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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 17th MEETING

Chairman: Mrs. SHERMAN-PETER (Bahamas)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 90: WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION (continued) (ST/ESA/213)

AGENDA ITEM 91: TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PROCLAMATION OF THE DECLARATION ON SOCIAL PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT (continued) (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 (continued) (A/44/400)

AGENDA ITEM 113: FAMILIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS (continued)

1. Miss VERLEZZA (Venezuela) said that the foreign debt crisis and the negative international economic environment had had a direct impact on social planning and policies in much of the developing world in the 1980s. The close tie between economic and social affairs pointed to the need to treat them as a unit. By efficiently co-ordinating the work of its economic and social organs, the United Nations could provide constructive assistance in that regard. Also, the Report on the World Social Situation (ST/ESA/213) could be improved to serve as a guide to the international community in co-ordinating economic and social development activities.

2. Venezuela fully supported the Declaration on Social Progress and Development, which was as valid today as it had been 20 years ago. One way to contribute to its application would be to incorporate its goals into the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade. A special section of the next report on the world social situation might also be devoted to activities undertaken in accordance with the goals of the Declaration. In that connection, Venezuela wished to express its full support for United Nations public information activities aimed at informing the public of its work in promoting social development (A/44/116/Add.1).

(Miss Verlezza, Venezuela)

3. Venezuela supported the measures described in the note by the Secretary-General concerning regional consultation on developmental social welfare policies (A/44/343). Of those measures, it attached particular importance to the planning of a data base on contemporary innovations in social welfare policies and programmes and to the preparation of a policy manual for use by practitioners in governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations.
4. With respect to the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, it supported the idea of strengthening the role of non-governmental organizations in implementing the Programme through the exchange of information with the national committees.
5. The subject of young people was particularly important in Venezuela, where 68 per cent of the population was under 29 years of age and 22.6 per cent of the work force was between 15 and 27. Despite progress achieved in national programmes for integrating young people into the development process, obstacles remained at the international level. For that reason, Venezuela applauded the decision of the Commission for Social Development to consider the integration of young people into society as a priority subject at its 1991 session.
6. Two ideas on the subject of aging proposed by the XIV International Congress of Gerontology in Mexico appeared worthy of in-depth study. One was that the intellectual resources and practical experience of the private sector might be useful in implementing the International Plan of Action on Aging. The other was the possibility of creating an international foundation on aging. Venezuela supported the proposal of the Secretary-General to proclaim 1994 "International Family Year".
7. The holding of the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders was timely, as was its theme of international co-operation on crime prevention and criminal justice in the twenty-first century. Venezuela was confident that all preparatory activities would continue as planned, without stinting either efforts or resources, in order to guarantee the success of the Congress.
8. Mr. GOMEZ (Guatemala) said that increasingly limited financial resources had forced the Governments of developing countries to cut or eliminate budgets for social development programmes. For that reason, a substantial increase in international and multilateral co-operation was needed.
9. Guatemala had doubled budget allocations for education over the next five years. Educational reforms under way gave priority to remedying nutritional problems, providing basic equipment such as text books, increasing service coverage and improving educational programmes to prepare children for life, work and participation in democracy. A parallel effort was also being made to combat the acute, nation-wide problem of illiteracy. All reforms took into consideration the country's multicultural, multilingual society.

(Mr. Gomez, Guatemala)

10. Guatemala noted with great interest the initiative of the World Bank in promoting the experimental establishment of a social investment fund which would help to eliminate the tremendous deficit in the goods and services needed for social development.

11. Mr. MENON (India) said that the values enshrined in the Declaration on Social Progress and Development were not entirely supported in the 1989 Report on the World Social Situation (ST/ECA/213). Certain conclusions of the report appeared to acquiesce in the current acceptance of the dwindling role of the State in social affairs. India believed that the Government had a leading role to play in social development, but wished to take exception to the report's contention that internal conflicts in several countries, including India, were inherently more difficult to resolve than conflicts between States. It was necessary to guard against selective judgements on complex societies whose traditions, values and behaviour were not wholly susceptible to formula analyses.

12. The report of the Secretary-General on policies and programmes involving young people (A/44/387) was a useful compilation of the experience of countries in mobilizing youth for socio-economic development. In India there was a government department which dealt with youth affairs and formulated youth programmes to enable young people to improve their skills and participate in national development. India had introduced a new educational policy designed to eliminate disparities between urban and rural schools and help under-privileged children. Greater emphasis had been placed on vocational training and developing skills geared to employment opportunities. To give young people a greater voice in the running of the country, his Government had recently lowered the voting age to 18.

13. Mrs. KABA (Côte d'Ivoire) said that she whole-heartedly supported those who had stressed the interrelationship between economic and social questions and had pointed to the difficult social situation that had arisen in the developing countries because of the economic crisis. Her delegation welcomed the efforts to integrate social policy into the new international development strategy and measures to promote co-operation in the area of social protection. The entire international community must act to reduce the gap between rich and poor countries so as to prevent further deterioration of the economic and social situation throughout the world, and particularly in the developing countries.

14. After a period of growing prosperity which had greatly benefited many social sectors, her country had, since 1980, undergone a series of economic reverses arising from the declining prices of its exports. The structural adjustment plans proposed for the African States, including her own, by the International Monetary Fund included the reduction of public expenditures, which meant less money for such areas as health and education, and cutbacks in civil service employment in countries where the alternatives to State employment were few. Those plans even included removing subsidies for staples, which resulted in intolerable increases in the price of food; and they ignored the social consequences of adjustment measures, particularly for the most vulnerable social groups. Growing poverty, unemployment and increasing health and environmental problems had been the result, and had made

(Mrs. Kaba, Côte d'Ivoire)

social progress in most of Africa highly problematic. The international community must work to stop the growing impoverishment of Africa and to protect its vulnerable populations. Debt cancellation and a greater flow of capital to the developing countries would be an eminently desirable way to give Africa an economic second wind.

15. Miss DE SILVA (Sri Lanka) said that the sustained increase in the youth population and the lack of adequate policies to deal with that phenomenon were creating major problems both nationally and internationally. Young people were a high-risk group, characterized by unemployment, and under-employment. It was encouraging to note the progress achieved in the implementation of the International Youth Year. Many Governments had formulated national youth policies within the context of integrated development planning. In Sri Lanka, it was estimated that young people would make up 50 per cent of the total population by the year 2000. Accordingly, her Government had formulated policies to enable young people to participate in the socio-economic development of the country.

16. The Ministry for Youth Affairs co-ordinated all youth-oriented activities through the National Youth Services Council, which had 3,500 youth clubs designed to promote the participation of young people in national development programmes. Youth training centres had been established to develop skills in various trades and the National Youth Services Co-operative Society provided credit facilities, guidance and services to promote self-employment among young people.

17. Political and social factors in Sri Lanka had given rise to frustration and unrest among the politically active youth and had plunged the society into a state of violence. The Government, in an effort to reconcile differences, had to set up a commission to report on the causes of unrest among the student population.

18. She noted with satisfaction that the United Nations Office at Vienna was carrying out its mandate with great efficiency and hoped that the Office would receive the necessary resources to continue its work in that regard. It was gratifying to note the success of United Nations activities in developing new youth programmes and strengthening youth-oriented activities within the context of the follow-up of the International Youth Year. The work carried out by UNESCO in that area was commendable.

19. Non-governmental organizations had a vital role to play in promoting youth-related activities and increasing public awareness of youth issues. The relationship between government bodies dealing with youth issues and the non-governmental organizations should be further strengthened, particularly in developing youth programmes at the national and local level. Education was essential in carrying out youth programmes and policies. National education policies should be employment-oriented and promote awareness among youth of the dangers of drug abuse and sexually transmitted diseases. The follow-up activities of the International Youth Year would require a steady flow of financial resources. In that connection, it was encouraging to note that the United Nations Youth Fund had been able to achieve its objectives by providing the much-needed

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(Miss de Silva, Sri Lanka)

resources for youth-related activities. She hoped that the Fund's resources would be strengthened through voluntary pledges at the forthcoming Pledging Conference for Development Activities in 1989. Lastly, her delegation agreed that the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year in 1995 would be an appropriate occasion for initiating global activities to strengthen youth-related components of development programmes by formulating, implementing and evaluating strategies involving youth.

20. Mr. ERDOS (Hungary) said that the improved international climate had enabled his country to tackle more forcefully its social and economic problems. In recent years, it had become increasingly clear that the political, social and economic structures set up in Hungary had become an obstacle to its further development. It was essential, therefore, to find solutions adapted to the conditions in the country. The establishment of a State based on the rule of law, the setting up of a parliamentary democracy and the carrying out of far-reaching economic and social reforms required the support of the entire nation. The most difficult task was transforming a mentality formed by an all-powerful and paternalistic State into one open to innovation and prepared to take risks to achieve objectives.

21. The success of Hungary's reforms could contribute to stability in Europe and enable its people to rejoin the ranks of those in the forefront of social, economic and technological progress. The next few years would be decisive for the future of Hungary, which must rely on its own strengths, resources and abilities within a framework of stability and democracy. In that enterprise, Hungary hoped to receive international co-operation and assistance in order to achieve its objectives.

22. Mr. TAHA (Sudan) said that the democratization of international economic relations was essential for maintaining international peace and security. It was hoped that progress in disarmament would release the financial resources for the socio-economic development of developing countries, which was indispensable for sustained international economic growth. He noted with satisfaction the 1989 Report on the World Social Situation. In Africa, increasing mass poverty posed a real threat to social and economic structures and political stability. The elimination of poverty required genuine international economic co-operation. Urgent and equitable measures must be taken to deal with the deterioration in the terms of international trade and the external debt burden. Although some countries had alleviated the debt burden through concessional rescheduling and cancellation, economic development and social progress could not be ensured without a new international economic order.

23. Adequate financial resources were required to protect the environment and reduce environmental hazards in disaster-prone developing areas. Recurrent drought cycles, desertification, locust infestation, floods and torrential rains in his country's region had caused great hardship for vulnerable population groups. External assistance and the transfer of appropriate scientific and technological knowledge was of paramount importance in that regard. He hoped that the objectives of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction would be achieved through increased international co-operation.

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(Mr. Taha, Sudan)

24. Structural adjustment programmes had failed to address the root-causes of the African economic crisis and respond effectively to African political, social and cultural needs. Such programmes were insensitive to human and cultural needs and were too short in duration. The African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation was designed to promote sustainable economic development and develop human resources. In that connection, he hoped that bilateral and multilateral institutions would respond to the needs of African countries and provide the necessary resources. His Government considered the development of human resources central to socio-economic development. The Sudan attached great importance to the advancement of women, which was a key factor in promoting social progress. He hoped that the continuing review and appraisal of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies would result in concrete recommendations aimed at achieving the desired goals.

25. The deteriorating socio-economic conditions in developing countries increased the likelihood of crime. In that connection, he stressed the need to ensure adequate financing for the United Nations African Regional Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders and underscored the importance of the forthcoming Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders.

26. The preparation of the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade was very useful exercise. His Government emphasized the need to give due attention to the development of human resources and considered Economic and Social Council resolutions 1989/55 and 1989/120 of particular importance in that respect.

27. The United Nations contribution to the implementation of the Declaration on Social Progress and Development was commendable. In that regard, he noted with satisfaction the role played by UNDP, WFP, WHO, UNICEF and UNESCO. The activities by non-governmental organizations in promoting social progress were also very useful and should be stepped up.

28. Mr. KOENIG (Federal Republic of Germany) said that the social situation of the elderly was of particular importance in his country because they were a growing percentage of the population. His Government had therefore instituted important programmes with a view to promoting the independence of the elderly for as long as possible. It would soon present its first in-depth study of the situation of the elderly. His Government fully supported the United Nations Trust Fund for Aging and had contributed 25,000 dollars, earmarked for elderly refugees in Uganda.

29. The problems of youth also required full attention. On the international level, there must be a greater exchange of information on the treatment of youth questions and more co-operation on youth policy matters with third world countries through selected projects. His Government focused on developing solidarity among young people, improving understanding between the generations and enhancing social responsibility. It encouraged the active participation of youth in the country's political, economic and cultural life, and gave high priority to improved training and expanded job opportunities.

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(Mr. Koenig, Federal Republic of Germany)

30. His country also stressed international contacts among young people as a way to reduce misunderstanding and welcomed better communication between the United Nations and non-governmental youth organizations, provided, however, that procedures were simplified so as to avoid additional expenditures.

31. More must be done for the disabled, and his country had made much progress, through national committees, in integrating the disabled and their families into society; and it would continue to work to improve the situation of the disabled not only in the Federal Republic but also, through bilateral co-operation, in the developing countries.

32. His delegation attached great significance to the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders scheduled to meet in 1990. It could be expected to make important contributions in crucial areas of criminal law and criminology and on the role of criminal law in environmental protection. He hoped the Congress would also approve a draft resolution his country had prepared on the role of criminal law in the protection of nature and the environment. His delegation was also pleased that the Standard Minimum Rules for Non-Custodial Measures, or "Tokyo Rules", were also to be submitted to the Congress for adoption. They would require further discussion. Their implementation might require the elaboration of further rules.

33. The proposed International Year of the Family could help improve the situation of the family as an important factor in formulating social welfare policies. Since existing patterns and role models of the family differed considerably among Member States, each country should determine on a national basis which family model would be included in its activities on the occasion of a Year of the Family.

34. Mr. SLABY (Czechoslovakia) said that experience so far in implementing the principles of the International Youth Year showed that youth problems must be dealt with as part and parcel of integrated development planning in the national and international framework. It also demonstrated the advisability of establishing national machinery to co-ordinate efforts and the need for systematic consultation between the State and youth representatives.

35. In Czechoslovakia youth problems were the concern of all competent State organs. A social youth organization, composed of all social groups, played an active part in shaping youth policy; and youth representatives took part in joint meetings with the Government and in the preparation of a new law on State policy for child and youth care. The family was regarded as the basis for the social maturing of young people and in the development of their capabilities and skills. Social assistance to families with children, funded by about 8 per cent of national income, was an effective tool for youth care by society. The most important and urgent task, however, was to make greater use of the creative abilities of young people and strengthen their active participation in State affairs.

36. His delegation emphasized the importance of interregional consultations with a view to achieving effective international action in solving social problems.

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(Mr. Slaby, Czechoslovakia)

Czechoslovakia had played an important part in a recent meeting of the bureau members of the European Conference of Ministers for Social Affairs in Warsaw. In preparing social and economic development programmes it took account of the guidelines adopted at the Interregional Consultation on Developmental Social Welfare Policies and Programmes held at Vienna in 1987, approved by General Assembly resolution 42/125.

37. On the question of aging, the United Nations had an active part to play in implementing the International Plan of Action on Aging and Member countries must consider the additional measures recommended in the report of the Secretary-General (A/44/420 and Add.1). In Czechoslovakia steps were being taken under the programme "Preparation for Old Age". Care for aging citizens was based on the constitutional right to work and to welfare security in old age, and encouragement of self-reliance and an active life for those citizens for as long as possible.

38. An equally important issue was international co-operation in solving the complex problems of disabled persons. The report of the Secretary-General (A/44/406/Rev.1) noted that the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons had not met the expectations of the international community or of disabled persons themselves. It was not enough to adopt resolutions: without appropriate national action, the Decade might end without fulfilling its aims.

39. In accordance with the World Programme of Action, the aim in Czechoslovakia was to ensure disabled citizens an equal position in society and equal social value. Every effort was made to create favourable conditions for their integration in the social and working spheres. Following the International Year of Disabled Persons, his country had approved a plan for the development of care for disabled persons until the year 1991. Increasing attention was being paid to the problems of special groups such as persons with impaired hearing and sight.

40. Regarding crime prevention and criminal justice, Czechoslovakia was playing an active part in implementing the Milan Plan of Action and in the preparatory work for the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders. Prevention was the most important strategem and preventive measures would be included in the State economic and social development plan. Amendments to the criminal code were in preparation. Efforts were being made to improve prison and detention conditions and also the rights of prisoners.

41. In connection with the status and role of the family in the development process, his delegation welcomed the proposal for an international year of the family and supported the recommendations in document A/44/407. Czechoslovakia attached great importance to regional co-operation on questions of family policy and had organized the June European regional conference in co-operation with the International Social Security Association (ISSA), which had assessed the effects of demographic development on the population policies of European States. In his country the family was regarded as the basic legal and social unit and was the subject of constant attention by the State bodies concerned. Social assistance to families with children was an integral part of the social and economic development

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(Mr. Slaby, Czechoslovakia)

plans. A long-term State family policy was currently being prepared with a view to creating conditions to enable families to fulfil their role in a balanced manner.

42. Mr. GALAL (Egypt) said that, among the activities undertaken by his Government in connection with its policies and programmes involving youth during 1988 and 1989 had been the distribution of reclaimed desert land to a number of graduates in agriculture, the award of grants to young people to undertake investment projects in their fields of competence, the extension of credit facilities to young businessmen and the granting of priority to young couples in obtaining housing.

43. Young people had responded to the Government's call for their participation in a number of projects, including the restoration of archaeological sites in the capital, literacy campaigns and land reclamation activities. The Supreme Council for Youth and Sports had organized youth camps at the national and regional levels and had concluded a number of agreements with European and Asian countries with a view to strengthening links between Egyptian youth and the youth of other countries. In co-operation with other Egyptian agencies, such as the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, it had organized camps for young people from the Islamic countries which had focused on the strengthening of religious faith and moral principles on the need for active participation in development and on increasing awareness of the dangers of drug addiction, sexual perversion and religious or political extremism, which could have the effect of isolating young people from the mainstream of society.

44. In the conceptual framework of challenge and response, it was the young who were most responsive to challenge. The challenge of modern technology required an appropriate response from youth in terms of its mastery and its use in the development of society. The challenge of occupation had produced the reaction of the "children of the stones" in Palestine. The spread of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) highlighted the need to promote the moral values inculcated by the major religions throughout history as the best response to the challenge of the delinquency and moral or sexual deviation in which limited numbers of young people were involved. The United Nations must be a beacon of morality in the modern world, just as it was a beacon of democracy.

45. A conference of Arab ministers of youth attended by representatives of 20 Arab States was currently being held in Cairo and, among other issues, it would discuss the question of support to Palestinian youth in the occupied territories. Egypt had donated a building site for the headquarters of the Arab Boy Scout movement, the construction of which would cost an estimated 3 million dollars.

46. The International Bill of Human Rights had stressed that the family was the natural and fundamental group unit of society. In connection with families in the development process, his delegation was of the view that the promotion of family values was the major guarantee of social progress and of the avoidance of juvenile delinquency. Given the important status that it accorded to the family, Egypt supported the institution of an international year of the family. The family must be protected from disintegration, and it was the weakening of the family's role in society that had led to the growth of crime among young people and increased addiction to drugs and alcohol.

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(Mr. Galal, Egypt)

47. His delegation strongly supported the implementation of the World Plan of Action concerning Disabled Persons. His country had established homes for the elderly, and special allowances were paid to those who did not receive pensions from the various State agencies. Because of the traditional values of Egyptian society, families took special care of their elderly and disabled members. For its part, the State was elaborating supplementary programmes for the elderly and disabled, it gave customs exemptions to disabled persons for the importation of prosthetic devices, and it was endeavouring to establish schools for the handicapped.

48. The items grouped together in the cluster under consideration were closely interrelated. The world social situation, and particularly that in the developing countries, required thorough examination and an integrated approach if social progress was to be achieved within a framework of principles that took due account of the welfare of youth, the elderly, disabled persons and the family as basic elements of the social order.

49. Mrs. KALMYK (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that even the developed countries were confronting increasingly complex social problems and that concerted international efforts were necessary to solve them. The 1989 Report on the World Social Situation (ST/ESA/213) made it clear what the main social problems were. It was also clear that in an interdependent world community, no country could solve its own problems at the expense of others without adverse consequences for all. Fresh approaches were needed to overcome traditional polarization and ideological and political confrontations between States. Her own country would continue to ensure business-like and non-confrontational discussions of social problems with a view to achieving tangible results.

50. The United Nations must perform a greater role in alerting States to their social responsibilities. It was the only organization that could integrate national and regional experience in solving social problems and co-ordinate efforts to solve them. Her delegation supported the conclusions and proposals made by the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna, whose programmes and plans her country would support in every way. It also favoured strengthening the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs.

51. In the Soviet Union, there was a growing realization that without serious qualitative changes in society the goals of perestroika could not be achieved. Renewed attention must be paid to previously neglected social problems in such areas as living standards, education, health, crime and substance abuse. Legislative efforts were focused on expanding economic and political freedom, which would have an immediate impact on social developments. Efforts to improve education, housing and health and to combat crime were well underway, as were wage, pension and welfare benefits improvements.

52. The Soviet Union favoured the exchange of international experience on social problems. In August 1989 it had hosted an international seminar on the problems of the disabled and it would contribute in every way to implement the goals of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons.

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(Mrs. Kalmyk, USSR)

53. Her country was also interested in greater international co-operation on questions relating to youth and welcomed the inclusion of an item on integration of youth into society on the 1991 agenda of the Commission for Social Development. The Soviet Union welcomed international efforts to overcome the problem of illiteracy. The family was central to the health of society and her delegation greatly appreciated the Secretary-General's report on the family in document 4/44/407, and supported its recommendation that 1994 should be declared the International Year of the Family. Crime was also becoming an increasingly important problem in many parts of the world and her delegation felt that the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders scheduled to be held in 1990 in Havana would make an important contribution to international co-operation in that area. Special attention should be focused on organized crime, and her country would participate in bilateral and multilateral efforts to combat it.

54. Organizationally, the treatment of social problems could be improved by strengthening the role of the Commission for Social Development and her delegation supported the relevant recommendations to that effect.

55. The Declaration on Social Progress and Development, whose goals were far from being achieved, was invaluable in that it was a guidepost for the treatment of social development problems on an international scale, and its goals must be duly reflected in the development strategy for the fourth International Development Decade.

56. Mr. RALEBITSO (Lesotho) said that social development could not be achieved without economic progress and a stable international political environment. The greater independence towards which the world was moving could be truly achieved only in the context of a more just and equitable system of international social relations. The 1989 Report on the World Social Situation, and particularly its annex entitled The Critical Social Situation in Africa, made it clear that much remained to be done. The social gains of the mid-1970s had either disappeared or been seriously eroded in the 1980s and the unprecedented crisis facing the African continent had thrown economies into disarray. Human progress had been severely undermined by deteriorating education, and by hunger, malnutrition and famine, the resurgence of endemic diseases, drought and environmental degradation. Initial efforts to implement the objectives of the Declaration on Social Progress and Development had been seriously hampered. Lesotho had nevertheless reaffirmed its responsibility for social development, had identified areas for priority action, and had undertaken to mobilize its limited domestic resources to achieve those objectives. It appealed to the international community, the United Nations specialized agencies and the non-governmental organizations to increase their co-operation and assistance to that end.

57. In connection with agenda item 113, while the status and condition of the family varied from country to country, there should be no restrictions on the ability of families to contribute to the welfare of their members and of society as a whole. National programmes should be geared to the support of families.

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(Mr. Ralebitso, Lesotho)

58. With regard to agenda item 102, his delegation was concerned about the increase in drug-related crime and in juvenile crime. In Lesotho, more than half the prison population consisted of young men and women between the ages of 19 and 30. A recent survey showed considerable improvement in the crime rate as a result of public education and special instruction to inform juveniles of the evils of crime. The probation services had been extended and might well serve as an alternative to imprisonment. In that connection, Lesotho appealed to the relevant United Nations agencies to provide information and financial and material assistance.

59. Miss AL-HAMAMI (Yemen) said that, for a society that had emerged into the modern world only 27 years ago, one that had long suffered under an obsolete régime and one whose members had been deprived of the most elementary human rights, the development process was a difficult one. Illiteracy was one of the strongest indicators of backwardness, and backwardness was the enemy of development. The true wealth of any State lay in its capacity to develop its human resources. Fully realizing that fact, the Government of her country had made the greatest possible efforts for development. The progress achieved could not have taken place without the full participation of the people as equal partners of the State.

60. Yemen had begun to adopt concrete measures for the implementation of the goals of International Youth Year. It accorded particular importance to the youth sector since, as a developing country, it had a pressing need to promote the participation of youth in development in order to make optimum use of its available resources. A separate ministry of youth had been established, and there had been a successful experiment in the organization of youth summer camps whose emphasis had been placed on active participation in the overall development of the country.

61. The principles of Islam, which promoted compassion and brotherhood, underlay the solidarity of Yemeni society and ensured that aging did not present a problem. The family assumed full and direct responsibility for the elderly, and they lived out their lives in dignity in the bosom of their families. The State nevertheless paid great attention to the question of aging, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour supervised the welfare of the elderly and paid a monthly allowance to those in need.

62. The problem of disabled persons was no longer a purely national issue but a humanitarian concern for industrialized and developing countries alike, although disabled persons represented a higher proportion of the population in the developing countries. Their neglect would deprive society of essential human resources, and effective measures should be taken for their rehabilitation and training and their integration in the work force. A first training course had been held at Sana'a in September 1989 with the participation of a number of ILO experts on vocational training for disabled persons, who had commended the efforts made by the Government despite its modest resources.

63. In any consideration of the cluster of social and humanitarian items before the Committee, the plight of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories

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(Miss Al-Hamami, Yemen)

could not be forgotten. Since the beginning of the uprising, 80,000 Palestinians had been wounded, about 6,000 of them seriously, and, according to many reports, about 30 per cent of the victims had been children. The number of disabled persons had increased to a frightening extent owing to the barbarity of the Israeli occupation forces towards innocent people seeking to defend their rights and win back their homeland.

64. Mrs. STAPHORST (Suriname) said the report of the Secretary-General on International Co-operation for the Eradication of Poverty in Developing Countries (A/44/467) showed that the economic crisis of the 1980s had had an adverse impact in Africa and had halted the improvement in the conditions of the poor achieved in Latin America during the preceding years. Poverty had once again become a major issue of concern for many developing countries and for the international community. In the Latin American and Caribbean region more than 40 per cent of the people were living in poverty, unable to satisfy even their most basic needs. Most of the poor population were women and children - the most vulnerable groups.

65. The major causes of the situation, which originated in international imbalances, were the terms of trade, financial restrictions, high interest rates, the impact of external debts, restrictive adjustment programmes, the decline in official development assistance and the intensified protectionism of industrialized countries. Some countries were also affected by the arms race, drug trafficking, international terrorism and environmental problems.

66. Governments of developing countries had instituted bold reforms to revitalize their economies, but had found that without massive external support, economic growth and social development were an illusion. Adoption of the Declaration on Social Progress and Development implied a commitment by the Member countries of the United Nations to initiate development strategies which made human welfare the central concern. The international community must consider comprehensive measures to enable developing countries to implement the Declaration. Her Government would appreciate it if the next Report on the World Social Situation would elaborate on the main factors influencing social progress and living standards, and the prospects for change, with special attention to the developing countries.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.