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DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

New international human order: moral aspects of development

Report of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 38/170 of 19 December 1983, entitled "New international human order: moral aspects of development", the General Assembly invited Member States that had not yet done so to submit their comments on this question and Member States that had already done so to submit additional comments, particularly on the draft declaration transmitted to the General Assembly by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 1983/171, and requested the Secretary-General to report thereon to the General Assembly at its fortieth session. The present report is submitted in compliance with that request.

II. SUMMARY OF VIEWS OF MEMBER STATES

2. Member States expressed their views on the question of a new international human order: moral aspects of development during the thirty-seventh 1/ and thirty-eighth sessions 2/ of the General Assembly and during the second regular session of the Economic and Social Council in 1983. 3/ Some Member States also communicated their comments to the Secretary-General during 1983 in response to General Assembly resolution 37/225 of 20 December 1982. 4/ In 1985 substantive comments had been received from only one Member State in response to General Assembly resolution 38/170. 5/ Another Member State communicated to the Secretary-General comments specific to consideration of this question by the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session. 6/

* A/40/150.

3. Most of the comments made point to the existence of a large corpus of relevant United Nations instruments and recommendations. Responding States point out that in recent years a number of important decisions have been taken on matters relating to the restructuring of international economic relations on a just and democratic basis. Particular reference is made to decisions taken at the sixth and seventh special sessions of the General Assembly, notably the Declaration and the Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order (General Assembly resolutions 3201 (S-VI) and 3202 (S-VI) of 1 May 1974), the Assembly's resolutions on development and international economic co-operation (General Assembly resolution 3362 (S-VII) of 16 December 1975), and on the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States (General Assembly resolution 3281 (XXIX) of 12 December 1974), as well as on the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade (Annex to General Assembly resolution 35/56 of 5 December 1980). Further reference is made to the provisions of the United Nations Charter, to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and to the existence of other instruments concerning human rights.

4. It is the opinion of some Member States that this corpus of agreed instruments already covers precisely the same grounds apparently addressed by the new proposals. These Member States see no need for further action and feel that the problems addressed by the proposals would be better dealt with by existing international development strategies and other proposals of the United Nations. Moreover, the concept of a new international human order, particularly if qualified by the expression "moral aspects of development", is so imprecise as to be of doubtful usefulness.

5. Furthermore, some Member States pointed out that there may exist a danger in giving further attention to this question in that it might divert attention from the need to achieve real progress in carrying out existing proposals for the establishment of a new international economic order. It was stressed that what mattered most was not so much the adoption of new resolutions or decisions as the strict observance by all Member States of those already in existence, including action to ensure their wider implementation. Achievement of international social justice is an essential prerequisite for the solution of the problems addressed by the new proposals: absence of political will to attend urgently to these problems along the lines already recommended in existing instruments is the principal obstacle preventing implementation of their objectives.

6. A converse opinion is held by some other Member States. They also recognize the importance of existing instruments, and in particular those concerning the establishment of a new international economic order, but consider that the concepts included within those declarations and recommendations, particularly with respect to the purpose and goals of development, need further elaboration. These Member States stated that hitherto the world community, and particularly the developing countries, had focused their attention, at least primarily, on economic solutions to societal problems. They stressed that proposals concerning economic solutions, particularly in the context of the current international economic crisis, were in themselves insufficient and should be extended to include social and cultural issues. The intrinsic dignity and worth of the human individual and the right of all persons to full moral as well as material development should be given a position of central importance in consideration of means to achieve more rapid

progress. It was by firstly re-establishing these principles as the fundamental goals of all developmental activities, and then by considering what morally acceptable actions might best achieve such goals, that there might be found a solution to present problems, including the extreme slowness so far characterizing efforts to implement proposals for a new international economic order fully. Accordingly, the question of the moral aspect of development and the establishment of a new international human order were of fundamental importance and central worth. However, the question of the precise nature of a new international human order and of realistic recommendations that might be made to achieve it required further definition and clarification.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-seventh Session, Second Committee, 37th, 43rd-44th, 46th and 48th meetings.

2/ Ibid., Thirty-eighth Session, Second Committee, 15th-24 and 38th-45th meetings.

3/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1983, Plenary Meetings, 17th-30th meetings.

4/ Comments were made by Barbados, Brazil, the Byelorussian SSR, Ecuador, Paraguay, the Philippines, Sweden, the Ukrainian SSR, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso). These were summarized for consideration by the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session in 1983 (E/1983/68 and Add.1 and 2) and by the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session (E/1983/68, Add.3). Comments made by the Government of the Philippines in July 1983 were transmitted to the Council in document E/1983/89. These latter comprised a summary statement and recommendations agreed upon at a Workshop on the Definition of a New International Human Order sponsored by the University of Life, the Philippines, and the University for Peace, Costa Rica, and held at Manila, the Philippines, on 7-8 April 1983.

5/ As at 1 June 1985 substantive comments had been received only from Iraq.

6/ In December 1983 the Government of Venezuela communicated to the Secretary-General and an aide-mémoire containing the comments of the Venezuelan delegation on this item of the General Assembly's agenda, with the request that these views be taken into account in the preparation of any studies or reports on this question that might be requested by the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council.
