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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 41st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KABORE (Burkina Faso)

later: Mr. OGURTSOV (Byelorussian Soviet
Socialist Republic)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 95: PREPARATION AND ORGANIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL LITERACY YEAR
(continued) (A/44/409-S/20743 and Corr.1 and 2)

AGENDA ITEM 98: INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS (continued) (A/44/40,
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Add.1, A/44/662, A/44/710; E/1989/22; E/CN.4/Sub.2/1987/20;
E/CN.4/Sub.2/1987/SR.22-27 and Corr.1; E/CN.4/Sub.2/1988/SR.13, 16, 18-24 and 26;
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AGENDA ITEM 114: ENHANCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PRINCIPLE OF PERIODIC AND
GENUINE ELECTIONS (continued) (A/44/254-S/20607, A/44/454 and Corr.1)

AGENDA ITEM 115: PREPARATION OF AN INSTRUMENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS BASED ON SOLIDARITY
(continued) (A/44/409-S/20743 and Corr.1 and 2, A/44/551, A/44/706)

1. Mr. DYALA-LASSO (Ecuador) said that his country placed great emphasis on the
plight of children. To improve society, primary attention must be given to the
child.

2. Given the existence of major philosophical, religious, social and cultural
differences, flexibility had been needed to arrive at the text of the draft
convention on the rights of child. While it should not be considered a definitive
instrument, it was acceptable to his country because it contained provisions that
protected the basic rights of the child and provided an adequate international
system for guaranteeing the protection of those rights.

3. Ecuador was especially pleased with the ninth preambular paragraph of the
draft convention, which pointed to the need to protect the unborn child, and
believed that that paragraph should be borne in mind in interpreting all the
articles of the convention, particularly article 24. While the minimum age set in
article 38 was, in its view, too low, his delegation did not wish to endanger the

(Mr. ~~Dyala-Lasso~~, Ecuador)

chances for the convention's adoption by consensus and therefore would not propose any amendment to the text.

4. The convention had taken 10 years to draft and should be adopted quickly. Ecuador had decided to be among the first countries to sign it and would also take immediate legislative action for its ratification. Given the importance of the convention, financial arguments should not be invoked which broke the consensus. The United Nations should be proud to finance the monitoring of the convention's implementation. As some delegations had rightly pointed out, experience had shown that it was counterproductive to have only the States parties to a treaty fund its implementation.

5. Literacy was a basic cultural right. In early 1989, Ecuador had carried out a highly successful national literacy campaign using 60,000 students and 18,000 volunteers. It attached great importance to education and would soon be hosting the preparatory conference for the World Conference on Education for All.

6. Mr. MATELA (Poland) said that 1989 had seen important changes in the legal regulations governing churches and religious denominations in his country. Two new laws had been passed, one on guarantees of freedom of conscience and belief which had been circulated in document A/C.3/44/3, and another on relations between the State and the Catholic Church. Poland had also re-established full diplomatic relations with the Holy See. The new legislation complied fully with the provisions of the Constitution and reflected Poland's long-standing tradition of tolerance of religious freedom.

7. Under the Constitution, no religious union, denomination or church could be banned. Poland maintained strict separation of church and state, and no one could be compelled to participate, or not to participate, in religious activities. Moreover, under Polish civil law, freedom of conscience and religion was recognized as a personal right. The Polish family and guardianship code guaranteed the right to raise children in accordance with the convictions of the parents or legal guardians. Constant efforts were also being made to improve the system for the legal protection of the freedom of conscience, religion and belief on the basis of internationally recognized standards and instruments. Since the issue of belief was a growing concern both at home and abroad, Poland welcomed the preparation of a draft resolution on the subject.

8. Mr. ALJURE (Colombia) said that his country was proud to be one of the oldest, most stable democracies in the Americas. Its system of government was based on a strict separation of powers, institutional controls and direct universal suffrage, and allowed the participation of political parties and groups covering a wide spectrum.

9. In recent years, however, democracy and respect for human rights in Colombia had been threatened by guerrilla warfare and drug trafficking. There had been a horrifying escalation of violence as guerrillas and drug traffickers, who had formerly worked hand in hand throughout Colombia, now engaged in internecine

(Mr. Aljure, Colombia)

warfare in some areas. In such an atmosphere of terrorism, warfare aided by foreign mercenaries, kidnappings and political assassination, the armed forces and the police had at times been implicated in violations of human rights.

10. The Government had responded to the situation by taking steps to strengthen democracy in Colombia. More public resources had been earmarked for social investment benefiting the poorest members of society and the most disadvantaged regions. Institutional reforms had included far-reaching political and administrative decentralization. The Government's approach to restoring the peace, which was based on the defence of its institutions and the need for dialogue, had led to the decision by the M-19 movement to lay down its arms and to work within the system as a legal political party. There was now hope of agreements with other guerrilla movements as well.

11. Colombia was intensifying its campaign against drug trafficking. While it was determined to forge ahead with or without international co-operation, the cost of the campaign, coupled with shrinking resources as a result of declining coffee prices and restrictive trade practices abroad threatened the stability of the political system. Colombia therefore appealed to the international community for support.

12. In such a complex situation, there was a constant danger that it would not be possible to reconcile the need to protect fundamental rights and the necessity of ensuring the preservation of the State. While few of the many cases of serious violations of human rights in Colombia could be attributed to public officials, it was the responsibility of the Government to ensure a setting in which full respect for human rights could prevail. To that end, human rights investigations by intergovernmental bodies and non-governmental organizations had been encouraged in Colombia. Great efforts had been made to strengthen the judiciary through legal and administrative reforms, and laws had been instituted to combat, inter alia, terrorism, vigilante groups, gangs of paid assassins, drug trafficking and other sources of violence. The security forces and the judiciary were working together to fulfil their duties, without indulgence for members of the armed forces and police implicated in drug trafficking or human rights violations, and at no time had the rule of law been questioned. It was important to note that the judiciary in Colombia was the key to the defence of democracy and human rights and he called upon the international community to help strengthen it in both the short and the long term.

13. Lastly, the recently established Advisory Council on Human Rights, which reported directly to the President, was already playing an important role in the defence, protection and promotion of human rights. It gave individuals or organizations seeking the reparation or prevention of human rights violations easy access to the Government and was promoting human rights through seminars, forums and conferences. It was also carrying out a programme under which municipal authorities were being trained to act locally in defence of human rights. It was working for the defence and protection of the rights of vulnerable groups, such as children, prisoners, ethnic minorities and the infirm, and was involved in a vast

(Mr. Aijure, Colombia)

educational project designed to inculcate in children at an early age knowledge of and respect for human rights.

14. As a result of those and other measures, the human rights situation in Colombia had improved even in the midst of the campaign against drug trafficking. The 1989 homicide rate was half that for 1988, as was the number of deaths resulting from direct clashes between the State and the guerrillas. There was reason to be optimistic about the future of democracy and human rights in Colombia.

15. Mr. KAUFRILA (Finland), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, urged all States that had not yet done so to become parties to the International Covenants on Human Rights, because human rights violations were matters of universal concern. He also urged adoption of the convention on the rights of the child and the second optional protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Existing human rights instruments should be strengthened, scrupulously implemented and become universal. He hoped that more countries would accede to the first Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and make the relevant declarations. All States should accept the procedure for individual complaints as a token of their willingness to implement the relevant instruments.

16. Scrupulous fulfilment by States parties of their reporting obligations was also essential in order for human rights monitoring bodies to be effective. National reports must concentrate less on explaining legislative texts and more on accurately describing actual implementation. The various human rights bodies should continue to consolidate their respective guidelines for the compilation of reports so as to ensure streamlining and co-ordination. States should not be required to submit information on the same matters to different bodies, and reports should concentrate on new information rather than recapitulate earlier reports. He hoped that the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) would complete its detailed reporting manual by the end of the year and publicize it effectively.

17. Regular meetings of the chairpersons of the different treaty bodies would be useful in streamlining reporting procedures. The treaty bodies should also involve themselves more in formulating specific requests to States parties for further reports after the initial report had been submitted, including requests for information on specific questions on which more information seemed necessary. The expenses of those bodies should be covered from the regular budget of the United Nations and additional staff and other resources should be made available to the Centre for Human Rights to enable it to handle its increasing workload. The allocation of budgetary resources within the United Nations should reflect the shifts of emphasis in its work.

18. He stressed the need for close contact and co-operation between the Committee against Torture and the Special Rapporteur on torture in order to avoid duplication of effort. He fully supported the useful work being done by the Special Rapporteur and urged the Committee against Torture to report fully and promptly on its work on

(Mr. Kauppila, Finland)

individual complaints submitted under article 22 of the Convention. Finland had recently ratified the Convention and had made the declaration under articles 21 and 22. It was also vital that the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture receive contributions on a regular basis.

19. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights must develop efficient working methods, and he welcomed its adoption of provisional rules of procedure. He also stressed the importance of advisory services for ensuring that States fulfilled their obligations under the relevant instruments, and supported the provision of technical assistance, training courses and regional seminars in the area of human rights. The strengthening of national institutions was one of the most effective ways of ensuring compliance with human rights standards and he urged States to contribute to the Voluntary Fund for Advisory Services and Technical Assistance in the Field of Human Rights.

20. Mr. RAVEN (United Kingdom) said that his Government fully supported the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Religious Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief as a matter of principle. Pervasive and widespread religious intolerance was the product not only of deep-seated social, economic and ethnic factors but also governmental actions, and if Governments themselves practised religious discrimination, citizens could hardly look to the Government as a unifying force.

21. Turning to agenda item 107, he welcomed the progress made on the formulation of draft principles and guarantees for the protection of persons detained on grounds of mental ill-health or suffering from mental disorder. His delegation viewed that exercise as a useful contribution to promoting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of a hitherto disadvantaged section of the population.

22. Turning to agenda item 115, there was a strong burden of proof on the proponents of human rights based on solidarity to demonstrate that those rights could not be met through the progressive development of existing norms. The rights embodied in the international covenants contained all the essential elements that might be satisfying the aspirations underlying the demand for an instrument that would implement rights based on solidarity. He drew attention in that connection to operative paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 41/120. The assertion of new "rights" might even undermine existing human rights and serve as a pretext for justifying policies that ran counter to them. The concept of "solidarity rights" implied the risk of the strong dictating to the weak. Rights also depended for their effectiveness on not being devalued by inflation - the more rights there were the less weight each carried. Moreover, all rights, not just new ones, depended for their achievement on international solidarity, and that was why compliance with existing standards must be made a priority. He referred in that connection to operative paragraph 1 of General Assembly resolution 41/120.

23. While it was vital to respond to changing circumstances, his delegation did not believe that social changes and improvements in science and technology implied any need to update existing international human rights instruments. Those rights should be developed and implemented, rather than obfuscated by the proliferation of new ones.

24. Mr. SUTRESNA (Indonesia) said that the healthy development of children, society's most vulnerable members, represented not only an investment in the future but also the fulfilment of a moral obligation. Even though the rights of the child were protected in other international human rights instruments, a convention on the rights of the child was still necessary because children were increasingly falling victim to preventable and tragic suffering as a result of a deteriorating world economic situation in which adjustment policies had meant reduced spending on the health and social sectors. While objections would inevitably be raised over certain aspects of the convention, they should not give rise to conflict over its interpretation or implementation and his delegation hoped that it would be adopted by consensus.

25. His own country had already begun to implement many of the convention's provisions, which were compatible with its national development plans and its attitude towards children. Children in his country were being educated as to their rights and responsibilities as members of their family and of society. Indonesia would continue to work for the well-being of children at home and abroad. In that connection, he reaffirmed his country's commitment to ending apartheid which, with its attendant abuses and atrocities, so adversely affected the lives of children in South Africa. His country welcomed the adoption of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, because freedom of conscience and religion were essential to human dignity and to securing the most fundamental human rights. Indonesia was a land of great ethnic and religious diversity, and respect for different creeds and practices brought harmony to its society. Religious freedom in his country was guaranteed under the Constitution and he hoped that it would become universal.

26. Lastly, he hoped that the improved international political climate would bring about a shift in the use of the world's resources from destructive to constructive ends, for instance, towards providing better health care for the world's children and relieving poverty in general.

27. Mrs. SEMAMBO-KALEMA (Uganda) said that children were the most vulnerable and dependent sector of society and required a special legal instrument to protect them from abuse. The draft convention on the rights of the child not only enumerated the rights of the child but also obliged the State and the family to see that they were protected. It provided a basis for Governments to enact child protection laws and to remedy violations through the judicial process. Since national laws were limited in scope and existing international instruments were not binding, the convention was designed to supplement them and would be of universal application. It provided agreed standards for the protection of children everywhere without discrimination, while showing due regard for the local, religious and cultural values of the child's community.

28. The inherent right of every child to life, provided for under article 6 of the convention, was perhaps the most fundamental right of all since it ensured the initial survival of the child. While infant mortality rates were low in developed countries, in some developing countries they were rising with alarming speed. It was estimated that by the end of the century, Africa would account for over

(Mrs. Semambo-Kalema, Uganda)

40 per cent of infant deaths world wide. The situation was worse in southern Africa, particularly in Namibia, Angola and Mozambique. That region, where armed conflict had directly or indirectly caused the deaths of thousands, had the highest infant mortality rate in the world.

29. As a result of economic crises, Governments in developing countries had been forced to cut back severely on public spending, thereby depriving the poorest segments of the population, including children, of basic necessities. Faced with just such a situation, her Government had demonstrated its commitment to child survival by providing, in close co-operation with UNICEF, a number of health and education programmes for children. As a result of an accelerated programme of immunization and oral rehydration therapy, the infant mortality rate for the period 1984-1988 had declined and was expected to decrease further.

30. Her delegation commended the efforts of UNICEF, WHO and UNESCO to ensure the survival, protection and development of children. It looked forward to continued co-operation with those organizations under the convention, which was comprehensive enough to cover child protection needs in both developed and developing countries.

31. In view of the difficulties experienced by other committees that were financed by contributions from States parties, her delegation favoured funding the Committee on the Rights of the Child from the regular budget of the United Nations. Such an arrangement would ensure better implementation of the convention.

32. She hoped that there would be universal support for the convention and that as many States as possible would take steps to sign and ratify it so that it might enter into force at an early date. She hoped also that the convention's provisions would be implemented effectively by Governments. Lastly, she welcomed the proposal for a world summit meeting on children.

33. Miss VUKI (Fiji) said that her delegation viewed the adoption in 1981 of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief as an important landmark in the development of international human rights instruments. The existence of religious intolerance was anathema to any civilized society and had the potential to erode its very foundations. In that regard, it was gratifying that in his recent statement, the Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights had recalled General Assembly resolution 43/108, which had reaffirmed that freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief was a right guaranteed to all and had urged States to take appropriate measures to combat intolerance.

34. Her delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the Permanent Observer for the Holy See who, in referring to an address by Pope John Paul II, had said that the concept of religion as an alienating social tool no longer held credibility, as humanity itself was aware of the significantly influential role believers played in the promotion of the common good. The expression of religious faith enriched both public and private life and was not easily amenable to rational analysis. The repression or elimination of religious

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(Miss Vuki, Fiji)

freedom was not only a negation of the fundamental concepts of human liberty and dignity embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but also an irreplaceable loss to the cultural life of a nation.

35. Fiji's was a multi-religious society which encompassed both polytheistic and monotheistic forms of religion, all of which were encouraged and co-existed freely. Her delegation was therefore concerned at the remaining instances of religious intolerance elsewhere in the world. In that connection, it viewed the forced assimilation of minority groups as tantamount to violating their right to determine their own religious and cultural experience. It therefore endorsed the proposal that the United Nations should increase its efforts to ensure that minority groups were well integrated and protected in terms of basic human rights.

36. Her delegation was pleased to note that the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities would be reporting to the Commission on Human Rights at its forty-sixth session thereby assisting in the Commission's efforts to promote and protect the right of religion, conscience and belief. Lastly, she welcomed the Commission's consideration of the question of an international convention on religious freedom.

37. Mr. KALITA (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said the approach followed by the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, based on dialogue and co-operation with States parties, had yielded positive results and promoted a businesslike non-confrontational discussion of the problems encountered by States Parties. The international community should seek to ensure that as many States as possible acceded to the International Covenants on Human Rights and other major human rights instruments. Much remained to be done to put an end to racism and racial discrimination and to eliminate mercenarism, terrorism, torture and other shameful phenomena.

38. He noted with satisfaction that a growing number of States recognized the need to ensure the exercise of social and economic rights. Human rights were interrelated and indivisible and the enjoyment of social and economic rights was a necessary prerequisite for developing civil and political rights. Much was being done in the Ukrainian SSR to correct the mistakes made because of the Stalinist concept of holding entire peoples "responsible" for the deeds of individuals. A programme for the complete resettlement of the Crimean Tatars was being elaborated and the question of restoring the autonomous status of the Crimea was being considered.

39. The elaboration of a second optional protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming at the abolition of the death penalty was a significant step forward in the field of human rights. The elimination of all forms of religious intolerance was also one of the most urgent questions under consideration. The provisions of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief should be codified as effective international legal norms. The Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities could elaborate a draft international convention in that regard.

(Mr. Kalita, Ukrainian SSR)

40. In the Ukrainian SSR, religious believers and the clergy enjoyed all the benefits of socialist society, including the right to work, free medical assistance, education and housing. The rights of believers and non-believers alike were equally protected by law. Adherents of various religions lived in the Ukrainian SSR: Orthodox Christians, Catholics, Jews, Muslims and others. Ukrainian Catholics enjoyed exactly the same rights as other believers. Unfortunately, an attempt was currently being made to use the Uniat Church as a political organization espousing nationalistic and separatist positions. His Government was considering the adoption of a law on freedom of conscience in religious organizations. Questions relating to the activities of such organizations would be dealt with on the basis of that law and in accordance with the obligations assumed under the Helsinki and Vienna agreements. Believers themselves should determine their own religious orientation. Religious extremists, however, must not be permitted to stir up national enmity and discord between peoples of different faiths. Lastly, his delegation supported the call for the adoption by consensus of the draft convention on the rights of the child.

41. Mr. MOLINA ARAMBARRI (Argentina) said that his delegation was proud to have participated actively in the working group on the draft convention on the rights of the child and thanked its Chairman and all those involved for their efforts.

42. While not perfect, the draft convention was satisfactory in that it established different categories of rights which could be incorporated into the various legal and social systems of individual Member States. Moreover, since it contained a minimum set of standards for the protection of children, its adoption should not be delayed further.

43. The first special meeting of lawmakers on the rights of the child, held in Argentina in October 1989, had adopted the La Plata Declaration, which had been issued as an official United Nations document. The Declaration proposed that, upon adoption of the convention by the General Assembly, the National Congress should take the necessary steps for its speedy adoption and ratification by Argentina and provincial legislatures should amend their legislation to conform to the convention's provisions.

44. His delegation was pleased that the preamble to the convention included the affirmation that children needed special safeguards before as well as after birth. Such an emphasis would ensure that equal attention was paid to biological and social development, thus contributing to the optimum development of the child. His delegation had provided the impetus for article 8, concerning the identity of the child, and had played an important role in the drafting of article 21, relating to inter-country adoption. With regard to article 38, it would have preferred a much stronger provision on the prohibition of the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts. It endorsed the establishment of a Committee on the Rights of the Child and believed that it should be funded from the regular budget of the United Nations. The first sentence of article 43, paragraph 11, should therefore be retained and its square brackets removed. The purpose of the convention fully justified the requirement that all Member States contribute to the costs of the proposed committee.

(Mr. Molina Arambarri, Argentina)

45. He hoped that the adoption of the convention was imminent and urged all States to do their utmost to ratify it as soon as possible.

46. Ms. GAO Yianping (China) said that the draft convention on the rights of the child expressed the common desire of the international community and conformed to the principles and spirit of the relevant international human rights instruments. Because of the variety of social systems and cultural traditions in the world, the convention could not have satisfied everyone. Although her delegation, like others, had reservations concerning some of the convention's provisions, such as its definition of the child, that would not prevent it from supporting its adoption. With respect to funding for the Committee on the Rights of the Child, her Government understood the economic difficulties facing many countries and hoped that the United Nations could provide financial support for the Committee's work.

47. It was encouraging that Governments were paying considerable attention to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, thereby enabling it to play a positive role. In November 1989, China would be submitting for consideration its first report on the implementation of the Convention, and it urged all States which had not yet done so to sign, ratify or accede to the Convention as soon as possible and to take all measures necessary to implement its provisions.

48. Turning to the question of periodic and genuine elections, the electoral system was an important component of the political and legal system of a sovereign State. In accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, every State had the right to choose its own electoral system. In so doing, States should ensure that the system chosen reflected the will of the people. The choice of a particular system was an internal affair and no foreign country had the right to arbitrarily criticize or attack it. Nor could any country justify the imposition of its own electoral system on other countries as a model. Any such attempt would violate the basic norms of international relations and would not work on a practical level.

49. Ms. ILIC (Yugoslavia) expressed her delegation's appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights and the Assistant Director-General of UNESCO for their comprehensive and informative introductory statements.

50. Her delegation fully supported the launching in December 1989 of International Literacy Year and its programme, which was to be carried out by UNESCO in co-operation with Governments, non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies and the media. Education was essential to the well-being of individuals and societies and literacy represented the very basis of education. As emphasized by UNESCO, the promotion of literacy implied the reform and universalization of primary education and the provision of out-of-school instruction to youth and adults. Like many other Member States, Yugoslavia had designated an overall co-ordinating body and regional and local bodies to implement activities related to International Literacy Year. A report on those activities would be presented to UNESCO in due course. In addition, her country supported the holding in March 1990

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(Ms. Ilic, Yugoslavia)

of the World Conference on Education for All, which should assist developing countries in designing and implementing their educational plans in the coming decade.

51. Her Government fully supported the adoption by consensus of the convention on the rights of the child. The convention was designed to elevate to the status of international law States' obligations to protect children. Although it was based on existing standards, the convention went beyond them and even contained new provisions which were relevant to the needs of children in the contemporary world. It combined ideas from different cultural, political and economic systems leaving ample room for specific traditions. Above all, it contained some universally accepted basic rights that were essential for the full development of every child.

52. Certain provisions did not reflect fully the views of all the States that had participated in the drafting of the convention. For example, article 30 was incomplete since it did not mention the children of national minorities and migrant workers. Furthermore, as it stood, the article had a negative connotation and would have benefited from a more positive formulation.

53. Her delegation favoured funding from the United Nations regular budget for the Committee on the Rights of the Child to be established under the convention, and welcomed the possibility that United Nations specialized agencies might be represented at the committee's meetings. She wished also to express her appreciation to UNICEF for the support it had given the working group, and to the Government of Poland and Mr. Lopatka for their untiring efforts to complete the draft convention.

54. Scientific and technological developments had to be adjusted as far as possible to accepted human rights standards. In that connection, her delegation supported the continuation of work on the project on the use of scientific and technological developments for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, initiated by Japan and Yugoslavia in 1986.

55. There was a need for wider ratification of existing human rights instruments and compliance with reporting obligations. As a party to the International Covenants on Human Rights and other international instruments, her country had been submitting its reports on a regular basis. The drafting of its third report on the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights had been postponed pending constitutional changes. Lastly, her Government had initiated proceedings for the ratification of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and was considering the possibility of acceding to the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

56. Miss AIOUAZE (Algeria) said that every effort must be made to ensure that the draft convention on the rights of the child constituted real progress in the field of human rights. Universal acceptance of the convention would depend to a large extent on its ability to meet the special needs of all the world's children. The

(Miss Aïouaze, Algeria)

draft convention was the result of a long and often difficult process of compromise, which explained its limitations. The need for consensus seemed to have obscured the original intent in a manner which was not always in the interests of children. In view of the many specific problems affecting children, an effort should have been made to establish new rights rather than reiterate existing ones, so that the convention not only made existing standards binding but also increased the protections afforded to children.

57. It was alarming to note that the system of international human rights guarantees did not apply to millions of children throughout the world. It was unfortunate that the draft convention did not place sufficient emphasis on economic, social and cultural rights. Children were the first victims on the altar of the current international economic system. Of the 28 people who died each minute from hunger and malnutrition in the world, 21 were young children. The economic crisis had resulted in the deaths of half a million children in the third world in 1988 alone. According to population projections, the total number of infant and child deaths would remain abnormally high in developing countries, particularly in Africa, throughout the rest of the century.

58. The draft convention made no reference to children subjected to repressive and discriminatory laws. The report of the Special Committee against Apartheid described the acts of brutality and violence suffered daily by South African children. The Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories likewise described the harassment and physical abuse to which Palestinian children were subjected. It had been amply demonstrated that children were all too often the first victims of such situations. The scope of the draft convention should have been broadened to provide special protection and care to all children, particularly the most vulnerable: those living under foreign or colonial occupation and the inhuman apartheid system and those who were being deprived of their basic rights by the unjust world economic system.

59. Her country had ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its Optional Protocol, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

60. Mr. MEZZALANA (Italy) said that scientific and technological progress and the consequent improvement in economic and social conditions had increased demands for participation in democratic decision-making and for the exercise of fundamental human rights. Progress and development could be defined as the appropriate use of science and technology to better the human condition.

61. There was much discussion of the role of science in the future. It was widely felt that rapid scientific and technological progress had adverse consequences for human beings and the environment. The quest for profit had spurred economic competition at the expense of the environment. The moral and social consequences of scientific development must be carefully considered. The dividing line between

(Mr. Mezzalama, Italy)

what was licit and what could be sacrificed on the altar of science was becoming increasingly blurred. While modern society could not function without technological development, the pace of scientific innovation must be controlled in order to avoid disastrous consequences. An acceptable balance must be found which ensured respect for fundamental human rights and promoted an awareness of the common destiny of all peoples, races and cultures.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.