



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 20th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ABULHASAN (Kuwait)

later: Mr. JATIVA (Ecuador)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 89: QUESTION OF AGING (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 90: POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES INVOLVING YOUTH (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 92: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORLD PROGRAMME OF ACTION CONCERNING
DISABLED PERSONS AND THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF DISABLED PERSONS (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 93: CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 107: FAMILIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 144: RESPONSIBILITY OF STATES TO BAN IN THEIR TERRITORY, AND TO
REFRAIN FROM INSTIGATING OR SUPPORTING IN THE TERRITORY OF OTHER STATES,
CHAUVINISTIC, RACIST AND OTHER MANIFESTATIONS THAT MAY CAUSE DISCORD BETWEEN
PEOPLES AND INVOLVEMENT OF GOVERNMENTS AND THE MASS MEDIA IN COMBATING SUCH
MANIFESTATIONS AND IN EDUCATING PEOPLES AND YOUTH IN THE SPIRIT OF PEACEFUL
CO-OPERATION AND INTERNATIONAL ENTENTE; AND EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
DECLARATION ON THE PROMOTION AMONG YOUTH OF THE IDEALS OF PEACE, MUTUAL RESPECT AND
UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN PEOPLES (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 89: QUESTION OF AGING (continued) (A/43/583)

AGENDA ITEM 90: POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES INVOLVING YOUTH (continued) (A/43/601)

AGENDA ITEM 92: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORLD PROGRAMME OF ACTION CONCERNING DISABLED PERSONS AND THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF DISABLED PERSONS (continued) (A/43/3, A/43/634)

AGENDA ITEM 93: CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (continued) (A/43/3, A/43/354 and Corr.1, A/43/370, A/43/572)

AGENDA ITEM 107: FAMILIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS (continued) (A/43/570)

AGENDA ITEM 144: RESPONSIBILITY OF STATES TO BAN IN THEIR TERRITORY, AND TO REFRAIN FROM INSTIGATING OR SUPPORTING IN THE TERRITORY OF OTHER STATES, CHAUVINISTIC, RACIST AND OTHER MANIFESTATIONS THAT MAY CAUSE DISCORD BETWEEN PEOPLES AND INVOLVEMENT OF GOVERNMENTS AND THE MASS MEDIA IN COMBATING SUCH MANIFESTATIONS AND IN EDUCATING PEOPLES AND YOUTH IN THE SPIRIT OF PEACEFUL CO-OPERATION AND INTERNATIONAL ENTENTE; AND EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE PROMOTION AMONG YOUTH OF THE IDEALS OF PEACE, MUTUAL RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN PEOPLES (continued)

1. Mr. STUART (Australia) said that the resolution of problems based on social values and institutions which differed widely from country to country would inevitably depend largely on action taken by Governments in each country. The primary functions of the United Nations in the social field were to act as a catalyst for such action; to promote greater international awareness of social problems; and to serve as a clearing-house for information about the measures taken. His delegation commended the efforts made by the United Nations Office at Vienna to do more with less.
2. Activities relating to youth, aging and disability should be centralized at the national level. Australia did not favour the launching of ambitious projects in the social field involving "add-ons" to the regular United Nations budget. New activities must be financed through redeployment of resources following a reordering of priorities or by drawing on new sources for funds. In reordering priorities it was necessary to examine priorities across the entire range of United Nations activities.
3. The United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme had been successful in working with Governments and others to develop practical and effective strategies, recognizing that ultimately it was Governments which had to take action against crime. The Australian Institute of Criminology had recently entered into an agreement to co-operate with the United Nations in crime prevention. His delegation had always strongly supported resolutions calling on the Secretary-General to allocate sufficient staff to the Crime Prevention and

(Mr. Stuart, Australia)

Criminal Justice Branch to enable it to meet its responsibilities. There was also a need for a clear sense of priorities in the Branch's work. The Branch should promote international co-operation to combat serious forms of crime, especially through mutual legal assistance and extradition procedures and should help fight organized crime. While a balance must be struck between strengthening crime control machinery and protecting the basic human rights of the individual, it was also necessary to bear in mind the rights of the general public. His delegation therefore supported efforts to study and document the social and economic costs of crime.

4. Australia fully supported the objectives of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, in particular the promotion of equal opportunities for disabled persons and their full social integration into the broader community. Australia had made real progress in implementing the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons.

5. His Government had also made a determined effort to maintain the momentum achieved during International Youth Year by appropriate follow-up action at all levels. It had formulated and was implementing a national strategy on youth concerns focusing on improved education, vocational training and employment, support programmes for young people who were unemployed, homeless or addicted to drugs, and opportunities to become involved in voluntary community service activities. Formal arrangements had been established for consultations on youth affairs and the strengthening of channels of communication, especially between the Government and youth organizations.

6. In the current financial circumstances of the United Nations, Australia would not support an increase in regular budget funding for United Nations activities on aging, although it welcomed efforts to find extrabudgetary resources for that purpose. Following a survey of Australia's senior citizens, who had overwhelmingly expressed a desire to live as independently as possible for as long as possible in their own homes, his Government had begun a process of redistributing resources for care of the aged away from nursing homes to alternative forms of residential and community care. It had also developed special programmes to cater to the needs of the aging in ethnic and rural communities and of disabled elderly persons, and on information strategy to provide elderly people with information on the full range of options and services available to them.

7. The Committee must be careful to maintain a broad concept of the "family" which could accommodate different experiences of "family" living. Disadvantaged groups should be integrated into the mainstream of society. That process was not merely beneficial to national economies; it was also a question of basic human decency.

8. Mr. RUDI (Albania) said that in many countries young people and the elderly were suffering because of the economic and socio-political crisis. While the increase in the number of older persons was mainly a phenomenon of the industrialized countries, it was likely to affect developing countries in the

(Mr. Rudi, Albania)

future. Issues of youth and the aged were more acute because of the overall decline of economic growth rates, particularly in developing countries. As a result of economic constraints and the introduction of new technologies, unemployment, which had continued to increase, particularly among youth and the elderly, remained a major concern and was a serious obstacle to the transmission of work experience from one generation to the next. The marginalization of youth had led to juvenile delinquency, crime and drug addiction.

9. The elderly and the young also suffered from the negative effects of the world political situation aggravated by the hegemonist policy of the super-Powers and the conflicts they perpetrated or incited. Young people were victims of foreign oppression and exploitation, as in the case of Palestinian youth, persecuted by the Israeli invaders, and youth in South Africa, Namibia and elsewhere fighting for national liberation and social emancipation.

10. In an era of break-throughs in science and technology, it was unacceptable to offer only poverty, unemployment and illiteracy to youth. The situation could not be changed unless the most crucial issues of socio-economic development were resolved and just and equitable international relations were established. It could not be reversed as long as imperialist, racist and aggressive policies continued to be enforced and huge material and human resources were allocated to non-productive sectors, particularly armaments. In many cases, cut-backs were being made in social funds, access to education was being restricted, and the living conditions of the elderly, neglected by society and the family and left to depend on charity, were deplorable.

11. As a country with the youngest population in Europe, Albania had followed a policy aimed at full integration of young people in all fields of endeavour and making them aware of their tasks and responsibilities for socialist construction and the defence of the homeland. It had succeeded in preventing unemployment, delinquency, drug addiction and prostitution. It had ensured a rational and planned use of natural and human resources and established democratic, compulsory and free education for all. Young people were imbued with the best traditional values such as respect for their parents, families and the elderly, respect for other peoples, in particular those fighting for freedom, independence and social justice and a love of peace.

12. The moral education of Albanian youth, both within the family and in society, aimed to avoid creating a gap between the generations. The elderly enjoyed moral and material support and the respect of family members and society. The policy towards the elderly was based on the principle of non-separation and full integration of the elderly in both family and social life. With their rich experience of life and work, they contributed to the proper education of the younger generation.

13. Mr. Jativa (Ecuador) took the Chair.

14. Miss LISSIDINI (Uruguay) said that the work of the United Nations in the social field was particularly important in developing countries where social progress was a matter of national survival, but was also significant in developed countries confronting serious social problems such as crime and drug addiction. Uruguay welcomed the operational association between the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Office at Vienna and the incorporation of some social matters in operational programmes.

15. The report of the Secretary-General on youth demonstrated that there was a greater awareness on the part of Governments concerning the importance of the participation of young people in the development process, partly as a result of the information and promotional activities carried out by competent bodies and organizations of the United Nations system. Her delegation believed that it was important to strengthen links between governmental and non-governmental organizations. In Uruguay, under a decision of the executive in September 1987, a youth commission had been established with the task of co-ordinating the activities of youth organizations, promoting initiatives to resolve the priority problems of young people and channelling international co-operation on youth. The commission had made a preliminary assessment of the situation of young people in Uruguay which had revealed that one of the main problems they confronted was the difficulty of securing their first job.

16. According to a profile established by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in 1987, unemployed young people in Montevideo were often studying as well as seeking work, lived above the poverty level and were therefore selective in the search for employment, were women under the age of 20 with limited educational qualifications or had moved to the city from rural areas. ECLAC had concluded that it was necessary to adapt the structure and content of education to the changes which had taken place in society. The report revealed that the main causes of death among young people in Uruguay were accidents, suicide and perinatal causes among young women, and that in some cases, accidents and suicide were associated with drug and alcohol abuse.

17. On the basis of the analysis made in the report, it had been decided to establish working groups to consider all the problems involved. The co-ordinating committee for youth and the Uruguayan Women's Institute, with the support of the Youth Institute of Spain, had co-sponsored the first workshop on policies for young women in Latin America held in Montevideo in March 1988. The workshop had made recommendations relating to general criteria for policy-formulation, including links between the public and private sectors in the use of the instruments referred to in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and an evaluation of the experience of non-governmental organizations, emphasizing the importance of co-ordination between governmental and non-governmental organizations. In May 1988, a national workshop had been held to study questions of youth and employment. Its preliminary conclusions had led to increased awareness of the need for viable alternatives to solve the problems of young people. A youth information centre was being organized under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture; a project on Uruguayan youth financed by the United Nations Population Fund was also being implemented.

(Miss Lissidini, Uruguay)

18. Uruguay firmly supported the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report and the work carried out by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, particularly in relation to youth.

19. Mr. AZAZY (Yemen), speaking also on behalf of Democratic Yemen, said that the interest of the international community in the question of aging gave proper expression to the concern of the younger generation for the elderly. The two Yemens were giving increasing attention to the question in the light of the social customs and spiritual values that governed family relationships in their society. The elderly were accorded a special status in the family, all family members deferred to them, and the family took care of its elderly members. That was in no way surprising, since the Yemeni family had always been characterized by its cohesiveness.

20. The two Governments gave high priority to the elderly in terms of health care and provided a regular monthly income to those in financial difficulty or belonging to poor families.

21. Despite the paucity of technical and financial resources, Yemeni society also accorded great attention to disabled persons, and the two Governments made exceptional efforts to provide for their social welfare. Plans were in preparation for the training of the staff necessary to run the special hospitals for the disabled which would be constructed in the foreseeable future. Both Governments were currently obliged to send disabled persons to other countries for treatment, which naturally involved great expense.

22. Since both countries were developing countries, there was a pressing need for all members of society, and especially the young, to participate in development programmes. They therefore had a particular interest in youth and provided free education up to the advanced-degree level. The two Governments had allowed young people to form their own organizations and had established special ministries to provide educational and social services to the young. Modern youth centres and summer camps had been established in recent years, and they offered educational and welfare services and the opportunity to participate in sports.

23. In connection with policies and programmes involving youth, it should be recalled that an entire generation of young Palestinians was engaged in an uprising against the Israeli occupation and was being subjected to the most savage Israeli practices. The international community must take concerted action to halt those practices and ensure the welfare of Palestinian youth.

24. On the question of families in the development process, it should be noted that, by virtue of its rural character, the Yemeni family already played an active role in the implementation of development programmes. The two Governments were preparing the necessary programmes to enable families to participate more actively in the economic and social development process, and the measures to be taken would support the traditional role of the family. The specialized agencies of the United Nations had a particular interest in the question, and Member States should lend

(Mr. Azazy, Yemen)

their support to those agencies so that they might expand their activities and make their expertise available to the developing countries.

25. In the view of the two delegations, the Committee should consider the items on crime prevention and criminal justice and on the international campaign against traffic in drugs within the same cluster, since they saw them as closely related. By virtue of its social customs and spiritual allegiance, Yemeni society was somewhat protected from the heinous crimes experienced in other countries. While the criminal laws in force in the two countries constituted a basic deterrent to such crimes, there was, at the same time, a proper humanitarian concern for the rehabilitation and reform of offenders.

26. Mr. MINET (Observer, International Labour Office) welcomed the recognition of the indissoluble link between social and economic issues and of the urgent need to adopt a broader view of the development process. Awareness of the social cost of structural adjustment policies adopted during the current period of austerity had led to the convening by ILO in November 1987 of a tripartite meeting on employment and structural adjustments, which had outlined a strategy emphasizing the need to take steps to protect living standards and social benefits of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and increase their productive capacity.

27. Providing young workers with employment opportunities and appropriate training constituted a major challenge for all countries, particularly the developing countries, where the problem was aggravated by difficulties of access to education and vocational training and discrepancies between training programmes and labour market needs.

28. A brief survey of recent youth unemployment trends was provided in a document which was available to delegations. Summarizing the document, he noted that young workers in all countries had borne a disproportionate share of the severe economic recession since the late 1970s, with the rate of youth unemployment at least two to three times greater than that for adult workers. There were, however, major differences both within and between regions. In Western European countries, youth unemployment rates varied from 5 to over 40 per cent, as against 60 per cent or more in some developing countries. In some cases the high youth unemployment rates were believed to be a temporary problem that could be remedied through short-term measures whereas in others they were due to longer-term structural factors. In many European countries there were clear signs of improvement, but in most developing countries schemes intended specifically for young people had more limited prospects. The situation of young workers was an issue of constant concern to ILO. Targeted measures, if they were to be effective, must be co-ordinated with the overall development strategy and employment and manpower planning policies.

29. Older workers constituted a growing category of the labour force in all countries, partly as a result of demographic trends. The urgent problem in the industrialized countries was to retrain older workers affected by structural adjustments or the introduction of new technologies, while in the rural areas of developing countries measures had to be taken to avert greater poverty among the

(Mr. Minet, Observer, ILO)

elderly as a result of the disruption of traditional income support mechanisms. As far as the industrialized countries were concerned, ILO was consequently directing its research towards further vocational training and retraining for older workers and retirees so as to avoid the marginalization of that category of workers. The International Labour Conference had adopted a recommendation aimed at encouraging countries to remedy those aspects of working conditions and the environment which might hasten the aging process, modify forms of work organization and working time which led to stress, adapt job content through ergonomic principles, and provide more adequate supervision of older workers' safety and health. ILO's Medium-Term Plan made provision for the further study of issues relating to older workers and recommended ways of dealing with them.

30. Expanded and sustained assistance to disabled persons and greater diversification with a view to reaching more categories of disabled persons were the main features of ILO's vocational rehabilitation programme. In 1987, some 60 developing countries had received assistance in the form of technical advice, with the emphasis placed on the development of community-oriented rehabilitation services and income-generating activities. An outline of ILO's approach to the disabled was contained in the press release available to delegations. In addition to concerning itself with the implications of new technologies for the training and employment of disabled persons, that approach placed emphasis on vocational rehabilitation based on the mobilization and utilization of community resources and active participation by the community. In conclusion, he agreed with the representative of UNESCO on the need for inter-agency co-operation on social issues.

31. Mr. LINDHOLM (Sweden), speaking on item 93 on behalf of the Nordic countries, regretted that the importance attached to crime and crime control in Member States was not reflected in the resources allocated for that purpose by the United Nations. While aware of the need to set priorities in the allocation of funds, the Nordic countries called for a better balance in United Nations allocations. With a staff of only six persons, the task of the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch might be reduced to arranging the quinquennial Congresses and it would be forced to neglect the other important tasks assigned to it. He referred to ECOSOC resolution 1988/44 requesting that the programme of work in crime prevention and criminal justice be supported by adequate resources through such measures as appropriate redeployment of staff and funds, including redeployment from relevant Headquarters departments. Restriction of the work of the Branch might also make it difficult to recruit competent professionals in the future, thus further reducing its usefulness in helping Member States to control crime.

32. In addition to the growing number of drug-related crimes, the Nordic countries reported a substantial increase in crimes against property, largely as a result of greater affluence in Western countries. More attention should be given to traditional crimes like theft and street violence, as opposed to the more spectacular crimes, in United Nations debates on crime prevention, since they were the crimes which caused most concern to citizens. Credit was due to the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch for the work it was doing, despite its limited resources, and for the success of the latest meeting of the Committee on

(Mr. Lindholm, Sweden)

Crime Prevention and Control in 1988. It was the Nordic countries' belief that the regional preparatory meeting for the next quinquennial Congress to be held in Finland in April 1989 would contribute to the success of the Congress. In that connection they expressed their appreciation of the work done by the Helsinki Institute for Crime Prevention and Control and commended it for its co-operation and its contribution to United Nations work in that field.

33. Mrs. MOLOJWANE (Botswana) said that young people in Botswana were faced with new problems today, with the weakening or breakdown of traditional social institutions such as the initiation schools and the extended family system and the security they provided. Further research was urgently required into all issues involving youth, including alcohol and drug abuse and delinquency.

34. Youth unemployment was recognized as a world-wide problem. In Botswana, institutions such as brigades and polytechnics offered vocational training for young people in a variety of fields, including trades, agriculture and crafts, and non-formal education was provided in community centres. The Government's objective was to improve skills in order to achieve rapid social and economic development with special emphasis on rural development and job creation. Creation of employment in rural areas was of particular importance to halt the drift to the towns and enable young people to stay and take care of the older members of the family.

35. The problems of aging and the elderly should be discussed not only at international forums but also at the national and regional levels, and Botswana was pleased to note the opening of the International Institute on Aging in Malta.

36. Mrs. SEMAMBO-KALEMA (Uganda), speaking on agenda items 90 and 93, said that, at a time when the war against crime had acquired new urgency, the United Nations and specifically the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch had achieved significant results and had provided valuable assistance to countries and regions in need, despite the financial difficulties faced by the Committee on Crime Prevention and Control.

37. Her country was grateful for having been selected as host country of the United Nations African Regional Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (UNAFRI) and would make every effort to facilitate its functioning. The Institute was an asset not only for the region but for her Government in its struggle to prevent and control crime. Although UNAFRI had had financial difficulties, it had already organized a number of activities and seminars with financial assistance from UNDP. Her delegation strongly appealed to Member States of the region to sign the agreement setting up the Institute so that it could enter into force and be effectively implemented; it was hoped that contributions from Member States would be forthcoming promptly. Meanwhile, UNDP and other funding agencies were urged to continue to provide the necessary financial support to the Institute, and the United Nations regional and interregional crime institutes were invited to strengthen their collaboration with UNAFRI by exchanging information and experience.

(Mrs. Semambo-Kalema, Uganda)

38. Turning to agenda item 90, she said that children under the age of 15 accounted for nearly half of the total population of Uganda, and approximately 38 per cent of school-age children were not enrolled in school. In order to cater for the social welfare of young people, the Government had established a Ministry for Youth, Culture and Sports. It also encouraged young people to take an active part in society at all levels. For example, in all Resistance Councils at the village level, young people must be represented by a Secretary for Youth Affairs; that gave them a share in political decision-making as well. There was a move by the Government to encourage young people to acquire skills training, with particular emphasis on farming, and so contribute to a self-sustaining economy.

39. In conclusion, she said that her delegation supported the resolution adopted by the Committee on Crime Prevention and Control at its August 1988 session inviting Governments to exercise stricter and more effective controls over the dumping of industrial and nuclear waste in developing countries.

40. Mr. AL-SHAKAR (Bahrain) said that his Government paid special attention to the welfare of the elderly on the basis of the deeply rooted social values of the Islamic religion, which preached reverence for parents and the importance of strong family ties. Bahrain had established institutions for the purpose of integrating the elderly in development and providing them with social services. It had drawn up programmes and projects for the elderly in accordance with the International Plan of Action on Aging, and a national committee on aging and the welfare of the elderly had been functioning since 1985.

41. The competent authorities, in co-operation with the United Nations, had carried out a number of field studies on the situation of the elderly in order to determine their present and future needs. The goals of social work and social development embraced basic human needs at every stage of life, and United Nations efforts should focus on the preparation of studies on the elderly, their problems and their integration in economic and social life in a rapidly changing world.

42. His Government considered that youth, if properly directed towards development goals, could contribute to positive social change. Young people in Bahrain were provided with every amenity in order to enable them to assume their future responsibilities towards their homeland. Bahraini youth organizations had also joined with those of other peoples of the world in celebrating United Nations Day at a gathering where presentations had been made illustrating the principles of the Charter.

43. International Youth Year had lent increased impetus to the United Nations action in the field. The activities of the Year had produced many recommendations, and the United Nations and its Member States should pay particular attention to those recommendations with a view to solving the problem of integrating youth in the overall development process. There was a collective international responsibility towards future generations that required a concerted effort on the part of the international community.

(Mr. Al-Shakar, Bahrain)

44. His Government had expressed general approval of the recommendations adopted by the 1987 Global Meeting of Experts to Review the Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons at the Mid-Point of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. Bahrain had stressed the need to give new impetus to the Decade and to promote the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons at the national, regional and international levels.

45. His delegation would like to stress the importance of the United Nations role in crime prevention and criminal justice. The recommendations and programmes adopted by the successive United Nations conferences on the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders were convincing proof of the importance and effectiveness of that role. The laws in force in Bahrain were in line with new thinking on crime and punishment and had proved successful in combating crime.

46. His Government had declared its agreement in principle to the proclamation of an international year of the family, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 42/134. The Islamic religion considered the family to be the foundation of society, and measures were therefore required to protect families from disintegration and help them maintain their cohesiveness.

47. Mr. MACKI (Oman) said that youth represented a social grouping with its own identity, its own needs and its own problems. Since 1973, the Government had taken great interest in the advancement of youth and was striving to realize its aspirations and hopes. Education was a major factor in building a modern nation, and an extensive educational system was therefore being developed.

48. It had become the custom to hold annual gatherings at different locations throughout the country so that young people could become better acquainted with the various regions and their inhabitants. Young women held their own gatherings, where they sought to develop their artistic, cultural and social abilities.

49. An annual gathering of young disabled persons was held under the auspices of the national committee for the welfare of the handicapped, which sought to instil confidence in disabled persons and encouraged them to be productive and self-reliant.

50. Peace, development and youth participation were organically related. The negative impact of war on development, in terms of the depletion of resources and waste of capacities that could be channelled into the solution of many of the world's problems, was well known. It was therefore essential to raise future generations in a spirit of humanitarianism, peace, friendship, co-operation and mutual understanding. Oman had attended and participated in many international conferences and meetings on issues involving youth. Moreover, in seeking contact with young people abroad, the youth training ship Shahab Oman had, over the years, visited a number of ports throughout the world.

(Mr. Macki, Oman)

51. Oman considered it its basic task to prepare youth to assume a creative role in the service of society. That task was difficult to accomplish in the absence of a sound upbringing based on faith, ethical values and devotion to the homeland. The Government assumed an important role in that domain, guiding and directing the education of young persons in order to protect them from destructive ideas incompatible with the convictions and values of the country.

52. Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait) resumed the Chair.

53. Mr. BOLOT (France) said that he wished to draw attention to the fact that the Third Committee was alone in having its press releases issued only in English. The Department of Public Information should be instructed to issue those press releases in the usual languages.

54. The CHAIRMAN said that the matter would be investigated.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.