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New York

## SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 23rd MEETING

Chairman:

Mr. AL-SHAALI

(United Arab Emirates)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 94: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(a) QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (continued) (A/46/3 (chap. VI, sect. B), A/46/56-E/1991/6 and Corr.1, A/46/137-E/1991/40, A/46/281-E/1991/112, A/46/315, 360, 361, 362 and Corr.1, 366, 414, 501/Rev.1)

1. Mrs. BOUKADOUM (Algeria) said that the ever-widening gap between rich and poor countries could trigger a major upheaval. The Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries, adopted at the eighteenth special session of the General Assembly, had emphasized the need to guarantee the basic right of all human beings to a life free from hunger, poverty, disease and ignorance. The eradication of poverty was also a priority objective of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade. That new consensus on the promotion of human development was based on the premise not only that each country was responsible for its own development but also that the international community had an obligation to create a global environment that was conducive to economic growth and to encourage social development in the developing countries. The United Nations remained the ideal framework for an integrated, comprehensive approach to all those aspects of development. However, as the Director of the Social Development Division had said, the United Nations and, in particular, the Division could not perform their task if they did not have the necessary human, material and financial resources. It was therefore essential that steps be taken to support the Division's activities and to enable it to fulfil its mandate more effectively.

2. In an increasingly interdependent world, only a collective approach could solve the most complex problems confronting human society. The World Summit for Children had validated that approach and the international community should continue along those lines. In that connection, Algeria reaffirmed its support for the proposal to hold a world summit for social development. It hoped that the proposal would materialize as soon as possible and would lead to effective measures for the promotion of social development in the developing countries.

3. She was deeply concerned that the interim report of the Secretary-General on the world social situation (A/46/56), dealt almost exclusively with the recent changes in Central and Eastern Europe and failed to mention the continuing deterioration of the socio-economic situation in the developing countries, even though they too had embarked on a process of democratization which they hoped to complete despite the current unfavourable economic situation. The international community must not turn its back on the serious problems of the developing world as a whole, nor forget the commitments it had made to it. In that connection, her delegation reaffirmed the validity of

(Mr. Boukadoun, Algeria)

Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/4 inviting the Secretary-General to reorient his report to reflect the concerns expressed by the Group of 77.

4. She welcomed the various activities undertaken in the social sphere: the implementation of the Guiding Principles for Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes in the Near Future, the preparations for the International Year of the Family and the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, the International Plan of Action on Ageing and the Programme for International Literacy Year. She had followed with particular interest the preparation of the draft world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond.

5. As a follow-up to the International Youth Year in 1985, which had led Governments to make new commitments to youth, Algeria was endeavouring to improve the living conditions of young people, particularly in the priority sectors of education, training and employment. It believed that the legitimate needs of youth in those sectors, as well as in the areas of food, health and culture, must be tackled without delay and that practical, urgent solutions to the problems of youth must be sought in cooperation with other States. The celebration in 1995 of the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year would be an occasion to give new impetus to efforts to achieve the goals of integration, development and well-being for youth. Her delegation supported the overall thrust of the draft world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond proposed by the Secretary-General and particularly endorsed his views on the need to give priority to disadvantaged and underprivileged youth.

6. Mr. RUDI (Albania) said that social problems were occupying an increasingly important place both in United Nations programmes and strategies for development and in the national development programmes of individual countries. He noted with satisfaction the growing awareness of the link between economic progress and social progress, which was clearly recognized in the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade. Furthermore, at a time when the alarming situation of the developing countries posed a threat to international peace and security and the industrialized countries were experiencing many development-related social problems, a third group of countries had been added: the countries of Eastern Europe, which included Albania. Those countries were confronting new economic and social problems associated with their transition from a communist totalitarian system to democracy and from a centralized economy to a market economy. His delegation appealed to the United Nations and its specialized agencies to pay greater attention to those countries and to take action while there was still time.

7. As was recognized by the General Assembly Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples, young people were idealistic and cherished democracy. It was young people that had initiated the historic changes that had taken place in

(Mr. Rudi, Albania)

Albania, and young people were at the forefront of the movements for economic, political and social change in many countries of the world. His Government therefore attached the utmost importance to the search for concrete, effective and speedy ways to prepare youth to take up the responsibilities of the future. Its priorities in that area were education and employment. It highly appreciated the commitment made by the Ministers of Education of the States members of the European Community to assist Albania in that regard. Unfortunately, Albania was faced with a serious problem: the massive exodus of its young people, which had begun as a protest against the dictatorship, was now continuing for economic reasons, for while Albanian youth enjoyed all their human rights from a legal standpoint, in practice many economic difficulties impeded their effective enjoyment of those rights. To protect the newly emerging democracies, it was important to facilitate exchanges between youth organizations. Holding international youth meetings and establishing cultural ties between young people of different countries would promote mutual respect and solidarity among peoples and would be an effective way of fighting xenophobia, which unfortunately persisted in many countries. In Yugoslavia, for example, Serbia was currently using every possible means to destroy Albanian culture in Kosovo, by cutting off all links with Albania and closing down all the schools, including the University and the Academy of Sciences. That was a grave affront to Albanian national consciousness and a form of inquisition unprecedented in the recent history of civilized Europe.

8. With respect to ageing, the measures proposed in the report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation on ageing for 1992 and beyond (A/46/361) deserved careful analysis. In particular, it was necessary to enable the elderly to continue to take part in economic, social and public activities. In Albania, the elderly were honoured and in turn, tried to impart their experience of life to the younger generation.

9. Despite a growing awareness of the problems of the handicapped, much remained to be done to integrate handicapped persons in society and to achieve the targets of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. In particular, greater attention should be paid to the mentally handicapped. Unfortunately, in Albania, disabled persons were suffering the consequences of a disabled economy. The humanitarian aid provided by many European, United States and other charitable organizations was therefore greatly appreciated.

10. His Government attached great importance to the family as the basic unit of society. Traditionally, in Albania parents lived with their children, so that young people benefited from the experience of their elders, and elderly and disabled persons had the support of their families. His Government was doing its utmost to alleviate the impact of the economic crisis on family standards of living.

11. Albania was ready to cooperate with the United Nations and the specialized agencies in finding solutions to national and international social problems.

12. Mrs. VALDES (Spain), speaking on the subject of disabled persons, recalled that in its resolution 45/91 the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to review the translation into the official languages of the United Nations of the terms "impairment", "disability", "handicap" and "disabled persons" used in the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the World Programme of Action did not respond to that request. She attached the utmost importance to that issue, believing it vital to eliminate certain pejorative and discriminatory terms used in United Nations working papers on disabled persons. Her delegation understood that the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Disability had dealt with the matter satisfactorily in his final report to the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1991/31).

13. Regarding the draft world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond, she recalled that preparation of the programme should be based on the guidelines for further planning and suitable follow-up in the field of youth adopted by the General Assembly. She also believed that specific targets should be set, under the new programme of action, not only for education, training and employment but also in such fields as quality of life, equal opportunities, participation, the setting up of associations and international cooperation.

14. Her delegation had noted with particular interest the report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation on ageing for 1992 and beyond (A/46/361). It was essential to establish a social security system which provided the elderly with adequate resources to live in dignity.

15. Lastly, her delegation saw great value in the debates on social issues taking place in different international bodies. It looked forward with interest to the regional Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Social Affairs to be held at Bratislava in 1992. It also welcomed the Secretary-General's consultations with all Member States on the possible holding of a world summit for social development.

16. Mr. FERNANDEZ PALACIOS (Cuba) said that, far from bridging the gap between rich and poor countries, the development model that all developing countries were expected to follow forced them to pay an excessively high price in social and human terms. That situation was particularly serious in Latin America, where the problems of hunger, illiteracy and poor sanitary conditions had recently been compounded by the cholera epidemic.

17. The main problem, however, was that of servicing the external debt, which by the end of 1990 had stood at over \$1,300 billion. The developed creditor countries and international financial institutions had, moreover, made the renewal of international credit conditional on the introduction of stringent economic adjustment programmes, which had had such adverse effects on the population of developing countries that the steady shrinkage of health, education, housing and social welfare budgets had come to be known as the "social debt".

(Mr. Fernandez Palacios, Cuba)

18. Latin America and Africa were the regions most affected by that economic and social crisis. In 1990, for example, there had been some 270 million poor people in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, accounting for 62 per cent of total population, and 84 million living in extreme poverty. Far from resolving the crisis, the neo-liberal economic policies foisted on the developing countries might trigger social upheavals which could undermine democratic gains. It was regrettable, therefore, that the Secretary-General scarcely touched on that situation in his interim report on the world social situation (A/46/56), championing, in a far from impartial manner, the alleged benefits of the market economy and downplaying social gains made outside the narrow framework of economic neo-liberalism.

19. His delegation agreed with the many other delegations that found it unacceptable that a supposedly universal report was in fact partial, selective and discriminatory, to the point of glossing over the very grave situation of the developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. How could a report on the world social situation ignore the social problems of regions where the social crisis was unquestionably the fundamental problem? Steps must be taken to ensure that the 1993 report on the world social situation was devoted especially to the situation in the developing countries, in keeping with the letter and the spirit of General Assembly resolution 44/56 and Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/4.

20. With regard to the draft world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond (A/46/360), his delegation attached great importance to the three selected themes, namely, participation, development and peace. However, high priority should be given to analysing the socio-economic and political problems affecting young people in developing countries and to devising measures to protect them from the effects of the debt crisis and structural adjustment - aspects that were not adequately covered in the proposed strategy.

21. The question of ageing was taken very seriously in Cuba, where 12 per cent of the population were over 60 years of age. Cuban policy in that area was aimed at enabling elderly people to live a better life through full integration into society.

22. Regarding the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, he paid tribute to the United Nations and to non-governmental organizations for their activities to benefit the disabled, and hoped that international cooperation in that area would be strengthened so as to complement national efforts, particularly by developing countries.

23. Despite the unremitting hostility manifested by the world's most powerful country towards a small developing country through an inhuman economic embargo, Cuba had been able, in 30 years of revolution, to offer its population very superior living conditions, inter alia in the areas of health, education, food, employment, housing and social welfare. The Cuban people could pride themselves on the remarkable accomplishment of having built,

(Mr. Fernandez Palacios, Cuba)

despite all obstacles, an infinitely more just and humane society whose motto was social equity and equal opportunity for all. In Cuba, life expectancy was 74 years for men and almost 78 years for women; the country had one physician for every 275 inhabitants and one dentist for every 1,500 inhabitants. The infant mortality rate, 10.7 per 1,000 live births, was unequalled except in the most developed countries; social security payments, which were available to the entire population, amounted to 3.4 million pesos per day; and 1,137,000 persons received a retirement or disability pension or an allowance upon the death of a close relative. Currently, 1 out of every 10 Cubans collected pension benefits. The rate of school enrolment was 100 per cent for children between the ages of 6 and 11, and 94.4 per cent for adolescents between the ages of 12 and 14.

24. The fact that human rights and fundamental freedoms were often mentioned in the Third Committee's debates bore witness to the close relationship between development, social progress and the enjoyment of those rights. The time had come to call upon the international community, particularly the developed countries, to make every effort to resolve the economic crisis of the developing countries by establishing a more equitable system of exchange that would allow the populations of those countries to enjoy the most basic economic, social and cultural rights.

25. Mr. SEZAKI (Japan) said that the dramatic events in Eastern Europe, the Gulf region and the Soviet Union, which indicated the emergence of a new international order, should not eclipse the serious social problems which had yet to be resolved. Since the young, the elderly, women and the disabled were usually the first to be affected by such problems, the international community must redouble its efforts to promote the social welfare of those particularly vulnerable groups.

26. With reference to the statement of the Director of the Social Development Division, he felt that international meetings on social development should be held at the United Nations Office at Vienna, which was often responsible for preparing for such meetings; that practice would strengthen the role of the Office and would rationalize the use of limited resources. In addition, the Secretariat and the United Nations organs concerned with social development should coordinate their work more effectively.

27. In view of the scarcity of resources and the increase in the Secretariat's workload, the Third Committee should, in considering the budgetary implications of its activities, remain in close consultation with the Fifth Committee, in accordance with the budget process established in General Assembly resolution 41/213, so that the resolutions adopted would have a realistic chance of succeeding.

28. As the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons drew to a close, his delegation hoped that a long-term strategy (to the year 2000 and beyond) could be formulated to guarantee the equal rights and full participation of disabled persons in society. For its part, Japan was striving to incorporate the World

(Mr. Sezaki, Japan)

Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons into its national policies, in cooperation with disabled persons themselves and with national non-governmental organizations concerned with the subject. Earlier in 1991, the Government had renewed its commitment to carrying out the long-term programme concerning disabled persons which it had formulated in 1982. He noted that the World Federation of the Deaf had held its eleventh World Congress in Tokyo from 5 to 11 July 1991. Eight hundred people from 55 countries had discussed the theme of equality and self-reliance, and the disabled participants had formulated proposals to enhance their integration into society.

29. The Japanese Government extended technical assistance to developing countries to promote the welfare of disabled persons. In that regard, it was pleased that the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, to which it had contributed since 1980, had played an important role in supporting catalytic and innovative activities to benefit disabled persons.

30. The continuing growth of the world population increased the importance of issues concerning youth. Young people must be encouraged to take a positive attitude towards life and to participate fully in society, since their integration was, in the final analysis, a precondition for peace and human development. Such was the goal of Japan's programme of overseas cooperation volunteers, whom it sent to developing countries as part of its technical cooperation efforts and whose skills and dedication were highly appreciated by the recipient countries. The programme had the dual advantage of enhancing human resource development and giving Japanese volunteers the opportunity to gain first-hand experience of cultures different from their own. An increasing number of young people were participating in the programme.

31. His delegation hoped that the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the International Plan of Action on Ageing would provide an opportunity to formulate, in the context of intersectoral and international cooperation, an action-oriented programme of activities on ageing for 1992 and beyond.

32. In Japan, the improvement of public health had raised the average life expectancy to nearly 80 years. However, that meant that early in the next century, one out of four people in Japan would be over the age of 60. It was therefore necessary to ensure that that population group contributed to social development and did not place an excessive financial burden on the working population.

33. The average number of persons in the Japanese family was 3.1, and the most common family structure was the nuclear family. Because of the changing structure of the family and the changing roles of family members, the care of children and the elderly increasingly depended on State assistance. With respect to the International Year of the Family, to be observed in 1994, he hoped that preparations for the Year would be carried out with maximum efficiency, in view of the Organization's system-wide budgetary constraints.



34. Mr. LUNA (Peru) said that the elimination of the ideological conflicts that had impeded the work of the United Nations and the new spirit of consensus and cooperation which had come about should make it possible to adopt a new attitude with regard to the difficult social situation in developing countries.

35. General Assembly resolution 45/248, which related to the restructuring of United Nations services in Vienna, had not been implemented and there was a growing disparity between the meagre financial resources available to the bodies that dealt with social development and the scope of their mandates. It was important to lay down as a matter of urgency working methods which took into account the close link between the social sector and the economic sector in order to prevent resistance to change in the Secretariat and its services and the inadequate use of its meagre human and financial resources. It was therefore necessary to reorganize immediately the United Nations social development bodies, without denying the progress achieved in that field by the United Nations Office at Vienna and the bodies at Headquarters in New York.

36. The ubiquity of social concerns within the United Nations specialized agencies, which was due to the growing needs of developing countries in that field, required the adoption of a new approach. The United Nations therefore was in a relatively weak position when it attempted to solve the social problems of mankind. The endemic problems resulting from poverty were compounded by phenomena related to the destabilization of societies by political groups that resorted to violence as a means of political expression.

37. The dominant trends in the international economy and the recent political shift in favour of freedom clearly demonstrated the need to reconsider the relationship between social and economic factors. Civil society was becoming increasingly important in international relations as an element distinct from government mechanisms; and the view that the economic aspect should be subordinated to social needs was gaining ground. In that context, international cooperation in the social field must not be evaluated solely on the basis of its contribution to the achievement of quantitative objectives; its contribution to the political stability of countries must also be taken into account. Furthermore it was illusory to seek to reduce reality to purely accounting parameters; and the solution to social problems could not be sought within a strictly financial framework.

38. The mutual understanding between the developed and developing countries with regard to social problems was all the more necessary since the possible disintegration of society was a factor which might prove very harmful to new democratic structures, particularly those which were being consolidated, and which might call into question macroeconomic policies aimed at improving the economy. It was in the interest of all countries to work to ensure that the transition period that the international society was passing through was accompanied by a new perception of social questions which went beyond the myth of ready-made solutions and the idea that a given model of society could solve all problems.

(Mr. Luna, Peru)

39. The Secretary-General's interim report on the world social situation lacked a methodological framework. It should therefore be hoped that, on the basis of the draft general framework to be used from 1993 on, the report would not be simply an accurate account of social situations, but a document which encouraged reflection and made it possible to evaluate progress or set-backs in the social field.

40. The world summit for social development could be the occasion for devising new ways of perceiving the social field, which would make it possible to put an end to the fragmentation of concepts and promote the consideration of substantive matters.

41. Mr. KOUNKOU (Congo) said that his country hoped that the resources which until recently had been absorbed by the arms race would be devoted to human needs. The Secretary-General's interim report on the world social situation (A/46/56-E/1991/6) provided ample proof of how alarming the situation was and why the past 10 years could be called a lost decade for the development of the South. The decline had been particularly evident in Africa, where IMF and the World Bank had had to recommend structural adjustment programmes. The United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 in the end had not met the expectations of the continent and the appeal by UNICEF for adjustment with a human face had not had an impact because of local constraints. The drastic reduction in social budgets, which had become inevitable, had led to the collapse of social infrastructures and the deferring or abandonment, pure and simple, of some programmes. In Africa, the decline had given rise to social, economic and political demands.

42. In the Congo also, the social situation, particularly that of the most vulnerable groups had deteriorated in terms of employment, health and education. The Government could no longer finance the generous social policy that it had conducted. Although economic indicators ranked the Congo in the category of middle-income countries, social indicators would rather suggest that of the least developed countries.

43. In that context, a wave of social protests had burst forth at the beginning of the year, leading to profound political changes, which had culminated in the holding of a sovereign national conference. The conference had chosen private initiative as the driving force for socio-economic development, while preserving the State's role as the main agent of social development.

44. His delegation, which was concerned about the credibility of the new international order taking shape and welcomed the initiatives taken on behalf of the former communist countries in Europe, hoped that the same effort would also be undertaken for Africa. Underscoring the need for a global solution to all the problems linked to the social situation in the world, he said that his country supported the draft framework for the 1993 report. Accurate information on world socio-economic trends and the real situation of the developing countries could mobilize international political will and promote a

(Mr. Kounkou, Congo)

strong commitment to find satisfactory solutions. Those concerns were in keeping with the ones expressed in Economic and Social Council decision 1991/230, which called for the convening of a world summit for social development, an idea which his country supported.

45. Mrs. REFUVEILLE (France), quoting the President of the French Republic, said that economic and social policies should ensure that "no one is left by the side of the road" and support all international, regional, national or strictly local efforts that promoted social progress, without which the world could not achieve peace and economic progress.

46. The United Nations was alive to the issue, because it was turning with renewed interest to social questions. In that connection, France welcomed the results of the thirty-second session of the Commission for Social Development and subscribed largely to the conclusions contained in the Secretary-General's interim report on the world social situation (A/46/56-E/1991/6). Her delegation had taken note of three areas of concern: the new social problems confronting the many countries that had embarked upon the road to a market economy in the course of the past two years, the persistence in the developed countries of pockets of poverty that called into question traditional social policies and the chronic inadequacy of social services in the countries of the third world, which usually reflected the failure of the economic development policies of the past decade.

47. The idea that social policies must go hand in hand with economic policies was gaining ground. France had always defended that notion, particularly in its activities in favour of developing countries, and considered that international organizations could do more. For that reason, it had noted with interest Economic and Social Council decision 1991/230 on convening a world summit for social development.

48. Concerning disabled persons, France had defined annual national priorities around a sole objective: establishing a global policy to integrate disabled persons. For children, priority had been given to their integration in an ordinary school environment, and care for severely disabled persons had been the subject of renewed efforts.

49. Family structure and lifestyles had changed profoundly over the past 20 years. Her Government ensured respect for the right of persons and couples to choose their way of life. That right was based on the principle of equality, both between men and women in all areas of life and among the various lifestyles, in accordance with French law, and also on the principle of national solidarity, priority assistance being given to children, the aged and the most disadvantaged families.

50. Concerning youth, France attached particular importance to the child's right to freedom of expression enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A perfect illustration of that attitude was the development in France of municipal children's councils. Her Government was also working to

(Mrs. Refuveille, France)

improve and broaden the definition of the rights of adolescents in order to facilitate their social and vocational integration and sought to provide for the hearing of children in judicial and administrative procedures and to address the question of the use of children in the media. France would hold a seminar on children and urbanization in January 1992 in cooperation with the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. She hoped that the conclusions of the seminar would be of use to the working group that would meet to discuss the integration of youth in society at the thirty-third session of the Commission for Social Development, because urban growth generated social phenomena of exclusion and tension that primarily affected youth.

51. At the thirty-second session of the Commission for Social Development, her delegation had participated actively in discussions on the question of ageing; France fully supported the text submitted for the General Assembly's approval. At its forty-seventh session, the General Assembly would, in principle, devote two days in plenary meeting to the question. Those two days would constitute an international conference on ageing, which should be held at a high level and aim at defining global objectives for the period 1992-2001.

52. Consistent with the United Nations Principles for Older Persons - "To add life to the years that have been added to life" - French policy focused on the following objectives: helping the elderly to stay in their usual environment as long as they so desired and their state of health permitted, improving the efficiency and quality of institutions for the elderly, and modifying the system for caring for the elderly.

53. Mr. ERDENECHULUUN (Mongolia) said that lasting peace and security would be illusory without economic development and social progress. Although 1991 had been marked by progress in the political sphere and in the field of disarmament, economic and social problems remained unsolved. Nearly half the population of Asia still lived in poverty, despite sustained growth in output per capita in a number of countries of the region. The international community was under an obligation to create an environment propitious to economic growth and social development. For that reason, Mongolia fully supported a strengthening of United Nations activities in that area.

54. The convening of a world summit for social development would be the occasion for all countries of the world, developed and developing, to pool their efforts in the area. Emphasis should be placed on encouraging a more thorough evaluation of the possibilities for improving social conditions offered by the Guiding Principles for Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes in the Near Future (E/CONF.80/10). Mongolia underlined the importance of greater regional cooperation and was pleased to note the Secretary-General's interest in the activities of ESCAP with regard to the implementation of the Guiding Principles (see document A/46/414), in particular the Fourth Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Welfare and Social Development, held in Manila.

(Mr. Erdenechuluun, Mongolia)

55. Like other countries in transition, Mongolia was facing enormous economic and social difficulties, as pointed out in the realistic balance drawn by the Secretary-General in his interim report on the world social situation (A/46/56-E/1991/6). His Government's social policy was focusing on those problems.

56. The promotion of equality between men and women remained an urgent task. Although the United Nations had made great efforts in that area and it was encouraging that the number of States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was increasing, de facto inequality persisted.

57. Mongolia supported the decision of the Commission on the Status of Women to focus on an in-depth discussion of priority themes and approved those selected for the thirty-eighth session of the Commission. The advancement of women must also be addressed at the 1992 World Conference on Environment and Development, the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development and other international forums. His Government expected the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) to review and formulate clear and specific guidelines for the future implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000.

58. In Mongolia, women enjoyed de jure equal rights in all spheres of social, economic and political life. The ongoing restructuring in the country had, however, brought to light many previously unacknowledged problems, such as the difficult living and working conditions of women, particularly in rural areas, the high rates of maternal and child mortality and the growing incidence of divorce and single-parent families. In that connection, his Government was grateful to UNIFEM for its support of national projects for the advancement of women.

59. With regard to youth, stronger efforts were required in the light of newly emerging issues. He underscored the importance of elaborating a sound world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond. The year 1995, when the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year would be celebrated, was an appropriate occasion for the adoption of that programme by the General Assembly. Young people constituted a large part of the population of Mongolia. They often led the struggle for democracy, liberalization of society and the transition to a market economy.

60. Mongolia attached great importance to the preparation and observance of the International Year of the Family in 1994. In his country, there were many questions in that regard, to which the Government attached particular attention but which were far from being resolved and could not be resolved without the participation of all sectors of society and specific programmes.

61. As the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons drew to an end, Mongolia felt that the progress made in implementing the World Programme of Action had

(Mr. Erdenechuluun, Mongolia)

not been sufficient. Persons with disabilities were full-fledged members of society. Much more should be done to make them active contributors to the socio-economic development of their countries. It was therefore necessary to strengthen United Nations activities and national efforts to that end.

62. With regard to the implementation of the programme for International Literacy Year, he noted with satisfaction that the Year and the World Conference on Education For All had marked a turning-point. He wished in particular to commend UNESCO, which had been the lead organization for the Year, the organizations which had sponsored the Jomtien Conference - UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank - and Governments that had launched national literacy programmes, as well as non-governmental organizations, the mass media and the private sector. The Asia and Pacific region, where three quarters of the world's illiterates lived, had been very active. Special mention should also be made of China and India in that regard.

63. In spite of those efforts, the eradication of illiteracy continued to be one of the urgent tasks of the international community. The General Assembly should continue to follow closely efforts to promote literacy and carry out, at its fiftieth session, a review of the progress made and the problems encountered. Mongolia would submit a draft resolution to that effect.

64. Mr. KABIR (Bangladesh) said that the issue of disabled persons was a problem that was not always appreciated. It should be noted in that regard that the progress made in implementing the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons had been far from satisfactory, particularly in the least developed countries, where many of them resorted to begging as the only means of livelihood. Pity was not a solution. In order to help disabled persons reintegrate into society, it was essential to gain a clear understanding of their needs and recognize the value of their potential. The objective should be to promote self-reliance through self-confidence and self-respect. For that reason, he hoped that the Third World Congress of Disabled People, which was to take place in Canada in April 1992, would address that issue in a pragmatic way.

65. Prevention also played an essential role in that field. In many countries, particularly least developed ones, lack of proper nutrition during pregnancy and early years of childhood was a principal cause of disability. In that connection, it was essential that organizations that dealt with food questions, such as the World Food Programme, UNICEF and WHO, should ensure nutritional programmes for children and nursing mothers.

66. Accidents and violence in all its forms were also causes of disability. In the developed world, there were insurance systems which guaranteed disabled persons medical treatment and compensated for lost earnings. Much needed to be done in that field in the rest of the world.

(Mr. Kabir, Bangladesh)

67. It was equally important to help disabled persons become integrated into society by setting up small income-generating enterprises, which required vocational training suited to their abilities. Only concerted action at the national level, together with international financial and material assistance, could enable Governments to develop institutions for providing such training.
68. There was also the problem of mentally retarded persons who required special care. Instead of considering that type of disability a stigma, society should view it as a challenge to man's ability to be compassionate and caring.
69. Aware of its responsibility to disabled persons, his Government had drawn up a national policy in the field which was implemented by the Ministry of Social Affairs. That policy placed emphasis on community-based programmes, the idea being that people should be encouraged to share the moral responsibility towards the less fortunate in society. The Government had also set up an employment and rehabilitation programme for the disabled, which included both vocational training of the disabled and placement once they had acquired the necessary skills. In addition to special schools for the disabled, some regular schools provided special education for students with visual and hearing impediments.
70. In Bangladesh, most of the programmes for preventing disability were implemented with the assistance of UNICEF. They gave special emphasis to immunization, distribution of vitamin A capsules and information on nutrition.
71. Non-governmental organizations supported the efforts of the Government, which faced set-backs due to both a shortage of financial and technological resources and, more often, sheer human indifference to the fate of the so-called "untouchables".
72. At the international level, it was necessary to draw up a system-wide action plan for specialized agencies like ILO, WHO, UNESCO and UNICEF to ensure better implementation of programmes in that area.
73. Bangladesh endorsed the four key themes which, in the view of the Secretary-General, required the attention of the international community in the years to come, namely, integration of disabled persons into the mainstream, recognition and protection of the rights of disabled persons through legislation, the setting up of national coordinating mechanisms and the establishment of disabled persons' organizations. Much remained to be done in Bangladesh and other regions of the world in order to achieve those objectives and thereby bring about a "society for all by the year 2000".

The meeting rose at noon.