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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 11th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. SOMAVIA (Chile)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 90: WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION (A/45/137-E/1990/35)

AGENDA ITEM 92: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORLD PROGRAMME OF ACTION CONCERNING DISABLED PERSONS AND THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF DISABLED PERSONS (A/45/470)

AGENDA ITEM 96: POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES INVOLVING YOUTH (A/45/225, 227, 280, 338 and 422)

AGENDA ITEM 99: QUESTION OF AGING (A/45/207 and 420)

AGENDA ITEM 104: INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE FAMILY (A/45/365; A/C.3/45/3)

1. Miss ANSTEE (Director-General, United Nations Office at Vienna) said that when she had addressed the Committee the year before, she had remarked on the startling transformation taking place in the global political climate and the infinitely better atmosphere in which social problems could be addressed in international debate. The unforeseeable events which had taken place since then had transformed the world, with profound consequences for the work of the United Nations. Those who had worked principally with development questions, particularly on programmes aimed at helping the peoples of the developing countries, had at last seen the prospect of their dream becoming a reality, i.e. that the relaxation of tension between East and West would allow greater resources and political and intellectual energy to be devoted to bridging the other great divide, between North and South. That vision had been dimmed somewhat by recent reminders that grave conflicts still persisted. Nevertheless that vision should be kept in view; otherwise, the world would witness even more sanguinary conflicts.

2. If that vision was to become reality, the positive changes which had occurred must usher in a new era of international co-operation for development and social progress, particularly in the developing countries. For that to happen, the United Nations must speak with a clear and unequivocal voice on social development and social justice issues that had for so long been relegated to second place nationally and internationally. That had been the purpose and the challenge when, as part of the reform of the United Nations inspired by the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations, the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV) had been made the focal point within the Secretariat for all programmes relating to social policy, social development and the abuse of and illicit trafficking in drugs.

3. UNOV had achieved some notable successes, particularly, but not only, in the field of narcotic drugs. In the social sector, new approaches to integrating social policies and goals in development strategies had been pioneered and efforts had been made to promote the implementation of measures adopted by the international community at conferences relating to the advancement of women, the disabled, the aging, youth and crime prevention. One of the Office's greatest

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achievements had been the establishment of closer links between the units responsible for carrying out those programmes, which were so evidently interrelated. Every effort had been made to overcome the persistent lack of resources by streamlining organization and procedures and seeking out innovative funding methods. In 1989, UNOV had suffered a serious setback when the General Assembly had decided not to endorse the Secretary-General's proposals to transfer to Vienna the social functions still remaining in New York, along with some very modest resources corresponding thereto. That denial had been disappointing at the time, particularly when it had become apparent that the strategy which had informed all the Office's efforts since 1987 would remain truncated.

4. During the current session, the General Assembly would consider issues whose resolution would decide the future of UNOV. One of those was the strengthening of the Office, a subject on which the Assembly had asked the Secretary-General to report in its resolution 44/201 B II, the same resolution in which it had rejected his proposal to transfer the remaining social functions from New York. Another issue was the restructuring of the programmes and units at Vienna working with the drug problem. Yet a third was the allocation of funds for drug and crime prevention programmes from the Contingency Fund. It was her hope that the decisions reached on those issues would be based on a careful examination of their history and would reflect the need to ensure a multidisciplinary approach to problems that were inseparable.

5. Various convulsions in the global economy in recent years had forced many countries to adopt austerity measures which had had an immediate effect on the weaker segments of society. Those measures had compounded the problem of poverty. Poverty was not a lack of adequate income for a decent life, but a complex set of circumstances which entrapped people and from which there was no easy escape, e.g. a lack of economic opportunities, limited horizons, inadequate access to services, limited participation, discrimination and helplessness. Many of the Office's activities were in fact intended to help eliminate the root causes of poverty.

6. One positive consequence of the current prolonged crisis was that many countries had begun to re-evaluate past development policies and approaches. Current trends had gone beyond concern for alleviating the damage done by adjustment measures to society's weaker segments towards a search for approaches that would enhance economic efficiency and promote economic expansion. One of the main lessons of the recent past was that successful development required a socio-political framework that combined incentives with justice. UNOV, together with such major funding organizations as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank, had helped to bring forward new ideas. She looked forward to closer collaboration with those institutions and with the International Monetary Fund, particularly in providing direct support for country efforts.

7. The year before, she had referred to the project which UNOV was carrying out in Bolivia. Since that time, with the support of UNDP and a number of bilateral donors, the Office had initiated parallel activities in several countries, including the United Republic of Tanzania, Chad and Indonesia. She drew particular

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attention to the support given to Peru's efforts to deal with its profound economic and social crisis, not only because she was directly involved in that endeavour in her capacity as Special Representative of the Secretary-General, but also because the concept of an emergency social programme, introduced as an integral part of a stringent economic stabilization plan and evolving in a few months into a genuine social development programme, was an innovative concept that, if successful, could be of interest to other countries in similar straits.

8. There had been a strong demand for the services of the new Interregional Advisor on Social Policies and Development, a post funded by the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development. The Interregional Advisor had already visited several countries in all continents. As part of United Nations efforts to strengthen national capacities for social analysis and the design and implementation of integrated socio-economic policies, UNOV had recently organized a meeting at Helsinki with generous support from the Government of Finland. The meeting had been attended by government experts from donor and recipient countries all over the world. Discussions had clearly indicated the need and the will to strengthen co-operation for social development. It was also recognized that many obstacles stood in the way. The meeting had agreed on a number of suggestions to support the work done by ministries of social affairs and to give greater emphasis to the social dimension in the planning and policy-adoption processes. The report of the meeting would be considered as a priority item at the next session of the Commission for Social Development. Several recommendations might serve to enhance the effectiveness of the work of UNOV, particularly in the context of the new international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade.

9. The role of the United Nations in championing the cause of the poor, the underprivileged and the excluded had not been as successful as hoped. It was true that plans of action had been ambitious, but results had fallen short of even conservative expectations. The United Nations Office at Vienna had therefore taken a number of initiatives, with the support of the Commission for Social Development, the Economic and Social Council and the Third Committee of the General Assembly, to translate intentions into action. The various non-governmental organizations which worked with the United Nations had provided invaluable suggestions as to how that might be done.

10. She shared the concerns expressed by several delegations regarding the status of documentation for the debate on the items before the Committee. There were still a number of difficulties in providing the required documents on time. The United Nations Office at Vienna, apart from its straitened resources, had a problem in that most of its reports were based on information supplied by Member States which came either very late or, more often, not at all. In order not to present very unrepresentative reports, the Office waited until the very last moment in the hope of including the greatest possible number of replies. She renewed her earlier appeal that the Third Committee consider methods of collecting information other than asking Member States to fill out questionnaires. That approach was unproductive and wasteful of scarce resources.

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11. She hoped that the Third Committee would give careful consideration to the proposals set forth in the reports to be introduced later by Mr. Sokalski, Director of the Social Development Division of the United Nations Office at Vienna. The reports contained indications of the resources that might be required, over and above the levels currently available under the regular budget. Reference was made in them to new methods being employed to increase extrabudgetary resources, through the Global Project to promote the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons and, in the field of aging, through the proposed Banyan Foundation. Nevertheless none of those extrabudgetary resources could substitute for a sounder basis of resources from the regular budget. The proposals contained in the reports emphasized operational activities and support at the country and field levels.

12. The same need had been emphasized at the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, held at Havana from 27 August to 7 September 1990, of which she had had the honour to be Secretary-General. The central theme of the Congress had been recognition that increased criminality and corruption in public administration impeded economic growth and social development. One of the most important consensus resolutions adopted by the Congress recognized that the social aspects of development were an important factor in an effective strategy for crime prevention and criminal justice. A further resolution adopted contained 23 recommendations on international co-operation for crime prevention and criminal justice in the context of development. The Congress had adopted by consensus 46 resolutions dealing with critical contemporary problems such as organized criminality, terrorism, protection of the environment, theft of national treasures, computer-related offences, illegal financial transactions, corruption, abuse of power, urban crime, illicit drug trafficking, drug abuse and use of children in criminal activities. To deal with those pernicious phenomena, the Congress had also endorsed model treaties, co-operative programmes and specific actions.

13. The Eighth Congress had been marked by a spirit of collaboration and readiness to exchange expertise and experiences. Many bilateral and multilateral initiatives had been launched. The co-operative atmosphere had been nourished through the generous hospitality and excellent facilities provided by the Cuban Government. Almost all the resolutions adopted by the Congress had placed emphasis on providing practical assistance to Governments to implement the norms and instruments adopted by the international community. The Congress had also adopted a decision asking the Secretary-General to give priority attention to practical measures and technical co-operation to combat international crime. Most countries had stressed the need for practical assistance to deal with increasingly complicated problems of crime in the contemporary world. She hoped that the United Nations would do its utmost to fulfil those expectations.

14. She proposed that, rather than developing and adopting new instruments, the next Congress should take stock of what had been accomplished and analyse what was needed in order to implement the norms promulgated by the United Nations so that they would have a demonstrable impact around the world. That would allow the United Nations Office at Vienna to devote its scarce resources to that key

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endeavour. The gap between needs and capacity remained great. In recognition of that fact, the Congress had recommended that the General Assembly should establish an intergovernmental working group to draw up proposals for a more effective international crime and justice programme. Those proposals would be submitted to a ministerial meeting, which would also consider mechanisms for setting priorities and monitoring results. Member States had been invited to provide active support. That would be the proof of their commitment. Although the foundations were in place, much remained to be done. She called for the approval of additional resources so that the secretariat of the Congress could carry out the myriad tasks assigned to it. She hoped that the necessary resources would be approved from the Contingency Fund so that work could begin as soon as possible.

15. With reference to the advancement of women, she said that the United Nations Office at Vienna had served as the focal point of the United Nations system in the attainment of the objectives of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000. The Commission on the Status of Women had during the year reviewed and appraised progress made in the first five-year period. Its conclusions had been embodied in resolution 1990/15 of the Economic and Social Council, which had stated that, unless prompt remedial action was taken, the goals of the Strategies would not be attained. The interregional consultation on women in public life would be convened in 1991, and would address the questions of full participation by women in the political process. The world conference on women, to be convened in 1995, would carry out the second review and appraisal. What must be kept at the forefront was that the advancement of women was an essential element in all economic and social progress. It was a priority that must be maintained, if the Organization was to be true to its central purpose.

16. Referring to trust funds, she said that particular importance was attached to the voluntary funds for financing field projects in the areas of disability, aging, youth, women and social defence. At the recent Congress on the Prevention of Crime, a number of pledges had been announced for the United Nations Trust Fund for Social Defence, which supported the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, the regional institutes and, increasingly, operational projects for crime prevention and criminal justice. Additional resources would help to carry out the recommendations of the Congress and make it possible to meet the many requests for assistance arising from the work of the Interregional Adviser in Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. She was grateful to those Governments which had generously contributed to all the voluntary funds and appealed to those Governments which had not done so to consider the possibility of making a contribution.

17. In conclusion, the United Nations Office at Vienna was renewing its efforts on three broad fronts: integrated treatment of substantive programmes which had previously been considered discrete activities; consideration of the work of the Office in the broader context of the Secretariat's tasks in the economic and political areas; and greater emphasis on the importance of operational activities in co-operation with the United Nations entities concerned. That was especially true of its function as the nucleus for social policy and development activities and activities relating to drug abuse control.

18. Mr. SOKALSKI (Director, Social Development Division) reviewed the activities of the Social Development Division over the year and said that in many cases, countries displayed little will with respect to social issues and devoted no attention to them. That was reflected, above all, in the lack of resources so essential to the national effort to establish the necessary institutions and frame the policies through which social development could flourish and be shared by all.

19. Owing to the late date of the Eighth Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the very ambitious and complex mandates emanating from that important meeting, the Committee did not yet have all the documents relating to the item on crime prevention and criminal justice.

20. Since its inception the United Nations had been concerned with issues related to specific population groups. That work had gained prominence through the preparation and observance of the International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981, the Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992), the World Assembly on Aging in 1982 and the International Youth Year in 1985. Each of those special events had culminated in the adoption of a major international instrument in the form of a plan or programme of action, which had provided a basis for the promotion of human development. The United Nations Office at Vienna had recently been entrusted with the task of preparing for the International Year of the Family to be observed in 1994.

21. The forty-fifth session of the General Assembly was of particular importance in that connection, as the Secretary-General would submit three important reports on social groups: a feasibility study on alternative ways to mark the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons with specific policy options for future strategy (A/45/470); a draft proposal for the observance of the tenth anniversary of the World Assembly on Aging (A/45/420); an analytical report on the implementation of the guidelines for the follow-up of the International Youth Year (A/45/422) and a Note on the International Year of the Family (A/45/365). Some difficulties had been encountered in the preparation of those reports and he would be grateful if the Committee could provide guidance on how to proceed in future in order to prepare reports on time when, in reality, sufficient and representative contributions had not been received.

22. In the opinion of experts who had advised the Secretary-General in the preparation of the report on the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, the end of the Decade should be marked by high-visibility activities. Should the Assembly decide to implement some of the proposals, the Secretary-General would submit the financial and administrative implications of the recommendations contained in the feasibility study. Those recommendations should not be seen as a means of insisting on new measures which would swell the United Nations budget, but rather as a faithful reflection of the resource requirements for implementing the bare minimum of what had been proposed by the meeting of experts. It should be stressed that implementation of any of the proposals contained in the report was contingent on the approval of its financial implications, as specified in the document.

(Mr. Sokalski)

23. The programme of activities on aging for 1992 and beyond contained a proposal to observe the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the International Plan of Action on Aging in 1992. Following its approval by the General Assembly, a calendar of events would be opened. The calendar, together with the targets identified as feasible, would be submitted to the General Assembly at its fourth-seventh session, in 1992. He looked forward to the Committee's comments on the draft and on possible ways and means of disseminating and implementing its contents.

24. The report prepared on youth contained an overview of the activities undertaken in order to implement the guidelines for further planning and suitable follow-up in the field of youth, with particular emphasis on activities by Member States, United Nations agencies and bodies, non-governmental organizations and the HOPE 1987 initiative. One of the highlights of the report was the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year in 1995, which would surely provide an opportunity to renew action at all levels. The report provided a framework for the adoption of collaborative measures between Governments, the United Nations system and the non-governmental organizations in order to identify strategies and realistic targets for the future. The United Nations had recognized the vital importance of young people, their potential to approach the problems facing mankind from a fresh perspective and their ability to embrace the ideals of the Charter. He reaffirmed the hope that Member States would continue to send youth representatives as part of their national delegations to the General Assembly and the Commission for Social Development which, in early 1991, would review, as a priority item, the problem of the integration of young people in society.

25. As Co-ordinator for the International Year of the Family, he wished to point out that the preparatory work had been carried out with three basic factors in mind: that the International Year of the Family was the first intergenerational and multidisciplinary event with a strong and unambiguous focus on the local and national levels; that few of the previous international years had had so little lead time between their proclamation and observance; and that, in assigning to the United Nations Secretariat an important role in activities preparatory to and in observance of the Year, the Assembly had not made any budgetary provisions for the purpose in the current programme budget. Under the circumstances, the United Nations should assist national efforts and the efforts of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in support of national-level activities, in accordance with international human rights and social policy standards approved by the General Assembly. In view of the magnitude of the International Youth Year, little could be done without resources, unless the secretariat for the Year was turned into a small, but efficient unit. On the substantive side, the situation was far brighter. Many international initiatives had coincided with preparations by the United Nations. In that connection, he wished to express his appreciation for the contribution by UNICEF whose crowning effort had been the World Summit for Children, at which a World Declaration and Plan of Action had been adopted.

(Mr. Sokalski)

26. In view of the relatively short time available for the preparation of the Year, the General Assembly might wish to urge all States, relevant United Nations organizations, concerned intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and communications media to join in the preparations for, and the observance of, the Year. Second, in order to facilitate preparations at the local and national levels, the General Assembly might wish to invite all States to take prompt action to establish mechanisms such as national co-ordinating committees for the International Year of the Family. Third, following the practice of previous international years, the General Assembly might wish to explore the feasibility of establishing a voluntary trust fund for the International Year of the Family for the purpose of preparing the Year and providing technical assistance, particularly to the least developed countries.

27. With respect to methods of work, as the Secretary-General had stated, common sense was beginning to replace the ideological obsessions of the past, and sustained attention should be devoted to the ills that afflicted society at the present time. The new state of international relations called for less conventional ways of handling social policy issues in the United Nations, which was not an easy task, especially since restructuring attempts had thus far been unsuccessful. In particular, there was a need for a new system of reporting to the legislative organs; less superficial follow-up of previous mandates and an innovative programme of mandates which would adapt the activities in the area to the changed and changing world realities. An effort should also be made to determine how much information produced by the Secretariat Member States were able and willing to absorb effectively.

28. Another question that had to be considered was whether the format of debates on social issues in the Third Committee really benefited Member States and gave the Secretariat the guidance it needed and whether debate on a corpus of major social issues could really be confined to just 9 or 10 meetings of a rather general nature.

29. Speaking with the sense of responsibility of someone who had worked for over 20 years as a member of a delegation and had participated in the discussions of the Fifth Committee, he stressed that the resources available in the areas of social development were totally inadequate to run a programme of that magnitude effectively. In conclusion, he said that he would be happy to attend a meeting to exchange views and share experiences with delegations interested in informally discussing the work and functioning of the programme in the social sphere.

30. Mr. HOEGH (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons) said that, with two years to go until the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, while everyone recognized that progress had been made, it had not been as great as had been hoped when the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons had been approved. The pace and extent of progress varied from country to country, owing to continuing major differences in the ways in which the Governments of the rich and the poor countries perceived the needs of disabled persons.

(Mr. Hoagh)

31. No country represented in the Committee could allow itself the luxury of ignoring the potential of its disabled communities. If society gave them the chance to participate fully in all its activities, disabled persons would be able and willing to make a useful contribution to the economic and social growth and development of their community. Everyone, including Governments, should contribute to making such participation possible.

32. The most important practical proposal was that all countries should have a national co-ordinating committee on disability issues. In the countries that had achieved the most progress, such national co-ordinating committees had proved extremely useful. It was even more useful to have committees responsible for the supply of technical aids as well as for building accessibility, teaching, transport and housing. In drawing up and implementing legislative and other measures, all Governments, government ministries and organizations should be more systematic in consulting the disabled. Also, donor countries, donor country development aid organizations and recipient countries should review their bilateral assistance programmes and requirements in order to assign higher priority to measures benefiting not only women but disabled persons as well. Greater attention should be given to the local production and distribution of technical aids for the disabled since most disabled people were unable to take advantage of the limited opportunities available to them because they lacked such necessary equipment as wheel chairs, artificial limbs and other prostheses and orthopaedic equipment. In addition, the Governments that had not yet done so should adopt regulations governing access to public buildings, schools, transportation and communications facilities. Experience showed that it was cheaper to provide new or renovated facilities accessible to the disabled than to provide separate facilities and services for them since it was far better from the economic standpoint to have the disabled participate actively in the social and economic development of their communities than to have to provide them with the costly assistance they would otherwise need.

33. All Governments should realize the invaluable role that the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons played in the World Programme of Action. Contributions received through that Fund constituted one of the most efficient and economic means of carrying out the many necessary projects of interest to disabled persons. All countries should contribute to the Fund during the next annual pledging conference. They should also participate in the international information and fund-raising campaign that would be organized during the final years of the Decade.

34. Lastly, isolated measures with respect to legislation, programmes, policies and procedures to assist the disabled should be integrated into other existing or proposed legislation and policies so that the necessary adjustments could be made to reflect the interests of disabled persons.

35 Mr. TRAXLER (Italy), speaking on behalf of the European Community, said that, in the opinion of the Twelve, the easing of international tensions should make it possible to devote resources and energies to the analysis and solution of social problems with the aim of improving the living conditions of people the world over.

(Mr. Traxler, Italy)

The European Community wished to reaffirm its determination not to allow the important political changes taking place in Eastern Europe to undermine its commitment to the economic and social enhancement of the developing countries.

36. The documents that he had consulted in preparing his statement (the 1989 Report on the World Social Situation, prepared by the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, and its supplement, as well as the Human Development Report 1990, prepared by the United Nations Development Programme) revealed an uneven socio-economic picture. While the geographical regions in which the process of economic and social development was gaining speed had widened, the relevant indicators showed that far too many human beings continued to live in areas untouched by the progress that was taking place in other developed and developing countries. Indeed, over the past decade, standards of living and social conditions had deteriorated in most countries of sub-Saharan Africa and in several countries in Latin America, and little or no improvement had been registered in some Asian countries in recent years. As the decade drew to a close, it was unacceptable for some one billion people to be living in conditions of absolute poverty, that was to say, for men and women to be struggling to survive on less than \$370 a year - the poverty line indicator used by the World Bank.

37. Although the international economic environment and the resources devoted to development co-operation were indeed crucial in the effort to bring about progressive changes in stagnant societies, the uneven outcome of similar foreign assistance initiatives in different geographical regions showed that those factors could not replace effective national policies emphasizing the social needs of the population. As the World Bank had pointed out in its latest development report, national policies should include access of the poor to land, infrastructure, health services, credit and education, and should also promote the full integration of women in development and decision-making processes, as well as special protection for the most vulnerable population groups. From the experience of the past decade, it could be concluded that when priority was given to the social elevation of people and the development of human resources, overall economic performance was strengthened.

38. The Twelve were aware of the economic difficulties facing many third-world countries, particularly the least developed. Nevertheless, they considered that democracy and development should progress together since there was an effect of mutual impetus between, on the one hand, economic performance and development and, on the other, accountable Government and human development, including the principles of democratic practices and pluralistic societies, respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the individual, and his or her right to participate in the decision-making process.

39. When addressing the social condition of a people, certain principles must be constantly referred to, such as the decentralization of authority, community participation and cost-sharing, the full access of women and vulnerable groups to social services, education, legal rights and income-earning opportunities in order to utilize fully their human and economic potential, economic policies that

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stimulated human talent and created room for entrepreneurship and, last but not least, an efficient public sector that could provide a proper framework for development. Three other issues, however, had a major negative impact on the social condition: the growing threat posed by climate change and environmental degradation, the constantly increasing world population and the heavy burden of foreign debt borne by several developing countries. Unless those were tackled, their repercussions could jeopardize and possibly nullify any results achieved by sound national policies in an international climate of renewed co-operation.

40. The interaction between an appropriate level of international economic co-operation and sound national policies, placing due emphasis on the social needs of the people, could help to solve the problems that derived from the migration of large masses of people into the urban centres of the developing countries. To the extent that a significant betterment of social conditions in the countryside was achieved, it should be possible to lessen that inflow, which had highly negative effects on often very fragile urban infrastructures. It was imperative, therefore, for the international community to increase its efforts to raise the standard of living of people in areas where population was declining as a result of emigration.

41. With the signature of the Lomé IV Agreement, with 69 countries from Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific area, and with the STABEX system, the European Community and its member States had given a clear indication of the priority they attached to devising an appropriate framework for dynamic and balanced co-operation activities with the developing countries.

42. The international meeting of experts held in Finland from 7 to 11 May 1990 had proved particularly useful for the purpose of providing impetus in the concluding period (1990-1992) of the Decade of Disabled Persons, and the urgent need to revitalize the objectives of the Decade before it ended had become clear. To that end, emphasis had been placed on the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to the subject and the need to draw up national laws in defence of disabled persons. The European Community and its member States agreed that an open-ended working group could provide a useful forum for laying down a framework of measures of an operational character. In particular, on the basis of the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons, the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the Tallinn Guidelines, the Group could prepare a document to facilitate the access of disabled persons to culture, sports, transport, housing, places of work and social services.

43. The commitment of the European Community and its member States to the cause of the disabled was reflected in the ambitious programmes and information systems set up by its Council of Ministers. The Community believed that the main objective of national policies in that field should be the active participation of the disabled in political, economic, social and cultural life, and that to that end greater emphasis should be placed on rehabilitation rather than passive long-term care. In that context, on 12 June 1989, the Council of Ministers of the European Community had adopted recommendations on the employment of disabled persons. The importance of the role that organizations of disabled people were called upon to play in the

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work ahead, both in the industrialized and in the developing countries, should be emphasized and Governments should be urged to promote, strengthen and co-operate with such organizations.

44. Many countries, irrespective of their political system, were witnessing a growing alienation among young people, constituting an unbearable loss of intellectual potential and energy that was bound to have very negative repercussions. The high human and social cost involved should lead to a renewed determination to devise adequate solutions. Everything possible must be done to free societies from the double scourge of drug addiction and AIDS, which claimed so many victims among young people.

45. Young people had been very active in the recent events in Eastern Europe and were continuing to play a part in promoting understanding, solidarity, development and peace in pluralistic structures. It was necessary, therefore, to improve the conditions for their participation in the social, educational and economic fields, so that their hopes could be realized. The initiatives taken as a follow-up to the International Youth Year must be broadened. The European Community recognized the importance of training and had organized major training programmes for young people. In that connection, it was also important to improve the channels of communication between the United Nations system and youth organizations the world over, with a view to improving the circulation of relevant information.

46. Likewise, the participation of aged people should be enhanced, given the value of their experience to society at large, particularly in view of the fact that, through improvements in medical care, elderly people constituted a much larger proportion of the overall population than in the past, especially in developed societies. The initiative taken by the United Nations Population Division and the municipal government of Kitakyushu, in Japan, in organizing an international conference on aging population in the context of the family was very welcome. On a world-wide basis, care for the elderly should remain high on the agenda, particularly when they were incapacitated by disease or physical weakness, as well as for those living in remote areas, who posed a challenge to society's capacity to provide the needed care. The United Nations could play a catalytic role in focusing energy and resources in that field in the years to come.

47. The member States of the European Community would give their full attention to preparations for the International Year of the Family, which would certainly help to emphasize the role of the family as a conduit of social cohesion and an important factor to be considered in the formulation of social welfare policies as well as in the promotion of equality between men and women. Since existing patterns and role models of the family differed among Member States, each country should determine on a national basis which activities to undertake in the context of the celebration of the International Year of the Family.

48. Mrs. TAVARES DE ALVARES (Dominican Republic) said that there were obsolete ideas and attitudes which, like the walls that had been broken down during the current year, could stand in the way of liberty and social well-being. The report of the Secretary-General on the question of aging (A/45/420) heralded the end of

(Mrs. Tavares de Alvares,
Dominican Republic)

one of those obstacles by implicitly recognizing the talents and skills of the aged as valuable human resources and as agents, rather than mere recipients, of social change and economic change. The report showed that a broader and more practical approach was being taken to the way in which the United Nations might deal with the crisis relating to the aging of the world's population; it was to be hoped that it would mark the beginning of a new era of co-operation between the United Nations, governmental organizations and the private sector. Her delegation accordingly endorsed the global calendar of events for 1992 and beyond.

49. Eight years earlier, at the World Assembly on Aging, a plan had been drawn up to address the problems of the aging, but the necessary means to carry out that programme had not been provided. The Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs had been given the task of implementing the plan, but its Aging Unit had to contend with increasing shortages of staff and resources. Governments had concentrated on addressing more visible and immediate priorities, and had not allocated funds for the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Aging; from the year 2000 onwards, however, the social crisis caused by the phenomenon of aging would become fully evident, especially in the third world, where it would escalate much more rapidly than in the developed countries and would change the basic nature of the human population of the planet.

50. Unless precautionary measures were taken, priorities would have to be altered when matters had already reached the chaotic stage that clearly lay ahead. Fortunately, there was now an awareness of the problem and the role of the aging in society was being redefined, as was the part that the United Nations might play in dealing with the situation. According to the report of the Secretary-General, the United Nations was turning to different types of groups in search of ideas, experience and resources, and assuming the role of co-ordinator. What was important was to encourage people to help themselves, so that they could have a sense of being in control of their own destiny.

51. Nowhere was that philosophy better reflected than in the Banyan Foundation, established under the auspices of the United Nations. The Foundation would work, in the context of the International Plan of Action on Aging, to empower the elderly to take their own decisions and to make a contribution to society; to that end, it would help obtain financing from a wide variety of private and public sources in order to carry out practical and profitable social projects and programmes. There were already some projects in existence which were promoting self-sufficiency among the aging, such as bakeries employing the elderly, in Colombia and Ecuador, automobile repair shops managed by elderly people in the Philippines, and self-service laundries operating in a home for the aged in Santiago, in the Dominican Republic. Other activities included home repair services, variety shops, equipment-rental businesses, industrial sewing establishments, child-care services and crafts.

52. With regard to the provision of capital to poor people with no savings, the programme that was being carried out in Bangladesh to assist poor women in rural

(Mrs. Tavares de Alvares,
Dominican Republic)

areas who had no access to credit was particularly interesting. Under that programme, the Grameen Bank had provided small loans without security to some 700,000 people in 14,000 villages and the repayment rate was as high as 98 per cent. A development bank for businesses run by the aging would also be established, following the model of the Grameen Bank, to provide capital for projects in which the elderly took part.

53. A more constructive approach to work with other groups and with the elderly themselves had finally put in motion machinery that would enable barriers to be broken down and international efforts to be channelled in the right direction.

54. Mr. KONKOBO (Burkina Faso), referring to agenda item 90, said that the world social situation depended on a process that was very important to the international community, namely social development, whose main purpose was the qualitative transformation of society in order to make it more just and equitable through the effective participation of all its members in the global process of development. The question called for rational analysis. Formerly, discussions on the subject of development had dealt with economic development and, either explicitly or implicitly, attention had been focused on such aspects as the gross domestic product (GDP), the gross national product (GNP), national income, foreign debt and similar matters. The social aspect had seldom been taken into account, as it had been considered non-productive or non-quantifiable. None the less, the experiences of several countries, as well as of the United Nations, had shown that neglect of the social aspects of development created serious problems for the economic and political stability of a country over the long term. Between 1960 and 1970, international agencies had mostly financed agricultural development projects, and economists had considered that a high growth rate was sufficient to ensure development; in third world countries, however, that option had led to an uneven distribution of income which had increased poverty. In fact, the World Bank had voiced certain criticisms regarding the results of the First Development Decade, and in his statement of 24 September 1973 to the Board of Governors, Bank President MacNamara had spoken of growth without development.

55. His delegation therefore felt it was necessary to abandon that narrow concept of development and to adopt a more global and dynamic definition.

56. A country was developed socially when its inhabitants, collectively, had real control over the decisions that affected them and the goods they produced. Social development existed where social inequalities were less pronounced, where organized groups were more numerous and where the flow of individual communications was smoother and more substantial. The demand for social development derived from the demand for equity in the distribution of wealth and power. His country's conception of social development differed from the more generally accepted concept of economic development. It was often thought that social development as his country conceived it was incompatible with economic development; in fact, however, economic development was not possible unless it was based on social development, as he had just defined it.

(Mr. Konkobo, Burkina Faso)

57. The deterioration in the economic and social situation of the developing countries had not abated, and the opportunities for social development of those countries, especially those in the sub-Saharan region of Africa, were decreasing. In addition to the social problems and the natural disasters affecting poor countries, their heavy debt burden and the economic-adjustment requirements of international financial institutions, especially since the beginning of the Gulf crisis, were factors which justified Burkina Faso's concern, and presaged even more disastrous economic and social problems for the developing countries. Consequently, his delegation hoped that a peaceful solution to the Gulf crisis would be found as soon as possible.

58. Turning to agenda item 92, on the problems of disabled persons, he saw that the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons was applied in Burkina Faso in a manner consistent with the options and capabilities of his country. Long before the proclamation of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, his country had realized that harmonious social development called for the active participation of all components of society, including disabled persons. Hence, Burkina Faso had adopted social, economic and legal measures to promote the true integration of disabled persons in production and in the various spheres of active life. His country was providing assistance to the different associations involved in the rehabilitation of disabled persons and, in the framework of its policy of reintegration and social promotion of disadvantaged groups, was giving disabled persons the opportunity to enjoy an active life, not only at the personal level but also at the level of participation in development activities. His delegation urged all non-governmental organizations to support the different associations of disabled persons in his country so that, under the guidance of the national institutions, they could consolidate the gains they had already made.

59. With regard to agenda item 96, on policies and programmes involving youth, he said that through the People's Democratic Revolution his country had taken a special interest in youth. That concern was doubly justified, since more than half the population of Burkina Faso was made up of young people. Burkina Faso had organized its youth into the great "pioneer" movement, in order to provide them with the necessary means to participate dynamically in the authorities' efforts to promote economic and social development. In 1990, among other measures on behalf of youth, a job assistance fund had been created and seminars had been organized in the provinces to discuss employment-related issues, with the participation of young people and with a view to considering ways and means of solving the problems of unemployment faced by rural and urban youth.

60. With regard to agenda item 104, on the International Year of the Family, his delegation appreciated that special attention must be paid to the family, which was the basic unit of society and the crucible in which social changes took place. The International Year was a very positive initiative which would help the international community to give serious thought to ways of genuinely furthering the cause of the family in a world where individualism was on the increase at the expense of traditional solidarity. It would also provide an opportunity for States to consider the adoption of a rational social policy which would really take

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account of the family. For those reasons, Burkina Faso supported the International Year of the Family on the basis of the ideas set forth in General Assembly resolution 44/82 and commended the Secretary-General on the measures he had taken for the organization of the International Year as set forth in his note (A/45/365).

61. It must always be borne in mind that no country could undertake or achieve development without mobilizing all the forces of a people united in solidarity. The motivation needed to develop such forces must come from individual and collective conviction freely expressed. On that basis, the Popular Front had since 15 October 1987 been pursuing a policy which sought to involve the people more deeply and genuinely in the promotion of their interests and bringing about a new society characterized by progress, solidarity, justice and prosperity.

62. Mr. PETROVSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the new world order should be one which respected the interests of all parties and affirmed the principles of human equality in international politics. It must be remembered that the present-day world, while extremely diverse, was at the same time a single living organism, and that injustice and cruelty caused suffering to real people. The new world order must be based not only on relations between States but also on the establishment of new relations between individuals. The process of establishing such relations touched all aspects of social life without exception: politics, economics and humanitarian questions. The international community, and in particular the United Nations, were responsible for ensuring the material and moral well-being of present and future generations.

63. Information which had been gathered, studied and disseminated over the years on the most diverse aspects of social life in different parts of the world was being used to prepare practical recommendations on specific measures and programmes to improve the social environment throughout the world and solve the problems of specific vulnerable population groups. A case in point was the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. However, there were millions of people in the final years of their lives who lacked even the basic means of subsistence. United Nations efforts to protect the rights of disabled people and the elderly had gained world-wide recognition; that was clear from the measures taken to humanize present-day life. The future of mankind should be the centre of attention in the international community and take its rightful place among the latter's priorities.

64. Regarding agenda item 96, he believed that the future of young people would depend to a large extent on the collective solution of serious present-day social problems. However, the special problems and needs of young people must also be taken into account. The establishment of a consistent youth policy was one of the most important of the tasks being dealt with by the authorities in the Soviet Union. Special legislation on youth was currently being drafted. The right of young people to education, employment and participation on an equal footing in the country's political, economic and social life, the promotion of contacts and exchanges between youth organizations and access for young people to information should be key issues in the Organization's activities concerning young people.

(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

65. Many present-day social problems, such as the situation of the elderly and young people, were the result of the disintegration of the family. That seemed to suggest that dehumanization was the result of humankind's paradoxical loss of humanity. The effects of that paradox were apparent in many of the ills of present-day society, such as drug addiction, delinquency and AIDS. The proclamation of 1994 as the International Year of the Family was evidence of the collective will of the international community to restore and strengthen the role of the family in development. Failure to seize the opportunity to mobilize all available resources to solve so vital a problem would be unforgivable.

66. In accordance with its terms of reference, the Committee must consider concurrently both the relationship between social problems and the development of international co-operation on human rights, and the humanitarian aspects of the Organization's activities. The international community had been extremely active in promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. A corpus of international law on human rights had been established in practice, consisting of important international instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty and the now almost completed Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and Their Families. However, it was time for clearer standards to be laid down on freedom of conscience and protection of the rights of the more vulnerable population groups. Human rights must also be guaranteed in respect of scientific and technological advances at a time of environmental deterioration.

67. The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe had contributed to the protection of human rights. In 1991 it would be holding a meeting in Moscow on humanitarian questions, with the aim of broadening the traditional parameters of interaction on human rights on the basis of recognition of the universal values of mankind. At that meeting the international community should concentrate on formulating new norms and guaranteeing the implementation of existing ones. The proposed international control mechanisms would play an important role in the implementation of human rights, promote the fulfilment of obligations undertaken by States and ensure that national legislation conformed with international norms. International human rights norms set the standard for national practice. The incorporation of those instruments of international law into the national laws and practice of all States was the real way to universalize and increase the effectiveness of those instruments as well as international humanitarian co-operation.

68. In the final analysis, it should be possible to achieve greater transparency and predictability in the development of the international situation and, to a large extent, guarantee human rights, although that would depend also on correspondence between national and international legal norms and the participation of countries in the international control mechanisms. That was the way to establish a new world order as a community of States under the rule of law, in which the primacy of international law was reaffirmed.

(Mr. Petrovsky, USSR)

69. The subject of law was man, and man would be fully reflected in society when recognition of his social role was assured and when he freely exercised his rights on an equal footing with others. Recent history confirmed the importance of human rights and their social impact in international relations. Failure to respect human dignity could even lead to regional conflicts which would jeopardize international peace and security. In the Gulf region an aggressor had wantonly obliterated the legitimate rights of an entire people, denying them not only the right to self-determination and the possibility of choosing their own form of political, economic and social development, but even the right to call themselves a people.

70. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union was optimistic about the future of international humanitarian co-operation in the spheres of human rights and social development. It believed that a climate of interaction between States should be created in the international human rights organs, where problems could be studied from the point of view of principle, not politics. The international community must understand that human rights were not a matter for ideological confrontation or interference in internal affairs, but were the common concern of all and a common objective for all those who remained faithful to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.