemes. The draft resolution submitted by the Ukrainian delegation thus constituted an element of continuity between 1949 and 1973. The

scope of the problems presented by the increase in the number of older people—406 million aged 60 years and over in 1985, according to demographic projections—alarmed the industrialized countries, but, for the developing countries, what gave rise to particular concern were the projections relating to the increase in the number of young persons, i.e. those up to 24 years of age: 2,499 million in 1980, or 55 per cent of the world's population, with more than 60 per cent of that total in the developing countries. The latter thus had to face a vast problem, at a time when their share of world trade had fallen from 21.3 per cent to 17.6 per cent and the terms of trade had deteriorated, while their debt had increased from \$18 thousand million to \$69 thousand million. They must, as a matter of priority, take steps to stimulate economic and social development, absorb unemployment, put an end to underemployment and establish their development plans in relation to their needs and available resources. In the circumstances, they could not elaborate development programmes devoted exclusively to the elderly, ensure their retraining, enhance their contribution to social and economic development or encourage the creation of job opportunities for them. In other words, they could not put into practice the guiding principles suggested in draft resolution A/C.3/L.2051.

27. Furthermore, the developing countries should not repeat the mistakes of the industrialized countries. One of the causes of the current problem in those countries was the breakup of the family and the rejection of the elderly by society by the mere existence of competition and a society where there was an excessive tendency to gauge a person by his productivity and inactivity was somewhat suspect. The report of the Secretary-General had recognized that in Africa and Asia, the elderly enjoyed great respect and were cared for by the community itself. Her delegation was firmly convinced that the family could play an active role in solving the problem of the elderly, and she noted with regret that draft resolution A/C.3/L.2051 had not taken the family factor into consideration. Apart from that omission, the text failed to take account of the difficulties which its wording might present for the developing countries.

28. For all those reasons, her delegation had decided to submit some amendments (A/C.3/L.2054 and Corr.1) to the draft resolution, in order that it might receive the maximum support. The first amendment was justified by paragraph 19 of the Secretary-General's report, which made it quite clear that the problem of the increase in the number of the elderly was particularly acute in the industrialized countries. The amendment to operative paragraph 2 was intended to leave each country free to elaborate policies for the elderly if that was a matter of particular concern for it. One of the amendments to operative paragraph 3 corresponded to a recommendation by the Secretary-General, who had stated in the report submitted during the twenty-sixth session² that a country's policies and programmes should be placed within the general framework of its economic and social planning, rather than being considered in isolation. The purpose of all the other amendments to paragraph 3 was to enable the developing countries to vote on the text and thereby to make their contribution to the preparation of a resolution aiming at the well-being of a particular

² A/8364.

category of the population, particularly in the industrialized countries, while the amendment relating to subparagraph (d) was also based on a desire to delete a pessimistic and discouraging provision. Lastly, her delegation felt that it was essential to mention the role of the family in the draft resolution and proposed that a new subparagraph covering that point should be inserted in operative paragraph 3. In that connexion, she believed that Governments should grant each family a pension for each elderly person for whose care it assumed responsibility and, furthermore, should endeavour, through information and education media, to place emphasis on the role and duties of the family in respect of the elderly.

29. Mr. VALDERRAMA (Philippines) commended the Secretary-General on his report and expressed appreciation to the Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs for her introductory statement (2022nd meeting).

30. The report of the Secretary-General provided extremely useful information on the biological, psychological and social aspects of the aging process and on the implications of increased expectation of longevity throughout the world as a result of the urbanization and secularization of societies, accompanied by higher rates of mobility, rapid social changes and the breakdown of traditional habits and customs which made it possible to meet the needs of the elderly.

31. The problem of the elderly was particularly acute in the industrialized regions, but it was beginning to make itself felt also in many developing countries, which must view the problem in the context of their over-all development. The serious problems raised by the elderly in the industrialized regions should by no means lead the developing countries to give up the idea of undertaking urbanization and modernization programmes with a view to modifying their economic and social structures. The developing countries should take a lesson from the experience of the developed countries, so that economic prosperity would not mean the isolation and alienation of one group of society but should, on the contrary, bring with it a greater sense of national community and cohesion. To that end, the traditional and cultural values of each country should be preserved.

32. Aging was an inevitable process and all societies, whatever their level of development, should take steps at the national and international levels to ensure that all their sectors, including the elderly and the aged, participated in the social, cultural and economic life of the community. The Government of the Philippines had taken a number of measures for the welfare of the aged, including the establishment of a social security system which covered all commercial and industrial private enterprises. All government employees had long been protected by a social insurance system. In all cases, the compulsory retirement age was 65 and there were provisions for optional retirement with relatively reduced pensions and other benefits after 20 years of service. A "medicare" programme had been established in 1969 and there were plans to extend it to those who were not covered by either the social security system or the government service insurance system. Ten community hospitals had recently been established to take care of the sick and aged.

33. Turning again to the report of the Secretary-General, he said that while he recognized that the various aspects of aging and social services for the aged were discussed at length, he thought that an action-oriented report which was much more concisely written and tightly organized would better serve the General Assembly as a basis for the adoption of a resolution indicating policies to be used as guidelines for the formulation of national programmes and international action. The demographic projections in the Secretary-General's report pointed to the need to begin planning at once for the problems that would inevitably accompany changes in the age structure of populations. In that connexion, his delegation endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendation that the collection of global data and the analysis of trends relative to aging should be centralized in a unit of the Secretariat, the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. It could be seen from the note by the Secretary-General submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its fifty-fifth session³ that the work programme and budget for 1974-1975 and the medium-term plan for 1974-1977 relating to economic, social and human rights activities provided for the convening of an *ad hoc* expert group to formulate guidelines for measures to be taken at the national and international levels to deal with the problem of the aged in the context of over-all development. It regretted that the expert group had not been convened earlier during the current year to consider the Secretary-General's report, so that the General Assembly would have been able to take the expert group's recommendations into account at its current session.

34. Fortunately, draft resolution A/C.3/L.2051 could provide a basis for a substantive resolution on the question, subject to certain amendments. In that connexion, he proposed that the wording of the sixth preambular paragraph should be reworded to read as indicated in the amendment submitted by the Philippines (A/C.3/L.2059). Several speakers had expressed doubts that the guidelines recommended in operative paragraph 3 might affect laws concerning compulsory retirement. Subparagraph 3 (d) in particular had given rise to misgivings, although his delegation did not think they were justified. The subparagraph in question referred to discriminatory attitudes towards persons approaching the compulsory retirement age and it was clear that the recommendation made was in no way intended to do away with legislative provisions regarding compulsory retirement. The measures which the Secretary-General was requested to take in operative paragraph 4 of the draft resolution should be supported. His delegation was happy to note that they were to be carried out by the Secretary-General "with the resources at his disposal". As to subparagraph 4 (c), his delegation believed that the studies to be undertaken in the field in question at the international level should be directed towards evolving a useful body of data and the analysis of trends to help countries formulate practical policies concerning the aged. Every country or region, of course, had its own peculiar problems with respect to the aged, which varied according to economic, social and cultural conditions. Each Government therefore had a primary responsibility to solve its problems by itself. Nevertheless, the United

³ E/5329.

Nations should be ready to assist the less developed countries whenever necessary.

35. His delegation had draft resolution A/C.3/L.2053 under consideration. It appreciated the reasons why the representative of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic had proposed (2023rd meeting) the adoption by the General Assembly of the text of Economic and Social Council resolution 1751 (LIV) but considered that it was for the Council, as a principal organ of the United Nations, to make the final pronouncement on the question of the aged and social security.

36. Mrs. LYKOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the Secretary-General's report, in a detailed analysis of the situation of older people in countries which had attained various levels of development, rightly stressed that policies and programmes concerned with that age-group should be an integral part of the economic and social planning of each country. In the USSR, the State was responsible for the material welfare of citizens who, through their work, had contributed to the building of society. The State assumed full financial responsibility for social welfare services, no contribution being required of the workers. Of the 43 million retired persons in the Soviet Union, 27 million had retired because they had reached the appropriate age. The remainder were receiving pensions on various grounds, for example persons disabled by war or by work. Social security was provided on the basis of the socialist principle "to each according to his work" and the right to a pension depended exclusively on the number of years of work. The amount of the pension was related to the quality of the work—with those who had received a high salary receiving a high pension—but account was also taken of the family situation. The retirement age, which was normally 60 years for men and 55 years for women, was lower for certain arduous occupations. In the construction industry, it was 55 years for men and 50 years for women while in the metallurgical and chemical industries it was 50 years and 45 years respectively.

37. The Secretary-General's report reflected concern with the question of compulsory retirement. She pointed out that in the USSR there was no law prohibiting a retired person from carrying on a remunerated activity while at the same time receiving a pension. In fact, the simultaneous receipt of a salary and a pension was quite frequent. Furthermore, studies had shown that appropriate activities prolonged the life of old people, and the authorities had therefore adopted measures with a view to encouraging retired persons to continue to work. If they were unable to continue their former activity, they could work in special workshops, in enterprises especially established for them where, in view of their particular needs, safety measures had been strengthened, production norms lowered, working hours reduced and vacations prolonged. Part of the income from such enterprises was devoted to cultural activities organized for the elderly. Furthermore, the elderly—and particularly women—could work at home. Once they had retired, workers remained members of the trade unions to which they had belonged and to the workers' councils, they concerned themselves with consumer services and belonged to artistic groups. All such activities gave a purpose to their lives and they did not feel isolated.

38. The Secretary-General's report also referred to the question of housing. In the USSR, that question was dealt with by the social security agencies and the community services. Since the war, the building industry had developed greatly, many new dwellings were being constructed and a particular effort was being made to establish "micro-regions" in which the community services—schools, polyclinics, and so on—were concentrated so that elderly persons living in such districts could more easily be given the medical services which they needed and which were mainly provided in the polyclinics. They could also benefit from medical house calls. From the medical standpoint, there were many institutes in the USSR which carried out studies on the diseases from which the elderly were particularly liable to suffer, such as cardiovascular conditions and arteriosclerosis. In addition, a number of international seminars on the welfare of the elderly had been organized under WHO auspices in the USSR, where there was also the very important Institute of Gerontology.

39. Admittedly, not all the problems had been solved. The experience of other countries could be valuable and her delegation had read the Secretary-General's report and listened to the statements during the debate with the greatest interest. The USSR social security services maintained contact with the International Social Security Association, which was studying the experiments in the field of social services for the elderly carried out in various countries, and took account of its recommendations.

40. Her delegation had no objection of principle to draft resolution A/C.3/L.2051, to which useful amendments had been proposed, in particular by Morocco (A/C.3/L.2054 and Corr.1). The Ukrainian draft resolution (A/C.3/L.2053) dealt with a crucial question. It should not be forgotten that, whatever the measures taken to improve the lot of the elderly, social security would remain the most important. She therefore supported that draft resolution, which did not in any case conflict with the draft resolution submitted by the Maltese delegation, whose provisions it complemented.

41. Mr. PETROPOULOS (Greece) considered that the analysis of statistical and other data contained in the Secretary-General's report constituted a good basis for the work of the Committee. A study of the document revealed the complexity of the problem and the need to distinguish between its various aspects. Examination of the subject as a whole resulted in oversimplification, and if problems of a dissimilar nature were treated together, some confusion arose.

42. At the outset, a clear distinction should be made between the elderly and the aged on one hand and, on the other, persons who were included in that category although their biological age did not justify such inclusion since it did not coincide with their chronological age. It was stated in paragraph 46 that it was important to separate chronological age from inherent functional capacities of older persons—a most important observation because it meant that persons wrongly included in the group were victims of a social injustice. The elderly and the aged did not form a uniform group. Some of them were able and willing to continue to offer their services to society. Compulsory retirement was tantamount to depriving them of their right to work, which constituted a violation of human rights, since the right to work was provided for in article 23, paragraph 1, of

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Furthermore, when speaking of the psychological problems of the elderly, it must not be forgotten that it was often society itself which created such problems through the practice of compulsory retirement, since those affected felt rejected by society. Moreover, society was depriving itself of many resources that could be derived from the contribution of some highly qualified elderly people. Therefore, before discussing retraining and second careers, it might be advisable to study the possibility of keeping people on longer in their jobs.

43. As some delegations had already observed, the urgency and importance of the problem of the elderly varied according to country traditions and culture. As the French representative had stated (2023rd meeting), he, too, thought that instead of examining the question from the viewpoint of developed and developing countries, it would be more meaningful to approach it through an analysis of specific civilizations and cultures. The respect for old age inherent in certain cultures, made it possible, for example, to solve the problem of the elderly whose families took care of them. To some extent, that was the case in Greece.

44. His delegation supported draft resolution A/C.3/L.2051, although it would have liked to see the diverse issues in the draft treated separately and some very important aspects of the report brought out more clearly—in particular, the inadequacy of the criteria currently used to determine old age and the need to promote research in that field. The draft resolution submitted by the Ukrainian SSR (A/C.3/L.2053) referred to many measures already applied in Greece and his delegation would support it.

45. Miss CAO PINNA (Italy) welcomed the report requested in General Assembly resolution 2842 (XXVI). The fact that it had been in the preparatory stage when the Commission for Social Development had met might explain why the resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council did not cover in a balanced way all the problems of the elderly or the variety of situations in different regions.

46. Aging was a world-wide phenomenon, and its social implications—in the developing regions of the world—went beyond an increase in the numbers and proportion of older persons in society, because changes in values and traditions had tended to erode the role of the elderly in family life and in the community. Her delegation thought that in dealing with the problems of the elderly and the aged account must be taken of the three main conclusions to be drawn from that state of affairs. First, the United Nations should give particular attention, in further studies, to the future situation in developing countries. Secondly, those countries whose existing plans, through force of circumstances, paid limited attention to the needs of the elderly, should start as soon as possible to study those needs and to adopt the appropriate measures to meet them. Thirdly, for a certain period at least, developing countries should not endeavour to adopt the methods and programmes of developed countries but should take advantage of the progress made by the latter in the field of social science.

47. In the light of those considerations, she thought that the Secretary-General's report (A/9126 and Corr.1) well reflected the growing importance of the problems of the elderly in developing countries, particularly in chapter II where a clear distinction was made between

the situation in developed countries and that in developing countries; that distinction, however, became blurred in the other chapters, perhaps owing to lack of information with regard to developing countries. In order to improve that state of affairs, studies on developing countries must be encouraged so that the situation could be analysed by region. To that end, the co-operation of the regional economic commissions would be very valuable and she wondered why only ECAFE, as indicated in paragraph 15 of the report, had provided additional material.

48. Her delegation attached great importance to the question of the isolation of the elderly, which was dealt with in paragraphs 85 to 87 of the report. In its view, the key principle behind any policy or service for the elderly should be maximum prevention possible of isolation and loneliness among the elderly and reaffirmation of the responsibility of the family towards them. That applied not only to developed countries, where a number of services of that type existed, but also to the developing countries, where, although the family still looked after the elderly, the need for organized services would soon make itself felt. She hoped, therefore, that the Social Development Division would undertake a deeper analysis of that basic aspect of organized services for the elderly.

49. Her delegation supported draft resolution A/C.3/L.2051, but wished to make some suggestions. Since the problem of the elderly would become increasingly important in the developing countries, it would be advisable to insert, after the word "Governments" in operative paragraph 4 (a), the words "especially those of developing countries". The report referred to in operative paragraph 5 was presumably the report which the Secretary-General was to submit on the action taken in pursuance of the resolution. Operative paragraph 5 should therefore be co-ordinated with operative paragraph 7. As to the question of timing, her delegation agreed with the date proposed in operative paragraph 7 but hoped that, since the Commission for Social Development was to meet in 1975, the Social Development Division would be able in the meantime to update the Secretary-General's report in the light of the comments made by the Third Committee.

50. Her delegation had no difficulty with the Icelandic amendment (A/C.3/L.2056), but it would have some observations to make with regard to the Moroccan amendments (A/C.3/L.2054 and Corr.1). It would make its views known later on the draft resolution submitted by the Ukrainian SSR; however, at the current stage she could say that, in her opinion, the text did not conflict with draft resolution A/C.3/L.2051, of which it was, in a sense, an extension.

51. Mr. OLIPHANT (Botswana) said that in Botswana, as in other developing countries, tradition required that the indigent and the elderly should be taken care of by the community in a spirit of neighbourliness. That spirit, to which the solidarity of the extended family was fundamental, was disappearing as families were breaking up and the able-bodied were moving to urban areas, leaving behind the infirm and the aged.

52. Through its social welfare department, Botswana was developing measures to care for the indigent and aged. But much remained to be done because pensions were enjoyed only by retired civil servants and a few

private employees and there was no machinery to care automatically for the infirm and aged.

53. That left no doubt that there must be full recognition of the need for a phase of transition to involve Governments of developing countries in new ways of developing programmes for the aged. The suggestion by the representative of Zaire (2023rd meeting), calling for a national solidarity council among countries to study ways and means of helping to set up patterns of social security, was a most judicious one. He also agreed with the reservation made by the representative of Jamaica (*ibid.*), who had pointed out that some recommendations in the Secretary-General's report were based strongly on the standards of developed countries without taking into account the position of the developing countries.

54. Draft resolutions A/C.3/L.2051 and A/C.3/L.2053 appeared to complement each other. Operative paragraph 4 (a) of the draft resolution introduced by Malta (A/C.3/L.2051) formed a basis for the recommendation proposed by Zaire. He also asked that particular attention should be directed to paragraph 5 of that text, in which the Secretary-General was requested, in the preparation of his report, to take into account the views expressed by Member States during the debate on the item in the Third Committee.

55. Mr. KLEMOLA (Finland) said that the Secretary-General's report called forth concrete efforts to solve the problems of the aged, which were becoming more acute. The increase in the elderly age group was far more rapid than that of any other group, both in the industrialized and the developing regions. However, in the less developed regions the rate of increase would be 150 per cent, while in the more developed regions it would be only 50 per cent, so that the fastest increase would take place in regions that were economically least capable of meeting the growing demands in the field of social security. The need to adopt international instruments and measures to enable the less developed regions to meet the new demands must therefore be emphasized. Since national policies aimed at improving social security, especially for the elderly and the aged, depended largely on over-all economic development, the less developed regions would lag further and further behind the areas that were already highly developed unless they were given support in that field.

56. Although it was important to endorse international goals and guidelines for improving the status of the elderly and the aged, their realization in practice would necessarily depend on national circumstances. National inequalities stemmed from such factors as economic resources, population structures, death rates and the public health situation, levels of education, the degree of industrialization and urbanization, cultural characteristics and the like. A high standard of living, urbanization and industrialization seemed to cause a decrease in the participation of older persons in national life, or prevent social contacts, whereas in the less developed regions the quest for a livelihood was of primary importance.

57. In Finland, the question of the elderly and the aged was considered an essential part of the common social security policy, the aim of which was to ensure a satisfactory standard of living for all age groups. Social expenditure accounted for approximately one fifth of the gross national product of Finland, and half of that

expenditure was for old-age and disability pensions. The proportion of the population over 65—which was the pension age—was about 10 per cent. The lowest pensions corresponded to the established minimum salary. The low infant death rate was a reflection of the quality of public health services. Less progress had been made in reducing cardiovascular diseases and arterial hypertension. Research was being done in that field as part of a major project undertaken in co-operation with WHO.

58. Efforts were being made, under current national plans, to simplify the administration of social services and make them less bureaucratic. Efforts were also being made to improve the unemployment insurance system and housing conditions. In the near future great attention would be paid to preventive measures and measures to ensure the rehabilitation and increased participation in society of the elderly and the aged.

59. In Finland the legal instruments for improving the status of the elderly and the aged involved government departments and institutes and non-governmental organizations, trade unions, employers' organizations and pensioners' organizations. Many problems characteristic of old age also concerned other people subject to the social security system, one of whose major goals was to integrate all those groups into society. Old age should not be regarded as leisure time but as a time for full participation in all activities of society, including work, in proper forms, and education. Each nation needed the contributions of its senior citizens. Those goals could not, however, be achieved by concentrating only on social security questions; all social aspects and needs had to be taken into account in over-all socio-economic planning and decision making.

60. Since the urbanization and industrialization processes would probably be faster in the developing countries than in the currently industrialized countries, and the related social problems would consequently be aggravated, the more developed countries should be called upon to give increased assistance to make that development smoother.

61. Mr. KAPER (Netherlands) said that his delegation whole-heartedly supported draft resolution A/C.3/L.2051, whose adoption would enable a further move to be made in combating the problems of the elderly and the aged.

62. However, his delegation would like to suggest that a reference to the housing problem should be included in operative paragraph 3 (a) of the draft resolution, as one of the measures needed to ensure the maximum economic independence and social integration of older people with other segments of the population. Such a reference would be in accordance with paragraph 92 of the Secretary-General's report, which dealt with housing and living conditions. The housing conditions of older persons were often unsatisfactory, and consequently the building of low-rent housing should be encouraged by Governments, which might provide financial aid for the purpose. Preferably such housing should be located in areas where contact with everyday life would be assured. For people who could not live independently, accommodation should be made available in nursing homes.

63. With regard to draft resolution A/C.3/L.2053, his delegation had not had an opportunity to study it in

detail, but suggested that the sponsors of the two drafts might consider the possibility of submitting a single text.

64. Mr. SRINIVASAN (India) pointed out that, since the first study made in 1949 by the United Nations⁴ on the question of the aged, the problems of the aged had considerably increased. Until the beginning of the century, Governments had focused attention primarily on the younger generation, and the special needs of the aged had been viewed mainly as a family responsibility. Health schemes had made it possible to reduce infant mortality and epidemic and endemic diseases, but they had brought new problems in their wake, partly by increasing life expectancy.

65. According to the Secretary-General's report, on the basis of a projection covering the next seven years, the rate of increase of the 65 and over age group would be quicker than last of the world's total population or that of any other age group. While the total world population would have gone up, by 1980, by 22.7 per cent, and by approximately 27.8 per cent in the less developed regions, the equivalent percentage increase in the 65-and-over age group would be 30.2 per cent for the whole world and 38.2 per cent for the less developed regions. Recent studies on the subject tended increasingly to agree that death was due more to illness than to aging. With advances in preventive and curative medicine, the question of the aged posed a growing problem for most countries. How, for example, could the demands of an employment policy which did not call for the retirement of workers reaching retirement age be reconciled with the need to provide jobs for young people entering the labour market in increasing numbers? How could older persons, who were in excellent physical and mental condition at retirement age, be given an opportunity to engage in productive activity? The solution might be to give them part-time work over a certain period to facilitate the transition from full employment to inactivity. In some countries older persons were being increasingly forced to live in a kind of ghetto in rural areas as the young were drawn to urban centres in search of employment.

66. In India, although family structures were changing, young people were increasingly migrating to urban centres and there were fewer and fewer three-generation and four-generation families living under the same roof, the elderly continued in general to have family support.

67. As in most developing countries, the problem in India was one of limited resources with which to meet a multiplicity of demands. Also, particular care had to be taken to ensure that projects undertaken in one field did not absorb too many of the resources required in others, thus aggravating the problems to be overcome. Hence the need for an over-all plan taking into account the demands of the various programmes to which resources must be allocated.

68. The information which the United Nations and specialized agencies such as the ILO and WHO could provide with respect to the matter would be particularly useful to all countries seeking to solve their problems in that field.

69. Mrs. GERÉB (Hungary), noting the importance which the question of the elderly and the aged had

assumed because of the constantly increasing number of persons in that age group in every society, said that the general situation of the elderly, particularly in the most developed countries, was characterized by discrimination based on age, economic insecurity, the denial of the right to work, and the absence of a will to ensure the equitable sharing of income and national wealth.

70. States unquestionably had the responsibility of meeting the particular needs of that age group. While those needs varied from one part of the world to another, the report of the Secretary-General on the question rightly noted that all over the world the main concern was to guarantee the elderly a means of subsistence and that consequently social insurance and income maintenance systems must be re-evaluated and reoriented. Her delegation accordingly welcomed Economic and Social Council resolution 1751 (LIV) on the question.

71. As the Secretary-General's report noted, working people, particularly industrial and agricultural workers, encountered the greatest difficulties when they retired. In Hungary, however, there were no inequalities, for the entire population, including the workers and farmers on State farms and agricultural co-operatives, were covered by the social security system, and when women who had not had an occupation were widowed they received a pension, the amount depending on the number of their children. Retired persons, like workers, had access to free medical care. Moreover, retirement pensions had for several years been automatically increased every year by 2 per cent and the system of social welfare benefits had been expanded. With their material needs thus guaranteed, elderly persons could take an active part in the life of society; in addition, after reaching retirement age, which in Hungary was 55 for women and 60 for men, retired persons could often continue to work. An annual pension increase of 7 per cent for manual workers and 3 per cent for workers in other categories was guaranteed. The trade unions and other organizations as well as special committees organized cultural and other activities. In the Houses of Culture there were clubs for retired persons, and meetings with them were organized by the youth organization. It was important that young people should be concerned with the psychological well-being of elderly persons and the family had responsibilities towards the older generation. Every retired person should, however, have the right to lead an independent life and have his own dwelling.

72. With regard to the two draft resolutions before the Committee, she noted that they were not contradictory. She supported draft resolution A/C.3/L.2053 and wished to emphasize the importance of operative paragraphs 3 and 6. In her opinion, the comparative study of social security systems, social security planning, and the role and responsibility of the State in that matter should prove very useful for countries which did not yet have such systems.

73. While the Hungarian People's Republic had not yet solved all the problems of the elderly, it was constantly striving to improve their conditions of life and it intended to profit by the conclusive experience of other countries in that field.

74. Mr. ALI (International Labour Organisation), speaking at the invitation of the Chairman, said that one

⁴ E/CN.5/200/Add.1.

of the most important problems of old age related to work and to participation in economic life, as the representative of Malta had stated (2023rd meeting) and as the Secretary-General's report on the question also emphasized.

75. In 1962, the report of the Director-General of the International Labour Office to the forty-sixth session of the International Labour Conference had covered the problems of older workers who were still active in economic life as well as those of persons who had retired. In 1970, the International Labour Conference had adopted a resolution concerning the employment of older workers in which it had urged that the questions of age, work and retirement should be placed on the agenda of a future session of the International Labour Conference. At the request of the Governing Body, the ILO had made a study of discrimination in employment based on age which estimated that there were currently 968 million people 40 years of age or over, in other words, 168 million more than 10 years earlier, and that by the year 2000 there would be 1,758 million people of that age. The problem of aging workers was particularly critical in industrialized countries, where society's burden of age dependency would increase greatly in the future.

76. It was likewise recognized that employment possibilities diminished with increasing age and that the difficulties encountered became particularly great after the age of 50. The average period between jobs for workers over 45 years of age was four times longer than that of workers under 20. The group between 55 and 59 years of age and the group between 60 and 64 were particularly vulnerable. In some countries persons over 50 accounted for two thirds of all unemployed who had been unable to find work for six months or longer. Manual labourers were usually hit first and hardest, but office workers and executives were also affected and often gave up trying to find employment. The unemployment rate for women in that age group had long been somewhat higher than that for men and the gap appeared to be widening. There were various reasons for those difficulties, notably the fact that the training which such workers had received was out of date and the fact that the decline in their physical strength precluded their being employed in certain types of work. Stubborn prejudices to the effect that older persons were less adaptable and slower, and the very obvious discrimination manifested in advertisements in newspapers regarding vacancies—advertisements which often stipulated an age limit of 40 years—were partly responsible for the situation. There was also discrimination in respect of layoffs, paid annual leave and other employment conditions.

77. Better health care, improved living conditions, better diets which were increasing life expectancy, and

an improvement in the quality of life were making many of the prejudices concerning older workers anachronistic. It was encouraging to note that certain countries, such as France, Belgium, Costa Rica, Spain, the United States, the United Kingdom and Sweden, to name a few, had taken steps to combat discrimination against older workers. In socialist countries enterprises were normally required to retain their workers until retirement age. The 1974-1975 programme of the ILO included provision for a symposium on equality of opportunity and treatment in employment in the European region, and the Governing Body would consider including in the agenda the problems arising with regard to certain categories of workers, including women and older workers.

78. The Committee would be interested to note that during the 1960s the ILO had revised and brought up to date its Conventions and Recommendations dealing with pensions, notably Convention No. 102 concerning Minimum Standards of Social Security (part V), 1952,⁵ Convention No. 118 concerning Equality of Treatment (Social Security), 1962,⁵ and Convention No. 128 and Recommendation No. 131 concerning Invalidity, Old Age and Survivors' Benefits, 1967.⁶ Since many social security schemes covered only urban industrialized workers and large numbers of rural workers remained outside their scope, and likewise because family structures were changing, it was becoming increasingly important to provide security for older people, not only in the industrial sector but in the rural sector as well.

79. In view of the particular interest in social security that had been expressed, he recalled that the Commission for Social Development, at its twenty-second session, in March 1971, had considered a report on social security in the context of national development,⁷ prepared by the International Labour Office. The main conclusions of the Commission were summarized in paragraph 18 of its report⁸ and they were, of course, still relevant and valid. They had special significance in view of the request contained in paragraph 6 of resolution 1751 (LIV). In that, as in other questions relating to the aged, the ILO would continue to co-operate closely with the United Nations.

80. The CHAIRMAN announced that Burundi had become a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.3/L.2053 and that Guyana, the United States and Zaire had joined in sponsoring draft resolution A/C.3/L.2051.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.

⁵ See *Conventions and Recommendations, 1919-1966* (International Labour Office, Geneva, 1966).

⁶ International Labour Office, *Official Bulletin*, vol. L, No. 3, Supplement 1, July 1967.

⁷ E/CN.5/460 and Corr.1-3.

⁸ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 3.*