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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 15th MEETING

Chairman: Ms. ZINDOGA (Zimbabwe)
(Vice-Chairman)

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In the absence of the Chairman, Ms. Zindoga (Zimbabwe),
Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 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)

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

1. Mr. BURCUOĞLU (Turkey), referring to agenda item 90, spoke of the crisis which, to varying degrees, was affecting all societies owing to rapid population growth, sometimes uncontrolled urbanization, the neglect of social problems in favour of economic expansion, and the imbalance in the distribution of resources. Turkey, in the midst of social change and urbanization, was endeavouring to resolve its social problems and develop its human resources, taking into account the social aspect of growth.

2. Turning to agenda item 96, he indicated the measures taken by his Government on behalf of young people, who comprised more than 20 per cent of a population of 57 million. Out-of-school education programmes for young people, vocational training and self-employment programmes were under way. The sixth five-year plan (1990-1994) included activities to encourage young people to play an active part in the everyday life of the country, as well as measures to protect against such scourges as drug abuse, delinquency and AIDS. His delegation welcomed the recommendations contained in document A/45/422 and noted that Turkey was among the 24 countries which had submitted information to the Secretary-General on their activities to implement the guidelines and integrate young people into social and professional life.

3. With reference to agenda item 104, he recalled the role of the family, which was the repository of human and moral values and of cultural identity, the keystone of social solidarity and a barrier against any worsening of social problems. His Government had also replied to the request from the Secretary-General concerning the preparation of a draft programme for the International Year of the Family.

4. Turning to agenda item 99, he noted with interest the 1992 programme of activities on aging, contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/45/420). The problem of aging had also begun to affect Turkish society, in which the elderly

(Mr. Burcuoglu, Turkey)

had always enjoyed a highly respected status. There was now greater national awareness of the problem and consciousness-raising campaigns were being conducted. At the same time health services and rehabilitation centres were being organized and special concessions for the elderly in various areas were planned.

5. Moving on to agenda item 92, he described the measures taken under the sixth five-year plan for the disabled. The plan involved integrating people with disabilities into everyday life and society in all its aspects, helping them to be less dependent and making life easier for them. In order to promote equal opportunities, Turkish legislation required companies to hire the disabled, for whom there was a special employment service in the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. The disabled were granted tax exemptions and the National Council for the Disabled was consulted in formulating and implementing relevant programmes. In addition, there was an increasing number of disabled young people in Turkey who attended university and thus had access to better jobs. Turkey endorsed the recommendations of the feasibility study on alternative ways to mark the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/45/470). His country had hopes that the Organization could make a contribution to resolving social problems by mobilizing international co-operation for that purpose.

6. Ms. SEMAFUMU (Uganda), with reference to agenda item 90, recalled the adoption by the General Assembly, two decades earlier, of the Declaration on Social Progress and Development, and the tremendous social progress which had taken place since then in some parts of the world, as noted in the report of the Secretary-General (A/45/137-E/1990/35). Unfortunately, the report confirmed an alarming deterioration in standards of living in many developing countries, attributable to the interconnected nature of economic and social problems. The collapse of commodity prices, the deterioration in the terms of trade, high interest rates and the debt burden had undermined the ability of developing countries to invest sufficient resources in such areas as health, education, sanitation and water supply. Unable to profit from the potential of their human resources to promote economic growth, developing countries had, on the contrary, suffered a continuing loss of the skills and the human resources needed for their social and economic development. In addition, in a bid to reduce their budget deficits, they had had to adopt a number of austerity measures which had prevented them from expanding their meagre social infrastructures. On the threshold of the twenty-first century, prospects remained bleak for the billion people living in absolute poverty throughout the world.

7. Her delegation commended the efforts made by the international community to promote social development. In acknowledging the importance of national efforts in that regard, Uganda underscored the need to strengthen international co-operation. In order to attain the goal of universal social progress, the international community must seriously address the economic crisis faced by developing countries, essentially by establishing more equitable terms of trade, substantially easing the debt burden, increasing resource flows to developing countries and providing genuine assistance in key areas of national economies. In that connection, her

(Ms. Semafumu, Uganda)

delegation took note of compensatory arrangements such as those established under the Lomé IV convention and the Swiss compensatory financing scheme. She hoped that the fourth United Nations international development strategy would also have a positive effect on the world's socio-economic situation.

8. Notwithstanding those difficulties, Uganda had made some gains in its efforts to provide its citizens with basic social services. The Government had emphasized the modernization of hospitals and health centres, the training of health personnel, the control of epidemics and infectious diseases and the improvement of maternal and child health care. The expanded programme of immunization implemented in Uganda in co-operation with UNICEF had reduced infant mortality from 114 per 1,000 in 1985 to 101 per 1,000 in 1989. A modernized blood bank had been opened the year before in Kampala and similar centres were planned at the regional level.

9. Her delegation welcomed the assistance of the international community, from which Uganda had secured \$US 160 million in loans and grants for the improvement of the water system nation-wide. Two projects had made it possible to supply safe water and ins`all sewerage systems in urban areas. As only 20 per cent of the rural population had access to drinking water, a programme had been undertaken in all districts of Uganda in order to improve the situation in that area.

10. Referring to agenda item 96, she took note of the encouraging report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the guidelines for suitable follow-up of the International Youth Year, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 40/14 of November 1985, and the recommendations contained therein. While youth issues remained on the agenda of various United Nations bodies in the early 1990s, the report of the Secretary-General observed a declining interest in youth concerns at the regional and international levels. It was to be hoped that the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year would once again focus attention on a question of major interest. Aware of the need to integrate youth policies in national development and to enhance communication between youth and the Government, Uganda ensured youth participation in the decision-making process. One of the nine members of the Committees of Resistance Councils was a Youth Secretary. In the national Parliament, a seat was reserved for an elected representative of the youth movements.

11. Referring to agenda item 92, she said that her delegation welcomed the international community's activities for disabled persons, especially the activities of the developed countries and non-governmental organizations. Unfortunately, disabled persons in developing countries were subjected to the effects of disabled economies. Her delegation hoped for intensified international co-operation in order to supplement national efforts to alleviate the plight of the disabled in developing countries. It wished to thank various non-governmental organizations, such as the Norwegian Association of the Disabled, the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind, the Christoffel Blinden Mission and Danida Papsca, which had greatly assisted the various services for the disabled in Uganda.

12. Concerning agenda item 104, her delegation underscored the importance of the family as the basic political, economic and social unit, and noted with

(Ms. Semafumu, Uganda)

satisfaction the arrangements undertaken thus far in order to implement General Assembly resolution 44/82, proclaiming 1994 as the International Year of the Family. It supported, in particular, the proposals by Mr. Sokalski, Director of the Social Development Division regarding the establishment of national co-ordinating committees and a voluntary fund that would provide technical assistance, particularly to least developed countries.

13. Concerning agenda item 99, her delegation took note of the draft "action programme on aging for 1992 and beyond". In Africa, it was traditionally each family's responsibility to care for the elderly, who, because of their experience, were respected by society. However, the changing structure of the family unit as a result of modernization, economic crises and military conflicts, tended to relegate senior citizens to a secondary position. And yet, developing countries must find practical ways of helping the elderly to lead meaningful, dignified and independent lives.

14. Her delegation wished to reaffirm the need for an international economic environment conducive to sustained economic growth. While economic growth did not systematically lead to social progress, economic stagnation made it virtually impossible. Her delegation therefore welcomed the strengthening of the United Nations Office at Vienna which should none the less take place within the overall context of the restructuring of the economic and social sectors. For that reason, it looked forward to the reports of the Secretary-General on the strengthening of the Office and the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council.

15. Mr. BROWNHILL (Australia) said that social justice - whether it concerned disabled persons, the aged or youth - was the common theme of the cluster of agenda items under consideration. It was clearly incumbent on the United Nations to encourage all its Member States to ensure that justice prevailed in their own societies.

16. Referring mainly to agenda item 92, he reiterated that over the 10 years since the International Year of Disabled Persons had been proclaimed, Australia had taken several initiatives in order to translate its objectives - full participation and equality - into reality at all levels of society. In 1984, the Government had asked disabled persons and their families about their aspirations. Their answer had been simple: a job, a home and a chance to live an ordinary life, just like everyone else. To that end, the Disability Service Act had been adopted in 1986. The Act applied the major principles of the Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons particularly the principle of equal opportunities. In the current phase, services and programmes funded by the federal Government must be introduced in order to improve the lot of such persons, particularly by ensuring them greater independence, employment opportunities and integration into the community.

17. Over the past decade, Australia had achieved the following results, which it believed were in conformity with the goals and principles of the World Programme of Action: the establishment, at the federal and state levels, of advisory bodies made up of consumers with disabilities, parents of disabled children, and

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representatives of providers of services; the establishment of technical aids and appliance programmes administered by states and funded jointly by the state and federal Governments; the gradual extension of anti-discrimination legislation to all Australian states in the areas of employment, education, housing and access to goods and services; the integration of disabled persons into federal and state public services; the introduction of 24-hour state-subsidized transport services for disabled persons; the expansion of local rehabilitation centres; the development of national construction standards providing for access to buildings by disabled persons. Lastly, the restructuring of the Commonwealth disability pension scheme should substantially improve opportunities for the employment, training and rehabilitation of disabled persons.

18. During the 1980s, his Government had collaborated closely with non-governmental organizations in establishing new directions for policies, services and programmes for the disabled. It especially supported the practical initiatives of the United Nations for the recognition of the right to dignity, an independent life and equal opportunities of doubly disadvantaged disabled persons, including women, aborigines and islanders, non-English-speaking persons and certain age-specific groups. Much remained to be done, however, and his Government intended to pursue its activities in the 1990s. His delegation wished to recall the proposal put forward by Sweden, at the May 1990 session of the Economic and Social Council, for the establishment of an open-ended working group to develop standard rules with a view to ensuring equal opportunities for disabled persons. It fervently hoped that that working group would take into account the recommendations contained in the report of the meeting of experts on alternative ways to mark the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, and that the question of access to buildings and the possibility of adopting international standards in that area would be considered.

19. In response to suggestions made on 17 October 1990 by Mr. Hoegh, he stated that during the International Year of Disabled Persons (1981) a national co-ordinating committee of non-governmental organizations had been established in Australia to advise on various disability issues and the programme for the Year. Many of its advisory functions had been taken up by the Disability Advisory Council of Australia. Australia recommended particularly that Governments and the United Nations should consult disabled persons on implementation of any legislative or other measure having an impact on their lives. It supported the suggestion that bilateral aid programmes should be reviewed to give higher priority to assistance to disadvantaged groups, especially persons with disabilities, taking into account recipient country objectives. Australia was placing increasing importance on accessibility standards in the broadest context, not only access to buildings, but also greater communications access. His delegation applauded the translation of the initial debate of the Third Committee on that cluster of items into sign language. It was desirable for United Nations documents and publicity and educational materials to appear so far as possible in braille, large print and audio tape, as was the current common practice in most official departments in Australia. It would also be advisable to avoid discriminatory terminology, such as "the handicapped" or "the disabled", and to use expressions such as "persons with a

(Mr. Brownhill, Australia)

handicap" or "persons with a disability", which placed the emphasis on the person rather than the handicap.

20. Referring briefly to agenda item 104, he emphasized the fundamental role of the family in society. As the International Year of the Family approached, the diversity, cultural characteristics and needs of families must be highlighted and the family must be strengthened. The International Year of the Family should be devoted particularly to the study of practical problems, such as the impact of a handicap on family life.

21. Mr. ZAWACKI (Poland) said that the integration of youth into society was a complex process requiring wide-ranging programmes and strategies. The Polish Government was aware of the difficulty of the task, particularly because of the country's transition to a market economy. The young people were expecting the reconstruction to revitalize the economy and, consequently, create new opportunities for them.

22. Polish society was relatively young, with 30 per cent of the population under 18 years. Since 1985, the birth rate had fallen, which would change the demographic structure of the country in the years to come. The nuclear family predominated, but the number of single-parent families was growing constantly. Relationships between parents and children still followed the traditional authoritarian pattern.

23. The reform programme undertaken by the new Government was intended to improve the economy, but families faced problems which had not previously existed. Overburdened by work, parents had less time to devote to their children. Furthermore, because of a noticeable decline in real wages, more and more families could buy only the cheapest foods; cases of malnutrition had been discovered recently among children. The number of unemployed was increasing as well as the number of persons threatened with job loss, especially among youth.

24. The economic situation was shaping the attitude of Polish youth. In Poland a noticeable disinterest in further education, particularly at the higher levels, was noted. Furthermore, only a small percentage of youth were active in politics. His Government faced the difficult task of developing a new social policy designed to improve the situation of youth and to establish a system that would encourage their participation in the social and political life of the country. Despite those problems, Polish youth currently had a unique opportunity to fulfil their political aspirations by forming independent and democratic associations and movements.

25. The Government intended to formulate a youth policy in conformity with the long-term strategy and practical recommendations adopted by the General Assembly at its fortieth session. Improvement of the general situation of youth, however, remained an elusive goal. The follow-up activities of International Youth Year within the United Nations system and inter-agency co-operation in youth research were thus especially important. Better data bases on youth would help to make United Nations activities more effective. To that end, all Member States should

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furnish the Secretary-General with more detailed information on their youth policies.

26. The principal results of the World Programme of Action concerning disabled persons and the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, had been increased awareness of the problems and rights of persons with disabilities, the growing number of organizations of disabled persons and the substantial increase in the numbers of censuses and surveys with a disability component. Member States must continue to find innovative ways of integrating the needs and interests of disabled persons into national planning. Unfortunately, it must be admitted that implementation of the World Programme of Action had fallen short of expectation.

27. His Government had taken measures to implement the recommendations of the World Programme of Action, but the end of the decade had coincided with a difficult period for Poland. In such circumstances, the Government must, above all, protect the most vulnerable groups, among which were the disabled. Recently, the Government had included that objective in the new social policy.

28. In recent times, new guiding principles had been established for governmental institutions and various organizations working with disabled persons and emphasized the rehabilitation, particularly the vocational rehabilitation, of those persons. Particular attention had also been given to the question of disabled children. Numerous steps had been taken to meet their needs in all areas -- health care, rehabilitation, education, recreation and culture -- as well as in social benefits and assistance.

29. His Government had noted a need for a comprehensive approach to the various problems faced by disabled persons, in health care, family life, education, work and communication, among others. In that regard, it had concerned itself particularly with means of helping the handicapped to achieve their goals, whatever the nature or degree of their disability. More than in the past, those efforts had had an effect on the rehabilitation of the chronically ill, co-operation with families, integration into schools, construction of more accessible facilities, and grants of higher benefits for the most severely disabled over age 18. The Government was encouraging modernization of orthopaedic and rehabilitation equipment, and the design and manufacture of toys to stimulate the development of visually impaired children.

30. Despite the many initiatives taken to make Polish society more aware of the problems and needs of the disabled, much remained to be done in that field.

31. Ms. HAMALAINEN (Finland), speaking on behalf of the five Nordic countries, said that social questions were inseparable from equal opportunity for all. The concept of human resources development was central to national strategies in education, health care, family planning, water and sanitation, nutrition and housing. Such development should take place above all in accordance with the essential principles of democracy, human rights and the participation of both men and women.

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32. Human development could, however, be threatened by certain factors with negative social consequences, such as the crises erupting in various parts of the globe, which threatened all population groups, and environmental degradation, not to overlook certain psychological and psychosocial factors not given sufficient consideration.

33. It was well known that, when a conflict erupted between two countries or within a country itself, it was the children who suffered most from hunger and disease. In that context, the Nordic countries believed that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child could make a contribution to a noticeable improvement in social security, the living environment and a future for children.

34. The improvement of family life depended on the progress made in a variety of areas, including equality issues, which the Nordic countries felt were deserving of particular attention as the United Nations prepared for the International Year of the Family. The programme for the Year should be based on the widest possible definition of the family, so that all dimensions of the family and all types of family units (including single-parent and extended families) would be considered, and stereotypes would be avoided. While the situation of women deserved special attention, the role of men in the family, especially as fathers, should not be excluded.

35. The 1989-1993 Action Plan for co-operation between women and men, adopted by the Nordic Council of Ministers, concentrated on two themes: the role of women in economic development and the problems connected with the dual responsibilities of family and professional life, which were related to the need for equal opportunities in the labour market and for good child-care facilities.

36. The importance of young people as a population group made it essential to integrate them into society. The report of the United Nations-organized international symposium on the integration of youth, held at Toledo in June 1990, called for dynamic interaction between young people and adults.

37. With regard to the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, adopted in the context of the 1983-1992 United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, she noted that barriers of all types continued to prevent disabled persons from participating fully in community life, in industrialized and developing countries alike. The Nordic countries felt that the success of the Decade was of the utmost importance to the development of all nations. Their Governments had therefore supported the activities undertaken for the Decade, and had initiated concrete action to achieve the Decade's goals. On the initiative of Sweden, the Economic and Social Council had adopted unanimously, at its first session in 1990, a resolution authorizing the Commission for Social Development to elaborate standard minimum rules for the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons. Norway had financed the post of Special Representative of the Secretary-General to promote implementation of the Decade, and Denmark had financed the post of Press Officer in the Office of the Special Representative. The Nordic Council had recently organized a two-day seminar on the situation of disabled persons and on the

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implementation of the World Programme of Action in those countries. Sweden and Finland had made special contributions to the Disabled Persons Unit of the United Nations Office at Vienna.

38. In May 1990, the United Nations and the Government of Finland had arranged a meeting of experts in Järvenpää to conduct a feasibility study on the substantive, financial and administrative implications of alternative ways to mark the end of the Decade in 1992. The recommendations formulated at that meeting would contribute significantly to the drafting of standard minimum rules on the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons. It had also been proposed at the Järvenpää meeting that the General Assembly should convene, in 1993, an international ministerial-level conference on disability. The Nordic countries were carefully examining that proposal.

39. The Nordic countries emphasized that Governments and the United Nations system should work to strengthen organizations of disabled persons to facilitate their progress in various areas: independence and participation of disabled persons on an equal basis; development co-operation by disabled persons; the special problems of women with disabilities, particularly, but not exclusively, in developing countries; procedures at the national and international levels to secure implementation of existing human rights standards; and the situation of disabled children.

40. The Nordic countries, whose Governments co-operated closely with organizations of disabled persons, supported the establishment of national co-ordination committees on disability. They also favoured the development of guidelines to assist Governments and United Nations bodies in establishing an appropriate framework for their co-operation with organizations of the disabled. Some positive results had been obtained at the international level, but much more could be done, such as designing a framework for the implementation of a long-term strategy.

41. Another topic of importance to the Nordic countries was crime prevention. The Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, held in Havana at the end of August 1990, had yielded many innovative ideas on how to improve the Organization's programme on crime. The discussions held on reducing prison sentences and developing alternative forms of punishment were encouraging. The Nordic countries felt that violence in the family should be a central theme at the ninth congress. The protection of minors who had been deprived of their liberty and action to prevent juvenile crime were among the central issues that should be handled jointly by social and judicial administrations.

42. At the Havana Congress, model treaties on extradition and on mutual assistance in criminal matters had been adopted. Those model treaties should enhance international co-operation in that field, and help to overcome the long-standing problems caused by different legal systems and traditions.

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43. The Nordic countries supported the elaboration of a more effective programme of crime prevention and criminal justice. Such a programme, however, would necessitate not only new resources, but also the establishment of priorities in those areas where United Nations efforts could be of practical importance.

44. The Nordic countries noted that, to date, the General Assembly had never included in its agenda the consideration of problems related to the excessive use of alcohol. The report and recommendations of the Expert Meeting on the Negative Social Consequences of Alcohol Use, organized at Oslo by the Norwegian Government in co-operation with the United Nations Office at Vienna, should contribute to further study of those consequences and of effective international means of preventing them.

45. The Nordic countries welcomed the Declaration, adopted at the eighteenth special session of the General Assembly, in which the Assembly had recognized the tremendous importance of human resources development. The ultimate objective of economic policy and development was the improvement of the human condition and enhancement of the contribution of all persons to development. Development co-operation should emphasize human resources development and concentrate much more on the needs of the most vulnerable population groups in society. Governments and donors must integrate the social dimension into all stages of development activity, especially in times of economic crisis, and must ensure that the appropriate range of professional skills was available for that purpose.

46. Mrs. SYAHRUDDIN (Indonesia) said that the profound changes that had taken place throughout the world in the previous months had given rise to a new era of international co-operation. The United Nations, as the primary multilateral organization for the maintenance of peaceful relationships among peoples and for the promotion of economic and social development, had achieved new prominence. The recent World Summit for Children demonstrated that international co-operation on political questions extended to co-operation on social questions. However, it must be borne in mind that social progress could not be substantial and lasting unless it rested on a solid economic foundation.

47. In the 1980s, some developing countries had experienced social progress in spite of the economic recession. However, in most cases, the social situation had worsened. In the Supplement to the 1989 Report on the World Social Situation (A/45/137, para. 47), the Secretary-General stated that "there is ample evidence of a deterioration in living conditions and an aggravation of problems of poverty in virtually all major regions of developing countries". The difficulties of social development in the developing countries had been exacerbated by external debt problems, an outflow of resources and falling commodity prices.

48. However, the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade, to be adopted at the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly, gave reason to hope that the coming decade would witness a significant improvement in the human condition everywhere. Likewise, the eighteenth special session of the General Assembly had provided an opportunity for the States Members

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of the United Nations to reaffirm their commitment to revitalizing the development of developing countries. The human development index of UNDP indicated that quality of life and social welfare were central aspects and indicators of development. Government policies could significantly improve social conditions during periods of structural adjustment, through the "adjustment with a human face" approach, provided that co-operation was forthcoming from the international community, and particularly from its more prosperous members.

49. With regard to the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, towards the middle of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons it had become clear that it would not be possible to attain the Decade's goals, namely, full participation of disabled persons in social life and development, and equality. Indonesia therefore welcomed the report of the Secretary-General (A/45/470) on alternative ways to mark the end of the Decade, and fully supported the conclusion (para. 33 of the report) that full integration of disabled persons into society was made possible by refocusing policies, programmes and projects from care-taking to independence. Disabled people should be considered a vital resource for development. In fact, in 1983, Indonesia had set up a co-ordinating body for social welfare efforts for disabled persons, to which organizations for the disabled belonged.

50. At its thirty-first session, the Commission for Social Development had undertaken a second review and appraisal of the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Aging, and had set forth several important recommendations to supplement the Plan of Action and encourage its implementation. The report of the Secretary-General on the question of aging (A/45/420) contained a draft global calendar of events on aging 1991-1992, and it also gave information on the action programme on aging for 1992 and beyond. Indonesia looked forward to the publication by the United Nations Statistical Office of a special issue of the United Nations Demographic Yearbook 1990, placing special emphasis on aging, disability and living arrangements of elderly persons. The publication was particularly pertinent since the rapid changes in society as a result of the application of new technologies, of increased participation of women in the development process, and of urbanization, had all brought change to the structure of the family, which in many developing countries had been the prime support facility for the aged. The United Nations Demographic Yearbook 1990 would thus be a most useful contribution to the study of the impact of such change on the elderly.

51. Likewise, the youth of the world were also facing the challenges of a changing family structure, and the process of economic and social development. In his report on policies and programmes involving young people: participation, development, peace (A/45/422), the Secretary-General mentioned, in particular, the activities in connection with the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year, which presented a suitable occasion for focusing global attention again on youth issues in the context of the changing international situation. Indonesia was continuing its celebration of the Indonesian Youth Decade, 1986-1996, and the Indonesian Youth National Committee was organizing activities throughout the country with a view to drawing attention to youth issues.

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52. Indonesia welcomed the note by the Secretary-General (A/45/365), on the progress made so far in preparations for the International Year of the Family in 1994. Rather than establish a new national committee, Indonesia had considered it more appropriate to entrust the commemoration of the Year to existing national and local committees, set up to commemorate other annual activities.

53. Mr. RASTAM (Malaysia) said that the changes currently taking place in the global political arena should enable greater resources and energies to be devoted to promoting social progress and social justice throughout the world. International co-operation in that area should be given appropriate attention, because the concerted efforts of all States Member of the United Nations could produce positive results in overcoming the social challenges facing all of them.

54. The supplement to the 1989 Report on the World Social Situation (A/45/137) met the requirements set out in General Assembly resolution 44/56 and Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/72. However, as Mr. Rafaeuddin Ahmed had said, the foremost conclusion was that stagnation and reversal in economic conditions in a large number of developing countries, particularly in Africa and Latin America, during the decade of the 1980s had set back social progress and reversed the positive trends in the three decades since the 1950s. The delegation of Malaysia hoped that future reports on the world social situation would contain adequate recommendations in view of the urgent need for steps to be taken to alleviate the problems faced by the countries concerned.

55. Malaysia welcomed the decision of the General Assembly to proclaim 1994 as the International Year of the Family. It was extremely important to recognize the leading role of the family in society. In making preparations for the Year, the Secretariat should take into consideration the varying social and cultural values of different societies. The Year should be an opportunity for the international community to exchange views on the various roles of the family in different parts of the world.

56. Malaysia recognized the importance of the family as the contributor to and beneficiary of economic progress, social advancement and a better quality of life. A family perspective had therefore been progressively woven into Malaysian development plans, beginning with the passage in Parliament of the Family Planning Act in 1966. In the course of time, the scope of family planning had progressed beyond the maternal and child health approach, to a broader family welfare and development perspective and to community-oriented programmes. The new population policy, which had taken effect in 1984, aimed at ultimately creating a quality population or a developed human resource for the country. The fifth Malaysian development plan (1986-1990), sought to increase awareness of the means of controlling births, with special emphasis on family development and welfare.

57. Under the national family development programme in Malaysia, which emphasized the total and balanced development of the individual and the family, the Government had organized a campaign aimed at creating awareness among the population of the family relationship in order to enhance family stability and harmony. The federal

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Government had provided the funds for major activities at all levels. The proclamation of 1994 as the International Year of the Family, with the theme: "Family: resources and responsibilities in a changing world", was most timely for Malaysia, and would help in intensifying existing national programmes.

58. His delegation felt that more youth exchange programmes should be set up between Member States. That would help to promote international co-operation among young people in crucial areas.

59. With regard to the feasibility study on alternative ways to mark the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, he felt that the final years of the Decade should be marked by activities that would ensure high visibility for issues concerning the disabled.

60. In Malaysia, the problems of aging were still under control; nevertheless it was interesting to study the measures undertaken by other countries to overcome such problems. Malaysia supported the suggestions concerning activities in the year 1992, which marked the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the International Plan of Action on Aging.

61. Mr. BORG OLIVIER (Malta) said that the dramatic changes which had occurred during the past 12 months in Eastern and central Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa could not but encourage hopes for the future. The consolidation of democracy accompanied by full respect for human rights and dignity were cornerstones for the furtherance of economic, social and cultural development. However, Malta wished to express its concern at the danger that those trends might be thwarted by the negative consequences of the invasion and annexation of Kuwait by Iraq.

62. The Government of Malta had established a strategy which aimed at strengthening social justice by reinforcing the traditional forms of financial assistance with innovative measures designed to emphasize personal involvement, whether in the context of the family or of the community.

63. In co-operation with the Council of Europe and the United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, Malta's Ministry for Social Policy had successfully organized in Valetta, in November 1989, a European Conference on "Integrating Social and Family Policy for the 90s". The participants had agreed on the basic principle that the State must be a key actor in the rejuvenation of social policy.

64. In the field of formal education, especially at the most junior level, the Government of Malta had set up an Educational Welfare Unit with the following main objectives: (a) to identify at an early stage psycho-social problems faced by children and to provide the required support to their families, (b) to follow up cases of truancy, and (c) to offer counselling and other services in schools and families in the event of unsatisfactory scholastic achievement. Another important function of the service was to help adolescents, at a time of rapid physical and

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emotional change often involving difficulties with their families, to overcome their sense of insecurity, communicate better with their parents and become integrated as responsible adult members of society. The Maltese Government remained fully aware, however, that it could not on its own cover the full range of economic, social and emotional needs of young people. In that area, as in others, it was mindful of the role of voluntary organizations, which must be encouraged and enhanced.

65. The most evident symptom of the stress on the family was the growing number of marital and parental failures. The policy of the Maltese Government was to act principally by upgrading the services of voluntary agencies. In addition, the recently established Marital and Parental Support Unit gave advice and support in all matters concerning the family.

66. The Maltese Government was also ensuring the continuation and improvement of all forms of social assistance associated with a caring society. Its overall policy aimed at increasing the participation of every individual in community life, since the strengthening of community solidarity was a vital factor in both the preventive and the curative aspects of social welfare. In that spirit, the National Commission for the Handicapped, set up in November 1987, included disabled persons and parents of disabled children among its members. The Commission identified the needs of handicapped persons and helped their families and voluntary organizations to respond to those needs. It also assisted in co-ordinating action taken to implement government decisions and any other measures that it might approve.

67. The Government had allocated building plots and housing units in each locality for disabled persons or families with a disabled member. The Housing Authority had also agreed to build a number of apartments especially designed for such persons. In addition, the Commission had ensured that the Government offered special incentives to enterprises that employed and trained disabled persons. It had given its full support to the Awareness Week organized by the Federation of Voluntary Bodies working for the Handicapped. Disabled persons could thus, despite their physical disability, feel that they were an integral part of society.

68. One of the most significant phenomena of the twentieth century was the aging of the population. Until recently, it had been viewed as a phenomenon peculiar to the developed countries, but, as a result of improved social and medical conditions, it had become a feature of the developing countries as well. In 1980, out of an elderly world population of nearly 371 million, 53 per cent had been living in developing countries, and that proportion was expected to reach 71 per cent by the year 2025. Moreover, in contrast to the pace noted in the developed countries, population aging was expected to be a very rapid process in the developing countries, where the number of elderly persons would increase by 83 per cent by the year 2000.

69. Every Government had to face the social, economic, medical and demographic impact of that phenomenon on resource allocation. Effective social and economic

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development demanded a proper balance between social, economic and environmental factors on the one hand, and the implications of changes in population structure on the other. Such problems should be addressed in the context of overall economic and social development planning programmes. Concerted action by planners and policy makers, and greater public awareness of the implications of population aging, would prevent the international community from being overtaken by events. The policy of the Government of Malta was to integrate as fully as possible the services for the elderly provided by the State, by voluntary organizations, such as the Church, and by the elderly themselves.

70. Several speakers had observed that Governments had not been contributing fully to the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Aging. The Maltese Government, for its part, was very actively involved, at both the national and the international levels. Resolved, as it was, to respond to the appeals contained in the relevant United Nations resolutions, his Government supported the activities of the International Institute on Aging in Malta and was contributing financially and in kind to both the Institute and the United Nations Trust Fund for Aging. The activities of the Institute, which worked in close collaboration with various United Nations organizations, deserved full recognition.

71. Mr. SUAZO (Honduras), referring to agenda item 104, said that every effort must be made to ensure that the International Year of the Family was an outstanding event, both nationally and internationally. In that regard, he shared the view of the Director of the Social Development Division concerning the urgent need to prepare the budget for that event.

72. Concerned as it was about any threat to the integrity of the family, Honduras was dismayed at the events in the Persian Gulf, where thousands of families had been displaced, while others, forced to remain in high-risk areas, found their very existence endangered. Because of those deplorable events and the situation experienced daily by the most vulnerable sectors of society, the International Year of the Family must not be a short-lived event of minor importance, but should provide an opportunity to mobilize the international community for the benefit of the family.

73. Honduras had done a great deal in that regard, having set aside a substantial proportion of its limited resources for the family. The establishment of the Honduran Social Investment Fund (FHIS), which came under the national plan for the period 1990-1994, was intended specifically to provide support for vulnerable family groups. The Fund, which would benefit 300,000 Hondurans on a temporary or permanent basis, would be used to finance the following programmes: immediate job creation for marginalized rural and urban sectors; support for production through the establishment of family, craft and other enterprises; construction of community facilities for production or social purposes; and provision of education allowances for mothers with dependent children.

74. It was a new experiment for which Honduras hoped that international co-operation would be forthcoming.

75. Mr. INSANALLY (Guyana) said that his country had expected that the improved international climate would help to refocus attention on the major social problems. Recent events in the Gulf had to some extent caused Guyana to restrain its optimism. Nonetheless, it continued to believe that there existed a political will to address the most serious humanitarian concerns, as evidenced by the recent convening in New York of the World Summit for Children.

76. The Declaration and Plan of Action emanating from the Summit should serve as a basis for concerted international action to protect the welfare of children. The UNICEF report, entitled The State of the World's Children 1990, showed that children, especially in the developing countries, were the principal victims of society's failures, although it was they who represented the future of humanity.

77. Guyana, a developing country, had made the protection of young people a matter of national policy. Unfortunately, those efforts continued to be frustrated by an unfavourable economic environment. In the past decade, the social infrastructure had been seriously weakened by the unbearable burden of debt. In order to pay their debt and preserve international credit standing, many low-income countries, such as Guyana, had had to adopt harsh adjustment policies and make cut-backs in crucial social services, particularly in the areas of education and primary health care.

78. In the field of education, despite well-intentioned policies aimed at providing free education from nursery to university, Guyana was recording a steady decline in quality. The weakness of the educational system had very quickly provoked new social problems. Many young Guyanese were forced by economic circumstances onto the labour market long before they were sufficiently qualified. The contribution they could make to the family could satisfy only the most basic short-term needs, and even that at great sacrifice. Eventually they were relegated to the ranks of the unemployed, thus unwittingly forfeiting their future and that of the nation.

79. His Government, despite competing priorities, had continued to provide free primary, secondary and university education as well as programmes for young adult education and early school-leavers. In addition, it financed technical institutes and provided free vocational training to all who wished to improve their opportunities in the job market.

80. Potential human resources could not be developed without adequate health services. Primary health care in all institutions owned and financed by the Government was provided free of cost. However, the capacity of the Government to offer those services and to respond to growing population needs had been severely eroded over the past decade, as the national economy had fallen into decline. Those difficulties had increased with the appearance of new problems, such as AIDS and drug abuse, which touched many young people despite continuing, though admittedly limited, programmes for education, prevention and rehabilitation.

81. Given the severe financial constraints under which all social programmes operated, his Government could not over-emphasize the need for international

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support measures for social and economic rehabilitation, particularly in respect of young people. Guyana was anxious, therefore, that the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year should be more than a mere commemoration. All nations should accord prime importance to the identification and means of implementation of the planned global strategy on youth for the year 2000 and beyond. They must also make good their commitments under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

82. Children were far from the only victims of social deterioration. Even while Guyana proceeded with the rigorous implementation of its economic recovery programme, it sought to cushion the impact on the most vulnerable groups: women, the aged, the disabled and the homeless. It had devised a Social Impact Amelioration Programme (SIMAP), designed to promote a selected range of projects, with a maximum life span of two years, to foster the creation of employment, and to enhance household income. SIMAP had already proved beneficial, but it could be truly successful only if it received sufficient external financing. Moreover, like any such programme, SIMAP was only a palliative: in other words, it treated the symptoms but not the causes of poverty. As the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna and the Director of the Social Development Division had noted in their statements, those affected were often incapable of voicing their complaints. Requests by the Secretariat for information often went unanswered, and it was only during the General Assembly that delegations could expound the particular problems of their countries. That state of affairs reflected current constraints.

83. At bottom, social ills were merely a symptom of a deeper malaise resulting from a highly unbalanced economic system. As the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation had pointed out, there was a clear nexus between economic and social issues, and between those and political issues. The approach to social problems should therefore be both comprehensive and co-ordinated, with full regard for their indivisible character. In that context, Guyana welcomed the declaration by the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna regarding the integration of substantive programmes.

84. The gravity of the world's social problems demanded a serious rethinking of traditional strategies in order to adapt them to the circumstances of the day. If, as had been suggested in the debate, those strategies had become outmoded, new and more appropriate measures must be devised speedily. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the establishment of the Working Group to consider ways and means of rationalizing the Committee's work.

85. Mrs. WARZAZI (Morocco) said that her country was making great efforts in the field of social development, as exemplified by the establishment in 1987 of the National Institute for Social Action - of which 39.5 per cent of the young trainees were girls - which provided specialized training for posts in local administrations and semi-public and private bodies. In that field, the people of Morocco were themselves playing an active role, through the local communities, by expressing their views on the development of social programmes and the establishment of social services. Similarly, co-operative activities in Morocco were becoming increasingly

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widespread, particularly in the agricultural and handicrafts sectors, both of which received State assistance. The recent convening in Marrakesh of an international conference of all non-governmental organizations concerned with social welfare throughout the world bore witness to the importance that Morocco attached to that question.

86. Morocco was aware that modern life encouraged societies to cease to have an interest in their young, elderly and handicapped members and it was glad to see that the international community, concerned about their critical situation, had set itself the objective of ensuring their full enjoyment of the rights enshrined in international instruments. However, a reading of the documents before the Third Committee showed that that goal had not been achieved. Her delegation therefore supported most of the recommendations in the reports of the Secretary-General, and welcomed the activities being carried out at all levels to enable those three categories to take their place in society and look forward hopefully and optimistically to life.

87. Despite difficult economic circumstances, Morocco had embarked on a very important initiative on behalf of young people, the principal component of Moroccan society, 61 per cent of which consisted of young people between 4 and 25 years of age. The organization of cultural, artistic and sports activities for young people, together with seminars where they could express themselves freely, financial support for youth organizations and participation by young Moroccans in various international and regional meetings were different aspects of that initiative. Furthermore, in order to solve the extremely serious problem of youth unemployment, the King of Morocco had announced, in July 1990, the establishment of a national youth employment council, which was seeking to associate all the forward-looking elements in the country in a search for solutions to that problem.

88. Although for the immediate future, because of the composition of the Moroccan population and the respect for family traditions, the situation of the elderly in Morocco did not constitute a particular problem, the Government had nevertheless adopted a series of measures on behalf of the elderly, including the opening of workrooms, the launching of health programmes (to combat hypertension and ophthalmic disease) and the provision of material and financial support to associations of elderly persons.

89. The Dahir (decree) on social protection for the blind was an example of the steps taken by her Government on behalf of the disabled. Vocational training centres and co-operatives had been established to encourage their rehabilitation and integration into society; schools had been built for disabled children and an artificial-limb workshop had been set up at Marrakesh. Lastly, several international marathons had been held in Morocco, at which Moroccan and other disabled sportsmen and women had performed remarkably.

90. It was unfortunate that the world economic situation, aggravated by events in the Gulf, would not allow national Governments to implement the plans of action adopted to improve the living conditions of vulnerable groups on which the

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Third Committee was concentrating its attention. As the representative of Saudi Arabia had remarked, 1 per cent of the money invested in the arms race would be enough to put a large part of those programmes into effect. Although the current world climate was favourable to disarmament, the tremendous inequality in respect of economic and social development was a destabilizing factor that compromised the future world order which many hoped to establish. The international colloquium organized in May 1990 by the International Institute for Peace had shown that interdependence was increasingly becoming the basis of international relations. The close link between economic and social problems was finally being recognized, but it was also necessary to understand that world security depended entirely on the solution of those problems. International co-operation must therefore be more vigorously affirmed, and interdependence in North-South relations must be conceived in such a way as to ensure the peace, security and welfare of all members of the great human family.

91. Mr. MONTALVO (Ecuador) recalled some of the conclusions of the 1989 Report on the World Social Situation (A/45/137). Economic and social conditions, particularly in Africa and Latin America, had continued to deteriorate during the 1980s, the gap between the rich and the poor had grown substantially wider, the proportion of the world's population living in absolute poverty had reached 20 per cent and external debt had grown from \$572 billion in 1980 to \$1,155 billion, or 44 per cent of the GNP of the developing countries. Motivated by the need to confront such issues and formulate common strategies, Ecuador had offered to host the Second Regional Conference on Poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean from 20 to 23 November 1990. His country agreed with Miss Anstee that social development and social justice must not be relegated to second place, since the economic and social aspects of development were indivisible. His delegation also had certain reservations regarding the need for the "structural adjustment" as described in the aforementioned report, as a means of coping with the problem of indebtedness.

92. With regard to the question of youth, he reiterated his country's adherence to the Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples and its support for the proposals on the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year and strategies for the year 2000. He welcomed the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/45/422) on measures which Government should adopt with respect to youth. His delegation noted with satisfaction the reference by the Secretariat to the work of his country's National Directorate of Youth and specifically requested the inclusion of Ecuadorian youth in the original projects for employment of the Institute of HOPE. Lastly, his country looked forward to the International Year of the Family, scheduled for 1994, and would co-operate fully during the organizational phase.

93. With respect to the elderly, his Government, implementing the recommendations of the General Assembly, had established a National Directorate of Gerontology. Furthermore, the Ecuadorian Congress was currently reviewing a bill guaranteeing the rights of the elderly.

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94. His country was doing everything within its means to implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and recognized the important role which non-governmental organizations played in that regard. However, the gap between rich and poor countries in such matters was enormous. For example, while countries were advised to build sports facilities that were accessible to wheelchair-bound persons, many of those countries, including his own, did not even have the resources needed to provide wheelchairs to all those who could use them. That was just one example of the impact of economic factors on social reality.

95. Mr. BLACKMAN (Barbados), referring to agenda item 96, said that his country, embracing the principle that an investment in youth was an investment in the future had entrusted its Department of Youth and Community Development with the task of implementing a comprehensive training programme targeting young people. The objective of the programme was to develop in youth the skills needed to establish and manage small business enterprises. The programme, which was being conducted in 31 community centres throughout the country, covered all facets of running a business: start-up, financing, management and marketing of products.

96. Preparing young people for leadership roles in public life was another important dimension of youth training. The Department of Youth and Community Development, in conjunction with the national television station, had established a television programme designed to enhance the social awareness of young people. A wide range of social issues - including unemployment, AIDS, youth involvement in agriculture, youth and crime, the environment, the rights and responsibilities of youth, the role of the church, and the influence of adults on the morality of the younger generation - were analysed and discussed during the broadcasts.

97. His country also maintained a keen interest in youth activities at the regional level. For example, Caribbean Youth Day, a large cultural and crafts fair which attracted thousands of young people, was observed annually in his country. At the international level, his country had participated in the World Summit for Children held in New York in late September and was one of the signatories of the Declaration adopted on that occasion. Lastly, on 9 October 1990 his country had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

98. His delegation welcomed the dialogue established between United Nations bodies on issues relating to youth, as indicated by the seventh meeting of the United Nations informal inter-agency working group on the International Youth Year held at Vienna in December 1989 and the International Symposium on the Integration of Young People into Society held at Toledo, Spain, in June 1990. His delegation hoped that similar symposia would be held in other regions of the world with the participation of youth organizations and non-governmental organizations. In that regard, it deplored the lack of co-operation with non-governmental youth organizations at all levels. The activities of NGOs played a crucial role in national and regional strategies for youth. In view of the serious problems which directly affected young people - the AIDS pandemic, illiteracy, poverty, debt and drug abuse - there was an urgent need for such strategies.

99. Miss ENKHTSETSEG (Mongolia), referring to agenda item 90, said that the reports before the Third Committee showed that the world social situation at the beginning of the 1990s was uneven and complex. The fact that various regional conflicts were moving towards a solution gave cause for some optimism. Unfortunately, in the economic sphere, the Gulf crisis had aggravated an already troublesome international situation. Her delegation therefore was gratified that, in his report on the work of the organization, the Secretary-General had drawn the attention of the world community to the need to "mitigate the economic and social consequences" of the crisis and to "provide a safety net for developing countries ill-equipped to cope with such situations".

100. The figures in the Report on the World Social Situation showed that the legacy of the 1980s was truly dismal: some 1 billion people, 55 per cent of them in Asia, lived in conditions of absolute poverty; poverty had become more severe in Africa; living conditions in most countries of Africa and Latin America had deteriorated during the 1980s; and nearly 3 million children died each year from avoidable diseases. Arresting and reversing those trends was the principal challenge during the last decade of the twentieth century. That required recognition of the primacy of interdependence in today's world and the crucial nature of international co-operation. Policy measures, moreover, should focus not only on economic growth as such, but also on the human dimension of development. That was the motivation behind her Government's policy, which emphasized the development of the individual in all respects.

101. Despite the achievements attained over the years by the people's Government, her country still faced a host of social problems, which affected the rural population most severely. While her country was basically self-sufficient in foodstuffs, it still faced serious nutritional problems. Although most of the population was literate much remained to be done to improve the educational system. Health services had to be improved. Lastly, statistics showed that one fifth of the households had an income below the subsistence level, and that in a country with a particularly unfavourable climate.

102. Faced with that situation, the Government had adopted a series of measures to increase wages, State pensions and unemployment allowances. The wages of agricultural co-operative members would be raised by 30 per cent, old-age pensions would be raised by 20 per cent, and new types of allowances would be paid to large families, single mothers with many children, disabled persons and the unemployed.

103. Unemployment in fact coexisted with a labour shortage in some sectors. To tackle that new type of social problem, the Government had established a Labour Ministry to ensure the efficient use of available labour resources.

104. In order for such measures, and others, to be fully successful, it was necessary to create a favourable international climate and to enhance co-operation. Instruments recently adopted at the international level, in particular, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit for Children, augured well for progress in

(Miss Enkhtsetseg, Mongolia)

that field. For that reason, her delegation was convinced that it was more important than ever for the United Nations to alert States to their social responsibilities.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.