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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 14th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. SOMAVIA (Chile)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 90: WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION (continued) (A/45/137-E/1990/35)

AGENDA ITEM 92: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORLD PROGRAMME OF ACTION CONCERNING DISABLED PERSONS AND THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF DISABLED PERSONS (continued) (A/45/470)

AGENDA ITEM 96: POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES INVOLVING YOUTH (continued) (A/45/225, A/45/227, A/45/280, A/45/338, A/45/422)

AGENDA ITEM 99: QUESTION OF AGING (continued) (A/45/207, A/45/420)

AGENDA ITEM 104: INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE FAMILY (continued) (A/45/365; A/C.3/45/3)

1. Mr. AL-HAMAMI (Yemen) said that as a young State, Yemen believed that the wealth of a nation derived from its ability to develop its human resources. Its accomplishments would not have been possible without the participation of the people working in conjunction with the State. Even with the limited technical and financial resources at its disposal, his Government had undertaken programmes and measures in order to allow the family to play a constructive role in the realization of cohesive economic and social development.

2. Youth constituted a great source of energy, and since its establishment, the United Nations had attached enormous attention to the young. The priority placed on youth had been repeatedly emphasized by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, and an international consensus had been formed that further efforts should be made to encourage young people to take part in the social and economic development of their country and in the realization of international peace and security. Yemen had worked towards the objectives of the International Youth Year and had attached great importance to the youth sector with a view to harnessing the creative abilities of young people for the construction of society. Yemeni youth played a leading role in the political, economic and social life of the country.

3. His delegation had studied the report of the Secretary-General on aging (A/45/420), which was a social and humanitarian problem related to development. He drew attention to paragraph 9 (f) of that report in which ensuring community integration in old age by developing an appropriate mix of self-help opportunities, family and community support, and government assistance was identified as one of the challenges the problem of aging posed to Governments. Family support of the aged was one of the main principles underlying the approach taken by Yemeni society in implementation of the teachings of Islam. In Yemen each family was fully responsible for the welfare of its aged members who remained within their family until they died.

(Mr. Al-Hamami, Yemen)

4. The problem of the disabled constituted a human burden shared by all countries, particularly the developing countries. It would be a mistake to ignore the danger of wasting the potential offered by disabled persons by not allowing them to play an effective role in society.

5. Mr. SEZAKI (Japan) noted that was essential to make further efforts towards the achievement of full participation and equality for the 500 million disabled people in the world. With regard to the agenda for action from 1990 to 1992, he said that although Member States were invited to ratify some specific international legal instruments directly related to disability, their ratification was in fact a matter to be decided by the Government of each Member State. Second, the regional commissions were requested to establish or strengthen units on disability within their Social Development Division, but it must be understood that the cost of those units should be absorbed within the existing United Nations budget. Regarding the preliminary outline of a long-term strategy, it was suggested in the report of the expert meeting, that a global conference to draw up a convention on the rights of disabled people should be organized not later than the year 2000. It was also suggested that the regional commissions should be encouraged to hold regional conferences with a view to preparing regional conventions. Such suggestions should be studied further and carefully, and the views of Member States should be taken into account. Japan was striving to accommodate the aim of the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons and was also committed to the idea that disabled persons should enjoy full participation and equal rights. It was co-operating actively with developing countries by extending technical assistance for that purpose. The Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, to which Japan had contributed a total of \$US 400,000 from 1980 to 1989 and was planning another contribution for 1990, had played an important role in supporting activities in implementation of the World Programme of Action.

6. The full and active participation of young people in society was clearly crucial to the peace and development of all mankind. He drew attention to the activities carried out by the Japan Overseas Co-operation Volunteers Plan, which was an integral part of the Japan International Co-operation Agency. Under the Plan, young men and women were dispatched to developing countries to offer their knowledge and technical skills for the benefit of others. He urged Member States to maintain the momentum they had built up during the International Youth Year in 1985.

7. Questions concerning the elderly also required attention because the effects of the trend towards older populations were particularly serious for developing countries, as shown in the report of the Secretary-General (A/45/420). His delegation regretted that the document had not been distributed in time to allow for the study it deserved. The activities outlined in the programme for 1992 regarding the further implementation of the International Plan of Action on Aging on the tenth anniversary of its adoption and should be fully studied in the capital of each Member State.

(Mr. Sezaki, Japan)

8. The family was a basic social unit whose importance to the healthy development of children could not be over-emphasized. The proclamation of 1994 as the International Year of the Family would make a great contribution to family welfare. He noted that according to document A/45/365, the draft programme under preparation by the Secretariat would be submitted through the Commission for Social Development to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session. His delegation hoped that the preparations for and implementation of the International Year of the Family would be both effective and efficient and that full account would be taken of its system-wide budgetary implications. He also wished to note the usefulness of the report of the Expert Meeting on the Negative Consequences of Alcohol use held at Oslo in August 1990 (A/C.3/45/3).

9. With regard to the world social situation, he noted that while the report submitted by the Secretary-General every three years had been intended to provide a comprehensive description and analysis of the world social situation, problems had arisen which had left the overall accuracy and objectivity of the reports open to question and urged that great care should be taken in that regard in the preparation of future reports.

10. Ms. PELLICER (Mexico), after remarking on the late distribution of the documents under review, said the 1990s had begun in a spirit of frustration because of the stagnation in social progress inherited from the 1980s, but also in a spirit of hope because thinking with regard to development was undergoing a real revolution. The need for the structural adjustment programmes embarked upon to that end was no longer under discussion, but their social cost was a matter for concern. Data on social conditions and the possibility of their worsening had made the world social situation a focus of debate. The main challenges for the 1990s were to reconcile the contradiction between social adjustment and social cost, to halt the deterioration in standards of living and to restore growth in order to achieve social progress for all. Without such progress, it would be difficult to achieve the objectives of the Third Committee.

11. The magnitude of the task of achieving social progress was illustrated by the fact that more than one billion people were living in absolute poverty and close to 900 million adults were illiterate, while another billion people did not have access to drinking water. At the recent World Summit for Children, it had emerged that 150 million children under five years of age suffered from malnutrition and that 14 million children died before their fifth birthday. Of the large number of measures proposed for overcoming those problems, some required an internal effort by countries, while others called for international action. All of them came up against two obstacles. The first was insufficient understanding of the origin of social problems, the relationship between them and the actions and methods needed to solve them. Second, the political will needed to put an end to the social inequality within countries was lacking.

12. The preceding year, her delegation had noted that the 1989 Report on the World Social Situation did not provide a means of identifying general trends in the main social indicators and of viewing specific problems in a larger context. It had

(Ms. Pellicer, Mexico)

gone on record as favouring the preparation of a supplement which would give priority to an analysis of the main indicators of social progress and standards of living and would consider the reasons for their negative performance in recent years. She thanked the Secretary-General for the supplement to the 1989 report (A/45/137), which had been prepared along the lines indicated in General Assembly resolution 44/56. Her delegation was pleased to note that a preliminary report on the work done within the United Nations to improve social indicators would be submitted to the General Assembly for its consideration the following year.

13. Referring to some specific social problems experienced throughout the world, she noted that 1995 would mark the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year. An appraisal of the progress achieved in the intervening years was not optimistic. Most developing countries had still not achieved the full integration of youth into their political, economic and social life. The momentum achieved during International Youth Year had not been maintained, and new impetus was needed if real achievements were to be made by 1995. Her delegation supported the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/45/422) and also endorsed the preparations for the programme of action to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the year.

14. The world community should prepare itself for confronting the problem of aging, bearing in mind that the elderly should play an active role in the economic and social life of their country. Her delegation supported the report of the Secretary-General prepared in that connection (A/45/420) and his proposals for an action programme on aging for 1992 and beyond to serve as a catalyst for further implementation of the International Plan on Aging. The global calendar of events on aging during the period 1991-1992 also seemed very useful.

15. Her delegation attached great importance to the celebration of the International Year of the Family and was pleased to note the designation of the Director of the Social Development Division of the United Nations Office at Vienna as Co-ordinator for the Year.

16. Ms. MAOBOOL (Pakistan) said that, since she was herself disabled, her presence was indicative of her Government's desire to include disabled persons in its delegation, and of the self-advocacy of disabled persons who wished to work for their own advancement. Pakistan had formulated a national policy for the disabled at the beginning of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. It had also established a new division of its Ministry of Health for special education and social welfare. Since the beginning of the Decade, the Pakistan Government had collaborated with United Nations specialized agencies on the prevention and early detection of disabilities. A broad programme of child immunization had been implemented, and diagnostic centres had been set up in hospitals. Her Government had also worked with non-governmental organizations to broaden the public's awareness of the situation of disabled persons through the press and the electronic media, with recognizable results. Television had been utilized as a community outreach medium to disseminate information about disabilities and their prevention, and about the care and welfare of disabled persons. As a disabled person, she participated in that process by acting as a media adviser.

(Ms. Magbool, Pakistan)

17. Pakistan had taken another positive step by establishing educational and training facilities for disabled children. The new special education centres had increased the need for qualified teachers, so special training programmes for the teaching of disabled persons had been introduced. To date, thousands of teachers had been trained in such programmes. In addition, Pakistan had provided disabled persons with increased access to vocational training, so that they could find skilled employment and thereby enhance their independence. In order to broaden employment opportunities for the disabled, a 1 per cent quota of disabled persons had been established for all employment sectors.

18. Pakistan had made special efforts to address the needs of women with disabilities by integrating those needs into its national policies for the advancement of women. Pakistan had increased its support of the activities of non-governmental organizations by collaborating with them and assisting them financially. Her delegation suggested that the United Nations should follow Pakistan's example by considering the inclusion of an item in its budget to fund organizations and projects for disabled persons.

19. Miss JUNEJO (Pakistan) said that the supplement to the 1989 Report on the World Social Situation demonstrated that social progress was inseparable from economic progress. More than 20 years after the adoption of the Declaration on Social Progress and Development, social conditions in many developing countries still left much to be desired. The stagnation or the decline of the economies of many developing countries in the 1980s had been marked by negative resource flows, trade barriers, crushing debt burden and high interest rates. The structural adjustment policies undertaken by developing countries had often meant sacrificing health, literacy, housing and the eradication of poverty for the sake of economic development. However, the recent World Summit for Children was a reminder of the international community's responsibility to its posterity. The international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade addressed the essential linkage between economic and social development for the improvement of the human condition, and was therefore a promising mechanism of change.

20. The Secretary-General's recommendations on the implementation of various youth programmes and activities based on the themes of participation, development and peace, pursuant to General Assembly resolutions, were worthy of favourable consideration. Pakistan's youth policy was part of its national planning framework, and was intended to improve the educational and employment situation of young people, to enable them to assume a leadership role in the future. Her delegation also supported international efforts to ameliorate the social and economic conditions of the world's aging population. Pakistan had adopted its own plan of action for the aging to enable them to enjoy fulfilling, healthy, secure lives in their families and communities. That plan, involving both governmental and non-governmental organizations, included financial assistance to families of the elderly for health care costs, preparation for aging through a mass media campaign, introduction of the subject of geriatrics in medical education, and institutional care of the elderly.

21. Mr. OULD MOHAMED MAHMOUD (Mauritania) said that the most complex social problems facing the countries of the world were those involving youth. The General Assembly's 1965 Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples had recognized the idealistic nature of young people and their importance as the hope of the world. Currently, young people were in the forefront of movements for social and political change. Through their efforts to bring about reforms based on noble ideals such as freedom, peace, justice and the defence of the environment, young people had set an example of courage and commitment in the face of brute force, notably in South Africa, in Palestine and in all occupied territories.

22. The search for concrete, effective and speedy ways to prepare young people for their future responsibilities was one of the great challenges currently facing the world. The observance of International Youth Year in 1985 had led many countries to renew their commitment to young people, and the recent World Summit for Children had given the necessary priority to the problems of children. However, those new commitments must be followed by concrete action. The abatement of ideological confrontation in the international community offered opportunities for greater attention to the problems of youth. Examples of international co-operation in that area on a regional basis included the co-operation among the States of the Arab Maghreb Union for the protection and education of children, as well as the participation of Tunisia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Algeria and Mauritania in Arab and pan-African youth festivals.

23. The economic difficulties of the 1980s had had a profound effect on the most vulnerable segments of society including youth, and the degradation of the environment was threatening the future of young people. Decreasing attention to the problems of youth was to blame for the prevalence of juvenile delinquency, drugs and crime in developing countries (as a result of weakened family and governmental structures, and the failure to take advantage of resources) and in industrialized countries (as a result of waning religious faith, increasing egocentricity and widespread unemployment). Governments had halted their development of an extra-curricular socio-educative infrastructure (community youth programmes, vacation centres, etc.), and the constructive participation of youth in society had therefore decreased. The organization of youth activities had declined since the 1980 United Nations World Youth Assembly. The abandonment of young people to the temptations of consumerism had left them without models to emulate, and had eroded their naturally strong sense of morality. The world was therefore losing a valuable moral resource that represented the ideals on which social and economic policies must be based.

24. Since young people were the world's most precious capital, it was time to sound the alarm for the problems of youth. The Third Committee should suggest ideas for youth policies to member States, to nurture the mind and conscience of the world's youth. It would also be appropriate for the United Nations to hold a second World Youth Assembly.

25. Mrs. ALVAREZ (Dominican Republic) said that because the United Nations had established standards of decent treatment for several groups in society, such as women, disabled persons and children, it should also adopt a declaration on the rights of the elderly. Like the aforementioned social groups, the elderly were particularly vulnerable to discrimination in employment, physical abuse, poverty and the devaluation of their dignity.

26. It could not be argued that such a declaration was unnecessary because the elderly were already protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, since other social groups had already been deemed worthy of special recognition. Their numbers were increasing so quickly that, in the foreseeable future, the elderly would outnumber infants two to one. It was also unreasonable to assume that the right of the elderly to work was detrimental to the employment situation of young people, since the exclusion of skilled, experienced workers from the labour force would lower productivity, thereby damaging the interests of all people in any economy. The practice of forced retirement also lowered the worker/dependent ratio, creating difficulties for younger workers who must pay taxes to fund retirement benefits. In many poor developing countries, where social security benefits were not available, depriving the elderly of the right to work often had lethal consequences.

27. The United Nations had the responsibility to foresee and act upon the implications of future trends, including those suggested by its own statistics on aging. The growing number of people over 60 presented specific political, social and economic problems that affected the relationship between generations. The place of the elderly in all societies was changing or was about to change; therefore, a United Nations declaration on the rights of the elderly was more urgent than ever.

28. Mr. CENKO (Albania) said that although in some ways there had been improvements over the past year, the economic and social situation of the developing countries had worsened and the gap between those countries and the industrialized countries had widened. It was generally agreed that old methods could not resolve the current international problems.

29. Albania, having emerged from its state of backwardness, was progressing on its chosen path of economic development, determined to build a life of well-being for its people. It was currently engaged in a new phase of development, calling for the highest possible productivity from its material and human resources. That required modern technology, educated and experienced personnel, the promotion of initiative, good social relations and strengthening and expansion of co-operation with the rest of the world.

30. Albania was a young and inexperienced society - about 70 per cent of its population was below the age of 30. It was undergoing changes, such as the distribution of land and cattle to the peasants, the establishment of a private sector for services and craft workers, foreign investment, and the creation of joint enterprises, all of which brought new problems. The first priority was to revitalize the role of the social organizations, with a view to finding just solutions for existing and new social problems.

(Mr. Cenko, Albania)

31. In connection with agenda item 96, Albania set great store by its young people, who were playing their part in democratization and in strengthening public opinion. They realized that progress required hard work, discipline, knowledge and skills and that as democracy grew, standards of life would improve. They were encouraged to be in the forefront and to show initiative and determination. It was also recognized that the needs of young people must be met and that they must be given access to all spheres of life, including decision-making and contacts with the outside world.

32. Regarding agenda item 92, Albania recognized that sustained and harmonious economic and social development required the active participation of the whole population, including disabled people. It supported the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and, as far as its means would permit, had taken various measures to promote the integration of disabled people in various sectors of active life. A determined effort was required to improve the situation of disabled people, as well as the support of the international community, in the framework of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. Such assistance was urgently required in the developing countries, where the situation was deteriorating.

33. Albania also supported the activities of the United Nations and the specialized agencies in the field of aging. Regarding the International Year of the Family, Albania attached particular importance to protecting and strengthening the family as the basic unit of society.

34. Mr. HODNE (Norway) said that, with democracy and international responsibility for the earth at the top of the world's political agenda, it was possible, for the first time in history, to deal effectively, through the United Nations, with the serious threats to mankind's existence. Action, or failure to act, today would decide the living conditions for people tomorrow. Unless action was taken now to slow down population growth, attack poverty and protect the environment, future generations would inherit a dying earth. Vast resources could be saved through disarmament and used to promote the development of a sustainable society. Young people had led demands for environmental protection and would have to live with the consequences of political decisions made today. It was important, therefore, that youth organizations should participate in the preparations for the Conference on Environment and Development to be held in Brazil in 1992.

35. A recent conference for youth organizations in the European Community region, held in Bergen earlier in the present year, had stated that the industrial countries of the European Community must assume a leading role in action to create a sustainable society. Norway believed that Governments should adopt, through the United Nations system, an environmental charter to include a set of rights providing for the public, on a well-informed basis, to make decisions on environmental questions. All people must have the right to receive full information on the environmental implications of products and services. Sustainable development depended on action across national borders to save a common environment, which in turn depended on understanding and knowledge and hence on

(Mr. Hodne, Norway)

education about the environment and the dangers of ecological crisis. Only the rule of law could secure a sustainable global society, and the United Nations Decade of International Law (1990-1999) should help to strengthen international institutions and legal instruments, as the most efficient way of enforcing the action needed to avoid an environmental disaster.

36. There were two preconditions for securing a sustainable environment. First, the industrialized countries must help the developing countries to obtain stable sources of income, to ensure the efficient use of resources and a fair distribution of wealth. That meant a drastic change in the lifestyle and pattern of consumption in the developed countries. Secondly, population growth in the developing countries must be controlled. Youth organizations had a responsibility in creating awareness of the need for those changes, in order to avoid tensions and develop new attitudes. Most industrialized countries neglected their commitment to devote 0.15 per cent of their GNP to the least developed countries.

37. Young people had an important part to play in democracy, although in many countries they were still not fully integrated in the decision-making process, and were even denied the right to organize. Youth organizations were good schools for democracy, instilling in young people political awareness, tolerance, respect for other people's opinions and an interest in public life. In order to safeguard new democracies it was important to facilitate exchanges between youth organizations in different countries. Communication within the United Nations framework was important and greater participation of youth organizations in the United Nations system was essential. For many years, the Norwegian delegation to the United Nations had included two youth delegates, and as a representative of Norwegian youth, he appreciated the opportunity to participate in the General Assembly. Only three delegations at the present session - Denmark, Netherlands and Norway - included youth delegates and those delegates had therefore sent a letter on the subject to all delegations in the Committee. He hoped that more Governments would include youth delegates in the future.

38. Millions of young people in both industrialized and developing countries lacked jobs and educational opportunities and thus felt that society did not need them. It was essential to build up educational structures in developing countries, minimize youth unemployment and protest against the closing of schools and universities for political reasons.

39. It was important for young people to be given the opportunity to take part in international youth exchanges, since international contacts fostered mutual respect, cultural understanding and solidarity between peoples of different race, colour and national origin and thus countered the ignorance, fear and mistrust that led to ethnic conflicts. Contacts between cultures were the best weapons against xenophobia.

40. Mr. Al-JABER (Qatar) said that his Government attached great importance to the younger generations and depended on them for the achievement of its objectives. It had established a Council for Youth Affairs in 1979, under the chairmanship of

(Mr. Al-Jaber, Qatar)

His Royal Highness the Crown Prince, whose activities included training in co-operation, solidarity and leadership and providing facilities for hosting students from other countries. It also provided social, cultural and sports facilities, and fostered activities in the arts, theatre and music. The Qatar Olympic Committee had participated in international and regional meetings, including meetings of the International Olympic Committee.

41. Qatar was interested in all matters concerning young people, its aim being to bring up a generation of vigilant and responsible young people, who would be useful to society both nationally and internationally. His country followed and greatly appreciated the activities of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Office at Vienna and looked forward to co-operating in the activities for the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year.

42. His country was deeply concerned about the problem of drug addiction and stressed the vital need for international co-operation and monitoring. His Government fully supported all the plans put forward by different authorities within the United Nations framework to encourage young people to tackle the problems and face up to the various difficulties that hampered development, so that they could play an active part in their own and in international society.

43. Mr. SAVLE (Yugoslavia) said that, despite the recent improvement in the political climate, there were still serious problems. Development in the 1990s must be a different kind from past development, to ensure a decade of world progress, and to that end Governments must adopt effective national policies as a creative response to the changing world economy. The measures and policies adopted by the Yugoslav Government in the past year, aimed at transforming the country into a modern, market-oriented and fully democratic society, had already shown remarkable results.

44. His delegation had noted with interest the report on policies and programmes involving young people (A/45/422) and supported the efforts to promote the ideals of peace, mutual respect and understanding among youth, as well as student and youth exchanges and information activities. Yugoslavia had already started activities in connection with the International Year of the Family and welcomed the designation of Mr. Henryk Sokalski, Director of the Social Development Division of the United Nations Office at Vienna, as co-ordinator. His country agreed with the notion of the family as a relatively independent unit and social group with an active and responsible role in society, but thought that more attention should be paid to the impact of social crises and sudden social changes on relations within the family. Attention should also be paid to the relationship between the family and the various social groups surrounding it which could play an important role and help official institutions responsible for social care and protection of the family.

45. With regard to the report on the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (A/45/470), his delegation agreed that disabled persons must be enabled to become active, contributing participants in the social and economic development of their communities, and that they represented a great human resource potential. His

(Mr. Savle, Yugoslavia)

delegation attached great importance to the recommendations on improving opportunities for and the status of disabled persons nationally, and supported the proposed steps for revitalizing the Decade.

45. Regarding the report on the Question of Aging (A/45/420), he agreed with the view that the active older population represented a development force and supported the practical recommendations in that connection.

47. Lastly, he informed members of the Committee that preparations were under way for establishing a research and training institute in Belgrade, which he hoped would soon be available for use by the United Nations.

48. Miss TURUPHIAL (Venezuela) said that the economic and social aspects of development were inseparable and stressed the need for a solid social base in order to bring about true economic progress. In response to the basic economic changes resulting from the foreign debt crisis, the Venezuelan Government had undertaken a series of measures to protect the most vulnerable social groups, focusing attention on three high-priority areas: nutrition, health and education. Almost half of the national budget for 1991 had been allocated for that purpose. Determined to restore social services to the level preceding the crisis of the 1980s, her country had implemented a number of social programmes aimed at mitigating the impact of economic adjustment policies.

49. Venezuela was committed to enabling disabled persons adapt to their immediate social environment and participate in development activities. A number of programmes were being carried out at the national level to meet the basic needs of that sector of the population. One such programme provided the children of disabled persons with scholarships for higher education. A recently conducted national population census would make it possible to determine the number of disabled persons in the overall population and their immediate needs in order to reorient national policies in that field.

50. With regard to ways to mark the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, her delegation supported the idea of convening a ministerial-level world conference in 1993. In order to improve the status of disabled persons in developing countries, Venezuela agreed that it was necessary to integrate specific components that addressed the needs of disabled persons into social and economic programmes within the context of the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade. It also supported the general considerations relating to a long-term strategy to the year 2000 and beyond. Her delegation reiterated its commitment to the concept of the family as a basic unit of society. Venezuela had supported the proposal to proclaim 1994 the International Year of the Family. The organizational measures set forth in the note by the Secretary-General in that regard (A/45/365) were very useful.

51. Mr. RCDIONOV (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) stressed the need for effective ways to provide social protection, improve living standards and find optimum solutions to problems impeding stable development. The social component of

(Mr. Rodionov, Ukrainian SSR)

United Nations activities must be strengthened in order to combine bilateral and multilateral efforts in tackling those problems. Increasing the role of the Economic and Social Council in that field, inter alia through the holding of ministerial-level conferences, offered interesting possibilities.

52. The Ukrainian SSR supported the basic recommendations in the feasibility study on alternative ways to mark the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (A/45/470). The anniversary programme for 1992 in the report of the Secretary-General on the question of aging (A/45/420) was very important as a catalyst for continued implementation of the International Plan of Action on Aging. His delegation also supported efforts to strengthen the position of the family and its role in the development process, including preparations for the International Year of the Family.

53. In recent years it had become clear in the Ukrainian SSR that without qualitative changes in social policies it would be impossible to achieve the goals of perestroika. Unfortunately, measures taken to increase productivity and ensure adherence to the principle of social justice had not improved the living standard of the Ukrainian people. Serious economic and social problems were cause for concern. Practical steps taken to increase pensions for the disabled and the elderly, allowances for temporary disablement, assistance to families, and the salaries of teachers, medical workers and other civil servants had been largely undermined by inflation. The possibility of unemployment and the need to change one's type and place of employment because of the transition to a market economy had caused alarm.

54. The crisis in the social and economic field was further aggravated by environmental problems. The entire territory of the Ukrainian SSR had been declared an ecological disaster area as a result of the Chernobyl accident. Today, approximately 1.8 million citizens of the Republic were exposed to direct atomic radiation. The international community had provided large-scale assistance to help cope with the effects of the disaster. Medical institutions, social organizations and business circles in a number of countries had sent hundreds of tons of medicine, foodstuffs and equipment for the benefit of children in the Ukrainian SSR. The United Nations and its specialized agencies played an important role in organizing international co-operation to overcome the effects of the Chernobyl accident. Resolution 1990/50 of the Economic and Social Council on international co-operation to address and mitigate the consequences of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant demonstrated the support and concern of the international community.

55. At the current time, the Ukrainian SSR was taking measures to bring about concrete improvements in living conditions. A decision had been taken to close down the Chernobyl nuclear power station and a moratorium had been declared on the construction of new nuclear power stations. The declaration of sovereignty adopted by the Ukrainian Parliament would enable the Republic to increase its participation in international life at a level commensurate with its political, economic and cultural potential. The Ukrainian SSR attached great importance to the

(Mr. Rodionov, Ukrainian SSR)

establishment and development of mutually advantageous equitable relations with European and other countries that were prepared to co-operate.

56. The recently adopted law on the economic independence of the Ukrainian SSR guaranteed legal protection for all forms of ownership and provided various possibilities for developing all forms of entrepreneurial activity. At the same time, the Ukrainian SSR considered it extremely important to observe the principle of social justice and ensure social protection for the most vulnerable groups of the population - children and young people, the disabled, the elderly, the unemployed and the needy. In accordance with its desire to promote stability on the basis of balanced economic development and social justice, his delegation would submit a draft resolution on achieving social justice and was prepared to co-operate with all delegations interested in discussing that text.

57. Ms. LISSIDINI (Uruguay) said that, although the international climate had significantly improved, the increasing gap between developed and developing countries had aggravated the economic situation in the developing world, particularly in Africa and Latin America. The slump in the prices of raw materials and the difficulties experienced by developing countries in exporting their products had considerably increased poverty in the world, which, in the case of Latin America, affected 183 million people or 44 per cent of the population.

58. Eighty per cent of the disabled persons in the world lived in developing countries. External assistance was necessary in order to compensate for reductions in social programmes resulting from the foreign debt burden in order to reach the goals set for the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. Uruguay attached great importance to the question of the disabled and had recently established a system to provide overall protection to disabled persons in the field of medical care, education, rehabilitation and social security in order to enable them to function in society on an equal footing with others. The objective was to ensure equality of opportunity to disabled persons so that they could participate fully in all aspects of economic and social life. Her Government had set up a national committee for disabled persons made up of representatives of government agencies and organizations for the disabled in order to draw up, evaluate and implement at the national level measures to promote the development, rehabilitation and social integration of disabled persons.

59. In view of the growing numbers of elderly persons in the world, there was an urgent need to ensure their broader participation in the development process and enable them to live independent lives. In Uruguay, an interministerial commission dealt with policies relating to the elderly in accordance with the International Plan of Action on Aging. Her delegation attached great importance to the technical assistance provided by the United Nations Youth Fund and expressed regret that limited resources impeded its work. In Uruguay, a special committee co-ordinated efforts to deal with problems affecting young people. At the current time, it was considering various projects aimed at, inter alia, improving the formal training of young people to facilitate their access to employment and providing a minimum income to young people from poor families during training.

(Ms. Lissidini, Uruguay)

60. Uruguay firmly supported the proclamation of the International Year of the Family, which should increase awareness of questions relating to the family as the basic unit of society. Her delegation attached particular importance to measures to improve protection for low-income families, including the construction of housing and the promotion of small-scale family businesses in order to reduce unemployment among young people. Such projects would require technical and financial assistance.

61. Mr. PULZ (Czechoslovakia) stressed the need for joint action by the entire international community in tackling serious social problems. The United Nations had a vital role to play in co-ordinating international action to deal with such problems as malnutrition, hunger, illiteracy, substandard housing, unemployment and pollution. The supplement to the 1989 Report on the World Social Situation (A/45/137) confirmed the fact that the situation was serious. He agreed that the economic and social dimensions of development were inseparable and that economic progress was impossible without a solid social base. Fundamental changes had taken place in Czechoslovakia's political and public life. The new Government sought to ensure that the adverse impact of such changes were minimized and was developing a new system of social security to enable all citizens to care for themselves and at the same time to guarantee a minimum living standard for all.

62. The International Year of the Family would help focus greater attention on questions relating to the family. The organizational arrangements undertaken by the Secretariat in preparation for the Year were commendable. His delegation supported the recommendation put forward at the Expert Meeting on the Negative Consequences of Alcohol Use held in August in Oslo to incorporate alcohol-use related themes in the preparatory work of the Year. The International Plan of Action on Aging promoted better understanding of the problems of the aged and ways to solve them. The measures set forth in the report of the Secretary-General on the question of aging (A/45/420) should be given careful consideration. In dealing with the problems of the elderly it was necessary to enable them to continue to participate, as much as possible, in economic, social and public activities. Attention should also be given to care for the aged by the State and society.

63. Much still had to be done to achieve the objectives of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. Although there was greater awareness of the problems of disabled persons, further efforts were needed to integrate them fully in society. The feasibility study on alternative ways to mark the end of the Decade (A/45/470) provided useful material for considering the problems of disabled persons. Czechoslovakia shared the view that a ministerial-level world conference should be convened to adopt a long-term strategy in that regard. The mentally handicapped constituted a special group of disabled persons and should be regarded as a specific vulnerable social group. He supported the authorization by the Economic and Social Council, under resolution 1990/37, of the Commission on Human Rights to continue its work on a draft body of principles and guarantees for the protection of the mentally ill persons and for the improvement of mental health care.

(Mr. Pulz, Czechoslovakia)

64. The potential of youth must be taken into account in both national and international development strategies. The tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year presented a suitable occasion for focusing global attention again on youth issues. Preparatory work should begin on a draft programme of action to mark the tenth anniversary of the Year and on a draft world youth programme of action to the year 2000 and beyond.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.