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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 13th MEETING

Chairman: Ms. COOMBS (New Zealand)
(Vice-Chairman)

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In the absence of the Chairman, Ms. Coombs (New Zealand),
Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 90: WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION (continued) (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 (continued)
(A/45/470)

AGENDA ITEM 96: POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES INVOLVING YOUTH (continued) (A/45/225,
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AGENDA ITEM 99: QUESTION OF AGING (continued) (A/45/207, A/45/420)

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

1. Mr. ONARHEIM (Norway) said that the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons had helped to focus international attention on the situation of the disabled. A major objective had been to include disabled persons and their organizations in the decision-making process in order to safeguard their fundamental rights. That had been one of the central tasks of the Disabled People's International, which had been established in connection with the Decade. Much remained to be done at the international level in order to guarantee the rights of the disabled in society and account must be taken of their experience when planning future activities.

2. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights also applied to the disabled. In addition to an individual's rights to freedom and social security, there was also the right of all persons to equal opportunity and to participate in society. The failure to observe those rights was a critical problem for the disabled. Article 25 of the Universal Declaration laid down the right to security in the event of disability. That was essential if an individual was to participate on an equal footing in society. He also stressed the importance of environmental considerations in dealing with disabled persons and pointed out that environmental pollution had led to new forms of disability.

3. Norway supported the proposal by Sweden to establish an open-ended working group in the Commission for Social Development to draw up a document setting forth standard rules for the equalization of opportunities for the disabled. It was important to focus on the special needs of disabled women. The United Nations should take advantage of the new international climate to deal with the entire range of human rights problems and enhance the status of disabled persons. Hundreds of thousands of children and adults had been disabled by war. Member States should intensify their efforts to improve the situation of the disabled through the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission for Social Development.

(Mr. Onarheim, Norway)

4. Organizations for the disabled based their activities on the view that equal opportunities could be achieved only by compensating for differences. Disabled persons themselves and their organizations represented the most important tools for making progress. Such organizations should be strengthened financially and accorded greater status. Norway supported the proposal put forward at the Meeting of Experts in Helsinki in May 1990 that the United Nations should draw up guidelines for consultation and co-operation between the various States and disabled persons' organizations. Lastly, his Government endorsed the view that the end of the Decade of Disabled Persons should constitute an agenda item of the General Assembly in 1992 and that disabled persons should be allowed to participate in the various national delegations.

5. Ms. PARRINO (United States of America) said that social welfare required the active participation of both Governments and individuals. While Governments could not provide all social services, they should give every person an equal opportunity to achieve a fair share of all that society had to offer. That applied particularly to women and children. Earlier in 1990, President Bush had signed into law the Americans with Disabilities Act, which was designed to provide equal access and equal opportunity in all fields of endeavour to 43 million disabled Americans and their families.

6. The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (A/45/470) rightly called for a shift in emphasis from awareness to action. The problems had been identified. National programmes must now be designed to address them. Efforts should focus on providing assistance to all who sought it, particularly in the field of prevention and rehabilitation. The young people of the world were its future and must be given the keys to future success: health and education. It was time to assist nations in carrying out programmes to enable each individual to pursue personal growth to the fullest extent. Ways must be found to ensure that the world's aging population would be able to live meaningful, dignified and independent lives. Programmes must be developed to provide the elderly with services and help them cope with the costs of long-term care. Referring to the note by the Secretary-General on the International Year of the Family (A/45/365), she stressed the need to take into account the substantial differences in family structures, traditions and values throughout the world and underscored the importance of observing the International Year at the national and local level. Lastly, it was essential to make the best possible use of limited resources in carrying out the various tasks under consideration.

7. Ms. BOUKADOUM (Algeria) speaking on behalf of the member States of the Arab Maghreb Union, said that the supplement to the 1989 report on the World Social Situation (A/45/137-E/1990/35) indicated that the economic and social situation of developing countries continued to deteriorate. The serious difficulties facing those countries, compounded by the burden of foreign debt and the impact of structural adjustment measures, had overwhelmed development efforts and jeopardized results achieved through great sacrifice. Like other developing countries, the States of the Maghreb had been severely affected by the economic crisis and its

(Ms. Boukadoum, Algeria)

social consequences. Determined to meet that challenge, they had established the Arab Maghreb Union in 1989 in order to promote social progress for the peoples of the region and to find common solutions to the most urgent problems facing them, particularly young people.

8. The growing gap between the industrialized and the developing countries posed a serious threat to world peace and security. To establish lasting peace, it was essential to ensure social and economic justice both within and among nations. The United Nations had a clear role to play by promoting international co-operation for the welfare of all peoples. It was hoped that the consensus reached at the eighteenth special session of the General Assembly would make it possible to carry out the commitments and achieve the objectives relating to international economic co-operation. The challenges facing the international community required integrated and global measures based on a spirit of solidarity. The Arab Maghreb Union firmly supported Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/55, which stressed the need to integrate social questions into the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade. The establishment of a more just world economic order was essential in order to ensure prosperity for all. The industrialized countries must make the necessary contribution to that effort by providing additional resources.

9. Mrs. MIGNOTT (Jamaica) said that the neglect of social development that had characterized the policies of the 1980s had had grave consequences for the living standards of most of the world's population, especially in the developing countries. The 1990s, however, if judged by recent outstanding developments, held the promise of positive changes for the world's people. In a growing awareness of the importance of social questions, a number of economic and financial bodies had considered that topic in elaborating policies for economic growth and development. The changing approach towards social development must be supported by concerted action to bring about concrete change aimed at improving the living standard and overall well-being of the world's population. The Jamaican Government had initiated a five-year plan for developing the country's human resources at every level of the development process. Specific attention was given to the particular needs of various social groups and special programmes were being considered for the aging, youth, the disabled and families.

10. Concerted follow-up activities for the International Youth Year should be promoted at every level. Jamaica supported the view put forward in the report of the Secretary-General on policies and programmes involving youth (A/45/422) that the tenth anniversary of the Year in 1995 should be commemorated to focus attention again on youth issues. Jamaica also supported the approach outlined in the report aimed at incorporating youth concerns into every part of the agenda. Jamaica's five-year national development plan contained special measures to revitalize youth programmes in the area of training, education, employment and community participation. The attempt to link agricultural training programmes for youth and the land divestment programme was a particular innovation.

(Mrs. Mignott, Jamaica)

11. The United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons was increasing world awareness of the needs and rights of that specific group. Jamaica would continue to support stronger measures on behalf of disabled persons during the remainder of the Decade and afterwards. The report by the Secretary-General on the question of aging (A/45/420) contained a number of innovative and important proposals on the Action Programme on Aging for 1992 and Beyond and the tenth anniversary of the World Assembly on Aging. Jamaica fully supported all efforts to address the needs of the aging and ensure their active involvement in society. Her Government also supported the observance of the International Year of the Family in 1994 to increase awareness of the importance of the family in bringing about social and economic change. She noted with satisfaction the valuable contribution by non-governmental organizations and advocacy groups in the social area and supported continued close co-operation between those organizations, Governments and the United Nations. Jamaica commended the efforts of UNICEF to draw attention to the plight of the world's children. Her country was committed to protecting the welfare of children and had drawn up measures to enhance family life and the status of children at the national level.

12. Mr. ZAWACKI (Poland) said that the family was the natural and fundamental unit of society, where people learned about human rights and respect for basic values and peace. Yet it was only recently that the international community had begun to recognize its importance. In proclaiming 1994 as the International Year of the Family, the Member States of the United Nations had recognized that the family must be strengthened to equip it to face the challenges and pressures of present-day times resulting from industrialization, rapid economic development and other factors. The needs of the family should be reflected in all areas of policy-making, with special emphasis on individual family members and the need to improve the status of women within and outside the family. Governments should be encouraged to improve public policies leading to better recognition of family values and greater support for differing family structures. The changing composition of the family should be studied as well as the factors leading to family break-up and ways of countering them.

13. The International Year of the Family offered a good opportunity for emphasizing the importance of the family in promoting development, giving the family its true place in society and ensuring that no member was discriminated against. The most urgent, short-term issue was to provide families with their basic needs for survival, including food, housing, water, medical care and access to family planning. Medium-term strategies should aim at improving opportunities for the advancement of basic living standards, through education, employment and social services, in particular for children and the elderly. Long-term strategies should help to promote individual development through cultural and intellectual pursuits. In view of the great differences in family structures, traditions and values, the International Year should be observed at national and local levels, the role of the United Nations being to assist national efforts.

14. The success of the International Year of the Family depended on adequate preparation and widespread support. Poland accordingly welcomed the designation by

(Mr. Zawacki, Poland)

the Secretary-General of a Co-ordinator for the Year and the establishment of an organizational secretariat within the Division for Social Development at Vienna. His delegation hoped that all States, relevant United Nations agencies and organizations, non-governmental organizations, communications media and the public would play an active part in preparing and observing the Year.

15. His delegation supported the Co-ordinator's proposal that, following the practice in other International Years, consideration should be given to the feasibility of establishing a voluntary trust fund.

16. All States should establish national mechanisms, such as co-ordinating committees, to prepare, observe and follow up the Year, and in particular to plan, stimulate and harmonize the activities of the governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations concerned.

17. As representative of the country which in 1986 had proposed the proclamation of an International Year of the Family, he firmly believed that the Year would offer a unique opportunity for mobilizing efforts to strengthen the family and emphasize its role in the contemporary world.

18. Mr. MAIER (Austria) said that he was speaking as a representative of the disabled community, being head of the Youth and Culture Centre for the Deaf in Graz and President of the Austrian Association for people who were hard of hearing or deaf or afflicted by tinnitus and people with speech impediments, and having worked for the deaf community for 21 years. He had himself been wearing a hearing aid for the past year and therefore knew at first hand the difficulties faced by the deaf in private, social and professional life.

19. He was raising the case of the people he represented in the context of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons because they had received little attention in the past, since their disability was not visible. It was, however, a serious disability in respect of one of the most important elements for human life, namely communication. Despite continual technical development, a hearing aid was not an "understanding" aid, and the public knew little about the problem.

20. Attendance at the recent World Congress of Education for the Deaf in Rochester had confirmed his belief that sign language must be legally recognized as the official language of the deaf so that the deaf community would have all the rights to which any linguistic minority in the world was entitled. Old educational structures must be abolished and the public must understand that linguistic minorities had the right to be educated in their own language. Governments must recognize that sign language was the primary language of communication for deaf persons and should ensure that sign language communication was made available within the educational system and at any Government-sponsored or jointly sponsored meeting, seminar or conference. Speech and sign language must exist together, with the same status. He had published a book on the subject, and sign language had now been incorporated into the curriculum as the 13th language at the institute for interpreters at Graz University.

(Mr. Maier, Austria)

21. He appealed to members of the Committee to support the urgent request of the people he was representing concerning the promotion of sign language and its development throughout the world. Most deaf people were ready to learn to communicate with the majority of hearing people, but hearing people must accept that sign language was the basis for a higher level of education, the prerequisite for an integrated life in society. Sign language also enabled deaf persons to take part in television programmes, for both deaf and hearing persons, by means of speech, subtitles and sign language.

22. With regard to the year 2000 and beyond, his organization intended to start an international project called "Auricle 2000" to increase people's awareness of the problems of hard-of-hearing and deaf people and to improve their lives. The project would entail a world-wide campaign on behalf of persons with impaired hearing, with annual congresses including lectures on special medical, psychological, teaching and acoustics problems, by experts and by afflicted persons, as well as musical and other performances by artists with impaired hearing. The congress could be followed by activities throughout the world to increase the awareness of government institutions of the problems of impaired hearing, particularly in the developing countries.

23. Mr. GILLIBERT (France), speaking on agenda item 92, welcomed the importance that the General Assembly attached to the problem of disabled people, who formed 10 per cent of the world population. For centuries, handicapped people, life's casualties, had never played a full or active part in their countries' social life. Integration had been an illusion: indeed there had never been any question of trying to integrate handicapped persons: their dependence from birth had been a fact of life. They had merited only kindness and charity, their daily life being reduced to eating, sleeping and surviving. Today, however, parents, friends and, above all, handicapped people themselves, had begun to wake up and shake public opinion out of its indifference, although all too often such efforts met with mass inertia and egoism.

24. Governments must take action and produce policies for integration at all levels: social, economic, educational, cultural and political. That was the urgent task that France had set itself. It was the purpose of the Decade, but it had to be admitted that results had fallen short of expectations. For eight years authorities had been aware of the scope of the tasks and the complex and varying situations in over 150 very differing countries. The problem was how to find an effective approach that would be acceptable to all, within the United Nations. The proposal by the representative of Sweden to set up a working group was worth considering, but the purpose of such a group would have to be clearly defined. In his opinion, it would not be appropriate to establish specific rights for disabled people since the policy of integration required that disabled people should enjoy the same rights as those of all citizens. Life's casualties must be given the possibility of full access to those rights. He regretted that the resources available for the Decade were so meagre.

(Mr. Gillibert, France)

25. To ensure that the last part of the Decade produced real results, activities must be made as operational as possible and must be based on a clear and precise analysis of priorities. As a first stage, he would propose that Governments should select one or more of the objectives of the Decade, as priorities to be achieved by 1993. For 1990, France had chosen the future of mentally handicapped persons, including the construction of new specialized establishments and specially built dwellings for seriously handicapped adults over the age of 20, since their families were incapable of dealing with the situation. It had also chosen the field of transport. The priorities selected for 1991 were accessibility, integration in school and university, and employment. Countries which had chosen the same priorities might co-operate.

26. In the context of the proposed World Conference, it would be useful if, during the preparatory meetings, each State would indicate what global approach it could envisage, bearing in mind its economic, social and cultural constraints. That would help each country to establish a global policy, taking into account the whole 24-hours-a-day existence of a disabled person. Disabled persons had the right to choose freely the way in which they participated in the active life of their country, but they must be given the means. The advantage of that policy lay in planning. In France, the Secretariat of State for Disabled People and Life's Casualties had been working for two years to give disabled people the possibility of living with dignity and as full citizens. The kind of structure called for by the President and the Prime Minister made it possible to carry out that policy, involving all the members of the Government, elected officials and people at the grass-roots level, uniting in a consensus.

27. He hoped that the term "life's casualties" would gradually replace the word "disabled" which had a negative connotation, suggesting an outcast. The term "life's casualties" was more appropriate and better illustrated the true situation. Social integration should start from birth, through positive information given to parents and preventive medical follow-up. At school, which should be open to all, disabled children were all too often victims of attitudes of exclusion. A constant battle must be waged for children who were different to have the benefit of the education provided for all, in ordinary surroundings. Education must be given by families as well. In the university world, study groups should be encouraged so that disabled students, life's casualties and others, could work together to find solutions for the inaccessibility of universities.

28. In the world of work, legislation must provide for disabled persons to be integrated in the economy. Vocational training was essential to give them the possibility of finding and holding employment. Under French law employment of disabled workers was compulsory in firms with more than 20 paid staff.

29. The disabled had the right to choose whether to work in a normal environment or one with special equipment, but that right could not be exercised unless the question of persons to accompany them had been solved. In 1991, France would embark on an experiment by which some young people carrying out their military service would be allowed to act as escorts for handicapped people employed in

(Mr. Gillibert, France)

normal working environments. Transport policy also determined the possibility of communication between the handicapped and the outside world. The Government of France had adopted a programme relating to transport for the disabled, which involved a commitment of 60 million francs a year for the land and air transport enterprises concerned.

30. All the countries of the world should work together in implementing a global policy for the disabled. During his travels in many parts of the world, he had been able to observe the causes of the success or stagnation of various policies. Exchanges of experts between two or more countries should be arranged in order to study the approach taken to the disabled in other countries. France had established bilateral working groups with Germany, Belgium, Ireland, Finland, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom and Turisia to study such questions as the improvement of legislation relating to employment, allowances, medical research and industrial policy concerning equipment for the disabled. As the result of a visit paid recently to his office by the Minister of Labour and Social Welfare of Romania, he himself would soon go to Romania with experts in various fields to help in the training of medical and paramedical personnel and in the establishment of urgently needed facilities. Following that trip and after a number of studies had been carried out, he would present a humanitarian plan for disabled children.

31. In November 1991, France would host a conference at which 23 Ministers of the Council of Europe would consider the subjects of job accessibility, equipment and information with regard to the disabled. The political will to bring about a revolution in respect of treatment of the disabled must also be mobilized in the third world. His Government was eager to launch a campaign of practical action in countries experiencing particular difficulties, especially with regard to the training of medical and paramedical staff. He appealed in particular to representatives of industrialized countries to recognize that the disabled in less fortunate countries did not have the specialists and technology to be found in the developed world. The industrialized countries had the duty of forming working groups for identifying disabled persons desiring to overcome their handicaps and for combating the injustices suffered by the innocent victims of disabilities.

32. Mr. LIU Xincheng (China) said that the rich countries were growing richer while the poor ones were growing poorer. An enormous external debt and failed structural readjustments were among the problems that made social development in the developing countries more difficult than it was in the developed ones, and the international community must take measures to help the former, particularly by reducing their debt burden, so that they could deal with social development issues.

33. His delegation appreciated the positive role played by the United Nations in alleviating the plight of the disabled, most of whom had the additional disadvantage of living in developing countries and hence required special help. He drew attention to paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 44/70 and said that China's own progress in providing the disabled with jobs, training, rehabilitation and education was in part due to its success in establishing national committees

(Mr. Liu Xinquang, China)

and organizations throughout the country. Another factor was government policy, which incorporated help for the disabled into the country's social and economic development strategy.

34. His delegation welcomed the work of the United Nations and its agencies in the field of aging, including progress in the development of regional training and research institutions. International efforts had heightened awareness of the problems of aging in individual countries and the world as a whole. China was prepared to increase its co-operation with the United Nations and other organizations and countries in that field. Domestically, China's policy was to enable retired persons to continue to contribute to society. Among the various priorities and recommendations put forward internationally, his delegation particularly supported those that gave priority to the participation of the aged in development and training and in the development of community services.

35. Mr. FERNANDEZ (Spain) said that while subscribing fully to the intervention made on behalf of the Twelve by the representative of Italy concerning the cluster of items relating to social development, his delegation wished to refer specifically to item 96, "Policies and programmes involving youth" and to the importance it attached to the work now under way regarding the integration of youth into society. His delegation was pleased to note that during its thirty-second session, the Commission for Social Development would give priority to the question of the integration of young people into society and that it had organized an international symposium on that subject in conjunction with the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Office at Vienna. His delegation agreed with the other members of the Commission that the subject was of vital importance for all societies in both the developed and the developing world, and felt that the Commission needed to formulate practical recommendations in that respect.

36. His delegation was aware of the difficulties and obstacles which still persisted in connection with the achievement of the objectives of International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace. That problem should be viewed from two aspects: the design of comprehensive youth policies at national level, and the strengthening or creation of national youth machinery. By comprehensive policies, he meant policies involving all social agents and giving cohesion to the activities of Governments in connection with youth. In such policies, attention should be paid to the youth component of every aspect of government activity, including support for autonomous and democratic young people's associations. The action called for would also include the creation of institutions dealing with youth as instruments for planning the integration of youth policies into national development plans. His delegation hoped that the questions he had raised would be taken into account by the Secretary-General in drafting his report on the application of the guidelines for further planning and suitable follow-up in the field of youth (A/40/256, annex).

37. Ms. GEIL (Denmark) said that the young people of the world were growing impatient and wanted immediate action on vital issues such as the environment, human rights, world peace, the debt crisis, poverty and development in the least developed countries. They wanted real and not merely formal influence and were ready to accept the attendant responsibilities. At the local level, they were very concerned about environmental issues, and were the group that was most ready to change its living habits to improve the environment. At the national level, youth organizations all over the world urged their countries to become party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and encouraged its implementation, especially in the areas of health and education. The youth of the world hoped that the good intentions expressed at the World Summit for Children would be realized. At the international level, youth co-operation was promoting the human contact and understanding that were the basis for a peaceful world.

38. Young people wanted freedom and democracy and urged the international community to intensify pressure on countries that did not observe human rights. The welcome improvement in international relations unfortunately had not been accompanied by any reduction in the growing gap between the rich countries and the poor ones. The relative position of the least developed countries in particular, whose very number was increasing, was deteriorating, and young people were among those most affected by that situation.

39. Another area of young people's concern was the ecological deterioration of the planet, and developed countries had a special responsibility to show the necessary political will to solve environmental problems. Young people must be kept informed and encouraged to help save the environment. Youth must be involved in the solution of problems both locally and internationally and must participate in decision-making processes. Unfortunately, very little had been accomplished to ensure young people's participation at the United Nations, where only 3 of the 150 delegations to the General Assembly included youth delegates. Young people should participate in the preparation of United Nations youth policy and all countries should allow young people to be represented in their official delegations. Youth representation at the United Nations should be given priority and consultative status for non-governmental youth organizations should be reviewed.

40. Ms. GRES (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that natural and man-made disasters were among the factors that had often had destructive effects on the social structure of countries and regions. In the Byelorussian SSR, the social and other problems of her 11 million countrymen had to be understood in the light of the Chernobyl disaster, which affected not only her own region but, through unmanageable radioactive waste, other regions as well, and to an extent not yet fully understood. The biological effects of radiation on the human organism had produced a catastrophe comparable to AIDS. Families feared having children with birth defects and people were even afraid to go swimming or take a walk in the woods. Most parts of the country suffered from radioactive contamination but still had to grow agricultural products because the uncontaminated portion was too small. The result was a decline in the quality of food products and failure to decontaminate them fully. Thyroid disorders in children and adults threatened to

(Ms. Gres, Byelorussian SSR)

become a national tragedy. An increased incidence of leukemia and malignancies could also be expected. The problems of the aged had also been exacerbated by the disaster because many older people chose to return to the contaminated areas, where their grandchildren could not live, in order to die.

41. The Chernobyl disaster also had terrible psychological, economic and social consequences for young people, particularly those who had taken part in the clean-up operations afterwards. Many young people had sacrificed not only their health but even their lives to save the world from a nuclear catastrophe and many were now invalids with reduced life expectancies. She drew attention to paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 44/70 and said that the fate of those young people must not be forgotten in complying with its provisions. The positive response of the world's ecologically conscious youth to Chernobyl reflected its commitment to international co-operation for a better world.

42. For four years her country had not asked for help, but it could no longer cope with the effects of the disaster - which had caused material damage equal to eight annual national budgets - and if the necessary steps were not taken immediately, millions more would suffer, resulting in an irreversible tragedy for all mankind.

43. Mr. SUMULONG (Philippines) expressed his delegation's satisfaction that the United Nations Office at Vienna was continuing to deal with social development issues in an integrated way. The supplement to the 1989 Report on the World Social Situation (A/45/137) was a reflection of the efforts being made within the United Nations system to develop a comprehensive approach. His delegation agreed that policy should focus not only on gross domestic product per capita but also on the humanization of development. To that end, it reiterated its support of efforts to strengthen the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs.

44. Noting that the cluster of items before the Committee were directed towards the disadvantaged and vulnerable social groups - youth, the aging and the disabled - he reminded the Committee of action it had initiated in the past in such areas as the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, the International Plan of Action on Aging and the guidelines for further planning and suitable follow-up in the field of youth. He expressed grave concern at reports that those endeavours had not been fully implemented.

45. His country's 1987 Constitution placed great emphasis on social justice, recognizing the vital role of youth and women in nation-building and making special provision for social justice and human rights. Concern for the welfare of disabled persons in the Philippines had begun in 1917 with the adoption of a revised administrative code. The 1987 Constitution had accelerated recognition of the plight of disabled Filipinos by providing for the establishment of a national committee for their welfare and for an education policy, special election procedures and free hospitalization for disabled persons. The Philippine development plan for the period 1988-1992 also addressed the needs of the disabled, providing for welfare programmes for them in 113 regions of the country, including services and workshops in the fields of self-reliance, human dignity, training and

(Mr. Sumulong, Philippines)

employment. Difficulties stemming from poor economic conditions, a lack of enabling laws, meagre resources for information campaigns and widespread apathy had, however, been encountered in the implementation of that policy. His delegation, therefore, attached great importance to the principal recommendations contained in the feasibility study on alternative ways to mark the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (A/45/470) and would join other delegations in introducing a draft resolution on the need for action-oriented activities for the remaining years of the decade.

46. Young people comprised a large sector of the population of the Philippines. The fact that that sector had its own congressional representative had encouraged the adoption of legislation and programmes relating to youth. The Philippine Presidential Council for Youth Affairs had recently worked with other youth organizations to formulate a national youth development plan in accordance with United Nations guidelines. The Council functioned as the national co-ordinating committee for the International Youth Year. His country was fully committed to its obligations as a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

47. With regard to the aging, his country supported global efforts to implement the provisions of the International Plan of Action on Aging and the Philippine medium-term development plan made provision for appropriate privileges and benefits for the elderly. His country therefore supported the Action Programme on Aging for 1992 and Beyond, which, it believed, should have a catalytic effect on the implementation of the International Plan of Action.

48. The Philippines welcomed the proclamation of the International Year of the Family. In the Philippines the family was recognized as the foundation of the nation, and a new family code aimed at strengthening the family as the basic social institution and ensuring equality between men and women had been promulgated. The Philippines supported the establishment of national committees to prepare for the International Year of the Family; however, it felt that in local, regional and national activities, the focus should be on different individuals comprising the family, i.e., women, the elderly, youth, the disabled and children and on problems resulting from their interrelations. His delegation believed that the solution to many social problems lay in cohesive family foundations and pledged itself to support every effort of the international community to promote family welfare and solidarity.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.