Chairman: Mr. Humberto DIAZ CASANUEVA (Chile).

AGENDA ITEM 12

1. Mrs. FRANCIS (Jamaica) expressed thanks to the Economic and Social Council for the comprehensive and realistic picture it had presented of the advances made, and the tremendous obstacles still to be surmounted in the social field. The Council's report, and the documents referred to in it, threw into relief many of the problems with which her country was vitally concerned.

2. Much had been said about the importance of balanced social and economic development. The developing countries found it particularly hard to achieve balanced development since they had to make difficult decisions in the allocation of very limited resources. The result was often a compromise between what was thought to be desirable and what was considered economically possible or politically expedient. She welcomed assistance in that matter, and endorsed the proposal made in the note by the Secretary-General (E/CN.5/304) for a study of methods of determining social allocations and organizational arrangements for social planning. She also supported the draft resolution before the Committee on the participation of women in national social and economic development (A/C.3/L.1135).

3. Many representatives had spoken of the equal importance of social development and economic development. Some, however, considered that primary attention should be given to economic measures, which would at a later stage provide the means for social development; while others stressed the need to emphasize social development as the necessary prelude to economic development. Her delegation maintained that social and economic aspects were two sides of the same coin and that they must be considered simultaneously. Unfortunately, the social implications of economic projects seldom received the careful consideration they deserved. Indeed, many economic ventures had failed purely because the human factor had not been taken into account. In that connexion she welcomed Economic and Social Council resolution 15/С (XXXVI) urging the regional economic commissions to pay special attention to arranging for simultaneous participation of both social and economic experts in development project planning and execution. She hoped that that approach would also be widely adopted at the rational level. A good example of such co-ordination was the joint United Nations/FAO rural development mission which would visit Jamaica and other countries later in 1963 and which would consist of a community development specialist, an agronomist and a rural social anthropologist.

4. A difficult problem faced in all developing countries was that of arousing and sustaining widespread interest and participation in development programmes. People who lived on the brink of poverty were understandably reluctant to alter a pattern of living which had, at least, enabled them to survive. Much more must be known about the dynamics of social change, and in that regard there could be no better theme for the next report on the world social situation than "Motivation for development".

5. Jamaica had been one of the pioneers in the field of community development, having had a programme in operation since 1937. For many years it had been helping to train community development officers from Africa, Asia and Latin America under UNESCO and bilateral programmes. Two Jamaican community development workers were now serving as United Nations advisers in that field in other countries.

6. She welcomed the increasing attention now being given to community development throughout the world. Activities in that sphere were a practical expression of the beliefs stated in the human rights documents adopted by the United Nations. In a period when man seemed dwarfed by science and governmental machinery, it was important that those beliefs should be continually reaffirmed. Community development was also a means of promoting adult education—a vital part of the programme of any newly independent country. In the community councils and similar groups, each man and woman had the opportunity to learn and practise the elements of democracy, to participate in decision-making and in co-operative action, and to develop leadership skills. Community development
was also a valuable means of encouraging the agricultural population—which predominated in most developing countries—to adopt new and improved techniques and to organize itself into groups of greater efficiency. There was sometimes a tendency, however, to justify community development mainly as a vehicle for promoting economic development and to assign its achievements in purely material terms. To her, the social gains at stake—the building of people—were of equal, if not greater, importance. A significant role in community development was played by non-governmental or voluntary organizations, and by voluntary workers. It was important that these disinterested efforts should be recognized and that opportunities for training should be afforded to volunteer workers under national and international training programmes. Furthermore, since community development work must command many techniques to meet new and challenging problems, the question of research was most important. The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development would be of great value in that respect, and she hoped that a direct relationship could be established between it and universities working on problems of social development.

7. Although the forms of community development might differ from country to country, there were certain essential elements which distinguished it. They had been usefully tabulated for the 1962 International Conference of Social Work as being, in brief, the involvement of people in the identification and implementation of activities to improve their levels of living, the encouragement of self-help projects, the utilization of outside assistance to meet local objectives, and the integration of community projects with national programmes; to those she would add the important element of continuous programmes of training at all levels.

8. The item on the eradication of illiteracy was being discussed in another Committee, but she wished to affirm her country's concern with it. Jamaica's five-year development plan provided for the expansion of the present adult literacy programmes into a national campaign. Her delegation fully endorsed the report entitled "World campaign for universal literacy" (E/3771) submitted by UNESCO and believed that adult literacy programmes in the Caribbean area would be greatly strengthened by the establishment of a regional documentary and research centre.

9. The laws of her country guaranteed equal rights to men and women, and Jamaica acknowledged the important role being played by women in all spheres and at all levels. It was interesting to note that, unlike many countries, Jamaica had an illiteracy rate which was higher among men than among women. It must be recognized, however, that everywhere subliterate prejudices subsisted, manifesting themselves, for example, in reluctance to employ women in higher posts no matter how qualified they might be. On the other hand, many women showed reluctance to venture into new fields and to associate themselves overtly with politics. The pamphlet on "Civic and Political Education of Women" (see A/5503, para. 511) would be most welcome in her country. She was also grateful to the United Nations for its valuable regional seminars, and her country would be participating in the seminars on women in family law, to be held in Colombia later in 1963.

10. The report of the Economic and Social Council presented a challenge, but surely it was one which man in the present day and age had the ability to meet.

11. Mr. SHARAF (Jordan) stressed the particular importance of the Council's report at a time when the urgent need for development in all parts of the world was determining to a great extent the norms and patterns of international relations. The less developed countries were making social and economic betterment their battle-cry and, in the drive towards development, planning was being more and more widely accepted. In Jordan, the public sector was playing a major role in the planning and execution of economic and social projects. The United Nations and specialized agencies were participating in the nation's efforts, and he wished to thank them particularly for their assistance in the field of agriculture, training, health and labour. Those combined efforts were bearing fruit in the present United Nations Development Decade. He stressed the importance of continuous international assistance to developing countries during the planning stage, when the scope and targets of programmes were being formulated; he hoped that the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Trade and Development would take that point into consideration.

12. The Report on the World Social Situation, 1963 (E/CN.5/375 and Add.1 and 2), dealt thoroughly with the factors shaping the social structure of the world and of the particular areas under review. He supported the draft resolution on the world social situation (A/C.3/L.1132/Rev.1). The report, in its chapter on the Middle East, aptly indicated the aspirations of the peoples and the efforts of their Governments to achieve social and economic progress. His Government had achieved excellent results, considering the meagre resources available to it. The complete transformation of existing conditions had begun in the mid-1950s. Hundreds of modern elementary and secondary schools had been built and a new university, the University of Jordan, had been opened in 1962. In public health, the significant increase in the number of doctors, trained health personnel, hospitals and health centres had raised the general level of health and lowered the rate of infant and adult mortality. He noted in that connexion the role played by UNICEF in his country, and expressed the hope that its material resources would be further strengthened.

13. Community development went hand in hand with land reform and he was happy that the latter was being fully discussed at the current session of the General Assembly (agenda item 8). The item was of particular interest to his country because of its present endeavours to promote agricultural modernization. Success in rural community development could not be achieved without modernizing the systems of land tenure currently existing in many under-developed countries. Fortunately, Jordan had never had a feudal system, and, as a result, most of the peasants owned their own land.

14. An important factor affecting the development of the Middle East in general, and of Jordan in particular, was the one million Palestinian refugees, the great majority of whom lived in tents and mud houses. If an economic and social plan to better their lot did not have, as its basic goal, their return to their homeland and the return to them of their lawful property, it was doomed to failure. Political strife was only one aspect of that great human tragedy, which was intensified by the refusal of the Israeli authorities to implement the resolutions of the United Nations and thus alleviate the economic and social plight of the Arab refugees.
15. Mr. Barber Orozco (Cuba) said that, while it might seem inappropriate to begin a statement on the social aspects of the Council’s report with comments on economic development, he believed that the two matters were inseparable and that, in the last analysis, social conditions depended on their economic counterpart. Moreover, it was necessary to correct the impression, given recently by some large Powers, that assistance towards the social development of developing countries was so essential that economic measures could be deferred.

16. Cuba’s experience proved that social development was impossible without the necessary changes in economic structure. Before its revolution, Cuba had presented the same picture of backwardness and poverty as that of other Latin American countries. It had been the victim of oppression and imperialist exploitation; latifundia had predominated in the countryside; there had been but one important crop and but one foreign market; unemployment, illiteracy and disease had been rampant. In such conditions, it would have been pure deceit to talk of social betterment.

17. The so-called Alliance for Progress, which was supposed to promote the social advancement of Latin America, was a failure because, unlike the Cuban revolution, it had not struck at the root of the problem. Indeed, its very purpose was to counterfeit the Cuban example, which offered the sole means of genuine social progress. The land reform programmes sponsored by the Alliance were now recognized to be essentially schemes of resettlement rather than redistribution. The Alliance called for an increase in investment in Latin America, but investment had actually dropped sharply between 1959 and 1962. Latin America was being called upon to contribute $80,000 million of the $100,000 million to be invested under the Alliance. The funds were not even being employed primarily for development programmes, but were being used to cover budget deficits, to back deprecating currencies and to finance imports. One of the main objectives was a 2.5 per cent annual increase in per capita industrial production, but the actual increase was barely 1 per cent.

18. The imperialists feared the example of a nation determined to live its own life and to overcome its inheritance of economic underdevelopment. The United States of America was waging a war of aggression against a people whose only quarrel was with want, ignorance and disease. In its efforts, that people had already achieved much. One of the first measures adopted after the Cuban revolution had been the agrarian reform act of 17 May 1959, proscribing latifundia and returning the land to its true owners. Under the reform, more than 3.5 million hectares had been converted into State farms affording greatly improved material and social conditions to some 250,000 agricultural workers, and some 2.7 million hectares had been given outright to tenant farmers and sharecroppers. The last stage in the land reform had been initiated on 3 October 1963, with the law nationalizing privately-owned rural properties of over sixty-seven hectares.

19. The agrarian reform act had been followed by a gradual nationalization of large foreign and domestic private enterprises, nationalization of foreign and domestic banks and assumption of control over foreign trade by the revolutionary State. That process had put the nation on the road to industrialization and economic planning. With economic planning, the country had undertaken to plan its social development.

20. In 1953, the national illiteracy rate had been 23.6 per cent, and the rate for rural areas 41.7 per cent. Illiteracy had been concentrated in the countryside and in the poorer quarters of the towns. Thus Cuba had been a prime example of a country where economic backwardness had impeded the spread of education. With the revolution a determined fight against illiteracy had begun, culminating in 1961 in the literacy campaign which had made Cuba the first Latin American country free of that evil. In reducing the illiteracy rate to 3.9 per cent, Cuba had joined the ranks of nations with the lowest rates in the world. The decisive factor in the campaign had been the fervour of the 271,000 literacy workers, including workers and students as well as teachers.

21. Once the literacy campaign had been completed, the revolutionary Government had turned its attention to an extensive programme of adult education, so that the workers and peasants might continue to improve themselves, both culturally and vocationally.

22. Primary education was compulsory up to a certain level, and it was intended to make the first three years of secondary education compulsory in the near future. No one was deprived of education because of his economic circumstances, for the Government not only guaranteed free education but provided lodging, clothing and educational materials, whenever needed, to ensure genuine equality of opportunity at all levels of education. One of the greatest difficulties was the shortage of teachers, and a number of training centres had been established to overcome that obstacle. Thousands of school buildings had been erected in order to give Cuban children the teaching services which 50 per cent of them had formerly lacked. Budget allocations for education in 1961–1962 had been much greater than in 1958–1959. There had been a radical reform of the university system, with the primary objective of reorganizing higher education along more rational and scientific lines and adapting it to the country’s needs. There were now three people’s universities, and the social make-up of the student body was completely different from that obtaining prior to the revolution, whereas less than one per cent of the population had attended universities, and those who had done so had been from upper-class families. Through the provision of free education and the scholarship system, sons of workers and peasants and of the middle strata of the population now went to universities; admission depended not on financial means but on ability and the desire to study. Workers’ faculties were being established at the universities for the benefit of persons who spent a part of each day in productive work and another part in attending pre-university classes in order to fit themselves for skilled careers.

23. One of the main objectives of the revolution was to promote and disseminate culture throughout the country, including the most remote areas. Culture was no longer the privilege of a few, but was enjoyed by the whole people. The cultural imbalance between town and country was being removed, and the best cultural traditions of Cuba, purged of foreign elements, were available to all.

24. The state of public health in Cuba had formerly been no less deplorable than that of education, and the Government had therefore given special attention to that sector. Greatly increased funds had been devoted
to the provision of hospitals and other health services; the infant mortality rate had declined considerably; and vaccination campaigns, unknown before the revolution, had been undertaken on a large scale. Special attention had been paid to child health and to the rural areas, which in the past had been neglected.

25. With regard to housing, one of the first acts of the revolutionary Government had been to reduce urban rents; and shortly thereafter it had introduced the urban reform act, which had made every tenant the owner of the premises he occupied, since the right to housing was considered in Cuba to be an inalienable human right. In addition, thousands of houses had been built, particularly in the rural areas, where wretched shacks had been replaced by modern dwellings with sanitary fittings and other conveniences. In the towns, filthy slums had been demolished and modern buildings erected in their place, while formerly aristocratic districts had been opened up to the people at large.

26. Despite nominal equality under the law, women had been discriminated against before the revolution. They had not received equal pay for equal work and had had few opportunities for employment. In socialist Cuba, women enjoyed the same opportunities and rights as men, and their role in economic, political and cultural life was of the greatest importance. In times of peace and in times of mobilization to defend the independence and sovereignty of their country, women had helped in building the new social order.

27. The history of Cuba was essentially the history of any under-developed people. The country had learnt from the past, and in the final analysis, imperialism was the same throughout the world. Once colonialism and the exploitation of countries by monopolies had been abolished, mankind would have taken a genuine step forward.

28. Mrs. ARIBOT (Guinea) said that the Report on the World Social Situation, 1963, showed how little social conditions had improved during the past decade and how slowly the poorer countries had been developing. The term "developing countries" was a euphemism employed to describe nations hampered by inadequate medical services, illiteracy, insufficient food supplies, malnutrition and unemployment. The solution of economic and social problems did not lie in limiting the growth of population: that remedy, sometimes advocated, would be neither humanitarian nor scientifically effective. The United Nations should rather concern itself with a fair distribution of the national income in the under-developed countries—an essential condition for industrialization, without which no social progress was conceivable. Political independence required a sound basis of economic independence, and international economic relations should therefore be placed on a basis of complete equality and mutual advantage.

29. The Report on the World Social Situation, 1963, demonstrated beyond any doubt that colonialism had played a decisive part in causing the backwardness of the under-developed countries. Progress could be achieved only by the complete decolonization of social structures, attitudes and behaviour. Her country had accordingly affected radical reforms in the administration of justice, in trade, in education and in public health; it had organized its youth and created a system of social security and a sound currency. A three-year plan of economic and social development already had an impressive number of achievements to its credit, including more particularly the building of several factories and of a polytechnical institute, improved water supplies and preparatory work on a State farm. Further projects yet to be carried out would constitute a decisive advance in economic development. The creative capacity of the whole people had been mobilized, every citizen taking the part assigned to him in the national effort.

30. National reconstruction posed three main tasks: the defence of national sovereignty, the maintenance and consolidation of national unity, and the introduction of a new and higher form of social training. Under the guidance of the Democratic Party of Guinea, the country's workers were carrying on a daily struggle to resolve the many political and social contradictions which had been sharpened by fifty years of colonial rule. The people had developed a new attitude to work, which was no longer akin to slavery but was a means of satisfying ever more effectively the country's growing social needs.

31. In Guinea, the education of youth involved the rehabilitation of the cultural inheritance and the laying of new moral and social foundations. The new Guinea aimed to train up people who were noble, ambitious or cynical but were attached to their work, shunned vice and were inspired by the revolutionary ethics which had been evolved.

32. The status of women, too, had changed. Under the colonial régime, women had been subjected to a moral code devised by men for the latter's sole benefit. They had not been allowed to appear in public, even in the company of their husbands, and in their homes they had had to be docile, silent and resigned. Girls had not been sent to school, since it had been assumed that they would be trained for their tasks at home without any systematic effort at imparting instruction or culture. With the national liberation, women had gradually broken down customary barriers and achieved equality with men. Africa's modern women had nothing in common with the type of cabaret dancer that represented African womanhood in the eyes of uninformed Western "specialists". With characteristic intuition, generosity and perseverance, they were building their nation hand in hand with men. Determined to safeguard the family and its welfare, they supported both the struggle of subject peoples to achieve national independence and all efforts to strengthen peace through general disarmament. In the light of what she had said, it would be readily understood why her delegation had joined the sponsors of the draft resolutions calling for the preparation of a draft convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination (A/C.3/L.1137 and Add.1 and 2) and of a draft declaration on the elimination of discrimination against women (A/C.3/L.1141).

33. For Guinea, differences between East and West, between socialism and capitalism, had little significance. The true division of the world was the existence, on the one hand, of advanced and emancipated societies and, on the other hand, of societies living in a world of hunger, nakedness and ignorance. In all fields covered by the report of the Economic and Social Council—housing, rural and community development, education, labour, the training of qualified personnel, the status of women and the protection of children—the under-developed nations lagged far behind the advanced nations. Any valid policy of social and humanitarian advancement should be designed to close that gap. That should be the chief aim of the United Nations, which was designed to create a basis
of justice and equality, and stability and peace, for all. The Council should re-plan all its activities and adapt them to that ultimate goal of human well-being. A substantial, not a token increase, in the financial and technical resources for international co-operation would be required if the United Nations was to cope with all its responsibilities.

34. Mr. ELUCHANS (Chile) said that he wished to comment on a number of important questions which were directly related to the topics dealt with in the Council’s report.

35. Social studies were not an entirely autonomous discipline: for instance, a high level of economic well-being and public health could not be regarded as the ideal social situation if it was achieved by the renunciation of political freedoms and natural dignity; nor could it be said that a community was truly humane because its members enjoyed civil and political rights, if there was not at the same time genuine social justice. Again, any solution to the population problem which disregarded moral precepts and the purposes of the family as an institution would be ephemeral. If genuine and permanent progress was to be achieved, a harmonious balance must be sought between protecting and promoting the values of the individual and acting likewise in respect of the community in which he lived.

36. Independence for individuals and peoples was generally recognized as a prerequisite for development. As the nations of Latin America had learnt, formal political independence was no more than an intermediate objective. Classic colonialism was doomed by world opinion, but there were other forms which could be even more profitable for their practitioners. They included pragmatic colonialism, based on financial and economic power, which strangled the economies of the emerging peoples and interfered with their full independence and their social development plans; that was a most dangerous form of colonialism, since it might result in clashes between autonomous national authorities and powerful economic forces from outside. There was also mental colonialism which, under a cloak of disinterestedness, sought to control the very thoughts and habits of the new nations and presented a threat to their development by submerging their national identity. Consequently, the advancement of the developing countries called not only for a dynamic ordering of their economies but also for a determination to retain their ideological independence and their spiritual heritage.

37. While development was essential to individuals and peoples if they were to enjoy a decent existence, economic and social affairs were but one aspect of life, and the following principles must always be borne in mind: every people had the right to determine the political system best suited to its needs; development must never be at the cost of such political freedoms as the right to form political parties, to hold divergent opinions on political questions, and to take part freely in elections; freedom of religion and of expression must be genuinely safeguarded by the State; there must be no interference with citizens’ freedom of movement inside or outside their country; freedom of creative artistic and intellectual expression was a hallmark of communities which respected human rights; racial discrimination was contrary to nature and must be eradicated in all its forms; finally, everyone was entitled to share in the responsibility for development and must therefore have access to learning and employment.

38. No discussion of the possibilities of economic and social development in Latin America could omit reference to the Alliance for Progress. Like all worthy endeavours, the Alliance had been severely criticized, but it was absurd to prophesy its failure without taking into account the letter and spirit of the agreements concluded by the Eighth meeting of consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs serving as organ of consultation in application of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, held at Punta del Este in January 1962. In the first place, the Alliance was much more than a unilateral offer of assistance by the United States; it was an agreement entered into by twenty nations of the Americas, as free and sovereign States, for the purpose of attaining full economic and social development within ten years, in conditions of democracy and freedom. It was implicit in the Alliance that the signatory States would overhaul their national systems in such a way that all available means would be devoted to planning development, to improving public health, to increasing the rate of production, to achieving a fairer distribution of national income and to carrying out structural reforms, especially land reform. The success of the Alliance for a joint and sustained inter-American effort, and the countries of Latin America must not only introduce internal reforms, but increasingly integrate their economies in order to gain the benefits of a common market.

39. The objectives of the Alliance could not be achieved, however, without a thorough revision of the existing terms of international trade. If prices for Latin American products continued to be governed by policies based on supply and demand, or on markets controlled by the stronger nations while the cost of imported goods and services became higher and higher, vigorous development would be impossible—quite apart from the iniquity of perpetuating a system under which many suffered hunger and despair in order to maintain exceptional standards of living in the more developed countries. He trusted that the countries of Latin America would have the opportunity to express their views on that question at the coming United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. In any case, the Alliance for Progress programme could not be fully carried out unless the procedures relating to it were applied more energetically and in a spirit of mutual trust.

40. It was true that economic and social reforms were needed in Latin America, but that was not the whole truth. Reforms could be introduced only when a society was ready for them, and after certain steps had already been taken and further action could be rationally planned. Those who clamoured for revolution in Latin America lacked understanding of the conditions prevailing there—for revolution was not a spontaneous occurrence but a violent reaction against a stubborn refusal to rectify long-standing grievances, and in Latin America, despite any statements to the contrary, remarkable progress had been achieved in recent years. Indeed, even such problems as that of urban housing, resulting from the exodus from rural areas and from the growth of population, reflected an aspiration of the masses to a better life in the cities with a higher level of living, which could not yet be achieved. Scepticism was the worst enemy—especially the scepticism of those who hoped for chaos and who spent large sums on propaganda designed to slow down
development and to attack representative democracy. Not revolution, but reform, was needed in Latin America, and it was being achieved through rational planning.

41. Mr. KHODR (Yemen) said that the growth of population, discussed in the Council's report in relation to economic and social development, was no problem in his country, because of its vast natural resources which were still largely unexploited. His Government, with the aid of friendly countries, was engaged in scientific and technical studies designed to determine how that wealth could best be developed. Agricultural experts had expressed the view that Yemen possessed some of the most fertile soil in the Middle East. His Government had concluded a number of technical assistance agreements with other countries, but would require further technical aid. The FAO had provided valuable assistance, which he hoped would be intensified.

42. New techniques had been adopted in housing, building and planning. Municipal authorities with autonomous powers had been set up in a number of the main towns to implement the relevant policies and, despite the very limited means available, considerable improvements had been effected in town-planning and sanitation. Preparations had been made for the construction of roads linking the principal towns. Minor roads had been completed and streets in the main towns had been paved. His Government would cooperate fully with the specialized agencies, which had already done much to promote the modernization of the country. It was determined to make up for the very long time lost under the Imamite system, which had kept Yemen in isolation from the rest of the world. Yemen would be put back on the map and would play its part in the history of progressive humanity.

43. The CHAIRMAN said that the general debate on the report of the Economic and Social Council had now been concluded. In his view the many interesting statements made should be assembled in a single volume, which would represent a symposium of views on social advancement.

AGENDA ITEMS 12 AND 43


DRAFT RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS (continued)

DRAFT RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE PREPARATION OF A DRAFT CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION (continued)

44. The CHAIRMAN invited the Mexican representative to report on his efforts to redraft document A/C.3/L.1136 and Add.1 and 2 in a form which would make it more generally acceptable.

45. Mr. CUEVAS CANCINO (Mexico) presented the revised version of the draft resolution.1/ The new text had been prepared after a careful study of the views expressed during the debate on the original draft, and after extensive consultation.

46. Mrs. DICK (United States of America) withdrew her delegation's amendments (A/C.3/L.1149) to draft resolution A/C.3/L.1136 and Add.1 and 2.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.

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1/ Subsequently circulated as document A/C.3/L.1136/Rev.1.