



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 16th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. DIRAR (Sudan)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 88: NATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN ACHIEVING FAR-REACHING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGES FOR THE PURPOSE OF SOCIAL PROGRESS (continued) (A/42/3; A/42/56-E/1987/7; A/42/57-E/1987/8; A/42/411; A/C.3/42/L.3)

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1. Mr. YU (China), speaking on agenda item 89, referred to the problem of the rapidly aging population throughout the world and particularly in China, where persons over 60 years of age constituted more than 10 per cent of the entire population, a proportion, moreover, that would virtually double by the year 2025. Since the 1982 World Assembly on Aging and the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Aging the United Nations had done a tremendous amount of work in that area. The Chinese Government had a consistent policy of providing the elderly with support, medical care and entertainment. In order to help them play their role in society and deal with their special needs and problems, institutions had been created at the central and local levels, and a national fund had been established. The Chinese National Committee on Aging had participated actively in the activities undertaken at the international level and had made every effort to implement the International Plan of Action on Aging, while taking into consideration the specific situation in China. The Third Committee enabled countries to learn from each other's experience, and advantage must be taken of all the possibilities it offered for facilitating the implementation of the Plan.

2. Turning to agenda item 90, he said that China had nearly 300 million young people between the ages of 14 and 28, constituting 30 per cent of the entire population. The Chinese Government paid great attention to creating conditions for their moral, intellectual and physical development and was confronted in that regard by the twofold problem of education and employment, which was especially difficult to solve because China was a developing country. Young people were therefore encouraged to study by every possible means (radio and television, correspondence courses or in-service training). Training in practical production techniques was also conducted in rural areas. More than 90 per cent of the counties had held workshops of various kinds with the participation of more than 40 million young people. The Chinese Government attached great importance to the employment of youth, and that was being duly reflected in the current economic reform. It could currently guarantee jobs for all college graduates and jobs or vocational training opportunities for all high school graduates within the year of graduation in both cases.

(Mr. Yu, China)

3. Youth organizations in China enjoyed amicable co-operative relations and constantly communicated with the United Nations, which should conduct in-depth studies of the situation of world youth, provide advisory services on problems affecting them and generally help countries to learn from each other's experiences in that area.

4. The achievements of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons and the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (agenda item 93) were remarkable. The international community was devoting increasing attention to the question and an increasing number of countries had incorporated it in their national development programmes. He hoped that the mid-term review of the Decade would encourage a redoubling of efforts to achieve the objectives of the Programme of Action in the next five years. In China, which had more than 60 million disabled persons, encouraging progress had been registered in that respect. In April 1987, a country-wide sampling of 1.5 million disabled persons had been conducted in order to collect the necessary data for improving work on their behalf. Through legislation, the media and various other means, the Chinese Government was trying to guarantee equal opportunities for the disabled and educate the whole of society to understand, respect and help them, and it gave particular attention to equal opportunities in education and employment. Special education had been instituted in the regular schools and universities, and schools had been established for retarded, blind or deaf and dumb children. In large and medium-sized cities more than 70 per cent of the disabled had jobs. In rural areas, township enterprises hired as many disabled persons as they could. Enterprises giving more than 35 per cent of their jobs to the disabled were exempt from income tax and those which gave more than 50 per cent were exempt from all taxes, as were disabled persons engaged in private business.

5. China attached the utmost importance to multilateral and bilateral co-operation between the countries and the United Nations, whose co-ordinating role in the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons could be further strengthened.

6. Mrs. SAULLE (Italy), speaking on agenda item 93, recalled the work done by the United Nations on behalf of disabled persons. She regretted that the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons was not always being fully implemented and seemed to be losing interest in the eyes of the international community. The General Assembly should put new life into the Programme so that it could better respond to the expectations of the disabled, which was impossible unless Member States paid the appropriate contributions. Her Government, for its part, had decided to join the small number of contributors to the Voluntary Fund established for that purpose.

7. The two meetings of Experts held recently at Ljubljana and Stockholm had considered the possibility of drafting an international convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against disabled persons. Her delegation considered that such a convention could contribute to the elimination of some of the obstacles which impede the equalization of opportunities for the disabled. Although there were already a number of international instruments

(Mrs. Saulle, Italy)

concerning human rights, the provisions of which applied also to the disabled, those instruments were general in scope and did not take into account the specific situation and the particular needs of the disabled, a very vulnerable group. Moreover, the instruments specifically concerning disabled persons, such as the Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons and the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons, were not of a binding nature and therefore did not provide minimum international standards for the protection of their rights.

8. The marginalization of disabled persons in all parts of the world, including the most developed countries, made it impossible for those persons to exercise their fundamental rights. That situation could be improved by means of a convention of a humanitarian and non-discriminatory nature. It would enable the world's 500 million disabled persons to lead lives that were as normal as possible, taking into account their specific needs. It would also give Governments the opportunity to take positive action in the areas of prevention of disabilities, rehabilitation and equalization of opportunities. She stressed that the convention would not prevent States that were in a position to do so from adopting more favourable provisions and would not set limits to further progress in the field. Her delegation was convinced that, as in the case of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the convention would bring about radical changes in living conditions for the disabled both from a practical point of view and in the perception of their role in society.

9. The Italian Government was particularly sensitive to the financial implications which initiatives for the disabled might have for the United Nations. The financial crisis facing the Organization should not lead to neglect of the legitimate expectations of particularly vulnerable groups, such as the disabled, who were unable to adequately defend themselves and enjoy equal rights. The financial implications should be evaluated at the proper time, within a comprehensive framework of priorities, and should not, under any circumstances, prevent an objective evaluation of the merits of a specific initiative.

10. Ms. THØGERSEN (Denmark) spoke on issues concerning youth, as had a Danish youth representative done every year since the twenty-fifth session of the General Assembly. The participation of young persons in the development of society should be given high priority.

11. Employment, education, housing and leisure were areas in which young people had problems. Consideration of those problems should continue at all levels of the United Nations system, as well as within the various bodies and specialized agencies of the Organization, which should communicate and co-operate on those issues.

12. Unemployment was perhaps the most important problem currently facing Danish youth. Solving it required the development of an up-to-date educational system, which would be accessible to all and would offer a broad spectrum of possibilities, both practical and theoretical, in accordance with personal interests. Unfortunately, a large proportion of young people, the majority of them female, had been unemployed for some time, and had consequently lost self-confidence and all

(Ms. Thøgersen, Denmark)

hope of active participation in society. In order to give them a new start in life, the Danish Government had tried, inter alia, to encourage young women to choose professions which had traditionally been dominated by men.

13. Danish society could not yet offer sufficient housing facilities to allow all young people to have their own residences, which was an important step towards adult life. Danish youth therefore supported all United Nations initiatives to ensure that everyone had decent housing.

14. In the area of leisure time activities, it was important for young people to be able to choose among a wide range of activities, including sports clubs, youth clubs or non-commercial organizations based on ideology. The Danish Government provided financial support for organized activities for children and youth. There should also be opportunities for non-commercial leisure time activities to counterbalance, for example, the offerings of television, with all the prospects opened up by satellites.

15. Although it was important for young people in her country to solve their problems in order to feel that they were real citizens of Danish society, they were also aware that youth in developing countries faced the far more serious problem of mere survival.

16. In 1986, the Nordic countries and the countries of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Committee (SADCC) had begun a programme of extended economic and cultural co-operation, which had been expanded to incorporate youth the following year. Youth represented an important potential and a factor for change, and it was therefore very important that they should be given the opportunity to take an active part in the development of their countries.

17. Danish youth, who aspired to global justice, were deeply concerned by the exacerbation of the situation in South Africa, where increasing numbers of children and youth had been imprisoned. They had initiated a programme of co-operation with youth councils in southern Africa and had also made similar contacts in South-East Asia and Latin America, in the hope that democratic structures which were a prerequisite for democratic development, might be established there. The South African apartheid régime, with its ruthless violation of human rights, was still the main obstacle to development and peace. Immediate sanctions should therefore be imposed against it.

18. Young people were also concerned by the hopeless situation of hundreds of thousands of refugees. The recent influx into Denmark of a large number of refugees might create problems which could not all be solved by financial resources. It was important that the international community should realize its responsibility towards the refugees. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was playing an important role as co-ordinator in that area. Since many of the refugees who had found sanctuary in his country were young persons, the educational system would have an important role to play. Some children's and youth organizations had started a campaign for the integration of refugees into society (for instance, in local sports clubs), based on the idea that

(Ms. Thøgersen, Denmark)

the refugee too had something to offer the host country. Such efforts should help to lessen discrimination in Danish society.

19. Since refugee flows were mainly caused by war and violation of human rights, observance of those rights would reduce the number of refugees.

20. Youth had always taken seriously the struggle to establish and maintain peace. Danish youth organizations were co-operating with other youth organizations in eastern and western European countries in order to foster détente between the two groups or countries, by creating a network of contacts to increase exchanges between young people with different political and social backgrounds and to develop tourism between the two regions.

21. Young people, compared to adults, had an avant-garde role to play in society, which they should help to develop today so as to take part in it tomorrow.

22. Mr. OGURTSOV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic), speaking under item 88, said that it was particularly important that countries should share national experiences in achieving far-reaching social and economic changes for the purpose of social progress. Economic and social problems could be solved rapidly when the development strategy was determined properly in the interests of working people. Historically proved experience showed that progressive changes in a society on its way to socialism were economically and socially effective and full of potential.

23. His country's history was a striking example. Before the October 1917 revolution, Byelorussia had been one of the most backward provinces of tsarist Russia. The poverty and hardships afflicting its population, most of whom had been illiterate peasants, had been a direct result of private ownership and the exploitation of man by man. After the unspeakable devastations and atrocities of the Fascist occupation, his country had been left with only half the national wealth created by all previous generations. Currently, with generous and fraternal help from all the republics of the Soviet Union, it had reached a high level of economic and social development. That had been possible only through the socialist transformation of public institutions during the years of Soviet power. Byelorussian industry and agriculture currently ranked high in the economic activity of the Soviet Union. Successful economic development would have been impossible without the creation and strengthening of a scientific and technological potential that had been non-existent before the revolution. General and professional education had been among the priorities at all stages of development. The right to education and professional training free of charge was guaranteed by the Constitution.

24. In conformity with the theory of scientific communism, achievement of a high level of economic performance had never been viewed as an end in itself. Economic development was a prerequisite for a continuous improvement in the well-being of the people. More than four fifths of national income was allocated to those goals. Besides wages paid to workers, social consumption funds played an ever-increasing role in providing access for the entire population to the

(Mr. Ogurtsov, Byelorussian SSR)

educational system, health care, cultural activities and leisure, caring for the aged and improving the social security system. The volume of housing had increased significantly. The quality of health care and pension systems was being improved constantly. Environmental protection had also become one of the main tasks of social policy.

25. In recent years, his country had experienced a speeding-up of its economic and social development, a restructuring and a renewal in all spheres of life, which had created ever more favourable material and legal conditions for the full participation of the entire population in public and social affairs and in the realization of human rights. The Byelorussian people were looking to the future with optimism. They had set the goal of doubling the national income and production potential by the end of the century, making man the central concern and creating the conditions for his all-round development. Without claiming to be the sole possessors of the truth in solving social and economic tasks, his country felt that its achievements spoke for themselves.

26. Mr. NENEMAN (Poland) speaking under items 89 and 93, said that the number of people over 60 years of age was steadily increasing in Poland and currently represented 13 per cent of the population. His Government had taken that group into account in social policy and had adopted special measures in their behalf, mainly with regard to health protection and accident prevention. It strove to provide special services for the elderly, to encourage neighbourhood associations and youth organizations to assist them, and to improve the social welfare system. His country attached great importance to the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Aging.

27. Most of the principles of social policy concerning the elderly applied also to the disabled. The parliament had stressed the necessity of creating appropriate means to enable disabled persons to participate fully in professional and public life. Accordingly, government policy had focused upon the social rehabilitation of disabled persons, aiming to retain the maximum number of disabled persons in their jobs and to provide them with working conditions corresponding to their state of health, while guaranteeing employment for all disabled persons willing and able to work, according to their psycho-physical abilities and professional skills.

28. The number of disabled persons in Poland who held jobs was estimated at 700,000 to 800,000. His country had a unique system of co-operatives for disabled and blind persons. That system, which employed more than 200,000 disabled persons, had received favourable recognition from other States and specialized international organizations, such as the International Labour Organisation and the World Health Organization.

29. Many scientific conferences had been held in his country to work out concrete proposals to improve the situation of disabled persons. They had dealt with such topics as social rehabilitation, employment and recreation for the disabled.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.