

UNITED NATIONS
General Assembly

FORTY-FOURTH SESSION

Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
13th meeting
held on
Thursday, 19 October 1989
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 13th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KABORE (Burkina Faso)

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/44/SR.13
23 October 1989

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

89-56435 1661S (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 90: WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION (E/CN.5/1989/2 and ST/ESA/213)

AGENDA ITEM 91: TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PROCLAMATION OF THE DECLARATION ON SOCIAL PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT (A/44/116-E/1989/15 and Corr.1 and A/44/116-E/1989/15/Add.1)

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AGENDA ITEM 102: CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (A/44/400)

AGENDA ITEM 113: FAMILIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS (A/44/407)

1. Mrs. KOLONTAI (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that successful solutions to world social problems depended largely on the willingness of the international community to reassess traditional approaches, to stop concentrating on their own problems and ignoring the interdependence of the world. New political thinking demanded that the world community should take a sober and constructive look at imbalances in social development and that the United Nations and its bodies should design a new concept of social justice and propose sound measures for achieving it.

2. The report on the World Social Situation (E/CN.5/1989/2) examined a wide range of social problems calling for solutions, some of them relating to nuclear power engineering. In that connection, she pointed out that the clean-up operations in the wake of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster would continue to place a heavy social and economic burden on the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic for years to come, diverting considerable material resources from other needs. During the current month, the Supreme Soviet would finalize a Government programme for the period 1990-1995 designed to eliminate the consequences of the Chernobyl accident in Byelorussia, at a cost of over 16,000 million roubles; the Republic's regular budget averaged about 10,000 million roubles.

3. The Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic had recently celebrated the seventieth anniversary of its founding. In a historically brief period, it had

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(Mrs. Kolontai, Byelorussian SSR)

eliminated exploitation of man by man, unemployment, poverty, illiteracy and homelessness. The right to employment, free health care, education and social insurance for the elderly and the disabled was guaranteed. Since 1985 the country had been pursuing a policy of restructuring - or perestroika - in order to maintain economic growth rates, expand the economy's material and social base so as to meet the people's growing demands, and to overcome the effects of the levelling methods used in distributing material benefits and services which had sapped the creative spirit, initiative and enthusiasm of workers. The major objective was to give effect to the fundamental principle of socialism: from each according to his ability and to each according to his work. The idea behind perestroika was to build an environment where the worker felt he was needed by society and where he could do what he did best.

4. The new policy included measures for the development of work collectives and co-operatives, expanding self-management, decentralizing decision-making powers, and allocating increased income for consumption. They also included a housing construction programme aimed at providing every family with its own apartment or house by the year 2000.

5. Perestroika, glasnost, and democratization opened broader vistas for Byelorussia's involvement in the international division of labour and in multilateral programmes of international social co-operation, multilateral exchanges of experience in social and economic transformation, and the joint solution of regional and global problems. The furthering of democracy presupposed affording every citizen greater opportunities for exercising his or her constitutional right to participate in the management of State and public affairs.

6. Mrs. FUSTIER (Belgium) said that the number of handicapped people continued to increase and in some countries was likely to reach between 30 to 40 per cent of the population by the end of the century. Since disablement resulted mainly from social and economic factors particular attention should be paid to the developing countries. The International Year for Disabled Persons, followed by the Decade, had generated hopes of great improvements, but unfortunately, now, at the mid-point of the Decade the enthusiasm of the International Year had not been fully sustained.

7. Belgium had played an active part in preparing United Nations action on behalf of the disabled and noted the priorities set forth in the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its forty-third session (A/43/634 and Add.1). In view of the Organization's financial situation, however, a more realistic programme would have to be devised, given the means available to the Secretary-General.

8. The Decade for Disabled Persons must be reactivated and Belgium attached great importance to the Secretariat's role as a catalyst. She drew attention to the reference in the Secretary-General's report (A/44/406) to strengthening national co-ordinating mechanisms and developing national policies for handicapped persons (para. 4). In response to the note verbale to Member States circulated by the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolution 43/98, the Belgian

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(Mrs. Fustier, Belgium)

authorities had submitted a list of actions taken or planned in implementation of the Programme of Action and the Decade. It was primarily the responsibility of Governments to make people aware of the benefits of including handicapped people in daily life, and the non-governmental organizations were important channels for mobilizing public opinion.

9. She reaffirmed her delegation's reservations on the legal justification or the value of an international convention on the rights of handicapped persons. Handicapped persons had the same rights as other human beings and they were guaranteed in numerous international instruments. It would be limiting the scope of those instruments to single out a specific group for a convention on their rights. The best way to ensure the effective enjoyment of the rights of handicapped persons was to promote the implementation of the World Programme of Action.

10. Mrs. SYLLA-LINGAYA (Madagascar), noting the important problems highlighted in the 1989 Report on the World Social Situation (E/CN.5/1989/2), said that the role of the United Nations was not only to identify and analyse current social problems, but to seek solutions which called for international co-operation. Specifically that co-operation should be aimed at restoring the economic and social balance in the developing countries, where structural adjustment and debt problems had adversely affected the well-being of the population.

11. Structural adjustment measures in Madagascar had achieved some success in financial stabilization and economic improvement but to the detriment of social conditions. With the help of United Nations specialized agencies and certain States, and with the co-operation of non-governmental organizations, Madagascar was endeavouring to maintain its concern for the human dimension of adjustment.

12. Madagascar's efforts to promote balanced economic and social development included a review of agricultural policy in order to speed up the growth of agricultural production with a view to achieving self-sufficiency in 1990 and the establishment of a social welfare department under the Ministry for Population, Social Welfare, Youth and Sports, to establish social welfare policy. The social dimension in the programme of adjustment would be reflected particularly in the health and nutrition sectors, where priority would be given to food security for the vulnerable groups and oral rehydration as one of the many measures to reduce child mortality.

13. The Malagasy authorities were also concerned to ensure that the structural adjustment included provision for the people to participate in development projects. In co-operation with agencies of the United Nations system, such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), they were emphasizing the importance of social mobilization and community participation in various development activities.

14. In most of the developing countries, particularly in Africa, efforts to remedy social problems were hampered by the unfavourable international economic climate.

(Mrs. Sylla-Lingays, Madagascar)

Multilateral co-operation must be intensified to create a more just economic climate and combat the common enemy, poverty - a factor of instability for all countries.

15. She also stressed the importance of social welfare policies and programmes and supported the action taken by the Secretary-General as reported in document A/44/343.

16. She welcomed the celebration on 11 December of the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration on Social Progress and Development, which should reinforce the international community's determination to exert every effort to improve the quality of life.

17. Mrs. PELLICER (Mexico) said that the General Assembly was meeting at an important time in the history of the United Nations, when the easing of world tensions was opening the way to greater solidarity in the fight for a better world. There were, however, problems which could weaken the prospects for peace, progress and security in the last decade of the twentieth century. Her delegation was concerned particularly about the decline and stagnation of social progress in most of the developing countries in the past 10 years.

18. In Latin America the economic crisis of the 1980s had affected provision of the basic requirements of food, health, housing, education and clothing: 40 per cent of the population - 170 million people - were not adequately provided for and 61 million lived in abject poverty. Diseases that had been eradicated were recurring and malnutrition and hunger were more widespread.

19. She wished to stress the relationship between social development and the main topics under consideration by the Third Committee. The achievement of an adequate standard of living for the majority of the world's population was fundamental to the success of efforts to improve the human rights situation, combat drug addiction and drug trafficking and improve the condition of women and youth.

20. At the first regular session of the Economic and Social Council, her delegation had made the observation that the report on the world social situation (E/CN.5/1989/2), while pinpointing specific social problems, had lacked a general framework which could indicate trends for the principal social indicators and could place the specific social problems in a broader economic and social context. The absence of such a framework was particularly serious at a time when most developing countries were at a critical stage in their social development. Her delegation therefore eagerly awaited the addendum to the report to be submitted by the Secretary-General to the forty-fifth General Assembly.

21. In connection with the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Declaration on Social Progress and Development (A/44/116-E/1989/15) she pointed out that General Assembly resolution 41/142 had requested the Secretary-General to include in the report substantive proposals regarding ways to increase the contribution of the relevant United Nations bodies to the full implementation of

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(Mrs. Pellicer, Mexico)

the Declaration. That matter had been taken up only in the report's final paragraphs, which did not provide the substantive proposals called for in the resolution.

22. With respect to the report by the Secretary-General on national experience in achieving far-reaching social and economic changes for the purpose of social progress (A/44/86). She wished to draw attention to the inadequate response thus far from Member States to the questionnaires. For obvious reasons, some of the respondents, instead of presenting a critical evaluation of their national experience, had submitted a simple list of national achievements. Such responses did not advance the search for solutions to social problems and her delegation therefore questioned their usefulness.

23. The inclusion in the 1989 World Economic Survey of a chapter dedicated to the status of women not only enhanced the quality of the report but would also contribute to an increased understanding of women's issues. In order to strengthen efforts to integrate the economic and social spheres the report on the world social situation should be discussed at more frequent intervals and be undertaken jointly by the Economic and Social Committees of the Economic and Social Council.

24. Although it was concerned about the limited progress thus far on the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Aging, her delegation was encouraged by the participation of the United Nations Office at Vienna and the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs in the International Congress of Gerontology, held in Mexico in June 1989. Encouraging results had also come out of the meeting of eminent persons to explore international fund-raising strategies for aging, held in September 1989, namely, a proposal for the establishment of an independent international fund for aging under the auspices of the United Nations. Such a fund could open the way for non-governmental organizations and private groups to contribute to United Nations social activities.

25. Mr. DAZA (Chile) said that as it approached the final decade of the twentieth century, the international community was faced with a number of interrelated phenomena - threats to the environment, drug trafficking and abuse, the high cost of weapon systems and increasing terrorist activities - which constituted an active threat to social development. The available financial resources were daily becoming more inadequate to the growing demands of social progress, and the pattern of distribution of resources cast serious doubt on the ability of the developing countries to resolve their current problems in the near future. It was therefore of the utmost necessity that the international community should utilize the resources allocated for social development more effectively.

26. His country had in recent years carried out a series of development and reform efforts enabling its inhabitants to achieve a better standard of living. The past decade had been a time of vigorous and difficult initiatives, which had finally yielded a harvest in the form of a strong and stable economy with positive indicators for the future.

(Mr. Daza, Chile)

27 The general improvement in the economic picture had enabled his Government to lay the foundations for the implementation of a broad range of social development policies. Over the past 15 years it had instituted a comprehensive programme of reform which had resulted in sustained economic growth and a reorientation of social policy. Major reforms had been carried out in the areas of education, health, housing and social security, with 60 per cent of the national budget currently going to the social sector.

28. He wished to highlight the following achievements in the area of social development: (a) a significant decrease in the infant mortality rate; (b) a decline in the proportion of the population classified at the level of extreme poverty; (c) a reduction in the number of school drop-outs among children in the sector of extreme poverty; (d) an increase in the percentage of individuals in the extreme poverty category receiving basic education; (e) virtual elimination of severe malnutrition, with a corresponding decrease in the percentage of low birth-weight infants; (f) increased life expectancy at birth; and (g) significant improvements in the urban sewage and potable water systems. Those reforms represented the commitment of his Government to the eradication of extreme poverty and the achievement of the social well-being of the entire population. At the same time, it was aware that the task had not yet been completed and would devote its efforts to consolidating the progress achieved thus far.

29. Mrs. NOSE (Japan) said that the well-being and active participation of young people in society was crucial to the attainment of peace and the development of humankind. Her Government had long promoted a variety of policies relating to youth. Noteworthy among them were the international youth exchanges, which provided educational opportunities for Japanese youth and also deepened mutual understanding between countries. The Government-sponsored technical co-operation programme which, since 1965, had enabled more than 9,000 Japanese youth to use their knowledge and technical skills in assisting people in developing countries was one example of the effectiveness of the youth exchanges.

30. The question of aging also required immediate attention. The estimated substantial increase in the world elderly population by the early part of the next century would have a dramatic impact on the entire international community and on the developing countries in particular. For that reason, her delegation attached great importance to the adoption of the International Plan of Action on Aging in 1982, which represented both a means to a broader comprehension of the problem and a set of guidelines for basic policy on aging.

31. Inspired by the Plan, the Ministerial Meeting for the Welfare of the Elderly, headed by the Prime Minister of Japan, had been making progress towards its goal of promoting comprehensive measures for the restructuring of the socio-economic system for an aging population. Particular attention was being paid to the elaboration of social welfare policies. Since conditions affecting the elderly varied from one country to the next, each country should be encouraged to adopt specific approaches in accordance with its own social, economic and cultural circumstances. Participation in activities and exchanges of views at the national, regional and

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(Mrs. Nose, Japan)

international levels were essential and her delegation wished to express its appreciation for the draft programme of activities for 1992, on marking the tenth anniversary of the World Assembly on Aging, and for the agenda for the Decade, prepared in conformity with General Assembly resolution 43/93.

32. During the second half of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, it was essential that the disabled should attain the objectives of full participation in society and enjoyment of equal rights. Her Government had demonstrated its commitment to those objectives. As a follow-up to the International Year of Disabled Persons, her Government had formulated the Long-term Plan for Measures for Disabled Persons in 1982. In 1987, it had adopted a new set of measures for the second half of the Decade, based on the core concepts of prevention of disability, rehabilitation and equalization of opportunities. Those measures were carried out by the central and local governments in co-operation with disabled persons and non-governmental organizations. In September 1989, Japan had been host to the Fifth Far East and South Pacific Games for the Disabled, which had played an important role in promoting mutual understanding between groups with and without disabilities. Her Government was also providing technical assistance to developing countries in the field of welfare for disabled persons. In addition, it had provided regular financial support to the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Disabled Persons and would make a further contribution in 1989 in the amount of \$US 100,000.

33. While the United Nations could point to many important achievements in the area of crime prevention and the treatment of offenders, there had been a recent increase in a variety of criminal activities on an international scale. For that reason, international co-operation to combat the problem was essential and her country was prepared to do its part. To that end, Japan had hosted the United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders in 1970, had actively participated in subsequent sessions and was now proceeding with preparations for the Eighth Congress. She also wished to draw attention to the international seminar which had opened in Tokyo in September 1989 at the United Nations Asia and Far East Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders which would be considering topics closely linked to those on past and current Congress agendas.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.