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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 18th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KABORE (Burkina Faso)

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The meeting was called to order at 6.10 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 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) (A/44/407)

1. Mrs. BAILEY (United States of America) said that social welfare required an active partnership between Governments and individuals. Individuals were primarily responsible for their own well-being, and it was impossible for Governments to provide all social services.

2. The President of the United States was strongly committed to bringing the disabled into the mainstream of society, and Congress was considering legislation which would protect disabled persons from discrimination in the workplace and in public accommodations. Under that law, the 37 million United States citizens with some form of disability would be able to participate fully in the "opportunity society".

3. Similarly, it was necessary to create services and programmes which would help older people to live more dignified and independent lives in their own homes and communities. In addition, methods must be found to help the elderly manage the high cost of long-term medical care. The problem of aging populations must be confronted in developed and developing countries alike, and young people must be persuaded that they had to prepare and plan for their old age.

4. Her delegation encouraged the Secretariat to focus special attention on the issues related to aging as identified in the Secretary-General's report. It was

(Mrs. Bailey, United States)

interested in the project for the creation of an independent international foundation on aging to support United Nations work in that field.

5. All countries must protect families and encourage their self-sufficiency and independence. It was vitally important to prevent the breakdown of the family. Single-parent families were increasing in the United States. More than half of such families were poor and most were headed by women; the most common problem facing them was the lack of responsibility on the part of absent fathers.

6. Her delegation supported the approach of designating an international family year to be observed at the national and local levels.

7. Mrs. SEMAMBO-KALEMA (Uganda) said that, unfortunately, the objectives of the Declaration on Social Progress and Development had not yet been universally attained. In order to attain them, there was a need, now more than ever before, for international co-operation. Her delegation believed that economic and social progress for all countries would be in the best interests of developed and developing countries alike.

8. While there had been remarkable social progress in some parts of the world, a large number of developing countries, especially in the African region, were still in deep poverty, and during the 1980s, their social conditions had stagnated or even worsened. She hoped that the international community would continue to pay attention to the deteriorating social situation in the world, even though other problems, such as illegal drugs, were attracting increasing attention and resources. All social problems were interlinked and, accordingly, required equal attention.

9. In the developing countries, the economic and financial crisis had had unbearable social consequences for the poorer segments of the population. The international community must urgently redress the imbalances in the world economy, especially through the easing of debt burdens and increased financial flows. She hoped that the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade would seriously address the crisis faced by the developing countries, especially those in the third world, and that various international bodies, as well as the developed countries, would assist in achieving the objectives of the Declaration.

10. In her country, social conditions were not very encouraging. The previous régimes and wars had had negative effects on the country's economic and social progress. However, the Government was doing all it could to improve the situation. It had embarked on a programme to immunize infants against communicable diseases in order to reduce the high infant mortality rate. There had also been improvements in the road infrastructure, agriculture and industry.

11. Her delegation thanked the Secretary-General for his report on crime prevention and criminal justice (A/44/400), and commended the work of the relevant organizations of the United Nations system which were helping countries to improve and reform their criminal-justice systems, and were strengthening international co-operation for crime prevention. Her delegation hoped that the Eighth United

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(Mrs. Semambo-Kalema, Uganda)

Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders would propose concrete measures, and looked forward to taking part in its deliberations.

12. She reported with satisfaction that the United Nations African Regional Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders had finally been established at Kampala, Uganda, and expressed gratitude to UNDP for its assistance to the Institute in its initial stage. She also called upon all Member States to pay their contributions to the Institute.

13. Her Government had committed itself to improving conditions for the disabled, elderly persons and youth, and to developing their potential, in close co-operation with international and non-governmental organizations.

14. Mr. SARR (Mali) said that, despite the hopes aroused by the Declaration on Social Progress and Development upon its adoption in 1969, the social situation in Africa and Latin America was currently going through a period of stagnation or regression, owing to the economic difficulties faced by the countries in those regions. The sharp decline in the prices of commodities, the negative net transfer of resources and excessively high interest rates had had very serious consequences for social development. Despite the unprecedented advances in science and technology, the vast majority of mankind continued to live in precarious conditions. If effective and appropriate policies were adopted, food production would be sufficient to meet the needs of the entire world population. However, despite the positive results achieved in the fight against famine, hunger and malnutrition continued to be very serious problems in some countries.

15. Endemic diseases which had been eradicated were now reappearing in Africa. Life expectancy on that continent continued to be the lowest in the world (age 51), and there was a very high rate of infant mortality due to malnutrition. As a UNICEF report had put it, sacrificing the growth of today's children for the growth of tomorrow's economy made neither economic sense nor human sense. Among the events which could help to revitalize the development of health care in Africa were a declaration adopted in 1987 by the Organization of African Unity on health as an essential development factor in Africa, and the "Bamako Initiative" for the purchase and distribution of essential drugs, especially to women and children.

16. Budgetary constraints and cuts in the public and semi-public sectors imposed by the economic crisis and structural adjustment policies had created serious difficulties in education and employment. A new, more equitable international economic order was needed in order to improve the socio-economic situation of the third world countries.

17. Mali's social policy was based on the participation of the people in all development activities. Under its "Grass-roots Development Policy", local communities could set up development projects that met their priority needs, and the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Grass-roots Development had been established to co-ordinate the various projects. With respect to the situation of disabled persons in Mali, he pointed to the existence of associations that provided assistance to the mentally ill, the mentally retarded and the blind, emphasizing

(Mr. Sarr, Mali)

that the latter were an integral part of society, both in the educational system and in the civil service.

18. Mr. POLISHTCHOUK (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that, in the current era of pragmatism and rapid scientific and technological advances, subjects related to the aging, disabled persons and young people were of particular interest for their humanitarian content. He praised the work of the United Nations in those areas, especially the activities of the Economic and Social Council, the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs and other relevant organs, and recalled that 1992 would mark the tenth anniversary of the International Plan of Action on Aging. Among other positive achievements, he pointed to the establishment of the International Institute on Aging in Malta, and to the proposal to establish a similar centre in Belgrade and to set up an African gerontology society. He also supported the idea of establishing a world foundation on aging.

19. With respect to the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, he said that, without a sustained effort at the national level and sufficient resources, it would be impossible to achieve the established objectives. In the Ukrainian SSR, the Government had focused particular attention on the disabled and was attempting to improve their living and working conditions through the relevant organizations. A plan of action for disabled persons was being drawn up for the 1991-2005 period, and there were other programmes designed to improve the situation of disabled persons. While there were undoubtedly still serious problems and shortcomings in that area, the country had begun a far-reaching process of political reform and democratization that would intensify the efforts of both the State and society to improve the situation of the disabled. In that connection, an international conference on human resources for the disabled had been held in August in Tallin, Estonia. The Ukrainian SSR supported the proposal for a draft international convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against disabled persons and reaffirmed its commitment to the activities of both the Decade and the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons.

20. The Ukrainian SSR also placed considerable emphasis on family development. The percentage of broken homes was constantly increasing. Faced with a high divorce rate and a disconcertingly large number of young people who deliberately chose not to marry, the Ukrainian SSR was attempting to correct the family situation by intensifying its social policy and by trying to improve family welfare within the framework of perestroika. Structural improvements designed to improve the educational and living standards were being made in order to permit the harmonious development of each individual, and funding in those areas would double by the year 2000.

21. Married women who worked found themselves in a difficult situation. Because that problem was shared by many countries, co-operation was needed between States and non-governmental organizations. The Ukrainian SSR applauded the role of the United Nations as a focal point for action on family matters. A seminar would be held in Yalta in December 1989 to address the problems of the family. Strengthening the role of the family as the basic social unit would make it an efficient means for preventing instability, delinquency, alcoholism, drug addiction

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(Mr. Polishtchouk, Ukrainian SSR)

and other current world problems. The Ukrainian SSR welcomed the Polish proposal to proclaim an international family year.

22. Mrs. MBELLA NGOMBA (Cameroon) said that, at a time when the United Nations was reorganizing its social and economic structures, in order to increase its efficiency and to establish a link between economic and social factors, co-operatives played a vital role as instruments of social change and global development. Although co-operatives were the least developed issue in the cluster of items under consideration, they had the potential of meeting the needs of all special groups, at a time when various nations were seeking alternative methods to combat a hostile economic environment. That environment was characterized by indebtedness and structural changes which had imposed various cuts on social budgets, with devastating results for vulnerable groups such as children, young people, the elderly and disabled persons, all amidst worsening unemployment.

23. The report of the Secretary-General (A/44/79) bore ample testimony to the search for new methods of meeting global social needs based on a commitment to integrating all aspects of the human condition. Co-operatives figured prominently among those methods because of their role in promoting development in urban and rural areas. To a great extent, Cameroon owed its social stability to a diversified economy that guaranteed food self-sufficiency for all inhabitants. In urban areas, consumer co-operatives had proved very useful in ensuring the regular supply of needed food items at reasonable prices. In rural areas, the potential of co-operatives for generating employment had helped to curb the mass exodus of young people to the cities. Her Government was currently allocating more resources to rural areas, and was encouraging increased food production through pricing policies that favoured farmers.

24. Cameroon supported the idea put forward by the Secretary-General that the participation of women in co-operative organizations should be enhanced by providing them with appropriate technology and labour-saving devices that would make their household chores easier. The co-operative movement also benefited young people by creating employment and turning them away from crime. In Cameroon, the Green Revolution Movement, which was heavily subsidized by the Government, had helped many young people to take pride in agricultural activities. The Government had also promoted the establishment of co-operatives in schools, and supported the Secretary-General's recommendation in that regard. With respect to disabled persons and the aging, she noted that the co-operative movement promoted the prevention of disabilities, rehabilitation, and the realization of the goals of full participation.

25. Co-operatives not only gave various groups of the population a better chance of being integrated into society; they also provided an opportunity for confronting current economic problems. Governments should therefore continue to subsidize their activities heavily. Cameroon supported the proposal of the Secretary-General that co-operative organizations should be strengthened at the national level, and that governmental and non-governmental organizations should, on request, help Governments to improve the conditions governing co-operatives. The United Nations should also play a more visible role in promoting the co-operative movement. For

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(Mrs. Mbella Ngomba, Cameroon)

example, it could transform recommendation 127 of the International Labour Organisation into a convention and proclaim an international year of co-operative development, as proposed by the Secretary-General. A well-co-ordinated co-operative system would make it possible to achieve more effective international co-operation for development, and would serve as a catalyst to North-South, South-South and world-wide dialogue.

26. With respect to the financial limitations that had inhibited implementation of various social programmes, she said that the world was experiencing a period of détente that should lead countries to identify social and economic priorities and to redeploy military resources for the purpose of improving the living conditions of mankind.

The meeting rose at 7 p.m.