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President: Mr. Ismat T. KITTANI (Iraq).

In the absence of the President, Mr. López del Amo (Cuba), Vice-President, took the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 30

International Year of Disabled Persons: report of the Secretary-General (*concluded*)

REPORT OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE (A/36/764)

1. Mr. DORR (Ireland): The proclamation of an international year by the United Nations helps to focus the attention of the whole international community on a particular issue of importance in the social, political, economic or human rights field. Of course, the selection of themes for international years by the Assembly must be done prudently and with due regard for the topics which deserve the particular attention of the international community at a particular time. We believe that the proclamation of 1981 as International Year of Disabled Persons was particularly timely and that the theme of full participation and equality for the disabled is particularly deserving of international attention.

2. The delegation of Ireland is glad to take part in the General Assembly discussion of the International Year. By doing so, we want to indicate the support of the Government of Ireland for the theme of the Year and for the basic objectives of the Year as contained in General Assembly resolution 31/123 of 16 December 1976.

3. The problem of disabled persons considered at the world level is indeed a very large one. It has been estimated that some 500 million people suffer in some way from disability. Put another way, as many as one person in ten is affected by a physical, mental or sensory impairment. Of course, if the families and relatives of the disabled are considered, the number who are adversely affected is much greater. In this case, too, as in the case of many of the world's major problems, the developing countries are the hardest hit. It has been estimated that some 400 million disabled people live in the developing world, and in some countries as many as 20 per cent of the total population may be affected.

4. In our approach to the work of the International Year it is clearly important, in my delegation's view, to stress both parts of the theme "Full participation and equality". On the one hand, disabled persons are entitled to full rights and to equality as members of society. On the other

hand, they have a valuable contribution to make to society. Therefore emphasis should also be laid on the concept of full participation, so that the disabled may be encouraged to exercise to the full the abilities and the talents they possess for the benefit of the community as a whole.

5. However, perhaps the most lasting result of a year such as the International Year for the Disabled may be psychological. The traditional attitude of society to a disadvantaged group can be changed by the attention focused on the problems of that group. More important, however, is that the disadvantaged group itself may gain from the Year increased confidence and a greater sense of solidarity which will encourage them to seek the full rights which society, consciously or unconsciously, has too often denied them.

6. In many instances, prejudice has hindered the disabled from playing their full role, and one major effect of the International Year will be to challenge ingrained attitudes in our society which lead us to underestimate the capacities of the disabled and the contribution which they can make.

7. In Ireland, through government action and through the activities of voluntary organizations, a particular effort is being made to implement the theme for the Year, "Full participation and equality". In accordance with the recommendations of resolution 31/123, a national committee for the International Year was established. The Committee has set itself, through a publicity campaign on radio and television, to educate and inform the public of the abilities of the disabled and of their right to participate in and contribute to the life of the community.

8. At government level, improved facilities for the disabled are being considered and action is already being taken in a number of fields. First, a Green Paper on services for the disabled is being published. It will focus attention on services that require improvement and explore the possibilities of new services and facilities. Secondly, the Irish Government has already committed itself to reserving a quota of 3 per cent of all public service jobs for disabled persons. A number of special competitions have been held and some 100 such persons have already been recruited into the public service. Thirdly, there has been an improvement in the allowances for disabled persons and a comprehensive register of the physically disabled is now being compiled. A register of the mentally disabled is already available. Fourthly, in the area of housing there are increased grants for disabled persons for house adaptations and there are plans for new national building regulations to lay down design criteria for buildings so as to provide suitable access for the disabled. In some cases specially-designed houses will be provided. Fifthly, studies are under way in regard to improved access to public transport, and local authorities with responsibilities in that area are taking account of the problems of the disabled in the provision of traffic signals and the removal of obstacles. And, sixthly, the Irish Ministry of Education is lay-

ing particular emphasis on integrating disabled children into ordinary schools, and in teacher-training colleges trainee teachers are being given a better appreciation of disability.

9. Action is not, of course, limited to Government. Voluntary organizations in Ireland are particularly active in this current year in examining employment opportunities, in organizing sport and recreation for the handicapped and in the organization of seminars and conferences for the study of their problems and the opportunities open to them. It will be clear from what I have said that, through both Government action and voluntary activity, every effort is being made in Ireland to make this International Year a time of heightened awareness both of the problems of the disabled and of the contribution which they can make to the economic, social and cultural life of the whole community.

10. We believe that the draft World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons has provided a similar focus of attention and impetus for action at the international level. My delegation endorses the draft Programme and looks forward to its early adoption.

11. A booklet published by the United Nations for the International Year states very well the purpose we have set ourselves in proclaiming 1981 the Year of the Disabled:

“It is designed to remind individuals and communities of their own responsibilities, and to stimulate the world’s conscience in the search for a solution. It attempts to mobilize the goodwill and humanitarian drive latent in all communities in a cause which transcends boundaries and sectarian loyalties.”

12. I believe that the International Year is already having a good effect in these respects. The world’s conscience has indeed been stimulated, goodwill has been mobilized and individuals and communities have been reminded of their responsibilities. But, of course, whatever is done during the Year itself can only be a beginning. The aim of full equality and participation in society for the disabled is one which will require continuing understanding and attention. Indeed, in some cases it will require a major change of attitude on the part of society as a whole. That is not an easy task. The work of the current year, however, is a good beginning, and at both national and international levels my country is glad to be able to play its part.

13. Mr. ZAKI (Maldives): Although my Minister already formally conveyed my Government’s congratulations to the President of the General Assembly, at the 26th meeting, I should like to take this first opportunity of addressing the Assembly to offer my own warm congratulations to Mr. Kittani on his election to the presidency of this session. I associate myself most sincerely with the sentiments expressed by my colleagues to the effect that he is well qualified to perform that onerous task. I am confident that he will fulfil his responsibilities in a manner befitting his position, unenviable though it is.

14. I should like also to pay a tribute to the President of the thirty-fifth session of the Assembly, Mr. von Wechmar, for the diligent and intelligent manner in which he carried out his duties.

15. Needless to say, Mr. Kurt Waldheim has distinguished himself as an experienced and polished diplomat in the performance of his duties as Secretary-General at a time when the international situation has remained afflicted by the turbulence and turmoil resulting from rivalry, suspicion and at times even hatred.

16. The subject under discussion today is not a new problem that mankind has faced in the twentieth century alone. Throughout human history, there have always been instances when groups of people in every community have had to live with physical or sensory impairment or disability.

17. The importance and urgency of investigating this problem had been gathering momentum even before the United Nations was established. By about the middle of this century, the problem had assumed such alarming proportions that the international community decided to take it up as a priority issue.

18. The staggering figure of 500 million people, our own fellow beings, who live a life of impairment and often in a state of neglect, is not something that can be considered lightly, nor should that consideration be postponed any longer.

19. While I do not consider myself competent to deal with all the major aspects of this important issue, I should like to address myself to some that I feel deserve serious consideration.

20. In 1971, with the adoption of General Assembly resolution 2856 (XXVI), on the Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons, and in 1975, resolution 3447 (XXX), on the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons, it was obvious that this problem, in all its aspects, had come under the focus of this international body. The fact that just one year later, in 1976, it was decided to observe the International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981, thus bringing the two earlier Declarations under one umbrella as it were, shows that we were well aware of the extent of even the political and economic implications of the problem.

21. What we perhaps did not know and could not even guess at that time were the twists and turns in political and economic paths, both at the international and at the national level, that would impede effective implementation of the decisions in question and the attainment of the great objective of enabling our disabled fellow beings to join the mainstream of life in our respective societies.

22. If the discussion we are engaged in today concerned only the natural causes—if I may use that phrase—of disability, perhaps decisions and their implementation would involve lesser implications. My delegation fully agrees with the concept of tackling this important issue on two fronts, prevention and rehabilitation. It is on the preventive aspect that I should like to think aloud.

23. I am sure we could agree that the reason this problem had escalated to a seemingly unsurmountable degree by the middle of this century is to be found in the two world wars. While we set about considering steps for the prevention of the causes of disability, therefore, I strongly feel that no less consideration must be given to avoiding not only world wars, but any conflicts, on whatever scale, where human blood is shed and lives are lost.

24. If we are sincere in our approach to tackling this problem, and if we are realistic, I believe we must agree that on the one hand to discuss the subject of the plight of our disabled fellow-beings in this forum, and, on the other hand to create causes for conflicts or proxy wars, however limited they may be, makes little or no sense. That is why I sincerely feel that the problem we are discussing today has great implications and encompasses a number of subjects that the Organization is currently grappling with. I mean human rights, the settlement of disputes by peaceful means, international security and even disarmament.

25. As we can see from the report of the Secretary-General [A/36/471 and Add. 1-3], action of many kinds has been taken by a large number of countries in an effort to respond to the resolutions of the Assembly relating to the question of disabled persons. They are as yet, however, but initial steps. Even in this sphere, the vast majority of the Member States will, I am sure, need considerable technical and other assistance from more advanced, affluent and specialized sources. Since none of us fails to see the tremendous benefits that would result from implementing effective preventive and rehabilitation plans for disabled persons in our respective societies, I have no doubt that the technical and other resources available within the Organization are urgently required, at least in taking the first steps in the right direction.

26. The population exodus since the Second World War and the widening gap between population growth and food production, along with the economic chaos prevailing today, compel most, if not all, of the developing countries to channel almost all of their available resources towards food procurement, agriculture and other development activities. Among the developing countries, the situation of the least-developed countries will require the special attention of the Organization and other bodies involved in the implementation of the resolutions of the Assembly, in the spheres of both prevention and rehabilitation with regard to disabled persons in those countries.

27. As far as my country is concerned, we have the good fortune to have no one among us disabled owing to any international conflict or war. However, we do have casualties from natural and other causes. In this connection, my Head of State is personally playing a leading role in responding to the resolutions of the Assembly with the limited resources available in our country.

28. The International Year of Disabled Persons has been observed in our country, and our President, with the assistance of a committee appointed for the purpose, has already taken steps to identify the areas in which the Government could take action, within the means available to us, to assist disabled persons. Furthermore, he has indicated his decision to initiate a project, in which a number of leading Government officials would also be involved, for the benefit of the disabled in our country. This project will undoubtedly form one of the elements of a follow-up plan for the cause of disabled persons.

29. As members know, ours is a country of more sea than land. It is therefore natural that a small island not far from the capital has been chosen as the rehabilitation centre for disabled persons. During the past two years steps have been taken to improve the facilities at the centre to achieve a better standard of living than that of an average island in our country.

30. On 13 October this year, our President personally attended a special meeting at the centre, which was also attended by disabled persons, people from different walks of life and Government officials. In an address the President delivered there, the basic points of the resolutions of this Assembly were amplified. He appealed to the people of the country to pay greater attention to the plight of our disabled brothers and sisters, and he highlighted the humanitarian aspect of caring for disabled people.

31. While we in Maldives may not have reason to be over-obsessed with the problem posed by the number of disabled persons, the problem confronting the Assembly remains a much more serious one. The current estimate of 500 million people throughout the world is indeed a staggering figure. To confront this problem is therefore a tremendous task, a task which will need immense resources—financial, material, educational and technical. It is indeed an irony of fate that the Organization has to grapple with yet another major problem facing humanity at a time when mankind is suffering from severely adverse economic and political conditions. But I can assure the Assembly that, for its part, Maldives, within the constraints of its limited resources, will always be ready to play its humble role, in co-operation with the other members of the world community, in the joint efforts to find a solution.

32. Our faith in the noble principles of Islam, our awareness of the sufferings of mankind today and our sense of responsibility as a Member of the United Nations, along with our full commitment to honour the principles of the Charter, dictate to us that we should do our utmost to alleviate human suffering.

33. Mr. ABDEL MEGUID (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): By proclaiming 1981 the International Year of Disabled Persons, in its resolution 31/123, the General Assembly bore witness to the awakening of world concern for the tragedy of the disabled throughout the world. It emphasized the need to take action to allow the disabled to participate in the various fields of life, not out of sympathy for them, but because such action constitutes the very minimum of social justice.

34. In Egypt it is considered that the integration of the disabled into the various activities of society, by giving them the opportunity to contribute to the economic, social and cultural progress of their community, is a matter of the highest national priority; but it is not merely a national responsibility, because the international community must shoulder some of the responsibility for the tragedy of the disabled.

35. The religious teachings and moral principles, the history and civilization of Egypt, the feeling of belonging to the human family of the Egyptian people, and the many brutal wars in which Egypt has been involved which have resulted in large numbers of disabled, mean that Egypt must play a principal role in the International Year of Disabled Persons.

36. We have done a great deal in this respect since the glorious October war. A national committee for the Disabled has been established in Egypt, and it has drawn up short-term and long-term plans for the integration of the disabled into society, showing how they can participate in all the activities of community life and how their suffering can be alleviated so that it may be possible to achieve the fundamental objective towards which we all strive: to give disabled persons the right to live an independent and

dignified life, in full equality with all other members of society and to enable them to participate fully in public life if they so desire.

37. The Egyptian National Committee has organized a national conference to discuss the problems of the disabled in Egypt and to seek ways and means to enable disabled persons to participate fully in public life. Several exhibitions have been organized showing the activities of organizations for the disabled. Six factories have been established for the manufacture of aids for the disabled, and five centres with the most modern equipment for natural and physical therapy have been built.

38. In addition to the Egyptian National Committee, a benevolent association was set up in June 1979 for the rehabilitation of persons wounded in the wars. The association has become a township where the disabled can live when they leave the rehabilitation centres. It is provided with all the necessary equipment for the treatment of persons with various kinds of disabilities, study centres and the most modern recreational facilities. The primary objective of the establishment of such a township was to assist disabled persons who cannot look after themselves and are unable to find anyone to help them. Such individuals will receive training there that will permit them to find suitable work.

39. Speaking of Egypt's achievements in the field of assistance to the disabled, we must also say that the Egyptian Government wishes to pay a tribute to the international community for the assistance it has provided to help lessen the suffering of our disabled brothers and sisters and children and to enable them to live with dignity.

40. As we commemorate the International Year of Disabled Persons, our thoughts are with the innocent children who come into this world with a handicap: with limited mobility, blind, deaf and dumb, or mentally retarded. There are said to be 146 million handicapped children throughout the world, 18 million of them in Africa. These staggering figures should stimulate us to spare no effort to make an effective contribution to the protection of our children, who are the future. For them to enjoy such protection, all possible preventive measures must be taken before the birth of the child, during pregnancy, so as to avoid the birth of a handicapped child. Measures already adopted in developed countries should become more widespread, especially in the developing countries, which, owing to economic and social problems, are unable to provide sufficient health facilities and do not possess the material means to apply measures likely to spare society the birth of handicapped children.

41. Statistics on the disabled have demonstrated that it is the developing countries that bear the greatest burden, since 80 per cent of all disabled persons are found in the developing countries. Unfortunately the figure is rising yearly, owing to malnutrition, disease and the absence of sufficient preventive measures in those countries. It is, therefore, important to provide all the necessary technical and material aid to the developing countries so that they can face this problem, alleviate it and, in so doing, also alleviate the problem at the international level.

42. The delegation of Egypt welcomes the efforts undertaken by the United Nations Secretariat within the framework of the International Year of Disabled Persons. I would emphasize here the World Symposium of Experts on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries and Technical Assistance in Disability Prevention and Re-

habilitation of Disabled Persons, organized by the United Nations in co-operation with UNDP and held at Vienna from 12 to 23 October 1981.

43. Similarly, Egypt would like to pay a tribute to the Austrian Government which spared no effort to ensure the success of that Symposium and especially to facilitate the participation of the disabled in the work of the Symposium to express their opinions and wishes and make proposals.

44. Egypt notes the positive results of that Symposium and supports the submission of its recommendations to the fourth session of the Advisory Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons which will be meeting in 1983 in Vienna, so that implementation of those recommendations can begin.

45. I wish to emphasize Egypt's role in the adoption of the draft resolution recommended to the Assembly by the Third Committee [see A/36/764].

46. The report of the Secretary-General emphasizes the efforts that have been made both within the United Nations and in the specialized agencies, and in particular the activities and recommendations of the Advisory Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons, which will make it possible to achieve the generous objectives of this Year. Although the report expounds upon the various activities undertaken by certain countries at the national level, we must none the less note that the sparse information provided to us by only 19 countries of three regions—Africa, Asia and Latin America—has not made it possible for the Secretary-General to proceed to a valid analysis at the regional level. I wish to stress here what is said in the report concerning that paucity of information and data, the shortage of trained personnel, material, and equipment, particularly as regards disabled children. The report underlines the urgent need for the developing countries to have at their disposal basic services in order to prevent disability and to deal with the problems it gives rise to. The report also underlines the need for these countries to accelerate their economic and social development.

47. The international community forms one family, bearing great responsibility for ensuring social and economic progress. But that can only be achieved if we respect the dignity of the individual member of this family, which is why the international scale of the problem of disability is so vast and disability is considered to be one of the principal problems confronting the international community. We should permit the disabled to live in their community, and to have the right to participate in its activities and prepare programmes and plans of action relating to themselves. We wish to pay a tribute to our disabled brothers for the part they play in the discussion of their problems. This is indeed a positive step towards the achievement of the objectives of the International Year and the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons.

48. In conclusion, the enthusiasm generated during this year must extend into the future, for disability is a tragedy that is experienced not for one year only but for a very long time, imposing cruel suffering whose heavy psychological consequences are felt by its victims, the people surrounding them, their families, society and their countries. It is therefore our humanitarian and moral duty to mitigate this suffering. We can do this if we work together in the name of fraternity, love and peace to reign supreme.

49. Ms. DEVER (Belgium) (*interpretation from French*): Tomorrow, 9 December, is the sixth anniversary of the proclamation by the General Assembly of the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons, the draft of which my delegation had the honour to introduce in 1975. The Declaration contains in paragraph 3 the following fundamental principle:

“Disabled persons have the inherent right to respect for their human dignity. Disabled persons, whatever the origin, nature and seriousness of their handicaps and disabilities, have the same fundamental rights as their fellow-citizens of the same age, which implies first and foremost the right to enjoy a decent life, as normal and full as possible.”

50. To achieve that “possible” and to remove existing barriers to it is one of the objectives of the International Year of Disabled Persons. It is an ambitious objective. The number of disabled persons throughout the world is estimated at 500 million, 350 million of whom have almost no support services. Disability is a major medical, social and economic problem which, unfortunately, will probably continue to grow.

51. The magnitude of the question has been misunderstood and the proclamation of the International Year of Disabled Persons is designed precisely to achieve a better understanding of the complexity and staggering scale of the problem of disabled persons. The theme of the Year, “Full participation and equality”, clearly indicates that this is in fact a social problem.

52. WHO has made a distinction between impairment, disability and handicap. This distinction is much more than academic, it is fundamental. If impairment and disability are characteristics of an individual, handicap is defined as a disability that constitutes a disadvantage for a given individual in that it limits or prevents the fulfilment of a role that is normal, depending on age, sex, social and cultural factors, for that individual. Thus defined, the handicap is a relationship between an individual and the society in which he lives. Thus the entire society bears responsibility for providing equality of opportunities for and full participation for those of its members who are handicapped. How can this be achieved? First and foremost, by changing people’s attitudes. There are so many prejudices, so many reservations that must be overcome. As the draft World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons indicates:

“Society has created an image of disabled people that may be the greatest barrier of all. We see the disability, the white cane, crutches, hearing aid and wheelchair, but not the person. What is required is to focus on the ability, not on the disability, of disabled people.” [A/36/471/Add. 1, annex, sect. IV, recommendation G (III), para. 25.]

In other words, we must turn a negative, or at best a passive attitude into a positive approach. Not only do economic reasons militate in favour of such an attitude, but, above all, more fundamental considerations do so. The human condition does not know perfection. Each human being possesses his limitations and his defects. These very limitations and the efforts made to overcome them are frequently the source of the most productive achievements and disabled persons themselves frequently provide remarkable examples of this.

53. Society is enriched by accepting the diversity of its members and by encouraging everyone’s participation. It is not healthy for a society to deprive itself of the contribution of a large part of its population. It is not healthy for a large part of the population to be deprived of making that contribution and feeling useful and integrated.

54. The greatest emphasis during this International Year is at the national level. However, international support is indispensable. In this connection, I should like to pay a tribute to the Secretary-General, to Mrs. Shahani, Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the International Year of Disabled Persons and to their co-workers, for the support they have provided. Similarly, we appreciate the action undertaken by the specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations, in particular WHO, the ILO, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNDP, the regional commissions and non-governmental organizations.

55. But I should like in particular to draw attention to the action undertaken by disabled persons themselves. They have seized the opportunity provided by the International Year to organize themselves better. Many organizations have been created which did not exist before, especially in connection with the establishment of national committees for the Year.

56. Like many other Member States, Belgium has set up a national committee. I do not wish to dwell on the various activities undertaken in my country with regard to the Year. In a few months’ time the Member States will be called upon to take stock and to formulate national long-term plans of action. For the International Year is not an end in itself; it must above all serve as a point of departure, a jumping-off point for continuous and constantly progressing action. A major step in this direction will be the adoption by the Assembly at its next session of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. A draft programme has been drawn up by the Advisory Committee for the Year, which will take a final decision at its next session in the summer of 1982, after having received the comments of Member States and specialized agencies. It is essential that we take fully into consideration the opinion of the organizations of disabled persons when the programme is finalized.

57. The draft World Programme includes three lines of action: prevention, rehabilitation and, finally, equalization of opportunities.

58. There are various categories of disability and preventive measures must be as diverse. They should vary according to the degree of development of the society. Thus, in the developing countries, where more than three quarters of the disabled live, malnutrition is not only an evil in itself, but also a cause of disability. Furthermore, poliomyelitis is one of the most disabling diseases in developing countries. It is saddening to note that millions of cases of blindness could have been prevented and it is very worrying to realize that if energetic preventive action is not undertaken the number of blind persons in developing countries may double by the end of the century. The prevention of work accidents and the struggle against drug and alcohol abuse are matters of concern to developing countries and industrialized countries alike. In the latter, road accidents are a cause of disability that is attaining disquieting proportions.

59. Rehabilitation should make it possible for the disabled to overcome their handicap. It should take place as far as possible in a normal social environment. That means within the family rather than in a specialized institution. The rehabilitation of various categories of disabled persons can certainly be facilitated by technically-sophisticated aids but this equipment, which is sometimes very expensive, cannot be used everywhere. Frequently, the same investment can benefit a larger number of disabled persons if it is directed towards designing materials that are simpler and less expensive, though just as effective. This adaptation of techniques was one of the items discussed at the recent World Symposium of Experts on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries and Technical Assistance in Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons. Technical co-operation in this field should be stepped up. The draft resolution put forward by the Third Committee, of which my delegation was a sponsor, contains recommendations in this connection.

60. Finally, let us turn to equalization of opportunities for the disabled, which requires efforts to ensure the integration of disabled persons into society. Among the obstacles which impede this process, mention has been made of social prejudice, discriminatory attitudes which make it harder for disabled children to benefit early enough from proper care or to attend school, and physical, psychological and emotional barriers which prevent the employment of the disabled or their participation in cultural or recreational activities. The equalization of opportunities is a particularly complex task, which varies according to the kind of disability and the characteristics of the society. On the positive side, it may be noted that progress has been achieved in adapting buildings to provide easier access and there is a notable trend towards integrating disabled children in public education. However, the economic difficulties in many countries have had negative effects on employment opportunities for disabled persons; and yet disabled persons frequently are able to find in work a special stimulus and a source of satisfaction, because professional activity is a privileged expression of full participation in the life of the society.

61. Much more must be done if the hopes that have been raised by the International Year are to be met. No one can doubt the fact that disabled persons' organizations themselves will remain active and continue to promote the objectives of the Year. Our Governments, armed with the experience acquired during this Year, should design long-term plans which will provide a really integrated policy with respect to the disabled. At the international level we particularly hope for an intensification of bilateral and multilateral technical assistance in the sphere of the prevention of disability and the rehabilitation and integration of the disabled.

62. The activity resulting from this Year must make people and Governments increasingly aware of the problem of the disabled, especially through information programmes in the press and the other mass communication media.

63. After all, we are all, unfortunately, potentially disabled persons. From one day to the next, from one minute to the next, disease or accident can turn any one of us into a disabled person. What would then be our reaction to the indifferent or at best reserved attitude of society towards us? It is only by putting ourselves in the place of another person that we can understand his problems and legitimate aspirations and how we can meet them. What is

involved here is not concessions or sympathy, rather it is simply to recognize that the disabled possess a right to a normal life, integrated into the general activity of society.

64. This development of our own attitudes is an essential step in our pursuit of the full participation and equality which are demanded by the disabled. "It is the way other people look at me that makes me a disabled person", one disabled person wrote. We can and must change that way of looking at the disabled.

65. Mr. GARVALOV (Bulgaria): International co-operation within the framework of the United Nations in the field of the disabled enjoys the sympathy and support of the Government and the people of the People's Republic of Bulgaria. My country expressed its full support for General Assembly resolution 31/123, which declared 1981 the International Year of Disabled Persons. My country has also supported all subsequent resolutions on this matter. In conformity with those resolutions and the Plan of Action adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 34/154, the People's Republic of Bulgaria has participated actively, at both the national and the international level, in the preparation and observance of the Year.

66. We have been closely following the activities of the Advisory Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons. In our view, the results achieved at its sessions will in general have a positive impact, encouraging international co-operation and stimulating the efforts of Member States to solve the problems of the disabled in order to attain the objective of the Year—full participation and equality.

67. The attention paid by the People's Republic of Bulgaria to the problems of the full participation of disabled persons in social life and their equality with other citizens is determined by the nature of our society. The importance which the socialist countries attach to the full realization and enjoyment of their economic, social and cultural rights by all citizens is well known. The achievements of the social policies of these countries are also well known. In this context it is evident that the disabled constitute a social group which requires special care and attention on the part of both society and State.

68. In consonance with these principles the People's Republic of Bulgaria has long established a comprehensive system for the integration of the disabled in society, on the basis of full participation and equality, and for the timely and effective settlement of their problems. This system contains all the elements essential for the prevention of disability, for rehabilitation, for equal opportunities and for the full participation of the disabled in social life. Among the various measures and activities at the national level, I should like to point out the existence of legislation concerning disabled persons; special medical services for the disabled, in addition to the existing system of free health care for all Bulgarian citizens; statistical studies and scientific and technological research in the field of disability and the needs of the disabled; the existence of a comprehensive pensions and social security system and grants; as well as a number of privileges for the disabled, such as free transportation, recreation and balneotherapy, facilities and subsidies in finding accommodation and purchasing housing, specially-designed cars and so on.

69. One of the main means for the rehabilitation and integration of disabled persons in society which is subject

to special attention and efforts in my country is the creation of favourable conditions and opportunities for the involvement of the disabled in suitable vocational activities. A lot has already been done in this connection. In addition to disability-related labour legislation, we have a broad system of vocational training and retraining, special State and co-operative enterprises for the disabled and jobs especially designated for them in various enterprises. By the end of 1980, 44 per cent of disabled persons in Bulgaria of working age were employed, while there is a steady tendency for that figure to increase.

70. The Twelfth Congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party, held last March, also devoted its attention to this problem. The programme of the Congress stipulated that in the next five-year period measures would be taken for the fuller integration of the disabled in the active life of society.

71. Despite the constant attention given to the problems of disabled persons in my country, the preparation and the observance of the International Year of Disabled Persons was yet another occasion for making an overall assessment of the progress made so far in providing new opportunities and taking new measures to improve the living conditions and well-being of the disabled.

72. In compliance with the recommendations of the Plan of Action for the International Year of Disabled Persons, a national committee to observe the International Year was established in Bulgaria in 1979. The Committee is headed by one of the deputy-chairmen of the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Bulgaria. It comprises representatives of many ministries, departments, public organizations and unions. Within the Committee itself, an active role is being played by various national organizations of the disabled, such as the Bulgarian Union of the Deaf and the Bulgarian Union of the Blind. Local commissions for the observance of the International Year of Disabled Persons have also been established in all districts of the country.

73. In 1980 the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Bulgaria adopted a special programme encompassing measures for the attainment of the objectives of the Year at the national level and involving the participation of various ministries, departments and State agencies.

74. In accordance with the decisions of the Government, the ministries and departments whose activities having a bearing on disability-related issues, such as the Ministry of Public Health, the Committee for Culture, the Ministry of Home Trade and Services, the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of the Interior and others, have elaborated and are now implementing their own comprehensive programmes in carrying out the national programme for the International Year of Disabled Persons. A number of public and economic organizations, such as the Fatherland Front, the Dimitrov Young Communist League, the National Agrarian-Industrial Union, the Bulgarian Union for Physical Culture and Sports, the Central Co-operative Union, the Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement, and various unions and organizations of the disabled are now implementing similar programmes.

75. During the International Year of Disabled Persons additional legislation was enacted regarding employment and the creation of job opportunities for the disabled and regarding social security, safety regulations and road

safety for them. In compliance with the national programme all ministries and departments have reviewed the causes of disability and have envisaged measures for its prevention and for improving safety. About 380 million leva—the Bulgarian currency—were earmarked for this purpose in 1981. In addition, more than 3 billion leva will be spent between 1980 and 1985 for the prevention of road-accident disabilities.

76. Special importance is attached to the integration of disabled children in society, their rehabilitation, education and vocational training. A unified registration system for all disabled children in the country has been set up. The Ministry of Public Health has been implementing a detailed programme for the education and training of all disabled children in special kindergartens and schools, as well as in regular schools. Special courses have been created where the parents of disabled children are being trained in how to use simple rehabilitation techniques at home.

77. At the local level, various public organizations are taking measures for the direct social integration of disabled persons and their participation in artistic, cultural and sports events by means of free entry to performances, auto rallies and other activities.

78. In conclusion, I should like to point out that this is a very incomplete list of the activities which have been taking place in Bulgaria during the International Year of Disabled Persons. The problems of the disabled will continue to be highlighted by the Government and the people of the People's Republic of Bulgaria. Pursuing its humane social policy, my country will continue to exert all efforts for the attainment of the noble theme of the Year, that of "Full participation and equality" for disabled persons.

79. Mr. LEWIS (Jamaica): May I say how much I value this opportunity to share with and learn from representatives from all over the world information regarding activities undertaken during this, the International Year of Disabled Persons.

80. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative for their untiring efforts in making this Year the success that it has been. Indeed, we in Jamaica share the view that the International Year of Disabled Persons may be considered one of the most successful years proclaimed within the United Nations system. And this is as it should be, since the prevention and alleviation of human suffering has been and remains the core of man's coming together in a world organization such as the United Nations.

81. We in Jamaica have long been conscious of the needs of the disabled in our society and in fact we have a well-developed system of Government programmes which are geared to respond to the medical, financial, vocational and social needs of the disabled. The Jamaica Council for the Handicapped, made up of persons from the public sector, private sector, voluntary organizations, employers' associations and trade unions, is responsible for the implementation of these programmes.

82. My appointment as Minister of Social Security—my Ministry is responsible for the handicapped—coincided with the start of the International Year of Disabled Persons. One of my first actions as Minister was to conduct an appraisal of the programmes for the handicapped. This has resulted in new impetus being given to these programmes, and I am happy to say that we can point to

positive achievements on behalf of disabled persons during this Year.

83. The task of ensuring Jamaica's full involvement in the fulfilment of the aims of the International Year of Disabled Persons was assigned to the Jamaica Council for the Handicapped. Responding to the theme "Full participation and equality", the Council immediately proposed that Jamaica's national aims for the Year should be: to increase the involvement and participation of disabled persons in programme planning, services and activities; to reduce the incidence of handicapping conditions through improved preventive measures; to improve access to public buildings and transportation for persons with disabilities; to build a permanent workshop to make aids for the handicapped; to develop, for Government's examination and possible implementation, a long-term plan for adequate services for persons with disabilities.

84. A national committee was appointed and given the task of organizing and implementing the programmes for the Year. The committee was appointed under the chairmanship of an eminent orthopaedic surgeon and worker among disabled persons, and with a national co-ordinator, who is blind and who is a senior government physiotherapist.

85. Throughout the activities planned to implement the programmes for the Year, disabled persons have been fully involved in the decision-making process, in keeping with the first of our national aims.

86. An International Year of Disabled Persons secretariat was established at the Mona Rehabilitation Centre, with a paraplegic as the executive secretary. The secretariat served as a resource centre for information on International Year of Disabled Persons programmes and activities, and made available to the public literature on prevention of disabilities, as well as on access and mobility problems.

87. The secretariat worked closely with international agencies, such as UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, WHO, the secretariat of the International Year of Disabled Persons at Vienna and Rehabilitation International.

88. A member of our national committee attended the World Symposium of Experts on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries and Technical Assistance in Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons at Vienna during October and Jamaica also participated in the Pan American Exposition on Disability, which took place at Miami between 20 and 22 October this year.

89. I should like to share with the Assembly some local statistical data on which the International Year of Disabled Persons National Committee based its planning and projects: There are approximately 200,000 disabled persons in Jamaica today; approximately 99 per cent of Jamaicans with disabilities live without the help they need to enjoy a full life; approximately 25 per cent of the members of any community are prevented by disability from giving full expression to their capabilities; of the 60,000 to 65,000 live births annually in Jamaica, there are approximately 3,000 new handicapped children. Of this 3,000, three quarters will be mentally retarded and approximately one fifth will be severely handicapped. It will readily be seen from those statistics that the Committee had its work clearly defined.

90. Bearing in mind the national aims already identified, the noticeable achievements so far are in the areas of public awareness; increased awareness by disabled persons of their own self-worth; increased interest in health-care facilities, especially in the area of prevention; and the formation of the Combined Disabilities Association in June of this year, as an advocate body in all matters concerning the development and welfare of disabled persons in the society.

91. Dealing specifically with public awareness, I can truly say that public awareness has been heightened through a series of weekly broadcasts over the electronic media aimed at providing information on different aspects of disability, and that in turn has generated the necessary empathy to relate to the handicapped in their own environment.

92. An impact is being made in respect of the importance of access for the disabled to parking spaces, walks, ramps and entrances, doorways, stairways, floors and corridors, rest-rooms and confined areas.

93. The government of our capital city, The Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation, has established an Access Mobility Committee which has undertaken to ensure that major public buildings are accessible by the end of this year. It has also written a building code and the Minister responsible for parochial government has organized a seminar for those involved in constructing public buildings.

94. In the area of housing, the Government is arranging for disabled persons to obtain houses in Government-sponsored schemes without having to make an initial deposit on the purchase price and with low or no interest rates in cases of demonstrated need.

95. The Government has also undertaken to introduce amendments to legislation to entitle disabled persons to special benefits. These include, first, amendments to appropriate legislation to improve insurance coverage in the case of motor vehicular accidents, thereby raising the protection of the injured party and providing reasonable compensation for injury; and, secondly, designating the International Year of Disabled Persons Committee as a charity, for the purpose of income tax exemption. In addition, the Government has undertaken to consider special tax credits for the disabled.

96. With regard to health care, the accent has been on the prevention of disability. In this regard surveys have disclosed that the major areas of need are for improvement and increase of maternity units in hospitals; adequate equipping of maternity units with resuscitation equipment and equipment for measuring and treating neonatal jaundice; and increasing the knowledge and skills of health-care workers who provide services for mothers and children during pregnancy, birth and early infancy.

97. The International Year of Disabled Persons has had considerable impact on health care professionals. Teaching seminars have been organized throughout the island and directed towards the prevention of disability during birth. The prevention of home accidents, road safety and the dangers of road traffic have also been discussed. Additionally, radio discussions on adult health by prominent athletes, physicians and physiotherapists, as well as representatives of the Heart Foundation of Jamaica, were conducted during the Year.

98. Let me here specifically mention our early stimulation project, pioneered by the Council for the Handicapped and Dr. Molly Thobourne, whose efforts have made the project a success. The significance of that project, although begun prior to the International Year, is that the programme takes place in the child's home and involves the parents in the teaching process, thus increasing positive attitudes and involving the family in caring for the disabled child.

99. Specially trained personnel help parents to teach the handicapped child. Children up to six years of age with developmental problems are involved in this programme, and it has shown that this project can be undertaken by developing countries at very low cost. UNICEF has recognized in its periodical *News* that Jamaica has disproved the misconception that services in this area of early stimulation are expensive. The average cost is approximately \$US 151 per annum per child in Jamaica.

100. During August of this year a sports week was organized for persons with all types of disability. That was Government-sponsored and spearheaded by a disabled member of the National Committee.

101. So far I have described activities which have been carried out at the governmental level. However, it has been widely recognized that non-governmental organizations have made a major contribution to the success of this Year, and this has certainly been our experience in Jamaica where voluntary organizations have had a major impact in improving the quality of life of the disabled in our society and have also performed an advocacy role in dealing with the Government on their behalf. I should like to pay a special tribute to those organizations for the work that they have done in this regard.

102. The Council for Voluntary Social Services, in its role as co-ordinator of private welfare organizations in Jamaica, has pioneered rehabilitation and welfare work with the handicapped. Here are a few examples of the work of the Council and the members associated with it: the Salvation Army operates a school for blind and visually handicapped children. The Society for the Blind provides support services and aides to the blind. That Society, in collaboration with local hospitals and businessmen's clubs, recently began a programme for cornea transplant operations and established an eye bank in Jamaica. The Association for the Deaf operates schools for the deaf. The Association for Mentally Handicapped Children, with the assistance of the Ministry of Education, sponsors schools for the handicapped throughout the island.

103. As a part of its contribution to the observance of the International Year, the Scouts Association has launched a programme for integrating disabled boys into the movement throughout the island. The Girl Guides have been similarly integrated for many years.

104. A broad cross-section of Jamaican society has been involved in the activities to mark the Year. This has included university students, schools, churches and our police force, all of whom have been active in fund-raising efforts in support of the activities of the Year. The culmination of those fund-raising activities will be the "Million Dollar Telethon", to be broadcast on local radio and television stations on Sunday, 13 December, with a view to raising funds for the establishment of a work centre for the disabled.

105. This centre will be a monument to the observance of the International Year and is intended to provide vocational training for disabled persons and research data on the use of local and regional materials in the manufacture of aids and appliances. In addition, the work centre will be a source of ready access to a range of aids and appliances required by disabled persons and will also provide much-needed spare parts and repair services for equipment used by the disabled. It is also envisaged that the aids and appliances to be manufactured in the work centre will be for local as well as overseas clients.

106. Prospective employers of disabled persons will be able to tour the centre to see at first hand the capabilities of disabled workers and the design of accessible workplaces. The production centre, unlike existing sheltered workshops, is to be a self-sustaining operation paying wages commensurate with similar employment in industry. And here, I should like to say that it is my Government's policy to encourage greater employment opportunities for the disabled.

107. The United Nations, by proclaiming the International Year of Disabled Persons, has focused attention on the condition of the estimated 500 million people with disabilities in the world, and particularly on the plight of the 80 per cent—which is approximately 400 million—of those people who live in developing countries. Attempts have been made to arrive at agreement on how a society should treat its disabled citizens. In this regard, I wish to congratulate the Advisory Committee on the work they have done in preparing the draft World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. Jamaica looks forward to its adoption at the thirty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

108. We are nearing the end of the International Year of Disabled Persons. My Government is committed to ensuring the continuance of programmes for our disabled citizens, thereby giving meaning to the theme of the Year, "Full participation and equality". There is no greater impediment to the disabled than their exclusion from normal life by the able. Pity and patronage are not compensation for lack of purpose and participation.

109. As many speakers before me have stated and as has been recognized by the World Programme, the greatest need for developing countries such as mine is access to appropriate technology, especially in the manufacture of aids for the disabled person. Our countries possess the political will to integrate the disabled into the larger society, but we are constrained by our lack of resources and know-how. This sharing of technology is one of the practical measures which will make a reality of the expectations aroused among the disabled persons of the developing countries by the proclamation of the Year.

110. As this Year closes, we must make sure that when international exhortation is done we do not, as a world community, slip back into a slumber of complacent pity for the disabled, forgetting that full participation and equality cannot be a transitory thing in a person's life but is instead the definition of a full life.

111. Mr. SHELDON (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) (*interpretation from Russian*): The very fact that the International Year of Disabled Persons is being held and that this item is being discussed in the General Assembly bears witness to the increased attention being given by the United Nations and the organizations in the system to the situation of disabled persons in society and

to questions of their vocational rehabilitation and integration into the life of society.

112. The Byelorussian SSR, as a member of the Advisory Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons and participant in its work, notes with satisfaction that the United Nations and its specialized agencies have done much, during the preparatory period for the International Year of Disabled Persons and during that Year itself, to draw the attention of Governments to this problem and to assist developing countries in resolving legal, administrative and technical problems related to the prevention of disability and the integration of disabled persons into active social life. This has been borne out in particular by the statements made by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the International Year of Disabled Persons at the 86th meeting.

113. Concern about improving the situation of disabled persons, their social and vocational rehabilitation and the prevention of disability is, as a rule, not merely a necessary act of humanity on the part of society towards people who suffer from physical impairments, but is a measure that is also of great social and economic importance.

114. The prevention of disability is particularly important in resolving that problem in our view. Efforts undertaken in that direction and the rich experience gained by the Byelorussian SSR and other socialist countries in carrying out this work convincingly bear out the correctness of this approach.

115. As one of the component parts of the Soviet social-welfare system, questions such as care for disabled persons, their social and vocational rehabilitation and the prevention of disability are dealt with on a permanent basis by the State, now as in the past, within the framework of the integrated plans for social and economic development aimed at guaranteeing increased well-being for the Soviet people.

116. The Constitution of the Byelorussian SSR and the legislation of the Republic set forth the rights of disabled persons to participate, on an equal footing with other members of society, in all aspects of economic, political, social and cultural life. The socialist society guarantees to all its members fundamental rights and freedoms, including the right to work, recreation, health care, housing and education. The society is concerned about improving the conditions of its citizens, including safe working conditions, and is taking necessary measures to maintain the purity of air and water and to improve the human environment as a whole.

117. In accordance with article 41 of the Constitution of the Byelorussian SSR, the right to material assistance in old age, in the case of sickness, full or partial loss of the ability to work or the loss of the wage-earner of the family is guaranteed by the social insurance covering manual workers, office workers and collective farm workers and by allowances for temporary disability. The State and the collective farms pay old-age pensions, disability pensions and pensions in the event of the loss of the wage-earner. Citizens who have become partially disabled are resettled in new jobs. Care for senior citizens and disabled persons and other forms of social services are provided. We should emphasize once again that all types of social assistance, which is the second-largest source of income of

the population in Soviet society, after salary, are provided by the State.

118. The constitutional rights of citizens in the field of social services are strictly regulated by law. An important step in that regard was the adoption in 1956 of the law on State pensions, in 1964 of the law on pensions and allowances for members of collective farms and, in 1970 of the Byelorussian SSR's law on public health, as well as a number of measures adopted by the Communist Party and the Soviet Government to improve the living standards of all categories of workers.

119. State expenditures on social services over the period of the tenth five-year plan (1976-1980) in the Byelorussian SSR exceeded 4.12 billion roubles. The main task of the eleventh five-year plan, as stated by the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Comrade Leonid Brezhnev, in his report to the Twenty-Sixth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, is to make sure that the well-being of the Soviet people continues to improve. An important step in this direction was the adoption in March this year by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Council of Ministers of the USSR of measures to increase State assistance to families with children and measures to improve further the social services provided for the population, which foresee an increase already in 1981 in the minimum old-age and disability pensions and the loss of the wage-earner.

120. The network of homes for the elderly and disabled persons will be significantly expanded and their standard of accommodation will be improved, as will that of social services provided at home. Social services include a network of medical centres giving free assistance to disabled persons, including orthopaedic assistance and equipment and various additional benefits.

121. During the great patriotic war, one out of four inhabitants in our Republic fell at the hands of the Fascist aggressors and many were disabled. Persons disabled in the war are given great care and attention by the Soviet State. They receive various benefits in paying for their housing and communal services, in public transport, treatment at health spas and other kinds of services.

122. In a socialist society, great attention is paid to the social and vocational rehabilitation of disabled persons. In the Byelorussian SSR all disabled persons who want to work are given reasonable work for their level of health, if that is not contra-indicated. To that end, a network of State vocational technical colleges and courses and secondary specialized and higher educational establishments has been developed in our Republic, as well as on-the-job training. After they have finished their training or retraining, disabled persons are offered jobs in specialized State plants or in the training and manufacturing workshops of the Republic's voluntary societies for the blind and the deaf.

123. Many disabled persons want to work at home and, to do this, all facilities are provided to them. The State provides disabled persons who work at home with the necessary raw materials. These are delivered to them and the finished articles are sold for them.

124. The basic role in the job placement of disabled persons is played by the medical-labour expert commis-

sions, which determine the degree of loss of labour ability, and its recommendations lay down the conditions, nature and organization of the work of disabled persons. The conclusions of these medical-labour expert commissions are mandatory for the administration of institutions and enterprises that employ disabled persons.

125. An important condition for further improvement in the quality of medical and social assistance to disabled persons is the creation of a special scientific and medical centre for rehabilitation and clinical, expert and scientific research to find effective measures to prevent disability and to organize the work of disabled persons in a rational way.

126. In order to develop these questions, a scientific research institute to evaluate the capacity to work and to organize the labour of disabled persons was established in the Byelorussian SSR in 1976. At the present time this institute is an important scientific research body staffed by highly qualified scientific and medical professionals and other service personnel. Disabled persons needing these services are examined and treated in its clinical departments.

127. This comprehensive care given by the socialist society to disabled persons has rid them once and for all of the need to rely on private humanitarian aid.

128. As the experience of our country and of many other States shows, concrete results in preventing disability, improving the condition of disabled persons and integrating them into the political and social life of society on an equal footing with other citizens can be attained only by the countries themselves taking effective practical measures in that direction.

129. All-round activities by States, bearing in mind their political and social systems, their level of economic development and also their established traditions and customs should be given high priority in order to attain the objective of the Year: "Full participation and equality". Measures at the national level should consequently be the basis of the world programme of action for disabled persons.

130. In order to improve the situation of disabled persons, we feel that all Member States should accede to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [*resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex*] and be guided in their actions by other important international instruments and the appropriate resolutions and decisions adopted by the United Nations.

131. At the same time, we feel that within the framework of international co-operation, we need to continue and extend the practice of exchanging information and experience available to States, the United Nations, its specialized agencies and international non-governmental organizations to improve the situation of disabled persons and to integrate them into the process of social and economic development. In efforts at the international level, an important part must be played by the ILO and WHO. These organizations can and should, within their competence, mobilize activities to improve the social protection of disabled persons.

132. In conclusion, our delegation would like to state that the Byelorussian SSR is prepared to continue to participate in co-operation in this important field, one that

affects millions of people who have every right to expect humane treatment, attention and assistance. At the same time, the delegation of the Byelorussian SSR would like to emphasize that international co-operation, as well as measures at the national level, designed to improve the situation of the disabled in various countries of the world should not be confined merely to technical and other specific aspects of the problem. There is no disputing the fact that such co-operation should be accompanied by continuing efforts aimed at consolidating international peace and security, curbing the arms race and eliminating the danger of war.

133. Speaking at the Twenty-Sixth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Comrade Brezhnev, stressed that there is at present no more important, no more essential question for any people in the world than the maintenance of peace, the securing of the foremost right of every human being, the right to life.

134. Only in conditions of peace will it be possible to solve all of the pressing problems of social and economic development, including the problems of improving the situation of disabled persons. With that in mind, it is imperative that a new impetus be found to mobilize the efforts being made by the international community to eliminate the threat of war. A start in this direction was made during the preparatory stage that preceded the International Year of Disabled Persons and during the Year itself. The main activities of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons should be subordinated to the accomplishment of that task.

135. Mr. BARBOSA de MEDINA (Portugal) (*interpretation from French*): My delegation is happy to be able to join so many other delegations in taking special note of the importance of the celebration of the International Year of Disabled Persons for the international community.

136. Today, there are more than 500 million disabled people in the world. That means that in each country, an average of one person in 10 is disabled. We can never sufficiently stress such terrible statistics, for people are a nation's most precious commodity and an indispensable resource for development. Any society that does not effectively respond to the problems with which we are now dealing runs the dangerous risk of suffering an immense loss of human potential, the waste of which, at both the moral and physical level, would have incalculable consequences.

137. Almost six years ago, the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons, whose object was to appeal for efforts at the national and international levels to achieve the full integration of disabled persons into society. Later, in the belief that a concerted effort was required, the General Assembly proclaimed 1981 the International Year of Disabled Persons, the basic aims of which were to help the disabled to adapt to society, to encourage all initiatives to provide them with assistance, training, care and necessary counselling, to offer them work opportunities and, finally, to guarantee their full integration into society. At the same time, it was proposed to inform public opinion of the right of disabled persons to participate in and contribute to the various areas of economic, social and political life, as well as to encourage the adoption of effective measures to prevent disability and to re-educate the disabled.

138. A month before the end of this International Year, it is, of course, not possible to put into perspective all the activities that have been carried out at the national, regional and international levels. However, according to the very comprehensive report submitted by the Secretary-General we can now conclude that the pursuit of the Year's goals has led to the strengthening of international co-operation and has made it more productive. In this connection, I should like to thank Mrs. Shahani, Assistant Secretary-General, for her full report concerning the excellent work accomplished by the secretariat of the International Year of Disabled Persons and the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. My delegation would also like to voice its satisfaction at the progress made in developing the draft World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, which we hope will soon be adopted.

139. Awareness of the responsibilities inherent in the problem of disabled persons has prompted Portugal to include in its basic law provisions governing their status. In chapter III of the Constitution of the Republic, which deals with the rights and duties of various social groups, article 71 provides that:

“Citizens who are physically or mentally disabled shall fully enjoy the rights, and are subject to the duties, set forth in the Constitution, with the exception of those whose exercise is beyond their capacity.

“The State is committed to a national policy of prevention and treatment, rehabilitation and integration of the disabled, to developing teaching methods to create awareness of the respect and solidarity owed them by society and to ensuring that they obtain full enjoyment of their rights, without prejudice to the rights and duties of parents or guardians.”

140. Thus, society has the duty to recognize the right of the disabled person to be different, precisely in order to enable him to pursue the equality that is his due. In fact, that duty constitutes an obligation for the State, which alone has the power to recognize such rights and to enforce respect for them. Governments are thus in duty bound to mobilize their resources and co-ordinate their activities in such a way as to facilitate a continuing and comprehensive process of rehabilitation of the disabled.

141. Accordingly, in 1977 the Government of Portugal established a new department, the National Secretariat for Rehabilitation, with the basic responsibility of promoting implementation of article 71 of the Constitution through a national policy of adaptation, rehabilitation and social integration of the disabled. In 1980, in pursuance of General Assembly resolutions 31/123 and 34/154, my Government decided to establish a national structure to see to it that the observance of the International Year of Disabled Persons made the greatest possible impact and brought about the needed public awareness. In this structure, the President of the Republic presides over the Commission of Honour while the National Secretary for Rehabilitation acts as chairman of the National Committee and the Executive Committee; this arrangement thus involves the nation's main political bodies, the governmental departments concerned, and the representatives of interested non-governmental organizations.

142. The structuring of all activities concerning the International Year is the job of the Executive Committee, which is also responsible for promoting the establishment of the necessary co-ordinating committees on the local

and regional levels, in co-operation with the local authorities, trade union organizations and other institutions. My Government has thus succeeded, in drawing up and, as far as possible, implementing a national plan of action, whose main goals are: the drawing up of a long-term plan on prevention, rehabilitation and integration; the promotion of action for public information and awareness, bearing in mind the specific questions of disabled children, adults and elderly persons; the expansion of government services in the fields of prevention, health, education, housing, transportation and social and vocational rehabilitation, in particular through the creation of several rehabilitation centres of which seven will soon be opened; study of the care of the mentally handicapped and of the possibility of home care and rehabilitation for people who become blind, as well as of the quest for a system for the observation, evaluation and orientation of disabled persons; research in the fields of rehabilitation and the technical and vocational training of staff; review and promulgation of legislation on education, labour and architectural obstacles; statistical study of the disabled population; involvement of non-governmental organizations in promoting and carrying out the national programme of the International Year of Disabled Persons; and the proclamation of an international day of disabled persons.

143. Specific information on the activities carried out in Portugal was communicated to the Secretary-General and is reflected in his report. There is thus no need for me to go into excessive detail, which I shall spare the Assembly.

144. It remains for me to reaffirm my Government's deep commitment to the responsibility undertaken by the United Nations and its Member States to encourage the international community to contribute to a significant improvement in the status of disabled persons by guaranteeing their right to a normal and independent life, to equality and full participation. Work towards that goal should involve active international co-operation stemming from a recognition of those rights. The end of the International Year of Disabled Persons undoubtedly signals a new beginning in the accomplishment of the immense tasks that remain.

145. Mr. SAIGNAVONGS (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (*interpretation from French*): The delegation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic is very honoured to be able to participate in this debate on the International Year of Disabled Persons, which is of particular importance to us all because, as is emphasized in the report of the Secretary-General, there are today in the world 500 million people suffering from disabilities, of whom 400 million live in developing countries.

146. The fact that the General Assembly proclaimed 1981 the International Year of Disabled Persons and allocated debate on this item to the plenary meeting confirms this importance and further emphasizes its humanitarian interest in having taken such action.

147. Furthermore, activities undertaken by the United Nations and by other intergovernmental and non-governmental international organizations in observance of the International Year have been clearly outlined in the report of the Secretary-General as well as by Mrs. Shahani, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the International Year of Disabled Persons, when she spoke at the 86th plenary meeting of the Assembly. In this connection, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to

express its sincere congratulations to Mrs. Shahani and her colleagues at the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs on their efforts and on the good results they have attained thus far.

148. The International Year of Disabled Persons will soon come to an end, but the enormous task of integrating disabled persons into society on the basis of the theme of "Full participation and equality" remains to be completed. The success of such an undertaking requires the active participation of the States Members because the attainment of the basic targets of the International Year, as set out in resolution 31/123, calls for universal action on a large scale.

149. For its part, the Lao People's Democratic Republic attaches particular importance to the problem of disabled persons, for of its 3.5 million inhabitants 300,000, including women and children—or almost one tenth of the population—are disabled, most of them as a result of the imperialist war of aggression, waged principally by American imperialism against our country.

150. A grateful fatherland has constantly concerned itself with its valiant children thus disabled. During the war, it provided safe shelter, food, clothing, education, suitable work, sufficient leisure and health care, and it also arranged marriages for those in a position to wed. After the establishment of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the implementation of this policy was further expanded. In its efforts progressively to improve the material, cultural and social conditions of our people, our Government strove particularly to emphasize the improvement of those of the disabled, in particular by the creation of a centre for rehabilitation and re-education, by providing orthopaedic appliances and prostheses, and by offering them free care and periods of treatment at the rehabilitation centre. The primary aim is to prepare them physically, and above all morally, to learn a trade in keeping with their abilities, which would enable them to be partially self-reliant, to participate in social life and thus to contribute to the best of their ability to the work of protecting and building up the homeland.

151. Naturally, the results are still modest, but they are commensurate with our technical and financial possibilities, which are limited. Notwithstanding this, the Lao Government is determined to pursue its task in this field. To that end, it has recently come to an agreement with WHO on assistance to physically handicapped persons.

152. The Lao People's Democratic Republic, like many countries, has participated in the International Year of Disabled Persons. It has expended many efforts to inform the public about the importance of the International Year through the media at its disposal: the press, radio, posters and banners with slogans. Although my country is not yet on the list of those which have established national committees for the International Year, my delegation would like to make it known to the Assembly that on 17 April 1981 the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic set up a national committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons, presided over by the Minister for Social and Veterans' Affairs. Furthermore, to underscore the special importance of the work of that committee and thus of the problems of disabled persons, the President of the Republic, Mr. Souphanouvong, became its honorary Chairman.

153. The task of the National Committee was to consider and establish a national plan of action having the

following three targets: first the improvement of the National Rehabilitation Centre, the better to serve disabled persons; secondly, the training of technicians and specialized medical personnel to meet long-term needs; and, thirdly, the organization of a vocational school for the disabled. Furthermore, the Committee's job is also to organize various activities, in the capital and in the provinces, in the cities as in rural areas, to make people aware of the problems of disabled persons.

154. In the context of activities for the International Year, the Lao National Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons organized on 22 May 1981 a solemn meeting at Vientiane attended by more than 1,200 persons, including members of the Government and the Supreme People's Council, as well as members of the diplomatic corps and representatives of accredited international organizations in Laos. Similarly, film screenings, circuses and theatrical events have been organized in various parts of the country to collect funds for the purchase of the appliances so necessary to the disabled. Furthermore, a refresher seminar for doctors and medical staff from all the provinces of the country whose duty it is to provide health care to the disabled is scheduled for this month in Vientiane. Finally, the Postal Service is issuing a stamp to commemorate the International Year.

155. Those are some of the activities that my country has undertaken to observe the International Year. But, in the words of President Souphanouvong in his message to disabled persons in our country on the occasion of the International Year:

"Naturally, we see that what has been done does not yet meet all our desires. The reason for this is that we still have many shortcomings and difficulties to overcome, among them the lack of specialized professionals and an inadequate level of scientific and technical expertise to assist and rehabilitate the handicapped."

156. Despite these shortcomings and difficulties, and in order to overcome them, I wish to reiterate the sentiments of the President of the Republic, who also said the following in his message:

"On behalf of our multinational people, and in the name of all disabled persons in our country, I wish, therefore, to express our feelings of gratitude and our profound thanks to the United Nations, the party and government organizations of brother socialist nations and other friendly countries, international organizations, private organizations and all persons who have accorded humanitarian assistance, both material and moral, to the Lao people in general and to our disabled in particular."

157. The goals of the International Year, in accordance with the theme "Full participation and equality", can only be achieved on a long-term basis and require favourable international conditions. It must not be forgotten that 400 million disabled persons are living in developing countries, 350 million of them in countries that have no assistance services. The economic strengthening of those countries would provide their people, particularly their disabled, with necessary resources. This implies that developed countries must show greater flexibility and understanding towards the developing countries by adopting, without delay, economic reforms to bring about the establishment of a new international economic order that will guarantee a just and equitable distribution of the wealth of mankind.

158. Furthermore, by eliminating pockets of tension and the dangers of war caused by international imperialists and reactionaries, by settling existing conflicts and adopting effective measures to curb the arms race, reverse its course and achieve genuine disarmament, we would release a large part of the resources now devoted to armaments, which could then be put to good use for the development of developing countries and, thus, for the well-being of disabled persons.

159. Finally, when the Advisory Committee for the International Year—under the competent and dynamic leadership of Mr. Muntasser of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, to whom we extend our hearty congratulations—examines the blueprint of the world programme of action for disabled persons, it would be desirable for particular attention to be paid to the plight of disabled persons in the least developed and most seriously affected countries, because scientific and technical disadvantages and the scarcity of resources in those countries make the attainment of the targets of the world programme very difficult.

160. In conclusion, and in order to emphasize my country's commitment to the cause of disabled persons, my delegation wishes to repeat the following words of the President of our Republic:

“Caring for disabled persons is one of the main tasks of humanity, of Governments and of various organizations throughout the world, in order to reduce the difference that exists between the living conditions of the disabled and those of normal people, to rid ourselves of inhumane, unworthy feelings on the path to creating the spirit of humanitarianism, friendship and love of peace. . . . Humanity demands that we seek ways to eliminate the causes of impairment or physical and moral disability of the handicapped and to give them material and spiritual assistance.”

161. Mr. RAZZOOQI (Kuwait): The United Nations took a giant step forward by nobly and rightfully proclaiming 1981 the International Year of Disabled Persons with the theme of “Full participation and equality”. A year with such a theme arouses the hopes, aspirations and expectations of nearly 500 million disabled persons.

162. This special day fully reflects the aims, goals and objectives of the International Year of Disabled Persons. First, it shows the solidarity of all nations, irrespective of race, colour, sex, creed or religion, in presenting and discussing the problems and concerns of disabled persons. Secondly, it shows us as nations working together towards the rehabilitation of the disabled to fulfil the theme of full participation in a more meaningful way in our communities.

163. Kuwait supports the draft World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, which concentrates on certain problems that can be resolved with the co-operation of Member States and reflects the views of Governments, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations.

164. It is a striking fact that around 500 million people in the world are disabled owing to physical, mental or sensory impairment and that, of the 500 million, nearly 140 million of them are children. We have to seek effective remedial action, otherwise the consequences of disability will be a constant obstacle and a burden to development, especially in small and poor developing nations

which aspire to reach some sort of reasonable standard of living in our modern world.

165. We believe that in disability there is always a hidden power and strength, and that if that strength is tapped it will be a moral as well as an economic asset. Governments play an important role in awakening the awareness and conscience of their people to the need to alleviate the suffering and agony of the disabled. The private sector also has a responsibility to help in that direction. We note with satisfaction that the awareness of people of the need to facilitate the integration of the disabled in the community is rising.

166. Kuwait is working hard, with the help of its Arab sister countries, towards a welfare system to alleviate the economic difficulties of disabled persons and their families. However, we regret the fact that people in many countries are still denying employment or care to the disabled on the assumption that because of their impairment they will not be as productive as normal persons.

167. My Government believes that the following elements must be taken into account. First, Governments must reduce and then eliminate the existing barriers to facilitate the full and effective participation of disabled persons in community activities and their access to services on an equal footing with others, in order to achieve one of the most important goals of the plan of action, that is, full participation and equality. Secondly, the participation of disabled persons in the decision-making process concerning their rehabilitation, which will help them to become full members of the community, must be ensured. Governments and communities have responsibilities, but these do not negate the role of the disabled themselves in facing their reality and courageously fighting it with the help of others. The disabled must have equal rights, but also they must have responsibilities and obligations. Thirdly, information must be disseminated by national committees and activities must be co-ordinated with those of the agencies of the United Nations system. Fourthly, the transfer of technology in the field of disability from the developed to the developing nations must be ensured. Fifthly, special attention must be paid to those who are disabled as a result of mental illness or retardation. Sixthly, family care and attention is very important in the rehabilitation programme for the disabled.

168. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 31/123 which proclaimed the year 1981 the International Year of Disabled Persons, and resolution 32/133, the Kuwaiti National Committee was set up for that purpose by Decision No. 1/79 of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. The Committee, which is headed by the Assistant Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs, consists of 12 members representing different ministries.

169. The Committee, which has already held several meetings, finally drew up the broad lines of an overall work plan comprising three major programmes, which are summed up as follows: first, the preparation of a study for the evaluation of the services offered to all categories of disabled persons in the State of Kuwait and identification of the major causes of disability, with a view to formulating proposals for the development and expansion of such services and promoting the prevention of disability; secondly, the preparation of a draft law on the status and rights of the disabled in the State of Kuwait and the establishment of a committee of lawyers and sociologists representing the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Justice, the Department of Legal Interpretation and

Legislation, the Council of Ministers, Kuwait University, the Ministry of Education, the Kuwait Handicapped Society and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour; thirdly, the implementation of various cultural, artistic and information programmes, such as the publication of a collection of booklets and informative pamphlets on public health and the possible holding of a large sports event by the Kuwait Handicapped Club within the framework of its extensive plan for the celebration of the International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981.

170. The Kuwait Handicapped Society will participate in celebrating the International Year of Disabled Persons in the following ways: by surveying all State facilities and structures with a view to identifying architectural obstructions that limit the freedom of movement of disabled persons and then submitting proposals for the removal or dismantling of such impediments, by preparing a publicity programme under the title "Artists from our Society" and by holding an authorship contest among handicapped individuals.

171. In observance of the International Year of Disabled Persons the Kuwait National Committee organized a regional conference from 1 to 4 April in Kuwait for study and the exchange of experience and expertise between States interested in the problems and the rehabilitation of disabled persons and to make known the legal and legislative conditions pertaining to the protection of the disabled, vocationally, medically and socially. Among the main documents issued by the conference was an Arab declaration of action concerning the disabled. The documents and draft resolutions adopted by the conference set forth the principles, objectives and methods of action for co-operation at the regional and international levels.

172. My delegation believes that we should emphasize the need to undertake and develop coherent studies and research on global strategy concerning the causes and types of impairment and disability. We are gratified to see that in the field of scientific research there have been dramatic breakthroughs leading to unprecedented results. The disabled live in hope, and I hope that we shall live up to their expectations by overcoming some of the conditions in which they live.

173. Mr. KHOZA (Malawi): My delegation wishes to associate itself with previous speakers in congratulating Mr. Kittani on his election to the presidency of the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly and on the very able manner in which he is conducting the Assembly's deliberations.

174. As we are approaching the end of 1981, my delegation wishes to pay a tribute to the General Assembly for declaring 1981 the International Year of Disabled Persons.

175. Various activities by nations during the Year have undoubtedly proved that this was part of a world-wide crusade for a growing realization that, in order to achieve any meaningful social and economic development and self-reliance, disabled persons need to be integrated fully into any nation's programmes by recognizing the main theme of the Year, namely: full participation and equality.

176. The aims and objectives of the International Year of Disabled Persons indeed gave us unparalleled opportunities for considering certain strategies for the long-term actions and programmes associated with the Year.

177. Equally important is the Charter for the 80s, drawn up and adopted by the World Planning Group of Rehabilitation International, as a major contribution to the International Year of Disabled Persons. This charter also provides a good working ground for future planning and programming as far as rehabilitation services are concerned. I should like to quote one of the statements contained in that charter:

"The knowledge and skills now exist to enable each country to remove the barriers which exclude people with disabilities from the life of their communities. It is possible for every nation to open all its institutions and systems to all its people. . . . A nation failing to respond to this challenge fails to realize its true worth."

178. This statement calls upon nations to prepare comprehensive national plans for disability prevention and rehabilitation and to ensure that each and every disabled person and his family receives the services and assistance which might be necessary to reduce the handicapping effects of the disabilities, thus ensuring the fullest possible integration and participation of all the disabled within their communities.

179. My delegation is gratified to note from the report of the Commission for Social Development on its twenty-seventh session, in the section on the International Year of Disabled Persons,¹ that the Year 1981 has achieved considerable success regarding planning for future activities and services for the disabled. Indeed, the Year 1981 provided an excellent opportunity for Member States critically to examine the situation of the disabled in their respective countries and to take concrete, positive action in order to improve their conditions of work and life-styles. However, let us not regard this International Year as an isolated event or as a campaign; we should associate the Year with long-term action programmes designed to improve the well-being of disabled persons and to integrate them to the fullest possible extent in day-to-day active economic and social life.

180. In this regard, my delegation commends the work of the Advisory Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons in considering follow-up action after 1981. We shall indeed study the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and we look forward to the adoption of the draft Programme by the General Assembly at its thirty-seventh session in 1982.

181. At this point, I should like briefly to outline the activities which the Government of Malawi has undertaken during this Year. The Malawi National Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons was established by the Government of Malawi at the beginning of 1980 and charged with co-ordination of the programme of activities and plans to further the objectives of the Year, as set out by the thirty-first session of the General Assembly, at which 1981 was proclaimed International Year of Disabled Persons. The programme further focused on preventive and rehabilitative services, including those which would ensure the integration of the disabled with the able-bodied.

182. In the field of prevention, immunization programmes which had been intensified during the Year of the Child continued to receive the highest priority. Additional mobile eye clinics enabled ophthalmic personnel to visit very remote rural areas to examine, identify and treat a variety of eye conditions. Following feasibility

studies, a clinic for orthopaedic surgery and physiotherapy became operational early in the year. The clinic also provides locally-made appliances for the disabled. This project is being carried out by the Malawi Against Polio Association with funds from Rotary International and local contributions. To complement the Ministry of Health's programme in medical rehabilitation, Malawi Against Polio initiated a course to train selected medical personnel as orthopaedic assistants.

183. In the field of education a great deal has already been done to provide special educational facilities for disabled children, especially the blind. The facilities are provided in selected schools where blind children attend the same schools as the sighted. There are plans to provide more such schools to enable and encourage parents to send their blind children there.

184. With regard to training and rehabilitation a number of training activities were already instituted and have attracted considerable attention from other countries. These facilities are in the field of farming and, for women, in housecrafts and handicrafts. During the Year courses were extended by the further development of a training and evaluation estate, where the blind are trained to grow tobacco, maize and other food and cash crops. They will subsequently be able to go either to the agricultural settlement schemes or to their home areas.

185. The last quarter of this year saw the beginning of the construction of a new rural vocational-rehabilitation training centre. The centre, when completed, will offer training for disabled men and women of working age in rural and industrial occupations such as woodwork, metalwork, tailoring, home economics, agricultural and poultry farming. The centre will also provide facilities for assessing and exploring the vocational potential of trainees. There will also be psycho-social counselling. Skills connected with the repair and servicing of any special aids they have will also be provided alongside their normal training programmes.

186. During the Year my Government also planned a survey of the disabled, which will be carried out by the National Statistical Office in 1982. It is hoped that the survey will not only provide statistics, but also information on the distribution and severity of handicaps.

187. The Malawi Government recognizes the fact that provision of suitable and adequate services for the disabled requires skilled manpower, useful baseline data and other resources beyond the capacity of a developing country such as ours. Therefore, my Government is willing to explore further possibilities of bilateral, regional and global co-operation. With that objective in mind the Malawi Government this year hosted a 10-day seminar from 28 September to 8 October, at the subregional level, with participants drawn from the member States of the eastern and southern African region.

188. This seminar, which was on vocational rehabilitation and resettlement of the disabled, provided a milestone in the field of vocational rehabilitation in general and also offered the participants a useful opportunity to evaluate together the administration and organization of the programmes of the International Year of Disabled Persons. There were five themes discussed, namely: the scope and boundaries of vocational rehabilitation services; services needed for individuals with handicaps; organization and staffing of services; evaluation of rehabilitation;

and future development of services. These are indeed issues of importance and relevance in rehabilitation work.

189. Regarding future development, the participants noted with gratitude the Organization of African Unity [OAU] resolution CM/Res. 834 (XXXVI) on the establishment of an African Training and Research Rehabilitation Institute adopted at the thirty-sixth ordinary session of the Council of Ministers of the OAU, held at Addis Ababa from 23 February to 1 March 1981. It is hoped that, when established, the institute will provide all the required comprehensive research and training services for the African countries.

190. In conclusion, my delegation strongly believes that success can be achieved through programmes which offer equal opportunities and which allow for the full integration and participation of the disabled in the services that affect them.

191. Mrs. KASHEMWA LAINI NYOTA (Zaire) (*interpretation from French*): It is a real pleasure for me to speak on behalf of the Executive Council of the Republic of Zaire, the Government of my country, which is a member of the Advisory Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons, during the consideration of the item concerning the International Year of Disabled Persons.

192. May I first and foremost take this opportunity to express to the Secretary-General the warm congratulations of the Republic of Zaire on his constant, praiseworthy efforts to ensure the implementation of resolution 31/123, which proclaimed 1981 the International Year of Disabled Persons, and all the other relevant recommendations that are put forward at our various meetings within the framework of the United Nations.

193. We also wish to congratulate Mrs. Shahani, Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the International Year of Disabled Persons, who most efficiently ensures the co-ordination of the Year's activities.

194. In Zaire, as in a great many young countries, the improvement of the status of disabled persons is one of the major national concerns and falls within the Government programme for the social and economic development of the country. That is why, long before 1981 was proclaimed the International Year of Disabled Persons, we had set up certain institutions, the main task of which was to prevent and to cure disability and to provide rehabilitation, vocational training and apprenticeships for the disabled with a view to enabling them to become reintegrated in society.

195. Among these institutions are the National Centre for the Vocational and Professional Training of Invalids and the Disabled and various neurological, psychological and pathological centres, as well as the Mama Mobutu Institute for the blind. The latter gives young blind persons the same primary and secondary education enjoyed by sighted children at ordinary schools, in every discipline. This Institute is 70 per cent directed by the blind themselves, and among the pupils are some students from neighbouring countries.

196. Regionally, since 1975, Zaire has co-operated closely with the United Republic of Cameroon, Burundi and Rwanda, exchanging experiences within the Association of Centres for the Disabled in Central Africa, whose

activities could be extended to other interested and concerned countries in the region.

197. Since the International Year of Disabled Persons was proclaimed the Republic of Zaire has always associated itself with the activities of the international community and has put every effort into applying at the national level the Plan of Action for the International Year of the Disabled. Indeed, in accordance with the recommendation of the Advisory Committee, the Executive Council of the Zaire Government last year established a national committee to prepare for the Year. That Committee is made up of representatives of the ministries of the Executive Council, representatives of public and private organizations interested in and concerned with the problems of the disabled, both medically and socially, and of representatives of associations of disabled persons. The role of the Committee was defined by the Advisory Committee, namely, to plan, co-ordinate and carry out activities designed to support the objectives of the Year nationally and locally, or to encourage such activities. It was also responsible for presenting the Executive Council with proposals for measures necessary for the observance of the International Year of Disabled Persons in our country.

198. A national programme of action in accordance with the Plan of Action for the Year and essentially aimed at the rehabilitation, re-education, readjustment, and social integration of the disabled, and also and especially at the prevention of disability, was established.

199. Several projects were proposed, including that of setting up a factory for making tricycles in Zaire and that of giving new impetus to all the centres for the disabled, with the assistance of the ILO and UNICEF. These projects are now being carried out.

200. At the beginning of the year we set up a national committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons. It is a standing national body bringing together all the social groups concerned with the problems of the disabled. Its essential task is to ensure follow-up and continuity in the activities of the International Year of Disabled Persons after 1981.

201. Within the framework of the observance of the Year we have organized, with the active participation of disabled persons, several sports and cultural events designed to increase public awareness and to bring about a positive change of attitude concerning the disabled.

202. The climax of these events was on 14 October 1981, which was proclaimed in Zaire the National Day of Observance of the International Year of Disabled Persons. The day was marked by a message from the Executive Council to the nation designed to increase public awareness and to bring about the proper social acceptance of disabled persons in society. An order was signed by the Founding President of the People's Revolutionary Movement, the President of the Republic, declaring an amnesty for disabled persons who had been sentenced to imprisonment. In addition, there was a national collection in the form of a generous, voluntary contribution from each and every citizen. The funds collected will be allocated to the promotion of the Executive Council's projects for the disabled.

203. I should like to say that, in spite of the willingness of which we have given proof and our many efforts, Zaire and all the other developing countries, cannot by themselves carry through such ambitious programmes as we

have put together during the Year because our means are limited and the needs are enormous. That is why we sincerely hope that all resources will be mobilized by the Organization and the specialized agencies in order to back up national activities, particularly the national programmes. Indeed, will or determination alone is not enough to achieve this. We also need the proper means for action, without which our initiatives will simply be pious hopes, with no future.

204. Zaire supports the idea that we cannot hope to reach most of the disabled unless priority is given to the needs of the developing countries in the allocation of resources by the international community, quite simply because those are the most needy countries since they have the largest percentage of disabled persons in their populations.

205. Similarly, we are convinced that the transfer of technology and regional technical co-operation are the best ways to achieve self-reliance in the rehabilitation of the disabled and the provision of the equipment they need. We therefore appeal urgently for the effective creation of an African regional institute for the rehabilitation of the disabled, as decided by the OAU.

206. Finally, my country, as a member of the Advisory Committee, expresses the hope that the General Assembly will adopt the conclusions arrived at by that Committee at its third session, in the light, of course, of the report and the relevant comments on this topic of the Secretary-General.

207. Mr. CHAN (Singapore): As the International Year of Disabled Persons draws to an end, we are left with a strong sense that its achievements and impact on the attitudes of societies and Governments have prepared the ground for continuing action in the years ahead in order to attain the goal of full participation and equality for disabled persons.

208. World recognition of the potential of disabled persons will contribute significantly to their self-confidence and drive in leading an active, normal and full life. The leadership of the United Nations in the International Year of Disabled Persons has given hope and inspiration to millions of disabled persons the world over. It is helping to generate a social climate that should be conducive to the full integration of the disabled into the economic and social activities of the community. We also realized during the course of the year that more could be done in the area of prevention of disabilities, an area which is relatively unexplored.

209. The task of integrating disabled persons is well under way in the developed societies. The progress and advances made in the care, rehabilitation and integration of the disabled are an example that the poorer and less advanced societies would wish to emulate. This task is a much more difficult and complicated one for societies that are hampered by poverty and are unable to meet the basic human needs of the population in general. In the competition for development resources priorities have to be determined within the limits of available resources, but there should be room for international co-operation on the disabled.

210. Because resources will always be limited, each society has to look first and foremost to its own means in helping its disabled. Desirable social attitudes and public recognition of the status of the disabled are well within

the realm of possibility. Sensitive consideration and supportive actions by employers, colleagues, relatives and society in general for the disabled can be fostered through social example and education. Help in the broadest sense of the word for the disabled is a matter of both the heart and the mind and of the pocket-book. The United Nations, during the International Year and, it is hoped, in the long-term programme of action that is being drawn up, should continue to help Member States in both those directions.

211. Singapore has made strides in recognizing the problems, needs and abilities of the disabled. It has found the International Year of Disabled Persons to be a major booster in its efforts to educate all sectors of its population in this field. Growing numbers of people in Singapore are looking at the disabled as individuals who should be helped to function as normal members of society. The assistance and courtesies that our people extend to the disabled are now increasingly seen in this light.

212. More people in Singapore are asking what they can do to help the disabled. More employers recognize that the disabled have marketable skills, or can be trained to acquire them. Indeed, many employers go out of their way to praise the positive attitudes of their disabled employees towards their work.

213. Disabled persons in Singapore are showing greater leadership and taking more initiative in questions concerning their relationship with society. Their voices can be heard on matters relating to education, vocational training, medical care and participation in the life of the community. Such dialogue between the disabled on the one hand and specialists and the general public on the other is welcomed as a healthy trend and strongly encouraged in Singapore.

214. The First World Congress of People with Disabilities was held in Singapore from 30 November to 4 December 1981. It was the first such meeting in which the disabled had gathered to speak for themselves and to plan future action. Altogether about 300 disabled persons from 60 countries attended as delegates. In his opening address to the Congress, the Acting Minister for Social Affairs of Singapore, Dr. Ahmad Mattar, called on the disabled to make their presence felt by seeking more positions on the decision-making bodies of agencies that provide rehabilitation services for the handicapped and to initiate research on existing services. The Acting Minister noted that in Singapore about one third of the Executive Committee members of the eight leading voluntary welfare organizations for the disabled are either disabled persons or parents of disabled persons.

215. During the International Year there has been an extensive public education campaign aimed at reaching all sectors of the community in Singapore. A handbook on places that are accessible to physically-disabled persons was produced to help them to participate in community life. Planners and developers are also urged to be conscious of design features for the disabled when designing new buildings. A handbook for employers, entitled *The Potential of the Disabled in Employment*, is being produced with the objective of educating employers and trade unions.

216. Abilympics-Singapore organized a skills competition along the lines of the International Abilympics, the aim being to promote public awareness and recognition of disabled persons' abilities and to promote employment of

the disabled. Among the main areas of competition were watch and clock repairing, dress-making, tailoring, cabinet-making, radio and television repairing and typing for the visually handicapped.

217. A training programme based in the home was launched with the objective of helping the parents of disabled children to train, rehabilitate and prepare them for adult life. The National Library has started Project Low Vision, a programme of microfiche work on textbooks that are used for the visually handicapped.

218. In conclusion, my delegation wishes to pay a tribute to the excellent leadership, initiative and participation of disabled persons in Singapore during the International Year of Disabled Persons. They have set an example for many of their fellow Singaporeans, and we look forward to the progress that can be made through both national efforts and international co-operation in achieving the goal of full participation and equality for disabled persons.

219. Mr. ALBORNOZ (Ecuador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): In the opinion of Ecuador, it is of the greatest importance that world attention be drawn to a matter of the utmost human importance and of serious economic and social significance: that of the disabled among all peoples and particularly those who are afflicted, in addition to their disability, by the shortcomings and disadvantages of adverse circumstances in the developing world.

220. If we include among the disabled those affected by physical, nutritional, psychological and educational limitations, indicative of the level of development, such a situation affects more than 10 per cent of the population of the countries of Latin America as a whole. In Ecuador, the gravity of this problem has aroused the national conscience and all public and private sectors are taking action, as far as they are able, to do something about the problem. They are prepared to act in response to whatever co-operation, particularly technical co-operation, the international community can provide.

Mr. Renzaho (Rwanda), Vice-President, took the Chair.

221. In that respect, and in connection with the International Year of Disabled Persons, the First Lady of Ecuador and Chairman of the National Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons, Mrs. Margerita Pérez de Hurtado, broadcast in our country the following message:

"I address all my fellow countrymen suffering from any form of physical, mental or sensory disability, and, particularly, the rest of the population of our country which does not find itself in this situation because it is from them that sufficient effort, resources and solidarity should come to ensure the social integration of Ecuadorians who are deprived of enjoying the fundamental rights of every citizen. In Ecuador, we must make a great collective effort to make sure that all men and women can take an active part in our national life, and for that the community as a whole—Government, social organizations, private entities, voluntary organizations and institutions generally—must be made aware of the problem and act in a co-ordinated manner to prevent the various kinds of disabilities which affect a large section of the Ecuadorian population and which result from factors that, in the final analysis, are related to an unjust economic and social order.

"In 1981, the International Year of Disabled Persons proclaimed by the United Nations, the national Government has given significant impetus to institutions for special education, rehabilitation, vocational training and research concerning the disabled. In this, it has had the generous co-operation and economic support of private foundations, which, acting resolutely in fulfilment of their social obligations and moving away from out-of-date paternalism and charitable attitudes, now constitute an infrastructure and a flow of resources without which the State would be unable to meet its planning goals. The magnitude of the task has been assessed: the prevention of future disabilities and the rehabilitation and integration of a million Ecuadorians already suffering from disabilities covers practically the entire range of social action—maternal and child care, nutrition, social communication, vocational training, rehabilitation in its various forms, teacher-training, training of parents, changing the physical environment and eliminating social barriers, recreation, artistic activities and research. All of that can be summarized in the words full integration and participation, and that is our aim."

222. The first participatory meeting to set up the National Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons took place at Guayaquil, in December 1980. Since then, progress has been made in many stages, including a first multidisciplinary convention for the International Year of the Disabled at Cuenca in February of this year. At that convention, specific recommendations were made in the areas of medicine, specialized education and professional rehabilitation. Short courses were organized for teachers from institutes for children with impaired hearing. The national Government allocated more than \$1 million, despite the financial difficulties of the country, for the work of the organizing committee. At the same time, the Ministries of Public Health, Education and Social Welfare promised their support. The activities of sports organizations for disabled children in Quito and Guayaquil, of rehabilitation centres in Quito, Guayaquil and Portoviejo, and of the Ecuadorian National Institute for the Blind have been encouraged. The Ministry of Public Health is preparing new comprehensive legislation on the disabled, which will be submitted by the Government to the Ecuadorian Parliament.

223. The Declaration of the Rights of the Disabled proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution 3447 (XXX) has been printed and distributed. And a workshop on new world trends in specialized education was held at Cuenca in August of this year.

224. At the same time, the National Institute for Children and the Family is coping with emergencies resulting from deficiencies that affect the child and the family unit.

225. In the rehabilitation unit of the Carlos Andrade Marín Hospital, 550 people are treated every day, in 12-hour shifts, with physiotherapy, electromyography, occupational and speech therapy, hydrotherapy, orthosis and prosthesis. The National Unit for Rehabilitation has been functioning since July of this year as a sub-unit of the Ministry of Health. It consists of five departments for full rehabilitation: physical, psychiatric, educational, occupational and social. Its aim is to free the population of the country from disability and to incorporate the disabled into the social, economic and cultural development of the country.

226. Under the Ministry of Social Welfare, the National Council of Vocational Rehabilitation deals with the social, educational and health problems of the disabled.

227. Specialized education is a sectoral aspect of general education in areas concerned with the mentally retarded, with problems of language and communication, and physical handicaps and other aspects of disability. All such activities are available free of charge as, indeed, is education in Ecuador at the primary, secondary and higher levels. If the resources of the national budget devoted to education, health and housing are added up, we find that it runs close to 50 per cent of the overall budget.

228. Thus, our country, Ecuador, believes that its contribution to a worthy observance of the International Year of Disabled Persons is to inform the international community of the efforts being made by our participatory democracy, whose aim is economic development and social well-being, to cope with and remedy this grave aspect of inadequate general development constituted by the disabled among the human resources of our country.

229. Mr. AL-YOUZBAKI (Iraq) (*interpretation from Arabic*): On the occasion of the International Year of Disabled Persons, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to set before world public opinion and the General Assembly an outline of my country's activities for the protection and rehabilitation of the disabled in the short period during which concerted action has been taken to ensure the success of a world-wide experiment. In view of the importance of this experiment, we wish to offer our experience as an example of spectacular initiative.

230. Inspired by the Iraqi people's characteristic desire to help and under the leadership of the head of State, orders were given two years ago to set up a committee for the disabled under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. This was in response to the appeal of the Secretary-General, and in conformity with the Plan of Action for the International Year of the Disabled aimed at ensuring their full participation in the social life and development of their society, providing living standards equal to those of other citizens and allowing them to enjoy, on an equal footing, the rising standards of living made possible by economic and social development. This Committee is made up of representatives of the Ministry of Planning, Housing, Reconstruction and Local Government, as well as organizations of the disabled. A special law was enacted granting the disabled the right to buy land, to build, and to buy special equipment. The sum of 2 million Iraqi dinars—that is, \$6.5 million—was allocated to that end. The Committee was granted customs exemptions and operates under special laws with regard to trade. It is allowed to deal directly with experts from all countries. The Committee has a flexible mandate making it possible to adopt effective measures with rapid results. During the second year, a similar amount was allocated to the Committee.

231. Two years have elapsed since this body was set up for the disabled, during which time 50 institutes and rehabilitation centres for the deaf-mute, the mentally retarded, the blind, the paralysed and the invalid have been established. An amount of 15 million Iraqi dinars—that is \$48.5 million—was also allocated to this Committee, which set up 20 rehabilitation projects. It bought the most up-to-date equipment and raw materials from many countries. The Committee delegated the selection of the personnel and materials necessary for the quickest possible realization of these projects. Necessary measures were taken to ensure that the work would be done. The Iraqi leaders have also authorized the construction of 18 complexes for the disabled. These centres are scattered

throughout the country and are equipped with special apparatus, furniture and materials. Each centre covers 65,000 square metres of land worth 14 million dinars. The entire project will cost \$45,160,000 per unit or \$812 million in total. A Swedish firm has been put in charge of the project.

232. Instructions have been issued to promote the recruitment of disabled persons able to work. The law has been changed to allow the recruitment of all disabled persons able to work, whereas only 3 per cent were previously recruited. A medical committee has been entrusted with assessing their capability and deciding on their place of work, and no disabled person can be transferred without this Committee's consent.

233. In a single year, 23,000 disabled persons were given employment and the process is continuing. These disabled persons have therefore become part of the active population and are contributing efficiently to the achievement of development plans since they have been trained for the task. In order to ensure effective participation and equal opportunity for these persons, instructions have been issued to provide them with specially equipped vehicles. In the last 15 months, 6,000 such vehicles have been delivered, and the disabled are now authorized to import them after learning to drive at special instruction courses organized by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

234. I should like here to mention an important law enacted in Iraq which came into force during the International Year of Disabled Persons. It is the law on social protection. The second part of the law deals with services to be provided to disabled persons and with the State's obligations towards them. It is concerned with the early tracking down of cases of disability by special medical commissions and diagnostic centres for the handicapped with special equipment and a staff of experts, psychologists and social workers. Our aim is to assist the disabled throughout their lives from the moment diagnosis is made.

235. The State, through the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, ensures the right of the disabled to protection, training and rehabilitation. Those who cannot attend ordinary training courses can thus benefit from this training. Every case is studied separately and, in 1981, during the International Year of Disabled Persons, we distributed more than 2,000 wheelchairs and 16,000 hearing aids to disabled persons, in addition to crutches and the provisions of special facilities in restrooms.

236. The State has also promoted scientific research, and four kinds of electronic equipment were made by Iraqi experts for use in the education of the deaf or those with impaired hearing. These services are provided throughout the country and abroad. They are supported by the Government, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has introduced ultra-modern technology into the field of assistance to disabled persons.

237. In view of the success of this pilot project in Iraq and its purely humanitarian nature, the Iraqi Government has proposed it to brother Arab States and some of them have already adopted it with the help of Iraqi experts. Other countries have asked us to assist them in planning similar services in 1982.

238. In order to render service to everyone in the name of humanity, we are ready to co-operate with any developing country wishing to benefit by our experience.

239. The number of persons employed by The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs amounts to 3,000, all working in the various institutes and centres for disabled persons. We are proud to mention that Iraq has been so successful that it is in a position to be able to render services to other developing countries in supplying experts and professional staff, if they are required.

240. We have attempted to give a brief survey of the services available to disabled persons and of the other efforts being made to make further services available to disabled persons who have not had access to those services. Such a contribution, backed up by the faith of our political leaders, has made our own experience truly significant, since we are providing services that are better than those called for by the executive.

241. Before concluding, I should like to state that although Iraq was not listed among those countries that set up national committees for the International Year of Disabled Persons, our National Committee was established at the end of 1979, as I mentioned at the beginning of my statement.

242. Mr. AL-ANSARI (Bahrain) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The fact that there are people in this world whom fate has afflicted in such a way that they are prevented from leading a normal life puts an obligation on us to assist them in such a way that they are enabled to play an active part in life. Yet that is not the end of the matter. Man himself has multiplied the number of the disabled through devastating wars, careless of the fate of those so unjustly affected by such conflicts.

243. Ever since the international community undertook to set in motion an international process of assistance to our disabled brothers, my delegation has supported that noble humanitarian initiative by giving prime importance to this question. Our country set up a national committee to seek ways and means whereby the International Year of Disabled Persons could be celebrated, to develop programmes aimed at achieving the goals of the Year and to implement them in collaboration with the appropriate departments and sections.

244. Several sub-committees were established under the National Committee, among them a sub-committee for the employment of the disabled. One of that sub-committee's basic objectives was to find jobs for disabled persons taking into account their condition and capacity for work. A sub-committee on information was set up to organize an intensive campaign to publicize the situation and to create public awareness of the rights and needs of the disabled. There is also a sub-committee on finance, whose task is to provide material assistance to the projects of the National Committee, and a sub-committee to eliminate the various barriers that confront disabled persons.

245. The State of Bahrain, in a humanitarian spirit, has made every effort to give assistance to this special group of human beings, conscious of the fact that, by such action, it is setting an example that every country in the world should follow.

246. Mr. MAKKI (Oman) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The proclamation by the General Assembly of 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons played an important role in drawing attention to the problems of the disabled and making them known at the international, regional and national levels. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 31/123, the majority of States Mem-

bers of the United Nations have focused attention on the problems of the disabled and have established programmes and national plans for the solution of those problems, which affect nearly 500 million disabled persons throughout the world.

247. There can be no doubt that the International Year has contributed and will continue to contribute greatly towards helping such people emerge from their sad and painful world and from their tragic solitude. The International Year of Disabled Persons has strengthened their faith and given them the right to play a full part in the life of society and in development, to enjoy living conditions equal to those that are available to others and to benefit on a basis of equality from the improvements in living conditions created by social and economic development.

248. Intensified co-operation among Member States, particularly in the area of scientific and humanitarian research, and an exchange of experience with regard to the problems of the disabled will help us to find an appropriate solution to the problem of disability, whether by treatment of the illness or by its prevention. There can be no doubt that many cases of disability might have been prevented, by proper nutrition, by health care or by simple surgery. All such measures could have been taken even in rural societies, and the cost would have been minimal. The same is true for all countries.

249. In our opinion the adoption of such measures calls for effective co-operation between the developed and developing countries in order to ensure the transfer of technology and the results of research, and the exchange of information on the prevention of disability and the rehabilitation of the disabled, not forgetting the provision of financial assistance.

250. My country has the honour of being a member of the Advisory Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons that was set up pursuant to General Assembly resolution 32/133 of 16 December 1977, and we have participated in all the meetings of that Committee.

251. In view of my country's concern for the disabled, and in order to implement resolution 31/123 ministerial decree No. 9, of 1981, was promulgated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs establishing a National Committee on assistance to the disabled. That National Committee includes the Ministries of Health, Defence, Education, Information, Youth, Post and Telecommunications and the Police, as well as the Ministry of Social Affairs.

252. The Committee's work lies in several areas. First, it informs the various segments of society about the problems faced by disabled persons and about their needs, so that they may be given equal treatment and the necessary co-operation to enable them to make their contribution to society and to enjoy the opportunities and rights granted to other citizens. Secondly, it informs society of the need to prevent disease, the need for periodic medical examinations and the importance to health of good nutrition. Thirdly, it encourages the disabled to emerge from their solitude so that they can really play an active role in and be a part of society. Fourthly, it develops co-ordinated and integrated programmes for the disabled to help them in the spheres of social welfare, education, employment and social integration. Fifthly, it also reinforces co-ordination between the various ministries concerned aimed in order to draw attention to the problems of the disabled.

And, sixthly, it reviews the services and programmes of aid for the disabled so that they can be adapted to their real needs, whether mental, physical or spiritual. Various State bodies have implemented the plans drawn up by the National Committee, preparing short-term and long-term projects to prevent disability and assist the disabled in all fields so that they can contribute fully to the social and economic development of Oman in this modern age.

253. Among the achievements of my country since the beginning of the Year are the following. First, we issued a commemorative stamp for the International Year of Disabled Persons. Secondly, we published posters on the same theme. Thirdly, delegations were sent to ensure that Omani students in other Arab countries are provided with the best possible conditions, and to study the development of special education for the disabled. Fourthly, the Omani National Committee is also co-operating with the national committees of other Arab countries and is participating in conferences on the disabled. Fifthly, disabled persons who complete their studies in foreign institutions are given employment in the ministries and State bodies of Oman. Sixthly, social insurance is enjoyed as a right by the disabled and their families, and disabled persons are provided with orthopaedic or prosthetic devices. Seventhly, a first seminar was held in August 1981 to inform society about the rights of the disabled and about the need for them to participate fully in every aspect of life. Eighthly, Oman contributed to the United Nations Trust Fund for the International Year of Disabled Persons. Ninthly, on the occasion of the staff day of the International Organization of Disabled Persons at Geneva, an Omani dagger was presented as a gift.

254. My delegation hopes that the United Nations will continue to concern itself with the problems of disabled persons, so as to focus increasing attention on this problem, which calls for further study within the framework of the draft World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons recommended by the Advisory Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons. My delegation would also suggest a United Nations decade for disabled persons—1983 to 1992—to ensure that the international community will continue to be alive to the noble humanitarian objectives formulated during the International Year of Disabled Persons and to help them.

255. Mr. MAITAMA-SULE (Nigeria): The significance of the International Year of Disabled Persons has been demonstrably underlined by the high-level participation of Member States in the present debate. The tremendous interest in and concern for the disabled which the celebration of the Year has generated throughout the world is further proof of its topicality and relevance. For, when the decision was taken, in resolution 31/123, to proclaim the year 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons, little did we know that this would provide a banner occasion for Member States, as an international responsibility, to enter into such profound and wide-ranging self-examination with respect to their existing services and legislation as well as their attitudes and policies towards the disabled.

256. For almost two decades, successive administrations in Nigeria have built their economic-development strategies around the philosophy that the ultimate goal of development is man, and that for that reason every man and woman should be given the opportunity for self-fulfilment.

257. The process of nation-building in Nigeria is directed towards achieving a strong and truly egalitarian society. To this end, the Federal Government of Nigeria has vigorously pursued a policy which fully recognizes the need to educate and integrate all sections of the community in the process of development and to inculcate a sense of unity, common purpose and common destiny in our nationals.

258. In accordance with this policy, the Government of Nigeria is firmly committed to the effective social integration of all disabled persons, in the firm belief that nobody should be hampered because of a disability from leading a useful and, to the extent possible, normal existence. Thus, disabled children, with the exception of the deaf, the blind and the dumb, attend regular schools with able-bodied children.

259. Throughout the life of the present civilian administration, special interest has been shown in the welfare of the disabled. As a result, the commitments we entered into during the celebrations marking the International Year of Disabled Persons are far-reaching in nature and dimension.

260. We observed that the welfare of the disabled could not be divorced from the social and economic situation of his family and community. Traditionally, the disabled Nigerian is his community's responsibility. In addition to the members of the extended family to which he belongs, other members and groups of his community accept without question that it is their duty to care for the disabled person. However, changes in our social structure and beliefs brought about by modern technology have made it necessary for the Government to play a leading role in the care of the disabled.

261. In addition to the institutional innovations and arrangements which we have decided to adopt so as to secure effectively and to promote the rights of the disabled as a national policy, we have agreed to give the highest priority within the framework of our five-year national development plans to a number of programmes for the disabled. These programmes form an integral part of our overall social and economic plans for Nigeria. For instance, we accord priority to the creation, expansion and improvement of all services for the disabled in the health, education and social-welfare sectors, as well as to fostering family planning activities and improved facilities for pre-natal and post-natal care. In addition, we are creating an environment for the education of the general public on the rights of the disabled, with a view to ensuring adequate legislative, administrative and budgetary provisions for our national policy for the disabled in Nigeria. It is our hope that, given our policies, and with the current revitalization of our national institutions, customs and traditions, there will be a happier marriage between what is best in both the new and the old.

262. The following are examples of some specific projects which my Government is undertaking in pursuance of an integrated programme for the welfare of the disabled:

263. First, we are carrying out studies on the special problems of the disabled in the areas of health, education and welfare. As part of our long-term objectives, a bill before the Nigerian Parliament envisages the establishment of a research institute which will study all aspects of disability in Nigeria, and possibly other African countries, and recommend ways and means of achieving the global goal of full participation. Secondly, in order to

minimize disability, my Government has embarked on an extensive immunization programme aimed at reducing the incidence of polio, the main cause of disability in Nigeria. In more general terms, the Government has adopted an integrated system in the education of disabled children. Consequently, there are only a few special schools, where deaf, mute and blind children are given specialized education. In recognition of the important role of rehabilitation, emphasis is placed on effective social integration. New programmes for the disabled have been started, including the establishment of six huge rehabilitation centres, and the Government plans to train 300 persons each year for the centres for the next six years. Community-based services also have been expanded to give adequate training to disabled persons to enable them to take care of themselves. They are given vocational training so they can earn their living, and their employment rights are protected.

264. A national trust fund for rehabilitation was established during the year. Its main responsibility is to provide funds on a continuous basis for long-term projects. The efforts of the trustees will continue to be supplemented by contributors from community sources.

265. The momentum generated by the International Year of Disabled Persons should be maintained by appropriate follow-up activities at both the national and the international level. In this connection, my delegation believes that rehabilitation should be encouraged at the international level. We therefore support the idea of setting up regional institutes for the rehabilitation of disabled persons, and a co-ordinating mechanism, also at the international level, for the sharing of information and experience among Member States. At this juncture, I should like to appeal to the developed countries to give every assistance to developing countries, particularly technical, financial and expertise assistance. We appreciate the contribution which the developed countries have made, and it is our hope that they will improve on their past performance in the face of the increasing magnitude of the problem.

266. In conclusion, I am pleased to announce, if I may, Nigeria's pledge of about 200,000 naira, or the equivalent of US \$340,000, to the United Nations Trust Fund for the International Year of Disabled Persons as a token of my Government's commitment to the welfare of disabled persons.

267. Mr. ADAN (Somalia): The activities of the world community over the past year on behalf of the disabled have without doubt constituted a most worthy humanitarian undertaking and one which responds to a critical human need. The goals of the International Year of Disabled Persons conform closely to a fundamental purpose of the United Nations, namely, "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person". Too often in the past, the rights, dignity and worth of disabled people have been ignored, with a consequent stifling of human potential and a loss to families, communities and society at large.

268. The estimate that there are over 450 million disabled people in the world today emphasizes the dimensions of this problem and the continuing need to arouse public awareness of the difficulties and deprivations faced by those who are physically or mentally impaired, who are disabled or who are handicapped. While the United Nations can indeed be proud of its efforts during the past year to promote full participation and equality for the disabled, it must ensure that action at the national, regional

and international levels is sustained so that the momentum of the International Year will not be lost.

269. With regard to action at the international level, my delegation hopes that the Advisory Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons will be able, in 1982, to finalize the draft World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. The World Programme would constitute a practical and objective standard against which countries and organizations could measure the success of their efforts to improve the lot of the disabled. We particularly urge that additional resources be provided to the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs to enable it to follow up on the activities of the past year.

270. We hope that the Advisory Committee will give favourable consideration to the proposal that the period 1983-1992 be proclaimed the United Nations decade of disabled persons in order to keep this question before the conscience of the world community and to enable the World Programme of Action to be firmly established.

271. If the momentum of the International Year is to be maintained, it will also be necessary for United Nations agencies and other bodies to co-ordinate their efforts while working closely with national and regional committees, which are continuing to give active support to the goals of the Year of Disabled Persons.

272. Support from the United Nations system and action by regional committees will be particularly important in the developing world, where individual countries with limited resources can achieve little, but could make significant progress in helping their disabled people through technical co-operation and through regional programmes.

273. In Africa, where there are 45 million disabled persons, we have already recognized the importance of regional action, as evidenced by the strong interest of ECA and the OAU in establishing a regional institute to promote rehabilitation, equalization of opportunities and prevention of disabling factors. We trust that technical and financial aid for the establishment of this project will be forthcoming from the United Nations system.

274. The fact that 80 per cent of the world's disabled are in the developing countries and that only 1 per cent of these receive trained help underscores the close relationship between the problems of the disabled and those of underdevelopment. The least-developed countries find it difficult to provide adequately for the basic needs of their populations, let alone to provide rehabilitation services for the disabled. The prevalence of disabling diseases, inadequate health care and widespread poverty are major factors accounting for the high proportion of disabled persons in the developing world. Obviously, the goals of the new international economic order provide an appropriate and indeed an essential framework for improving the quality of life of the world's disabled.

275. In Somalia we are attempting to ensure the participation and integration of the disabled in our society, but our efforts are hampered by the multiplicity of problems we face. In addition to contending with the classic problems of underdevelopment, we have been the receiving country for well over a million refugees and have suffered a number of devastating droughts over the past few years. All these factors have served to reinforce the self-perpetuating cycle of poverty and disability.

276. One asset we had at the outset of the International Year of Disabled Persons was an existing concern for the disabled members of our society. Since 1963 it has been required by law in Somalia that at least one out of every 30 jobs should be held by a disabled individual. In recent times the problems of the handicapped have gained greater prominence and sympathy because of the great number of casualties among those who have fled the conflict in the Horn of Africa and among Somalis in the Republic whose villages were bombed by enemy forces.

277. The needs of our disabled people and possible ways of responding to those needs will be assessed by Somalia's National Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons, which has been established at the ministerial level under the chairmanship of one of the Vice-Presidents of Somalia. The interest and the will to help are there, but strained resources, a lack of trained personnel and lack of equipment severely restrict the national effort.

278. Somalia's only rehabilitation unit is a vocational centre in Mogadiscio for 60 boys and young men who are mostly politic victims. The aim of this centre, in which our President takes a personal interest, is to make the handicapped self-sufficient through training in skills such as tailoring, carpentry and so on. However, it is readily apparent that the institute provides for only a very small proportion of our disabled people.

279. Happily, there is a growing awareness in some developed countries, and throughout the United Nations system, of the complex problems faced by developing countries in dealing with the disabled. In Somalia, for example, we are grateful for the help given by Norway to our Red Crescent Society in starting a prosthetics workshop. We deeply appreciate also the involvement of the ILO, UNICEF and UNHCR in rehabilitation, education, primary health care and other preventive measures on behalf of the disabled.

280. We have noted with great interest the programmes and projects developed by UNIDO in the areas of preventive and curative measures for developing countries. The large-scale application of immunization and diagnostic and medical techniques is desperately needed in many developing countries and is particularly applicable to refugee situations such as Somalia's. The UNIDO projects would also seem to be fitting subjects for regional programmes and technical co-operation between developing countries, and we hope that UNIDO will promote their implementation along those lines.

281. In my country, as in other parts of the world, overcoming prejudices and changing public attitudes are important aspects of the social integration of disabled persons. The deep-seated nature of this problem is illustrated by the fact that even in affluent communities of the developed world there is often resistance to the expenditure of public funds on integrating the disabled fully into their societies. The stigma attached to mental and to many physical disabilities is perhaps the most serious handicap faced by the disabled. One of the major achievements of the International Year of Disabled Persons has been to raise public consciousness about this problem so that irrational and negative attitudes towards the disabled can be dispelled. I venture to hope that the strong sense of community and family responsibility which is characteristic of many third world countries can be channelled into greater concern for the disabled and into stronger efforts in support of their full participation and equality.

282. In conclusion I wish to express my delegation's full support for the principles and proposals contained in the draft resolution on this subject submitted by the Third Committee [see A/36/764].

283. Mr. KISEKA (Uganda): The decision of the Assembly to proclaim the International Year of Disabled Persons epitomized the deep concern of the international community for one of its most disadvantaged groups. The observance of the Year in 1981 afforded us a noble opportunity to focus attention on the plight of the 450 million disabled persons and on the need to work towards ensuring their equality and full participation. As we review the progress made during this symbolic year, it is incumbent upon us all to re-dedicate ourselves to the general cause of the disabled and to record our recognition of the enormous challenge that remains after the one-year period.

284. The importance of and the need for continued attention to the plight of the disabled are underscored by the very tragic nature of disability itself, and by the prospect of an increase in the number of disabled persons world-wide. Most important is the realization that today 80 per cent of disabled persons live in developing countries, in circumstances of abject poverty and want.

285. The tragedy of disablement is perhaps the greatest source of human affliction. Irrespective of the cause, nothing induces more sorrow in a person than the inability to live a normal life. For the vast majority of the disabled the reality of life without full sensory, mental or bodily capability translates into morbid feelings of inadequacy, dependence, insecurity and rejection. Life to them is thus subnormal not only in the physical sense, but in all its attributes. That nearly one tenth of humankind shares this grave frustration must indeed continue to evoke our earnest compassion. The prospect of an increase in that percentage must inspire the massive and concerted international resolve necessary to accomplish the requisite preventive, rehabilitation and integration measures.

286. During the International Year of Disabled Persons the international community has evinced ample will to confront the problems facing the disabled. As the report of the Secretary-General shows, initial efforts to confront the problems of disabled persons have been made by Member States and national and regional institutions, as well as by various United Nations agencies at the international level. On this occasion, my delegation wishes to pay a tribute to all who took part in the activities of the Year and to applaud the spirit of international co-operation shown, which must have given solace to the disabled population of the world and a ray of hope for a better future.

287. We wish in particular to mention the historic efforts made within the United Nations system in the cause of disabled persons. The adoption of the draft World Programme of Action by the Advisory Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons is indeed most welcome. The draft programme provides the basic framework for the long-term measures that Member States and international agencies will find useful in their future efforts. The Government of Uganda will, in the course of the coming year, make a detailed study of the draft text and submit its specific observations in accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/133.

288. The importance of disseminating information on problems of a mass nature cannot be over-emphasized. The creation of a common awareness of the plight of the

disabled is indeed vital. On the one hand, it helps the international community to fathom the gravity of the problems facing the disabled and, on the other, it enables disabled persons to know of the international concern and sympathy for their cause. We are therefore heartened to note that over the year UNESCO, the secretariat of the International Year of Disabled Persons and other bodies within the United Nations system have devoted considerable efforts to publishing materials and organizing seminars and workshops at the international, regional and national levels on the various aspects of the problems of the disabled. The participation of disabled persons themselves in such seminars and workshops marked a positive beginning of their participation in shaping new approaches to the problems that affect them.

289. My delegation also wishes to commend WHO and FAO for their energetic involvement during the Year. It is widely acknowledged that a high percentage of cases of disability result from disease and malnutrition. The fact that four fifths of the world's handicapped are to be found in developing countries attest to this fact. In terms of prevention, therefore, WHO and FAO can play a vital role. We hope that the long-term programmes of these two organizations will continue to accord high priorities to the developing countries, commensurate with the size of their handicapped population.

290. It is our view that programmes for the participation of the disabled must be geared not only towards their rehabilitation but also towards a psychological adjustment that replaces their feeling of dependence by the confidence of self-sufficiency. In this connection we wish to commend the ILO for developing the concept of modules of employable skills. Although this notion is still at the testing stage, we cannot fail to acknowledge the virtue of its objective of creating self-contained training packages oriented towards essential skills and aptitudes. We believe that the adoption of such an approach, particularly in the rural parts of the developing countries, will help in the task of making disabled persons productive and self-supporting. By the same token, we wish to express our support for FAO's focus on projects aimed at facilitating and encouraging participation by the disabled in agriculture.

291. It should now like to share with the Assembly a brief account of our national activities during the International Year of Disabled Persons. In his address to the nation last August, on the occasion of the official launching of the Year, the President of Uganda, Mr. Apollo Milton Obote, announced that the Government was in the process of drawing up a comprehensive national programme to tackle the problems of our estimated 1 million disabled citizens. It is the intention of the Government that the programme shall aim not only at the rehabilitation of the disabled but also at ensuring their participation in all spheres of nation-building. For, to quote the President, "The task of vocational rehabilitation of the disabled is quite a complex one. It is not a matter of simple charity and care. It is a matter of distributive justice to all our people." Due emphasis will therefore be given to projects that will ensure that all disabled persons are enabled to play a part in the productive and service activities of the country. It is only through their participation that our disabled persons can abandon their sense of being ostracized and confidently take part in the task of nation-building.

292. On the same occasion the President announced the Government's intention to introduce a bill in Parliament charting the right of the handicapped to equality and a normal life. The main aim of such a charter would be to

ensure that our handicapped population is accorded its full dignity and fundamental human rights and that no disabled person shall be discriminated against or otherwise disadvantaged merely for reasons of his handicap. It is the view of the Government that such a charter would have the effect of contributing to the confidence of the disabled in their nation and people, and help regenerate compassion in the whole population.

293. As a response to the challenge of prevention, rehabilitation and participation, the Government has taken various steps in the cause of the disabled. These include the revival of the President's Polio Appeal Fund, the building of a multi-purpose commemorative rehabilitation centre at Nagongera in Tororo District and the provision of Government subsidies to privately-administered schools and training centres for the disabled. Furthermore, the Government has urged the National Disablement Advisory Council to mount fund-raising programmes and to advise on the harnessing of the proceeds.

294. The response in the observance of the International Year of Disabled Persons in Uganda has been most encouraging. The launching of the Year attracted donations both from within the country and from international sources. In this connection my delegation wishes to pay a tribute to such voluntary organizations as the Red Cross Society, the Christian Children's Fund, the Lutheran World Federation and the Governments of some Member States for contributing towards the operation and maintenance of the Uganda School for the Deaf sited at Mengo.

295. During the Year representatives from the Uganda Foundation of the Blind participated in the seminar for blind women in Africa held at Addis Ababa. We indeed value this kind of international co-operation, which enables our disabled persons to share with the disadvantaged of other nations their experience and a vision of the challenge that lies ahead. Uganda will continue to participate actively in international and regional enterprises of this nature.

296. Alongside the activities meant to highlight the purpose of the International Year of Disabled Persons, the Government of Uganda continues to provide all the regular services to the disabled. In our integrated approach the problems of disablement are viewed as an integral component of the scourge of poverty, ignorance and disease. The Government's efforts in the struggle against these ills has therefore remained comprehensive and co-ordinated, within the limitations of our national resources. Our disabled citizens continue to benefit from all those efforts. It is the determination of the Government that the disabled, like normal citizens, shall be provided with opportunities for medical care, education and employment in the public sector, and with all the products of our national endeavour. This approach notwithstanding, the disabled continue to receive the special attention they deserve, particularly in the field of rehabilitation.

297. The observance of the International Year of Disabled Persons was not meant to provide only a temporary focus on the problems of the disabled. The achievements scored by the international community in the course of the Year must not therefore be a source of complacency. Indeed, the results of many of the activities during the Year may not become manifest in the immediate future. There is a need to sustain the momentum marshalled this year, if the commitment by the international community to the cause of the disabled is to be fulfilled. In this regard we wish to express our fullest support for those

provisions of the draft resolution now before the Assembly that urge Member States and the United Nations to undertake follow-up and support measures to ensure the eventual achievement of the objectives of full participation and equality.

298. The importance of sufficient funds for national, regional and international programmes during the follow-up period cannot be over-emphasized. My delegation draws attention to the fact that most developing countries, by reason of their economic situations, may not be able to embark upon meaningful consolidation programmes unless enough international assistance is forthcoming. Similarly, United Nations programmes aimed at benefiting the disabled may become moribund unless Member States continue to contribute generously to the United Nations Trust Fund for the International Year of Disabled Persons and to the various agencies involved in projects for the disabled. I wish in this connection to quote *in extenso* the earnest appeal made earlier this year by the Director-General of the International Labour Office, Mr. Francis Blanchard:

"The question of how to tackle this formidable challenge is not one of policies or approaches. These exist . . . what is lacking, however, is the political will to act and—putting it quite bluntly—money. ILO experts have calculated that in order to stem the tide the world would have to find as a minimum 25 additional cents to spend on each disabled person annually . . .

"This at least would help to establish pilot vocational rehabilitation programmes in those countries where no such services exist; equally important, it would provide the means to set up some subregional and regional training centres where much needed specialized staff could be trained.

"It is a modest, realistic goal. And if the term human dignity has any meaning at all, these 25 cents should certainly be found."

299. It is not consoling to note that whereas, on the average, the world spares only one cent for every disabled person per year, it can afford to spend \$400 billion annually on armament, itself a factor in causing disability. We must realize that a sizable proportion of the 350 million disabled people in the developing countries do not even get the benefit of that one cent which the world currently offers.

300. Mr. KHALIFA (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): For more than half a century, despite its limited resources, my country has attached particular importance to the problems of disabled persons and the protection of their interests. That protection has taken the form not only of the provision of food and clothing, but also of training and education to enable disabled persons to work, to produce and to take part in the building of the society in which they live.

301. The Sudan, like other third world countries, is now passing through a decisive phase in its social development. Development in the social sphere has been limited by our general development limitations. We have therefore emphasized the importance of social activities in their various forms and the need to involve all citizens in the development of society. This is why, at the present time, social welfare is of particular importance, especially as far as the needs of developing societies are concerned. Insurance against old age, disease, poverty, disability and

accidents at work are an inseparable part of social security in general.

302. In the sphere of the codification of social work and the care of the disabled, and in order that social legislation may be a source of inspiration for all activities and practices in the social field, the legislature of my country has enacted laws pertaining to the protection of the aged and the disabled, which have been adopted by the National Assembly of the people. After the setting up of the National Council for Social Welfare, committees were established in 1974 to implement legislation concerning training for social work. Let me describe briefly some of the vocational training projects which have been in existence for a very long time in my country.

303. First, there is the audio-visual centre at Juba for the education and training of deaf-mutes. The centre was established with assistance provided by voluntary associations in the Sudan, and includes a kindergarten for deaf-mute children, a training institute together with a workshop fitted out by the International Union for Child Welfare, at Geneva and the Canadian International Development Agency.

304. Secondly, there is a centre for the protection of the physically disabled, also at Juba. An expert from the ILO has drawn up two plans, one short-term, the other a long-term plan, for the provision of aid to the disabled.

305. Thirdly, convinced of the importance of integrating the services to disabled persons within the general development programme of society and of the elaboration of practical measures to increase the participation of the disabled in social life, my country intends to carry out projects for the establishment of farms for disabled persons, with the help of FAO, which has agreed to finance these projects.

306. Fourthly, some projects are now being carried out to help physically and mentally disabled persons and to rehabilitate them. Here aid will be provided by the Canadian Association for Development, which will supply equipment necessary to teach deaf-mutes.

307. Apart from official assistance, there is assistance at the grass-roots level. Our citizens have applied the principle of self-reliance and self-assistance with regard to helping the disabled, through organizations and private individuals. A number of projects have been put into effect in this regard: a project for the protection of physically disabled persons; a project by the Union of the Blind involving a home and a workshop for the training of the blind; a project involving the mentally retarded; a project for the victims of misfortune, and a project for the establishment of a school for the mentally retarded in the town of Atbara. These projects, which were drawn up on the basis of self-reliance, are supervised by a number of associations working with disabled persons such as the Association for the Protection of the Blind, the Union of the Blind, the Association for Deaf-Mutes, and the "Broad Perspectives" Association.

308. Since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 31/123, my delegation has closely followed and taken part in the preparation of all the measures and arrangements relating to the proclamation of the International Year of Disabled Persons, with its theme "Full participation and equality". In our opinion, this Year is just the beginning of international efforts to provide the fullest possible assistance to the disabled in various parts of the

world, assistance that will guarantee them a decent standard of living and endorse their legitimate right to full participation in everyday life. The disabled person, in spite of his disability, is a human being entitled to a normal life, and the international community cannot ignore the condition of those who, according to estimates, constitute about 10 per cent of the world population.

309. My country has fully responded to the objectives of the International Year of Disabled Persons. In so doing we have set up a national committee, presided over by the Minister of Health and the Office of the National Council for Social Welfare. The Committee includes representatives of each national organization.

310. As part of the observance of the International Year of Disabled Persons the National Committee has drawn up a programme, consistent with the country's means, divided into two parts. The first involves supporting and consolidating efforts now being made for the benefit of the disabled. We are doing this by seeking to improve existing institutions and training their staff. The second part involves the implementation of projects, the most important of which involve: drawing up statistics on the disabled within the framework of the national population statistics programme for the Sudan, to be carried out in 1982, which will shed much useful scientific light on the problem and help in finding solutions; setting up a centre for the early detection of disabilities in order to assess their nature and extent; the establishment of regional centres for physically disabled persons, an institute for the blind in the area of the Jor River in Bahr El Ghazal province where river blindness is a common condition, an institute in the town of Soba for the training of disabled persons, and an institute for the education of the blind in Khartoum; the constitution of new associations and commissions to help the disabled, with the participation of the disabled themselves; and the mobilization of the efforts of benevolent associations and individuals to help the National Committee in carrying out its programmes and contacts with the national committees of friendly, brother countries to co-ordinate and receive aid. We also need to inform public opinion in the Sudan about the problems of the disabled and arrange for representatives to be sent to conferences and seminars on the subject of the disabled held by the League of Arab States, the OAU, and the United Nations.

311. We are fully persuaded of the merits of the objectives of the International Year of Disabled Persons and, in solidarity with the principle of international assistance, the Sudan, despite its limited resources and capacity, has made a symbolic contribution to the United Nations Trust Fund for the International Year of Disabled Persons of \$US 10,000, to express our support of the need to study the problems of the disabled throughout the world.

312. My delegation calls upon all Member States to work even harder towards the full participation of the disabled and to meet the noble objectives of the International Year of Disabled Persons at the international, regional and national levels. In this respect, we wish to emphasize the need to consolidate and strengthen co-operation between the developed and developing countries, especially in technical matters relating to training and education for those working on behalf of the disabled, and to provide whatever is needed to train them.

313. My delegation firmly endorses the recommendation for the establishment of an international institute for rehabilitation, which would enhance international co-opera-

tion and assistance on the subject. We hope that the institute's programme will be addressed in particular to the needs of the developing countries. We would also hope that UNDP would participate in co-operation with the institutions concerned, in strengthening the role of the national committees and associations in various parts of the world and helping them meet their obligations to the disabled, to relieve their suffering and bring them more fully into everyday life.

314. Mr. FRANCIS (New Zealand): Preparations for the International Year of Disabled Persons have brought to light many disturbing facts about the nature and extent of disability in the world and, more importantly, have provided a vehicle by which the international community might set in motion basic changes in that situation.

315. We have a better idea now of the substantial number of people affected by physical and mental disabilities around the world, and of the scale of the effort, national and international, that will be needed to deal with the problem. It has become evident that the problems of disabled people must be of concern to all of us, not just because we have obligations to the disabled themselves, but because it is in the interests of every country that the disabled should have every opportunity to develop their potential and abilities and to participate to the fullest extent possible in the life of the societies of which they are members. The theme of the International Year of Disabled Persons "Full participation and equality" thus strikes a note that will be apt long after the Year itself is over.

316. New Zealand fully supports the International Year of Disabled Persons and in particular the focus that the United Nations has been placing, through its preparations and the celebration of the Year, on the need to facilitate the full participation of disabled people in the communities in which they live. We consider it important that the new directions in thinking about the disabled and their role in society which have been stimulated by the Year should not be dissipated but should be consolidated into a long-term programme of action, which will be a blueprint for social change.

317. We therefore welcome the report of the Advisory Committee for the International Year, which contains the draft World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. This is a comprehensive document, reflecting the most important preoccupations of countries of all regions and at all levels of development.

318. While New Zealand will in due course submit its formal comments on the draft Programme, my delegation is encouraged, on the basis of a preliminary reading, to note the realism and flexibility of its expectations in relation to the rate of its implementation by different countries. A certain amount can be achieved at the global level in terms of the social change required to improve the situation of disabled people. This should certainly not be overlooked, particularly in an area like technical co-operation. However, New Zealand considers that the most significant changes take place at the national level, and even at the local level of the community.

319. New Zealand supported the Plan of Action for the International Year prepared by the Advisory Committee at its first session. A national committee, chaired by Ms. Ann Ballin, a woman who is herself disabled, was established early in 1980 to co-ordinate activities for the Year. That Committee established groups to examine a range of

topics of particular concern to the disabled and is backed up by regional groups, whose role is to develop projects and activities at the local level. Activities for the year have been structured to focus attention for a two-month period on each of the topics. They are recreation and sport, access, accommodation and mobility, education and welfare, legislation and income, employment, and prevention and rehabilitation.

320. The efforts of the National Committee have been supplemented and broadened by the activities of non-governmental organizations. Always a dynamic force in the implementation of community projects in New Zealand, those organizations have once again been a source of ideas, energy and resources, ensuring that the Year would have an impact greater than could have been achieved by the national authorities alone.

321. The International Year has received enthusiastic support and involvement from the disabled in New Zealand and from the public as a whole. One example of participation by disabled people was the holding, during the period when recreation and sport were being highlighted, of a marathon relay which involved all regions and culminated in the presentation of a submission to Parliament by the participants.

322. The most notable demonstration of the strong public support for the Year was undoubtedly the Telethon Appeal. This is an annual 24-hour-long television fund-raising promotion, the proceeds of which are awarded to different causes—this year to the International Year. The Appeal, which took place in June, raised over \$5 million, a very significant sum for a country with a total population of not much more than 3 million. The National Committee for the Year has identified priority projects for funding from Telethon proceeds. These include projects in training and research, information, the provision of aids to the disabled, the promotion of public awareness, and assistance to disabled persons outside New Zealand, particularly in the Pacific region. These priorities, like the areas of focus identified by the National Committee, accord closely with the objectives and priorities elaborated in the draft World Programme of Action.

323. The United Nations has an important part to play in giving impetus to the integration of the disabled into programmes for social and economic change. This is a complex undertaking. It requires attention to the many causes of disability and to the many ways in which society denies itself the full value of the resource represented by a tenth of its number. It requires that we seek ways of reversing that situation, as part of the overall process of development, and of ensuring that all members of every community are able to contribute and participate to the fullest extent of their capabilities. In another aspect, it requires new ideas and techniques regarding disability prevention and rehabilitation.

324. In all those considerations and many more, we look to the United Nations to co-ordinate the programme for the disabled with programmes for other special sectors, such as the elderly, children, youth, refugees, and women. Next year, for instance, we have the World Assembly on Aging which we hope will, among other things, draw attention to the problem of the disabilities associated with aging.

325. The tasks of the United Nations, the specialized agencies and the regional commissions in this respect will be demanding. The report of the Secretary-General has

shown how broad the range of activities being undertaken or planned within the United Nations family is already. And attention is drawn in that report, as in the draft World Programme of Action, to the need for policies for the disabled to be seen in the context of overall economic and social development. Similarly, the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade stresses the need for integration of the disabled in the development process and for effective measures for prevention, rehabilitation and equalization of opportunity. All this is valuable, not only in placing the needs and priorities of the disabled in the perspective of national, social and economic development and of the expectations of international society, but in demonstrating the requirement—a requirement that will only become more evident with the passage of time and the intensification of effort at the international level—for effective and rational co-ordination among all the agencies, organs and bodies concerned.

326. In the era of change in which we live, the millions of disabled people among us, while recognized as one sector and having special needs, must be seen essentially as being like all other people, striving to meet the challenges of this age in the building of a world of maximum productivity and creativity. Through the Organization, we are made aware of the complexity of the challenge posed by the celebration of the International Year of Disabled Persons and through it, we have the best opportunity of meeting that challenge internationally.

327. Mr. NG'ENY (Kenya): As we reported to the General Assembly at the 41st meeting of the Third Committee at the thirty-fifth session, Kenya declared 1980 as the National Year for Disabled Persons. During that year, various activities and initiatives were undertaken. Old projects for the disabled were reviewed, new ones were identified and plans for their future implementation were made, based on past experience.

328. The year 1981, which has been the International Year of Disabled Persons, has therefore been for us a year of action and implementation of some of the programmes which had already been identified.

329. At the official inauguration of the International Year of Disabled Persons, on 24 March 1981, President Daniel Arap Moi commended the National Rehabilitation Committee, which had been working on the preparations for the International Year of Disabled Persons. The Kenyan President also paid a tribute to, and recognized, the voluntary efforts and contributions of many persons and institutions without whose active participation the National as well as the International Year of Disabled Persons could not have been such a great success. Additionally, the following institutions, among others, were also recognized and commended: the National Committee of Trustees, which was set up in October 1980; the Kenya Society for the Blind; the Kenya Society for the Deaf; the Kenya Society for the Physically and Mentally Handicapped; religious organizations; Lions Clubs, Rotary Clubs; round tables; the Red Cross; and United Nations agencies resident in Kenya. The National Rehabilitation Committee, which co-ordinates all these groups, was urged to work hard to improve and expand the facilities available in the field of vocational rehabilitation programmes and centres to enhance the rapid improvement of the welfare of our disabled persons.

330. Besides supporting the work of the Advisory Committee of the International Year of Disabled Persons on

the draft World Programme of Action, my Government continues to prepare and implement its own action programmes for disabled persons. All the plans that had been identified in the past by the Organizing Committee, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Social Services are already being highlighted. These programmes in the main are aimed at integrating disabled persons into our society and assisting them to decide and shape their own destinies as far as possible. In this regard different Government ministries have been called upon to evolve programmes for disabled persons in order to increase their participation in the social and economic activities of the nation.

331. A move to educate the Kenyan public on the plight of the disabled has also been organized and is being carried out. The Ministry of Economic Planning and that of Culture and Social Services, in collaboration with the Institute for Development Studies of the University of Nairobi, have been entrusted with various research projects on the number of disabled persons and the categories of their disability. It is our belief that the reports emanating from this research will lead to the preparation of more meaningful plans and programmes for the benefit of disabled persons.

332. Another positive move, which deserves mention here, is the plan to waive customs duty on all orthopaedic aids and other equipment required for use by disabled persons or for their benefit.

333. It is our conviction that these programmes designed for disabled persons will not only help to raise their standard of living but also act as an incentive and encourage them to work harder for the benefit of the whole community.

334. So far the response from disabled persons themselves has been very impressive and encouraging. They have publicly shown their abilities in various activities, including sports. Their dedication and determination have been tremendous.

335. Kenya realizes that the rehabilitation of disabled persons is a continuous process. For this reason, my President appealed, in his launching speech, to the United Nations and the international community as a whole to declare the 1980's the International Year of Disabled Persons.

336. I am therefore encouraged to note that in operative paragraph 6 of the draft resolution submitted by the Third Committee the Assembly would request the Advisory Committee to consider the advisability of proclaiming the period 1983-1992 the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons.

337. My President also proposed the formulation of a rehabilitation programme and the establishment of a special United Nations agency for the supervision of the implementation of that programme.

338. Kenya therefore notes with satisfaction and supports the request made to the Secretary-General, in the same draft resolution, to convene a meeting of the Advisory Committee in 1982 to finalize the draft World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, with a view to its adoption at the thirty-seventh session.

339. My Government supports all these proposals, on the understanding and in the belief that this is not too

much to request on behalf of a sector of society that for many years has been denied full participation in the normal activities of society.

340. I should like to take this opportunity to record our sincere gratitude to Mrs. Shahani, the Special Representative, and her staff, for their work and the dedication they have shown in making the Year a success. I wish to assure them of my Government's full co-operation and support in their future activities in this field.

341. I wish also to take this opportunity to thank UNDP most sincerely for the assistance it has continued to give, through its office in Nairobi, to my Government in this field and to convey our greatest appreciation to the Secretary-General for his contribution to the success of the International Year of Disabled Persons.

342. Finally, I wish to assure members once more that Kenya will always be ready to co-operate with the international community in its efforts to alleviate the suffering of disabled persons and to improve their lot by making the rest of society accept them and help them find a suitable position and role in society.

343. Mr. RÁCZ (Hungary) (*interpretation from French*): The delegation of Hungary is taking the floor in this debate on the one hand to emphasize the capital importance we attach to the International Year of Disabled Persons and on the other to illustrate the efforts made by my country to ensure the achievement of the objectives of the Year.

344. The report of the Secretary-General on national, regional and international activities and the report of the Advisory Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons on its third session, which Hungary attended as an observer, reflect the considerable response and enthusiasm of the international community with regard to the United Nations decision to proclaim 1981 the International Year of Disabled Persons, with particular emphasis on the full participation and equality of disabled persons in our societies.

345. At the outset I should like to emphasize that for us this question, which has social, humanitarian and economic content is intimately involved with a highly political question: the maintenance of peace. In Hungary, memories of the Second World War still haunt us every day in the persons of those who suffered injuries of all kinds during that war and who have had to be rehabilitated and become full members of our society again. Let us not underestimate the major physical and psychological problems which this segment of the population has to overcome. Above all, let us not lose sight of the prime responsibility we have assumed under the Charter of the United Nations and other major instruments to maintain peace and to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, the source of so much unhappiness and human suffering. The disabled victims of military conflicts who live among us are so many warnings that, if we forget the commitment that we have entered into willingly, the consequences this time might prove fatal.

346. Hungary is taking an active part in the efforts to achieve the objectives underlying the draft World Programme of Action concerning Disabled People. In the summer of 1980 the Hungarian National Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons was set up, with the participation of representatives from governmental and civic organizations. The Committee set the goals

of its national activity with a view to giving practical effect to the objectives of the International Year. It called upon interested organizations to draw up specific plans of action, launched an appeal to the people of the country and drew up an overall national programme. The appeal the Committee launched in December 1980 was heard, thanks to the press, radio and television, by the entire Hungarian population.

347. The main goal of the overall national programme is to enable everyone to realize what it means to be a disabled person and what society and individuals can do to help solve the problems involved.

348. In the framework of activities related to the disabled, new measures were adopted in my country in 1980 to improve living conditions for disabled persons. Those measures include free petrol coupons, a 60 per cent increase in benefits for families with handicapped children or children suffering from chronic diseases, and the compensatory payment of the full average wage to those suffering from work-related accidents or occupational diseases.

349. Since the National Committee's appeal to the Hungarian population, the interest shown by various segments of society and the initiatives and creative energy devoted to improving the situation of the disabled have increased to a remarkable degree. The measures taken at the governmental level have been complemented by specific steps taken by various enterprises, co-operatives, work units and individuals designed, *inter alia*, to produce the equipment necessary for the disabled, to introduce various social allocations for their benefit and to expand the cultural and sporting opportunities accessible to them.

350. The Fifth Congress of the Hungarian Society for Rehabilitation, which was attended by a number of foreign and Hungarian participants, marked the beginning of activities for the International Year. The Hungarian Red Cross celebrated its centenary in 1981, and meetings held on that occasion also dealt with questions relating to the disabled. On the basis of the positive experience acquired in preceding years, a number of civic organizations banded together to organize once again a Week of the Disabled. On 18 September a Day of the Disabled was observed. Other measures have been implemented with regard to leave and holidays, special parking facilities for the disabled, the provision of free vouchers to facilitate tourist activities by the disabled, special shops for the disabled, art exhibitions, the showing of documentaries and special radio and television broadcasts. With regard to television, in January this year the Hungarian television service began to broadcast a monthly programme devoted to the problems of the disabled. In addition, several films have been made to illustrate the situation of invalids and disabled persons.

351. The various organizations of disabled persons are working actively to contribute to the solution of the problems faced by their members, as well as by society as a whole.

352. The International Year initiated a vast exchange of information and experience between various countries and concerned organizations, which should continue well beyond the end of the Year. Hungary participated in the European regional seminar on the International Year of Disabled Persons held at Siilinjärvi, Finland, last summer, and we intend to contribute to the extent possible to the further strengthening of that flow of exchanges for the

benefit of the disabled in the developed as well as in the developing countries.

353. It goes without saying that in the course of this statement it has not been possible to do more than sketch out the broad general lines of what has been done in Hungary to contribute to the achievement of the noble objectives of the International Year.

354. In our opinion, national actions should constitute the basis of the programme for the International Year, for it is within the national framework that the specific and special requirements of the disabled in various countries can best be examined. At the same time, it is highly important to co-ordinate effectively the many efforts being made at the national, regional and international levels by Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and to draw practical conclusions in order that those members of the world population, and there are many of them, who, by reason of their physical or mental state, must make an additional effort to participate in community life can do so with the maximum assistance and understanding of our societies. It is obvious that such action must be long-term and that it must be carried forward in the future. This work must be an integral part of everyday life, and Hungary is prepared to support the praiseworthy efforts of the United Nations in this direction.

355. Mr. CHUGHTAI (Pakistan): As 1981, designated the International Year of Disabled Persons, draws to a close we must look back and make a realistic appraisal of our endeavours to achieve the objectives that were set for the Year in General Assembly resolution 31/123. This is also a time for looking ahead in order to determine, in the light of experience gained during 1981, what remains to be done to carry forward the momentum of the efforts initiated this year.

356. We have read with interest the report of the Secretary-General, which puts into perspective the efforts made at the national, regional and international levels to ensure the attainment of the objectives of the International Year of Disabled Persons, under its theme "Full participation and equality".

357. At the national level, one of the most encouraging and positive developments during the Year has been the establishment by 125 countries of national committees entrusted with the responsibility of organizing activities aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of disabled persons and making available to them opportunities that will ensure their increased participation and integration in the society, as well as the adoption of measures with regard to disability prevention, rehabilitation and so on. This development reflects the awareness and determination with which nations have embarked upon a programme of action for the achievement of the objectives of the International Year.

358. In Pakistan, the culminating point of the activities undertaken in this regard during the current year will be the holding, later this month at Islamabad, of the National Conference on Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation: a Community-Based Strategy. The Pakistani National Committee has made untiring endeavours to spread the message of the International Year of Disabled Persons to all sections of the population, through public meetings, seminars, workshops and conferences. On the one hand, its efforts have been aimed at educating public opinion and on the other at solving the problems of the disabled.

Some of the special features of these activities are as follows: the training of workers and teachers for the institutions and centres for social welfare and rehabilitation of disabled persons, with the technical assistance and consultation of foreign experts; the establishment of four model centres for the social welfare and rehabilitation of the disabled, one each for the deaf, the blind, the physically disabled and the mentally retarded; technical assistance provided by the United Nations, WHO and the secretariat of the International Year of Disabled Persons, and under bilateral arrangements; the formulation of specific plans and programmes for the revitalization of existing services, equipment, buildings and curricula, and the establishment of training institutions for teachers and workers and of new centres and institutions, including integrated workshops for the disabled; the integration of disabled children in normal schools and work centres; the promulgation of the Employment of Disabled Persons Ordinance, 1981 enjoining government and non-governmental establishments to draw at least 1 per cent of their total workforce from among disabled persons of all categories; and the involvement of disabled persons in the policy-making, planning, organization and administration of services for disabled persons.

359. We believe that as a result of the determined efforts of the Government of Pakistan we have been able to create a positive, constructive and progressive atmosphere for the social welfare and rehabilitation of disabled persons in our country. For a developing country like mine this has not been an easy task. The World Symposium of Experts on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries and Technical Assistance in Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation, held at Vienna in October this year, rightly pointed out that the developing nations, for a variety of reasons, are the ones which are confronted with a larger share of disability problems. It also indicated the possibility, unless appropriate action is taken, of a sharp increase in the disabled population. The upsurge of national activity reported by so many countries has come at a most opportune time. It is essential for the United Nations to continue—indeed, to strengthen and expand—its positive role in regard to technical co-operation activities, especially in developing countries, for the prevention of disability and the rehabilitation and integration of the disabled in their societies, with emphasis on the need to develop and strengthen indigenous capacities and capabilities.

360. This is the spirit and sentiment of the draft resolution on the International Year of Disabled Persons recommended by the Third Committee in its report. We are confident that its adoption by the General Assembly will go a long way towards enabling nations and relevant organizations effectively to face the challenge before them.

361. After hearing the statements made in the General Assembly, and after examining the conclusions and recommendations of the World Symposium [see A/36/471/Add.3] and the World Conference on Actions and Strategies on Education, Disability Prevention and Integration of Disabled Persons, held at Torremolinos last November [see A/36/766], we are confident that, given our determination and commitment, we will be able to carry forward our efforts for the full implementation of the objectives of the International Year of Disabled Persons.

362. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): On this special occasion the Permanent Observer for the Holy See has requested to make a statement. I take it that there

is no objection to that request. I call on the Permanent Observer for the Holy See.

363. Archbishop CHELI (Holy See): From the very beginning, the Holy See received favourably the United Nations initiative of proclaiming 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons. These persons deserve the practical concern of the world community, both by reason of their numbers—it is calculated that they exceed 400 million—and, especially, by reason of their particular human and social condition. In this noble enterprise, therefore, the Church could not fail to show its caring and watchful solicitude, for by its very nature, vocation and mission it has particularly at heart the lives of the weakest and most sorely-trying brothers and sisters.

364. For this reason, the Church has followed with close attention everything that has been done up to the present time on behalf of the disabled on the legislative level, both national and international. Worthy of note in this regard are the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons and the Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons, as well as the progress and future prospects of scientific and social research and the new proposals and initiatives of various sorts now being developed in this area. These initiatives show a renewed awareness of the duty of solidarity in this specific field of human suffering. Also to be borne in mind is the fact that in third world countries the lot of the disabled is even more grave and calls for closer attention and more careful consideration.

365. It is in this spirit that the Holy See, while expressing its gratitude and encouragement for what has been done by those responsible for the common good, by the international organizations and by all those who work for the handicapped, considers it useful to recall briefly a few principles that may be helpful in dealing with the disabled, and also to suggest some practical points.

366. The first principle, which is one that must be stated clearly and firmly, is that the disabled person, whether the disability be the result of a congenital handicap, chronic illness or accident, or of mental or physical deficiency, and whatever the severity of the disability, is fully a human being, with the corresponding innate, sacred and inviolable rights. This statement is based upon the firm recognition of the fact that a human being possesses a unique dignity and an independent value from the moment of conception and in every stage of development, whatever his or her physical condition. This principle, which stems from the conscience of humanity, must be made the inviolable basis of legislation and society.

367. Paragraph 3 of the Declaration of the Rights of Disabled Persons, contained in resolution 3447 (XXX), states:

“Disabled persons have the inherent right to respect for their human dignity. Disabled persons, whatever the origin, nature and seriousness of their handicaps and disabilities, have the same fundamental rights as their fellow-citizens of the same age, which implies first and foremost the right to enjoy a decent life, as normal and full as possible.”

It must be clearly affirmed that a disabled person is one of us, a sharer in the same humanity. By recognizing and promoting that person's dignity and rights, we are recognizing and promoting our own dignity and our own rights.

368. The fundamental approach to the problems connected with the sharing by the disabled in the life of society must be inspired by the principles of integration, normalization and personalization. The principle of integration opposes the tendency to isolate, segregate and neglect the disabled, but it also goes further than an attitude of mere tolerance: it includes a commitment to make the disabled person a participant in the fullest sense, in accordance with his or her capacities, in the spheres of family life, the school and employment and, more generally, in the social, political and religious communities.

369. From this derives, logically, the principle of normalization, which involves an effort to ensure the complete rehabilitation of the disabled person, using all means and techniques now available, and, where this proves impossible, the achievement of living and working conditions that resemble as much as possible, the normal environment.

370. Furthermore, the principle of personalization emphasizes that in various forms of treatment, as also in the various educational and social means employed to eliminate handicaps, it is always the dignity, welfare and total development of the handicapped person, in all his or her dimensions and physical, moral and spiritual faculties, that must be primarily considered, protected and promoted. This principle also signifies and involves the elimination of the collectivized and anonymous institutions to which the disabled are sometimes relegated.

371. We cannot but hope that such statements as those of the Declaration will be given full recognition in the international and in national communities, avoiding limiting interpretations, arbitrary exceptions and perhaps even unethical applications which end by emptying the statements of meaning and importance.

372. Developments in science and medicine have enabled us today to discover defects in the foetus which can give rise to future malformations and deficiencies. The impossibility at present of providing a remedy for them by medical means has led some to propose and even to practise the suppression of the foetus. One cannot at whim, dispose of human life by claiming an arbitrary power over it. Medicine loses its title of nobility when, instead of attacking disease, it attacks life; in fact, prevention should be against illness, not against life. One can never claim that one wishes to bring comfort to a family by suppressing one of its members. The respect, the dedication, the time and means required for the care of handicapped persons, even of those whose mental faculties are gravely affected, is the price that a society should generously pay in order to remain truly human.

373. A consequence of clear affirmation of this point is the duty to undertake more extensive and thorough research in order to overcome the causes of disabilities. Certainly, much has been done in recent years in this field, but much more remains to be done. Scientists have the noble task of placing their skill and their studies at the service of bettering the quality and defence of human life. Present developments in the fields of genetics, foetology, perinatology, biochemistry and neurology, to mention only some disciplines, permits us to foster the hope of notable progress. A unified effort of research will not fail, it is hoped, to achieve encouraging results in the not too distant future.

374. The Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons enumerates, apart from the right to appropriate medical treatment, other rights which have as their objective the most complete possible integration or reintegration into society. Such rights have very wide repercussions on the whole range of services which exist at present or which must be developed, among which might be mentioned the organization of an adequate educational system, responsible professional training, counselling services and appropriate work. One point seems to merit particular attention. The Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons affirms that disabled persons "have the right to live with their families or with foster parents". It is extremely important that this right be put into effect.

375. The observance of the International Year of Disabled Persons, therefore, offers a favourable opportunity for a more precise overall reconsideration of the situation, of the problems and of the requirements of millions of those who make up the human family, particularly in the third world. It is important that this opportunity not be allowed to go unused. With the contribution of science and all levels of society, it should lead to a better understanding of the disabled and of their dignity and rights; and, above all, it should foster sincere and active love for every human being in his or her uniqueness and concrete situation.

376. Celebrating the Day of Peace at the beginning of this year, His Holiness John Paul II mentioned publicly in the Vatican Basilica the initiatives of the International Year of Disabled Persons and called for special attention to solving their serious problems. He said then: "If only a minimum part of the budget for the arms race were assigned for this purpose, important successes could be achieved and the fate of many suffering persons alleviated"

377. It is to be hoped that international institutions, public powers in individual nations and within the United Nations system, research agencies, non-governmental organizations and private foundations will increasingly foster research in the field of prevention and rehabilitation and allot the necessary funds for it.

378. In conclusion, the Holy See reiterates its support for the objectives of the International Year of Disabled Persons and the long-term programme of action and wishes to contribute to their implementation with personnel and resources, especially through those of its institutions that devote themselves to providing education and professional training.

379. We stand side by side with our brothers and sisters in all organizations in order to foster, support and increase initiatives capable of alleviating the situation of the suffering and integrating them harmoniously into the mainstream of the social, cultural and spiritual life of the human community.

380. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): I call now on the Permanent Observer for the Palestine Liberation Organization [PLO], in accordance with General Assembly resolution 3237 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974.

381. Ms. LUGHOUD (Palestine Liberation Organization): It is for me and for my delegation a great honour to be permitted to address the General Assembly on this occasion in recognition and commemoration of this special year, the International Year of Disabled Persons.

382. The observation has been made during this debate on the International Year of Disabled Persons that there are over 500 million disabled persons, with 400 million to be found in the developing countries. Among our own population, the Palestinian population, there is a staggering proportion of disabled persons. Our priority attention to these disabled persons long antedates the international attention which was formalized in General Assembly resolution 31/123 and has been promoted in this very successful year. The survival of our people depends on adequate services for our handicapped, who now comprise a substantial proportion of our population.

383. What is different about our disabled is that they are not so much disabled because of disease, malnutrition or natural causes; they are disabled because they are Palestinians and as such are targets of Israeli terrorism. Let us look at just one day in our history this year, 17 July 1981. Without any forewarning, five waves of Israeli aircraft screamed over Beirut, blasting residential quarters for over half an hour with 2,000-pound bombs and rockets. At least six large apartment houses were toppled and 17 others partially destroyed. Simultaneous attacks were launched against civilian populations in Damour, Nabatieh, Sidon, Tyre and Hasbaya and the Zahrani oil refinery. The toll at the end of the day was over 300 murdered and over 800 wounded, and many will be permanently disabled. These are unnecessary disabilities, but unfortunately it is not within our power to prevent them. What we are able to do, we do to the maximum of our ability. And with the continuing aid and solidarity of our friends and the United Nations agencies we shall continue to provide for our thousands of disabled persons.

384. Since 1968 agencies within the PLO have been involved in the rehabilitation of the victims of Israeli aggression. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society runs over 30 hospitals and 100 clinics, which provide medical care in all areas where the Palestinian population is concentrated. In 1970, with the sum of 100 Lebanese pounds, or \$US 35, the Ramleh Centre for Rehabilitation was founded. Here the guiding principle is that the wounded person who has been rehabilitated is at the service of the wounded person who is infirm. Thus, the disabled are treated and reintegrated in a truly meaningful way. At Ramleh, there is equipment for rehabilitation and electrical treatment. There is a factory for making medical footwear for polio victims, a swimming pool for handicapped children and, most important, a factory for making artificial limbs, which, owing to the escalation of bombardments, has had to maximize its production.

385. We are proud of the strength shown by the victims, who have adjusted to the use of artificial limbs, and we have succeeded in giving them new hope. In our Samed workshops, some of which were damaged during the last series of bombardments, our disabled are engaged in the production of furniture, foodstuffs, handicrafts and clothing. Many of the disabled teach more recent victims necessary technical skills.

386. The Palestine Society for the Blind, also linked to the PLO, sponsors over 300 blind people, and with more financing we can found new centres in Syria. Blind people occupy two thirds of the seats on the administrative board and they provide families with food and clothing and money for schools and books. Blind workers learn Braille and technical trades. They also play musical instruments. The same society aids the mentally handicapped.

387. It is our duty and an honour to take care of our disabled, regardless of the cause of their disability. When a family can take care of the disabled, the PLO, through its organizations, will do its best to alleviate some of the social and financial burdens that this situation may present. But many of our disabled persons have a second handicap and suffer a second tragedy. These acts of aggression have succeeded in making many disabled children orphans also. The PLO has established homes for the children of martyrs and sees to it that these unfortunate ones can go to school, receive health care and eventually be employed. Because of the brotherly feelings the Palestinian people have for each other it is unnecessary to remind them that disabled people have dignity and rights. In almost every home there is someone who suffers from an unnecessary and unnatural disability and this serves as a constant reminder of our struggle.

388. But natural causes of disability have also been an area of concern for the PLO. These can best be prevented through the development of public health programmes. Since 1968 we have been involved in preventing the spread of debilitating diseases, which are a real threat given the appalling sanitary conditions in the camps, and the population density. Our vaccination campaigns have succeeded to the extent that there has not been one epidemic in any of our camps in recent years. Our medical centres, with the invaluable aid of the United Nations agencies and friendly countries, have organized campaigns to collect rubbish, eliminate rats, sterilize water and eradicate insects. This is necessary to prevent disease and its accompanying disabilities.

389. In recognition of this Year, we have increased international awareness of both our struggle and the services that we provide to our war-disabled. A photographic show, which was on exhibition in the lobby of the General Assembly building, graphically exposes the real horror of war and colourfully depicts the road to recovery of the disabled. We have displayed this exhibit widely and believe that with maximum exposure we will increase the world's sensitivity to our problems and motivate it to support our struggle.

390. None of this progress with respect to our thousands of disabled persons, innocent victims of terrorism, of air raids, of cluster-bombs and other anti-personnel weaponry banned by the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, would have been possible without the generous aid of the peace-loving countries. We are thankful to those United Nations agencies which have facilitated our work and which have been co-operative regarding our needs, and understanding of and sympathetic to our desires. I believe it is necessary that priority be established for continuing and increasing aid to victims of war and indiscriminate and grievous attacks on civilian populations. The PLO is doing its best to provide aid to our disabled, but daily the number of our disabled increases. It is incumbent upon us, with the aid and co-operation of the United Nations agencies, to continue our truly humanitarian task of promoting our programmes for reintegrating our disabled.

391. But I remind the Assembly that none of this progress with respect to our thousands of disabled would have been necessary if we, united with the countries represented here, could have prevented this relentless barbaric aggression of the Israelis.

392. In conclusion, I reiterate our desire that priority be established for providing help to the victims of war, with a view to establishing peace in our region of the world

and in all strife-ridden regions, so that we may soon be able to prevent further unnatural disabilities and increase measures for the prevention of natural ones.

393. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): In accordance with the decision adopted by the General Assembly at its 4th plenary meeting, on 18 September 1981, I now call on the representative of the International Labour Organisation.

394. Mr. ADOSSAMA (International Labour Organisation) (*interpretation from French*): It is a great privilege for me to address the Assembly and to take part in this event, the great significance of which demonstrates the interest and compassion of the international community concerning the disabled.

395. First of all, I wish to express to the President the gratitude of the Director-General of the ILO, Mr. Francis Blanchard, and his sincere thanks for the kind invitation addressed to him to speak to the General Assembly on the topic now under consideration. The Director-General could not himself take up the invitation because of a prior engagement, but he asked me to apologize and to inform the Assembly of what has been done by the ILO and of its programme of action for the years to come concerning the disabled.

396. It is a pleasure to congratulate the President on the great dignity and effectiveness with which he is conducting the business of the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly. My congratulations also go to the members of the General Committee and to the Secretary-General and his colleagues on their positive contribution to the development of the discussions.

397. With respect to the International Year of Disabled Persons, it is incumbent upon me to say how much the ILO welcomes the excellent co-operation it enjoys with the United Nations Secretariat for the effective implementation of the Plan of Action for the prevention of disability and to ensure rehabilitation. I wish to pay a special tribute to Mrs. Shahani, Assistant Secretary-General for Social and Humanitarian Affairs, for her efforts to ensure the attainment of the objectives of the International Year of Disabled Persons.

398. My organization is pleased that it has been able to participate actively in all the meetings held so far and in the practical activities undertaken within the framework of the Plan of Action for assistance to the disabled. In the introduction to the report entitled *Vocational Rehabilitation* to be submitted in 1982 at the 68th session of the International Labour Conference, the ILO points out that:

“The International Year of Disabled Persons (1981) has stimulated world-wide interest in the subject of the vocational rehabilitation of disabled persons. That interest is being shown at a time when persons with a disability are seeking to have their say in decisions, at a time when many industrial countries which are suffering from high unemployment are seeking new ways of creating job opportunities, when the third world countries, wishing to grant high priority to social and rural development programmes and unable to bear the cost of complex institutionalized services are seeking other ways of ensuring the vocational rehabilitation of their disabled by relying on the community or in the context of a general development plan. . .”.

The 1982 session of the International Labour Conference will be regarded as the first discussion of an international instrument, with a view to its adoption in 1983.

399. That report contains a questionnaire in which Governments are invited to reply to questions concerning, in particular: the safeguarding, creation and expansion of job opportunities for the disabled; the participation of the national community in the organization of vocational rehabilitation services, including the disabled themselves; vocational rehabilitation of the disabled in the rural areas; the training of staff who, like social workers, teachers and medical and paramedical workers; should deal with the social and vocational reintegration of the disabled; the contribution of employers' and workers' organizations to the development of vocational rehabilitation services; vocational rehabilitation in terms of social security systems; the co-ordination of policies and programmes concerning vocational rehabilitation; the study of national legislation on assistance to the disabled.

400. As was stressed by the Director-General of the ILO in his report at the 67th session, in June 1981, of the International Labour Conference, the importance of the problem of vocational rehabilitation escapes many observers, who often regard with scepticism the figure of a minimum of 450 million disabled persons in the world. The growing concern of Governments, employers and workers also led not only to the adoption of Resolution No. 4 concerning the disabled, at the 65th session of the International Labour Conference in 1979, but also to discussions in the Governing Body of the ILO on the need to bring up to date Recommendation No. 99 on the vocational rehabilitation of the disabled, adopted in 1955, on the one hand, and on the role of the ILO in the efforts to achieve the objectives of the International Year of Disabled Persons under the theme "Full participation and equality".

401. As the Director-General recalled in his report, no organization is better placed than the ILO to help achieve the five main objectives of the International Year of Disabled Persons.

402. The occupational rehabilitation services should provide people suffering from some form of disability with a basis from which he or she can gain independence, both socially and economically, with the self-respect and dignity which flow therefrom. Recommendation No. 99 of the ILO points out that the vocational rehabilitation services should be made available to any disabled person, regardless of the nature or origin of his or her disability. The right of a disabled person to employment is enshrined in the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons, adopted in 1975 by the General Assembly, but declarations in themselves are not enough. We must find the political will and the means to implement those ideas if the aims of the International Year are to be fully achieved.

403. I should like to assure the Assembly that the ILO will make every effort to take an active part in the implementation of the Programme of Action submitted to the General Assembly for adoption. The contribution of the ILO to vocational rehabilitation of the disabled does not date from today. The first initiative in that regard goes back to 1921 when the first report on the various ways of dealing with the legal obligation to provide employment for the war-disabled was adopted. That was followed in 1923 by the convening of a meeting of experts at Geneva responsible for studying the means of integrating disabled persons into professional or occupational life.

404. The International Labour Conference adopted several resolutions in 1965, 1968, 1975 and 1979 pursuant to which the Conference has constantly called upon public authorities and employer and labour organizations to give disabled and handicapped persons every opportunity of securing, doing and retaining a suitable job.

405. The disabled today are more and more aware of the need to meet one another, to speak freely about their difficulties and to find ways of managing their own lives. They wish to take part, on an equal footing with the non-disabled, in the life of society, and they have a right to do so. As has been stated by the Director of Rehabilitation of the State of California, who is himself severely disabled:

"To guarantee the right to equal opportunity we have had to release disabled persons from the condescending attitude of a society ready to discard them. In the last 10 years we have done a great deal to destroy the myth of weakness or disease among persons suffering from some form of disability. We must help others to understand that being a disabled person is not a calamity in itself, and that disabled people can lead active lives that are worth living. We can bring about a change in outlook and attitude, and this is only a part of our task. As in the past, we will meet with strong resistance. We will be shown cost figures to prove that segregation may be less expensive, but that kind of argument we know, will not stand up to close analysis.

"We know that an integrated society's contribution to self-esteem cannot be measured in dollars. Above all, we know that the disabled will no longer agree to live in a society which rejects them."

406. Particular attention should be paid to the situation of disabled women, who make up at least one third—150 million—of the disabled population of the world. If we take into account disabled female children, the number of disabled females is around 225 million, so there is double discrimination—one because of their sex and the other by reason of their disability. This discrimination is serious and affects every area of life—teaching, employment, economic status, marriage and family, medical care and rehabilitation.

407. Within the framework of the programme of assistance to disabled persons, internationally, nationally, regionally and subregionally, the ILO has helped to establish workshops which are commercially viable with a minimum of capital investment, often using equipment and supplies available locally. Generally speaking, these workshops can employ only a small number of disabled persons. Projects based on methods suitable for small industries have been launched by the ILO in the third world. One of the greatest successes in this area was gained by the United Abilities Company at Addis Ababa. This is an umbrella assembly plant that began with 18 blind, deaf and physically handicapped persons, who for the most part had had to beg in order to survive. Today this company provides well paid employment to more than 400 men and women who have some form of serious disability. Those workers provide for the needs of 2,000 dependents.

408. A project of a similar nature, financed by UNDP is being carried out in Indonesia. The ILO has helped the Minister for Social Affairs to set up, in the most remote areas, vocational rehabilitation services which should not be costly, should be most useful, and should mobilize the

resources, efforts and abilities of the community in order to tackle the problems of the disabled.

409. Regional technical advisers and ILO experts are working in the field of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East and they are helping a number of countries achieve the objectives of the International Year of Disabled Persons. A major project to establish an African regional institute for vocational rehabilitation is being prepared by the ILO in close co-operation with the OAU and UNDP. The institute will be based on the universities, the rehabilitation centres, research centres and national training institutes which already exist in Africa.

410. The experience of the ILO shows that the programme for vocational rehabilitation in rural regions must be based on a strategy of meeting essential needs. The ILO, WHO, UNESCO and UNICEF, together with a number of international non-governmental organizations, have acknowledged the value of a strategy based on meeting essential needs, in order to respond to the demand for rehabilitation of disabled persons in rural areas.

411. Finally, to repeat what I said in the Third Committee, today now more than ever we must recognize that disabled persons are individuals like any others. It is not their disability but their ability that is important. I am sure that by adopting the draft resolution before us each of us will help disabled persons to feel that they have not been abandoned by society.

412. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): I should like to inform the Assembly that a message has been received from the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States in which he describes the efforts made by his organization during the International Year of Disabled Persons.

413. The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Third Committee in paragraph 12 of its report [A/36/764]. The report of the Fifth Committee on the administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution appears in document A/36/771. The Third Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same.

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 36/77).

414. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): The resolution just adopted will, we are sure, be the basis for continued efforts to implement the objectives of the International Year of Disabled Persons, pending adoption of the World Programme of Action.

The meeting rose at 9 p.m.

NOTE:

¹ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1981, Supplement No. 6, chap. IV, sect. F.*