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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 16th MEETING

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

later: Mr. SOMAVIA (Chile)
(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 3.10 p.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. WARADI (Fiji), speaking on item 90 and drawing attention to paragraph 218 of the supplement to the 1989 Report on the World Social Situation (A/45/137), said that economic and social conditions were linked at all levels and that economic prosperity was predicated upon an understanding of social issues. The scarcity of appropriate international institutions had constituted an obstacle to the framing of social development policies that had to be overcome in the United Nations. National legislative, administrative and economic measures were required to supplement international efforts to improve the standard of living of the world's population.

2. The small developing nations required greater assistance from the developed ones. The most pressing problem of the former was how to meet such basic needs as primary health care, adequate nutrition, social equality and justice, which were prerequisites for healthy individuals and societies. Scientific and technological progress played an important role in the social and economic development of society and their effects on individuals must not be ignored. Social and economic improvements in the world could also not be achieved without social justice.

3. Crime had become a social problem that now affected even countries as isolated as his own, and Fiji's national development plan included efforts to prevent crime. Its efforts, however, required international involvement and co-operation, and he welcomed the contribution that could be expected of the forthcoming Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders. Crimes committed by the poor had social causes, and when such crimes were violent or crossed national borders they became a cause of great concern. His delegation therefore hoped that the economic gap between rich and poor countries would be narrowed and that international co-operation would stop international crime and bring its perpetrators to justice. The equal distribution of society's resources would contribute to the solution of social problems.

4. Mr. FALEBITSO (Lesotho) welcomed the attention the United Nations had continued to give to the problem of social development, which was inseparable from the problem of economic development. Social development required economic progress and a stable international political environment. In an increasingly interdependent world, there must be greater equality of social benefits in the developed and the developing countries and more justice in international social relations. The report in document A/45/137 showed that more work needed to be done in many areas, particularly in Africa, where efforts to implement the objectives of the Declaration on Social Progress for Development had met with serious obstacles in the form of deteriorating education, hunger, malnutrition, disease, drought and environmental degradation.

5. His own country recognized its primary responsibility for the social development of its people and had given priority to education, health, youth, the disabled, women and rural development. Since the country's resources were limited, it appealed to the international community for greater assistance in those efforts.

6. In connection with agenda item 96, he noted with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General (A/45/422) and endorsed the recommendations in paragraph 14. Financial and material resources were required to achieve the objectives of youth development, and he appealed to the international community to provide more resources for his own country's youth projects. He also welcomed the decision to give priority to the integration of young people into society. Lesotho had a comprehensive programme to promote the mental, physical and moral development of youth.

7. Concerning international efforts to help the disabled, he said that national associations in his country worked closely with a number of international organizations, many of which had provided the country with welcome assistance in its efforts to rehabilitate the disabled, improve their quality of life and promote their full integration into society. He urged all Governments, as well as the private sector and the general public, to work for the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and supported the recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General (A/45/470).

8. Turning to the aged, he said that services to promote their welfare were urgently required, and he stressed the need to make resources available through the United Nations and its agencies as well as non-governmental organizations, in close collaboration with Governments, to address the social needs of the aged. Concerning the International Year of the Family, he was encouraged by the Secretary-General's positive efforts as described in his report (A/45/365) and said that his country would support all measures designed to ensure the success of the International Year. In preparing it, attention should be given to the protection of the family and its rights and responsibilities, in recognition of its fundamental role in society.

9. Ms. AL-ALAWI (Bahrain) said that the focus of development must be the human being and that her country attached great importance to comprehensive social and economic policies designed to make the best use of society's energies. In Bahrain,

(Ms. Al-Alawi, Bahrain)

social services were provided to all sectors of the population, including the disabled, without discrimination. The role of young people in development was also very important and her country therefore attached great importance to the implementation of the Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples. Her country was implementing that Declaration at all levels of society through youth programmes and activities. The report of the Secretary-General (A/45/422) stressed the importance of youth activities and follow-up activities even where resources were limited, and United Nations bodies played an important part in promoting such activities because they helped strengthen national capacities by providing information and guidance. She endorsed the recommendations in that report.

10. The aged also had a very important status in her country, which provided a vast array of medical and social services for them. Bahrain implemented the International Plan of Action on Aging and supported the measures set forth in the report of the Secretary-General (A/45/420).

11. Lastly, she stressed the importance of the feasibility study presented in the report of the Secretary-General (A/45/470) and supported the recommendations in that document.

12. Mr. SARR (Mali) said that, in spite of the encouraging political changes in the world, the economic and social situation in many developing countries continued to stagnate and even deteriorate, while the developed countries had experienced a long period of sustained growth. Although international trade had expanded, the share of the developing countries in that trade had declined. The supplement to the 1989 Report on the World Social Situation (A/45/137-E/1990/35) provided a sombre picture of the difficult conditions in developing countries with regard to social development. The standard of living had deteriorated in a large number of those countries. In many of them per capita GDP had declined to the levels of 1981 and, in some, to those of 1971. The debtor countries had become net exporters of capital.

13. There was an emerging international consensus in favour of the establishment of a new, more just and more equitable international economic order. The new order resulting from the end of the cold war would not be lasting if 80 per cent of the world's population was excluded from development. Since young people constituted the sector of society that was most affected by the deterioration of the national economy, Mali sought to promote greater participation on their part in the development process. Within the framework of the International Youth Year, it had established a national commission to co-ordinate activities for the Year and had adopted a national youth programme for the decade 1986-1995. In view of the increased numbers of job applicants in Mali as a result of structural adjustment programmes and far-reaching economic reform, Mali was taking steps, with the support of the international community, to place young school graduates in the rural, manufacturing and the service sectors in order to develop a spirit of enterprise among young people.

14. Mr. KIRUTTINAN (India) said that man's attention had been focused on social issues since the dawn of history and was still focused on them today when bridges of trust and co-operation were being built. The 1989 Report on the World Situation showed how the promise of economic betterment and social progress experienced in the 1960s and 1970s had been disappointed in the 1980s, and it was to be wondered whether disaster lay ahead in the 1990s. The scenario of disaster should be met with dedication by nations to the goals they set for themselves in the social field and with a concerted international effort which reinforced that dedication.

15. Guidance in approaching social issues was to be found primarily in the Declaration on Social Progress and Development adopted 21 years previously. Not only had the goals of the Declaration not been achieved, but in recent years economic growth had failed to keep pace with the increase in population. Although it had been recognized in the Declaration that Governments were ultimately responsible for ensuring the social progress of their people, developing countries could not always generate the resources needed for the manifold activities they were called upon to undertake; hence the importance of international economic co-operation. However, in the last analysis and as noted in the supplement to the 1989 Report on the World Social Situation (A/45/137), Governments would remain a principal agency of social development because market mechanisms did not resolve problems of poverty.

16. The reports of the Secretary-General on the other issues currently under discussion in the Committee also testified to the valuable work done by the United Nations in connection with the problems facing the aging youth, the disabled and the family. Probably never before in the history of the world had so many young and old people been alive at the same time. It was an awesome fact that more than 50 per cent of the 820 million inhabitants of India were below the age of 21. The challenges of developing the skills of those young people were being addressed by the national and state governments and by the country's voluntary agencies as best they could with the limited resources available. In the view of his delegation, the role of the United Nations was to serve as both the conscience-keeper and the catalyst where social issues were concerned.

17. Mr. Somavia (Chile) took the Chair.

18. Ms. ASHTON (Bolivia) said the 1989 Report on the World Social Situation and the supplement to it (A/45/137) contained information of relevance, particularly to Latin American and Caribbean countries. Economic and social development were indivisible goals in that one could not be conceived of without the other. The economy of Latin America and the Caribbean had continued to deteriorate throughout the 1980s. The sharp decline in levels of social well-being in most countries of the region was deplorable. The growth rate of GDP in the region, which had been 5.4 per cent a year on average in the 1970s, dropped precipitously to only 1.5 per cent during the 1980s. In per capita terms, there was a net decline in the levels of economic growth.

19. In many countries, the rate of investment indicated a further deterioration of infrastructure, including social infrastructure, and also an increase in the

(Ms. Ashton, Bolivia)

already unacceptable levels of unemployment. Owing to the burden of their external debt, the countries of her region had become net contributors of financial resources to the countries of the North. Thus, the social progress achieved, at the cost of sacrifice, had come to an abrupt halt in the 1980s. Critical poverty had reached unacceptable levels and over half the population of some countries had dropped below minimum standards of well-being. The problem should be viewed in its national and international contexts. From the national perspective, social defence policies were called for to mitigate the social effects of the crisis and the negative impact of the structural adjustment measures it had been necessary to implement.

20. In Bolivia, the deterioration in the terms of trade, the steep drop in the prices of the country's main exports, the persistence of protectionist practices, the erection of trade barriers and the burden of servicing the debt had made the economy so unstable that the Government had been forced to adopt stringent measures with negative social consequences.

21. Without economic revitalization and the maintenance of significantly high growth rates, the road ahead would be difficult, and everything possible should be done to ensure that the new decade was characterized by development and international co-operation in the promotion of international trade flows and investment. As for the development of human resources, there was an unbreakable relationship between education and the acquisition of technical know-how, on the one hand, and sustained economic growth and development, on the other. In order to promote the development of human resources in developing countries, it would be necessary to solve existing problems in the areas of employment, health, the maintenance of a sound environment, nutrition and housing.

22. Although economic recession, changing production patterns and climbing unemployment affected every social group, they had a particular impact on youth. In Bolivia there was a fundamental need for the political will to design and execute programmes designed to meet the needs of young people since 65 per cent of the population was less than 30 years old and youth had become a dynamic factor in the national development process. Accordingly, the country's authorities were actively engaged in preparing a national youth plan. It was hoped that the global Programme of Action adopted by the General Assembly at its seventeenth special session, devoted to the question of international co-operation against the illicit production, supply, demand, trafficking and distribution of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances would soon be put into effect, since the primary victims of drugs were children and young people.

23. The problems of aging should be viewed within the economic and cultural system in operation in each country. The myth that most old people were socially dependent had to be eradicated. In Bolivia social welfare for the elderly was the responsibility of two government agencies. With support provided by the United Nations Trust Fund for the Aging, a project had been designed for the purpose of incorporating the elderly into the economic and social process. The Government had given priority to its programmes to strengthen family ties with a view to keeping elderly persons within their family structure.

(Ms. Ashton, Bolivia)

24. Bolivia had set into motion a national plan for the rehabilitation of the disabled based on the concept of "Health for All by the Year 2000". The government office responsible for the rehabilitation of the disabled was endeavouring to ensure that its action would reach the majority of the disabled in the country.

25. In conclusion, she said that her country's experience showed that people were very eager for social improvement and change. The people of the developing countries were worn down by the continuous sacrifices they were called upon to make as a result of the processes of adjustment. She stressed the importance of global interaction and of the role of the United Nations in the quest for an integral solution to the world's social problems.

26. Ms. SIMHA (Israel) said that the cluster of items currently under consideration was of vital importance to the whole international community. She would refer in particular to the International Year of the Family, which, as provided for in General Assembly resolution 42/134, would be celebrated in 1994. The family was not a new issue at the United Nations; the Declaration of Human Rights contained a number of provisions on that subject, in particular article 16, paragraph 3. The Declaration on Social Progress and Development and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women also contained a number of articles on the family and its role in society. In the International Year of the Family, issues relating to the advancement of women, the protection of children, the promotion of youth and concern for the disabled would all be dealt with within the context of the family. The human infant was normally born into a family, and if a normal family unit was lacking, his physical survival and his role within society had to depend on some substitute agency. The family was currently experiencing fundamental changes and, as the basic unit of society, was under great strain. The profound changes in family structure over recent decades were reflected in greater life expectancy, a sharper drop in the birth rate, a decrease in the number of marriages and remarriages and an increase in the divorce rate and the number of single-parent families. The family had also been adversely affected by the prevalence of poverty and the rise in unemployment rates, drug abuse, violence and delinquency; yet it still constituted a safe port where its members could find shelter in times of difficulty. As yet no better framework had been found for meeting the needs of men and women, caring for future generations and upholding society in general.

27. One of the most perplexing changes in family structure had been the fast growth in the number of one-parent families, in most of which the mother was the remaining parent. Such families were confronted with more problems than most, and when the single parent was disabled, those problems multiplied. In Israel, many benefits were now being offered to such families. Families where both parents worked outside the home, known as "dual-career" families, also presented enormous problems in that they were often exposed to a higher level of pressure, conflict and tension than other families. There was a need to provide public facilities to meet their special needs. In Israel, special legislation had been promoted in that respect. Working women were faced with contradictory norms and values which made it difficult for them to participate fully in the work force and advance

(Ms. Simha, Israel)

professionally. They were bound by a traditional set of values in which priority was given to home and family and to their central role as mother, while at the same time they struggled to maintain their status in the work-place.

28. Children and youth were the future of any society and must be given every opportunity for a good upbringing and education. A diversified range of flexible services should be provided for meeting their needs and for supplementing the responsibilities of parents. Domestic violence was another subject which merited special attention as it had serious physical and psychological effects on its victims. Children raised in a violent atmosphere tended to become violent themselves. The problem should be dealt with from a multi-disciplinary perspective with a view to the adoption of concrete measures to deal with it.

29. Last but not least, she called for recognition of the important contribution made by non-governmental organizations in the social arena and said that their continued co-operation must be actively supported and encouraged. She invited all members of the third committee to participate in an international conference on the family to be held in Israel in 1994.

30. Mr. ALFARO-PINEDA (El Salvador) said that the encouraging events of the previous months had resulted in a more promising social situation in some parts of the world, but that the situation in less developed countries had continued to deteriorate. While ideological barriers were disappearing and political change was affording greater freedom and confidence in the future, the barriers between industrialized countries and developing countries had become even more difficult to remove.

31. Social problems were inseparable from the prevailing global economic conditions, which were becoming increasingly difficult for countries that required loans to finance their national programmes. The lack of programmes to meet the immediate needs of the developing world's growing population was a serious problem, and the prospects for improvement in economic conditions were not very promising, owing to the obligatory structural adjustments. Such difficulties had resulted in catastrophic internal situations in the countries affected, which threatened the security of the citizens and prompted their emigration, thereby disturbing the normal development of neighbouring countries. The greatest danger was that groups opposed to democracy would take advantage of such situations, using the illusion of a utopian social order to try to impose obsolete political systems that ended in suffering, death and destruction.

32. El Salvador had suffered under those conditions for more than 10 years, in a conflict that had seriously damaged its economic infrastructure and caused many deaths. The search for a peaceful solution had become the highest priority of those Salvadorians who wished to build a modern society.

33. Young people, who were the future leaders of the country, were a source of hope in El Salvador. War had constituted the greatest obstacle to the social progress of El Salvador's youth. However, it had also obligated young people to

(Mr. Alfaro-Pineda, El Salvador)

participate directly in building a nation in which they could enjoy equal opportunity, inalienable rights and stable conditions. Through tireless work and study, young people were participating more and more actively in building the future of their country, to the advantage of all the Salvadorian people. Central America was the final scene of the cold war, and once it had resolved its conflicts and difficulties, the social situation throughout the world would be on the way to improvement.

34. Miss CHAUKE (Zimbabwe) said that there were over 270,000 disabled persons in Zimbabwe and that Zimbabwe's war of liberation had contributed considerably to that number. However, her Government had elaborated a policy on the prevention of disability, on rehabilitation and on equalization of opportunities for the disabled. In accordance with the recommendations of the Secretary-General's report (A/45/470), that policy emphasized the role of disabled persons as citizens, rather than as clients of social services. In addition, a bill to integrate the disabled in society was currently being drafted in Zimbabwe.

35. In Zimbabwe, the idea that disability was not inability was taken very seriously, and disabled persons were considered a vital resource for development. Although the exercise of right of disabled persons to choose jobs had greatly increased in Zimbabwe, massive training programmes were needed to give them the necessary skills.

36. Zimbabwe had also addressed the issue of rehabilitation. Legislation had been enacted for the compensation of war victims, and the results of a national disability survey carried out in 1982 were currently being analysed by local and foreign consultants. The Government had also established a national rehabilitation centre that provided medical, paramedical, psycho-social and vocational job placement services. In addition, a nation-wide rehabilitation programme was being operated by the Department of Health. Disabled persons themselves, who had brought their plight to society's attention through their national organization in Zimbabwe, were to be credited for those achievements.

37. Because the African continent's problems had been complicated by poverty, wars, droughts and underdevelopment, her delegation strongly supported the vigorous implementation of plans of action, including public awareness campaigns, for the Decade of Disabled Persons before the end of the Decade. She supported the proposal in the draft resolution on the Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons that the Secretary-General should review the regular budgetary process to ensure that resources were adequate to implement the objectives of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. She also supported the proposal that Member States should be requested to contribute generously to the Voluntary Fund for the Decade to implement special projects. The African Rehabilitation Institute was in particular need of financial and technical assistance because of the deteriorating economic and social situation in Africa, which had been exacerbated by structural changes.

(Miss Chauke, Zimbabwe)

38. While the Decade had succeeded in generating public awareness of the situation of the disabled, action to improve that situation should become its new priority. Her delegation supported plans to convene a major meeting to mark the end of the Decade, with the hope that such a meeting would encourage the implementation of programmes after the end of the Decade. Her delegation was optimistic that the goals of the Decade would be attained in the near future.

39. Mr. ALLAFI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the Algerian delegate had spoken on behalf of the countries of the Arab Maghreb Union on issues of social development. His delegation wished to make some additional comments regarding agenda item 92. He thanked the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs for its efforts in implementing United Nations resolutions on the disabled and the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. He also supported the Secretary-General's determination to strengthen the Disabled Persons Unit of the Centre. His country gave its full support to the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons and the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. An examination of the Secretary-General's report (A/45/470) showed a regrettable flagging of international solidarity and interest. The 147 national committees in 1981 had fallen to 70, which played a weak co-ordinating role. Nevertheless, it was still possible to revitalize the Decade with the help of United Nations bodies and agencies and concerned non-governmental organizations. His country appealed to those countries which had allowed the national committees to lapse to revive them, and those countries which had not yet established such co-ordinating committees to do so. Everything should be done over the coming two years to achieve as many as possible of the goals of the Decade. His country supported the idea of a ministerial-level world conference to be held in 1993 in order to mark the end of the Decade. His country was willing to help to prepare for such a conference.

40. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya stressed the need to devote particular attention to the disabled, and especially the severely disabled, in the developing countries. International co-operation should help to provide technical expertise to those countries in order to develop their facilities and services for the disabled. He expressed his gratitude to those countries which had offered such assistance, in particular the countries of northern Europe. During the current year the disabled in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had established an independent league through which they put their concerns and needs to the General People's Congress. Finally, he stressed that the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya was fully committed to achieving the goals of the Decade and placed its legislative and technical experience regarding the disabled at the disposal of the developing countries.

41. Mr. AL-BADI (Oman) said that human resources were one of the most important factors in development, being both the means and the goal of development. Accordingly, Oman had devoted particular attention to youth programmes, declared 1983 as a Youth Year with numerous cultural and social programmes, and participated in the activities of the International Youth Year, 1985. His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said had donated the ship Fulk al-Salamah (the Ark of Peace) for use in UNESCO's Silk Road programme, in which Oman's youth would participate.

(Mr. Al-Eadi, Oman)

42. A sound human resources policy must include care for the disabled, who formed some 10 per cent of society. Such care should include rehabilitation, reintegration, guidance, training and employment for the disabled. It was also important to educate and sensitize the general public to the problems of the disabled. Oman was conducting a general survey of the disabled in co-operation with the rehabilitation programme of the Voluntary Fund. In 1987, a care and rehabilitation centre for the disabled had been established. Omani legislation guaranteed the allocation to the disabled of a certain proportion of jobs in both the private and the public sectors. Funds were also earmarked for projects for the disabled, who were encouraged to participate in cultural, social and sporting activities. There was a social security umbrella for the totally disabled and the disabled who had not received vocational rehabilitation.

43. It was important to provide care and rest to the aged. Oman offered such assistance in accordance with the International Plan of Action on the Aging.

44. Mr. WARADI (Fiji), speaking on items 92, 96, 99 and 104, said that in spite of the progress made in implementing the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, much remained to be done. The Meeting of Experts on Alternative Ways to Mark the End of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons had provided a useful basis for organizing future policies and programmes. His delegation welcomed the increased attention given to the plight of the disabled and supported the deliberate shift in emphasis to the abilities of people with functional limitations. The effectiveness of that approach had been proved time and again in a wide variety of areas.

45. Under its national development plan, Fiji provided educational programmes to ensure the full integration of disabled persons into society. National co-ordinating committees for the disabled arranged for the participation of their members in national as well as regional meetings, including sporting competitions organized by regional parent bodies. Fiji continued to review its national legislation to promote the integration and full participation of disabled persons in society. His delegation fully supported the long-term strategy to the year 2000 and beyond: a society for all.

46. Young people represented 55 per cent of the population of Fiji. The follow-up activities to the International Youth Year had achieved the basic goals of formulating and implementing integrated youth policies and programmes and promoting awareness of the significant role of national co-ordination mechanisms in youth policy development. Youth programmes were given high priority in all national development plans in Fiji. To meet their needs two basic goals had been set: improved employment opportunities and full integration into society. Academic and vocational training institutions had been established for that purpose. His country looked forward to participating in United Nations youth programmes, which would enhance its efforts in that field.

47. The initiative to focus attention on the need to promote the integration of the aged into the economic, social and cultural life of the family and the

(Mr. Waradi, Fiji)

community had been timely. The contribution of the aged to national development should feature more prominently in future plans. The extended family was still very much the norm in Fiji and in many parts of the Pacific region. The transition from the close-knit, extended family to the more exclusive, nuclear family seemed to be the result of modernization and affluence. The two, however, were not necessarily mutually exclusive. It should be possible to strike a balance, combining the best of the traditional family structure with the features of the modern family.

48. Mr. KALLEHAUGE (Denmark) said that the time had come to evaluate the World Programme of Action for the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, and to determine what would follow the Decade. The best way to mark the end of the Decade would be to elaborate a new policy which would make the intentions of the World Programme of Action more operational. The Programme was so comprehensive and abstract that it did not offer much guidance on how to transform its goals into active policies. The new policy, therefore, would have to specify methods of achieving the goals of the Decade.

49. Public awareness of the situation of disabled persons continued to be a priority, since stereotypical assumptions about the disabled had often resulted in unequal treatment of disabled persons and their relegation to a position of political powerlessness. The capacity of disabled persons to participate in and contribute to society had not been fully appreciated. He therefore supported the proposal that all legislative bodies should hold special sessions in 1992 to discuss the World Programme of Action, with special emphasis on equalization of opportunities for disabled persons. In Denmark, annual debates of that type had proved useful in making the disabled more visible and in drawing attention to the shortcomings of legislation and of the public services offered to disabled persons.

50. The Nordic Council of Organizations of Disabled Persons, of which he was President, supported the proposal to elaborate international standard minimum rules regarding the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons, and offered its assistance to that project as a consultative body. There were two possible approaches to the task: to draft rules that met the needs of the disabled while remaining appropriate to all people (for example, in building and transportation regulations and in specifications for communications equipment such as telephones), thereby obviating the need for special provisions concerning disabled persons; or to draft standard rules based on the functional limitations of the disabled, in order to eliminate all physical, social, economic, political and cultural barriers. The diversity of the problems concerned would probably result in a compromise where both methods would be used in different areas.

51. The full integration of disabled persons into society could not be accomplished solely through social and health services. Policies for the disabled must be national policies that pervaded all areas of social life, schools and universities, housing and labour market policies, planning of public transportation, and cultural, sporting and political life.

(Mr. Kallehauge, Denmark)

52. In order to avoid duplication of effort in the elaboration of international standard minimum rules on the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons, and to prevent conflicts with the ongoing international standardization work, he recommended that such work should be co-ordinated by the United Nations. No international standardization work should be undertaken without an awareness of the needs of the disabled, since there were many areas in which the relevance of those needs had not yet been recognized.

53. The goal of integration was to eliminate discrimination in both of its forms: intentional discrimination aiming at the exclusion of disabled persons, and discrimination through neglect or lack of understanding. Although public awareness campaigns had succeeded in reducing the incidence of intentional discrimination, discrimination through neglect was much more difficult to combat, since its negative effects were often felt only by disabled persons themselves. However, the elaboration of standard minimum rules would make the problems of the disabled better known, and would encourage the reparation of previous errors in that respect. Additional information and awareness campaigns were also essential, since public understanding of the situation of the disabled would lead to solidarity with them, and solidarity would lead to equality.

54. He supported the proposal from the 1990 meeting of experts in Finland that the United Nations should hold regional conferences in collaboration with disabled people and their organizations to prepare documents on the rights of disabled persons. That idea should be combined with the proposal to establish umbrella organizations of disabled people at the national, regional and international levels. Such umbrella organizations already existed in the Nordic countries, and he hoped that more of them would be established around the world. Another recommendation from the meeting in Finland had been that donor countries and their development agencies should give highest priority to disability issues in their assistance programmes. The Nordic countries had already acted on that recommendation by holding a meeting in which Nordic development agencies had reported on their activities in the field of disability. In addition, a conference on that subject was scheduled for 1991. He urged development agencies to integrate disability components in all technical co-operation programmes and in development programmes for education, job training, building of houses, town planning and public transportation. The goal was not to adapt disabled persons to the environment, but to adapt the environment to the needs of all.

55. Ms. BOTERO (Colombia) said that the supplement to the 1989 Report on the World Social Situation (A/45/137-E/1990/35) provided very useful information and showed that while the developed countries had experienced sustained growth, living conditions in the developing countries had substantially deteriorated. Although there had been encouraging improvements in the international political climate, there was cause for concern about social conditions. In carrying out national development policies aimed at promoting economic growth, most developing countries had not taken into account the social dimension as an essential aspect of development. Intervention by the State could be decisive in adopting development models that helped bring about a real redistribution of income and reduced the level of poverty among the most vulnerable groups.

(Ms. Botero, Colombia)

56. There was a marked contrast between the developed and developing countries with regard to health care and maternal and child mortality. Reduced public expenditures in the field of education in developing countries were also alarming. Government support for social services had been cut back or frozen largely because of the external debt burden and economic adjustment measures. Such developments called into question the social efficacy of such measures since the outlook continued to be very discouraging.

57. The developing countries had explicitly acknowledged their responsibility in defining policies and revitalizing economic growth and development. Today more than ever the developing world was aware of the effort required of it. At the same time, the developed countries had undertaken the commitment to support the initiatives of the developing countries and promote internal changes aimed at restoring equilibrium in their domestic economies. Further studies on the world social situation were unnecessary. There was a need for political will and decisions to solve the problems at hand, particularly those affecting the most vulnerable groups. She hoped that effective measures would be taken to find real solutions to those problems.

58. Mr. AL-HASSAN (Jordan) said that the improvement of social conditions had been hampered by economic fluctuations, austerity measures, increased likelihood of disability, drug addiction, alcoholism, pollution, radiation and armed conflicts. Economic progress could not be achieved without social justice and equality of chances. Poverty, suffering, desertification, deterioration of the environment, illiteracy and the growing gap between the haves and the have-nots threatened society. The Secretary-General's report had noted a decline in living conditions in most of the developing countries, which suffered from poverty, malnutrition and insufficient resources. Continuing conflicts in those regions would have an adverse impact on development plans. Particularly grave was Israel's rejection of Arab and international peace efforts on the Palestinian issue aimed at securing the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and the establishment of a Palestinian State. International peace and security were essential for economic and social progress.

59. The needs and cultural background of the disabled varied from country to country. The conclusions of the Meeting of Experts on Alternative Ways to Mark the End of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons and the outline of a long-term strategy to the year 2000 and beyond were extremely useful. More efforts should be devoted to increasing international awareness of the disabled and promoting of social security, education, vocational training and cultural, recreational and sporting activities for the disabled, as well as providing rehabilitation and full integration for them. More national committees for the disabled should be established. Within the framework of the World Programme of Action, Jordan had since 1983 expanded institutional services, education and rehabilitation for the disabled.

(Mr. Al-Hassan, Jordan)

60. Youth was inseparable from society, politics and the economy as a whole and their social and cultural problems must be taken into account when dealing with contemporary problems. Jordan was a preponderantly young society with nearly 75 per cent of the population under the age of 30. The young were an essential element of development and vital for the future of the country. Youth education and care were an investment in the future; the protection of youth from addiction, disease and environmental hazards would redound to the good of society as a whole.

61. Mr. FHALIL (Egypt) said, regarding the world social situation, that his delegation had examined with interest the supplement to the 1989 Report (A/45/137), which emphasized statistics more than analysed causes or proposed solutions. It warned against excessive optimism over developments resulting from the new era of co-operation and conciliation between East and West, since political progress had not been accompanied by corresponding economic or social progress. In most developing countries, particularly in Africa, GDP had remained stable or declined over the preceding decade, while population growth had accelerated. Developing countries had been affected by natural and man-made disasters including wars, destruction of the environment and dumping of toxic wastes. They had also suffered from declining trade and protectionist measures adopted by the developed countries, as well as a worsening of the debt crisis. Infant and maternal mortality rates were high and 98 per cent of the world's illiterates were in the developing countries, where half a billion people suffered from hunger and malnutrition. The social and economic benefits of the new-found political harmony between the countries of the North were restricted to those countries as the gap between the rich and poor countries grew wider. It was therefore vitally important to adopt policies of structural adjustment in most developing countries.

62. In the view of the report, structural adjustment was aimed primarily at coping with debt and debt service, and only secondarily at making optimum use of resources. His delegation felt that growth should be directed internally towards the humanitarian development urged by United Nations resolutions, rather than towards the exporting of resources in order to service debt, even though such international obligations must be respected. In its negotiations with international funding institutions, Egypt attempted to formulate a structural adjustment strategy which reconciled the social and economic needs of Egyptian society with Egypt's financial obligations and avoided sudden swings in economic measures. It was necessary to make the international economy more balanced, to reduce the gap between the rich countries and the poor countries and to preserve the advances made in the relations between the great Powers. The savings afforded by disarmament might be used to revitalize the economies of developing countries by alleviating their debt burden and reversing the negative flow of resources.

63. Regarding policies and programmes involving youth, he praised the efforts of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. However, he regretted that not many of the goals of the International Youth Year had been achieved. Nor had he found evidence of progress in the eradication of illiteracy among youth over the current year, which had been designated International Literacy Year. His country supported the recommendation of the Report of the Secretary-General

(Mr. Khalil, Egypt)

(A/45/422) to prepare an inventory on the youth-related projects and activities of the United Nations system, with a view to identifying priority areas for joint action.

64. Egypt was working actively to integrate youth into society, to provide young people with job opportunities and to involve them in development. Projects included co-operative land reclamation schemes in the desert, and summer camps where high moral values were inculcated. There were also successful dialogues between young people and experts regarding contemporary social and international developments and challenges. In the early 1970s, the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports had been established. The Chairman of that Council was also head of the Egyptian United Nations Association, a non-governmental organization aimed at boosting public awareness of the United Nations and its role in maintaining peace and security and promoting development across the world by holding seminars and debates between pupils and students and United Nations officials in Egypt. He suggested that that experiment be emulated in other countries as a suitable means of celebrating the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year. The Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs might be able to organize a series of local seminars and discuss an appropriate means for evaluating the conclusions of such seminars over the coming two years. Such a scheme would be simpler and less expensive than a series of regional seminars bringing together mainly officials without sufficient youth representation. If there was sufficient response, the development of such a mechanism should be reviewed in several years' time.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.