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New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 37th MEETING

Chairman: Ms. COOMBS (New Zealand)
(Vice-Chairman)

later: Mr. SOMAVIA (Chile)

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In the absence of the Chairman, Ms. Coombs (New Zealand),
Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

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

AGENDA ITEM 90: WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION (continued) (A/C.3/45/L.16, L.18/Rev.1)

AGENDA ITEM 92: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORLD PROGRAMME OF ACTION CONCERNING
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AGENDA ITEM 104: INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE FAMILY (continued)
(A/C.3/45/L.14/Rev.1, L.15)

1. The CHAIRMAN said that she had been informed that the draft resolutions submitted under cluster II, comprising the above agenda items, did not have any programme budget implications.

Draft resolution A/C.3/45/L.16 (Agenda item 90)

2. Draft resolution A/C.3/45/L.16 was adopted.

3. Ms. MUCAVE (Mozambique) and Ms. SHIVUTE (Namibia) said that, had their delegations been present, they would have joined in the consensus and voted in favour of draft resolution A/C.3/45/L.16.

Draft resolution A/C.3/45/L.18/Rev.1 (Agenda item 90)

4. Ms. KAMAL (Secretary of the Committee) said that in paragraph 4, the words "as well as in the low-income countries" should be deleted.

5. Mrs. ASHTON (Bolivia), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors, said that among the minor changes made in the text of the draft resolution, paragraph 5 had been brought into line with previous General Assembly resolutions; paragraph 6, which reaffirmed the policies for international development co-operation as set out in the Declaration on International Economic Co-operation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries, had been added to the draft text. The sponsors hoped that the text would be adopted by consensus.

6. The CHAIRMAN said that a recorded vote had been requested on the draft resolution.

7. Mr. WALLDROP (United States of America), speaking in explanation of vote before the vote, said that as in the past, his Government questioned the relevance of the Report on the World Social Situation. It had yet to be demonstrated that the report contributed to the improvement of the world social situation in a meaningful way.

8. Paragraph 5 of the draft resolution did not adequately reflect the impact that market-oriented domestic economic policies would have on export performance. Although commodity prices in the 1980s had shown a downward trend, not all commodity prices had moved in the same direction or to the same degree and not all countries had been equally affected by the general trend. In addition, during the 1980s, economic performance among the various developing countries had differed dramatically, owing in large part to differences in their domestic economic policy and their ability to respond in a flexible manner to changes in markets.

9. Given its reservations about the language of the draft text and about the value of the report, his Government would vote against the draft resolution.

10. A recorded vote was taken on draft resolution A/C.3/45/L.18/Rev.1.

In favour: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Somalia, Spain, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zimbabwe.

Against: United States of America.

Abstaining: Germany, Israel, Japan, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

11. Draft resolution A/C.3/45/L.18/Rev.1 was adopted by 112 votes to 1, with 4 abstentions.

12. Mr. KOENIG (Germany), speaking in explanation of vote, said that while it attached great importance to social issues, in particular to the world social situation, his country had had to abstain in the vote on the draft resolution. The text had dealt to a large extent with Second Committee matters rather than concentrating on Third Committee issues. In addition, the draft resolution did not adequately reflect the results achieved in the Second Committee and at the eighteenth special session of the General Assembly.

13. Mr. TISSOT (United Kingdom) said that his delegation had abstained in the vote on draft resolution A/C.3/45/L.18/Rev.1 because it did not offer any new insights into the world social situation. Furthermore, the text failed to reflect some of the more constructive results of the General Assembly's eighteenth special session and the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

14. Mr. MIYATA (Japan) said that his delegation had abstained in the vote on draft resolution A/C.3/45/L.18/Rev.1. Certain parts of the text placed too much emphasis on economic issues, which might lead to a duplication in the work of the Second and Third Committees. In addition, some of the language used was misleading and distorted the reality of the current economic situation. His delegation also questioned the accuracy and objectivity of the reports on the world social situation and hoped that greater care would be taken in preparing future reports.

15. Miss DELFINA (Angola), Mrs. SHERMAN-PETER (Bahamas), Mr. EKE (Benin), Mrs. MOLATIHIWA (Botswana), Mrs. BANGUI-DUCASS (Central African Republic), Mr. DA ROSA (Guinea-Bissau), Mr. RAKOTONDRAEMBOA (Madagascar), Ms. MUCAVE (Mozambique), Ms. SHIVUTE (Namibia), Mrs. LISSIDINI (Uruguay), Mrs. BAGBENI (Zaire) and Ms. FUNDAFUNDA (Zambia) said that, had their delegations been present during the voting, they would have voted in favour of draft resolution A/C.3/45/L.18/Rev.1.

Draft resolution A/C.3/45/L.17 (Agenda item 92)

16. The CHAIRMAN said that Madagascar, Somalia and Zaire had become sponsors of draft resolution A/C.3/45/L.17.

17. Draft resolution A/C.3/45/L.17 was adopted.

Draft resolution A/C.3/45/L.13 (Agenda item 96)

18. Mr. KRENKEL (Austria) said that in paragraph 2 of the French text, the words "en donnant au Centre pour le développement social et les affaires humanitaires du Secrétariat un rôle centralisateur" should be replaced by the words "en utilisant le Centre pour le développement social et les affaires humanitaires du Secrétariat comme point focal". The English text remained unchanged.

19. Draft resolution A/C.3/45/L.13, as amended, was adopted.

20. Mr. Somavia (Chile) took the Chair.

Draft resolution A/C.3/45/L.12/Rev.2 (Agenda item 99)

21. Mrs. ALVAREZ (Dominican Republic), introducing the revised draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors, said that at the request of the delegation of Senegal, two new paragraphs had been added: the eighth preambular paragraph, which recalled the establishment at Dakar in 1989 of the African Society of Gerontology, and paragraph 10, which requested the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs to provide assistance to the Society.

22. Draft resolution A/C.3/45/L.12/Rev.2 was adopted.

23. Mr. KOENIG (Germany) said that while it had joined in the consensus, his Government felt that, generally speaking, the draft resolution did not serve the needs of the elderly. Germany accorded high priority to the aging and its policies were in full compliance with the International Plan of Action on Aging. In addition, it contributed to and supported specific projects undertaken by the United Nations Trust Fund for Aging.

24. Draft resolution A/C.3/45/L.12/Rev.2 contained a number of proposals which were inconsistent with the principle of efficient use of United Nations system resources, in particular, the proposal to create new international institutions in the field of aging, which would lead to duplication of effort. His delegation reserved the right to discuss those matters further at the next session of the Commission for Social Development.

Draft resolution A/C.3/45/L.14/Rev.1 (Agenda item 104)

25. Mr. ZAWACKI (Poland), introducing the revised draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors, which now included Mongolia, pointed out that three new paragraphs had been added to the original text: (1) the fourth preambular paragraph, which welcomed the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the successful conclusions of the World Summit for Children; (2) paragraph 9, which invited the Commission for Social Development to, inter alia, ensure that all activities related to the family were in accordance with the concept of equality between women and men; and (3) paragraph 10, which requested the Commission for Social Development to inform the Commission on the Status of Women on the preparations for the International Year of the Family.

26. Draft resolution A/C.3/45/L.14/Rev.1 was adopted.

27. Mr. VAN DER HEIJDEN (Netherlands) said that while it recognized the family as the basic unit of society, his country also acknowledged the existence of many different family structures. Accordingly, Government policy was oriented towards strengthening the family as well as comparable social units.

28. Family structures, traditions and values differed so markedly across the world that international consultations on family matters were unlikely to result in widely applicable measures. Furthermore, such consultations were liable to be used to promote negative views about or even discrimination against household structures other than the traditional nuclear family.

(Mr. Van Der Heijden, Netherlands)

29. His Government therefore strongly preferred expanded co-operation at the regional level, which was in accordance with the Secretary-General's recommendation that specific activities for the International Year of the Family should be geared mainly to local and national situations.

30. Mr. STUART (Australia) said that his delegation welcomed the amendments that had been made to draft resolution A/C.3/45/L.14. In the celebration of the International Year of the Family, that due attention should be given to the diversity of national and international social experiences relating to the family. When the General Assembly had adopted its resolution 41/82 proclaiming 1994 as International Year of the Family, there had been a consensus against adopting a strict interpretation of the family, and it was important that the draft resolution now before the Committee should reflect that consensus.

Draft resolution A/C.3/45/L.15 (Agenda item 104)

31. The CHAIRMAN invited members to consider draft resolution A/C.3/45/L.15, which had been introduced by the representative of Poland on behalf of the sponsors listed on the document and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. The representative of Poland had orally revised the third preambular paragraph by replacing the words "urgent action" by the words "sustained action". If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft resolution as orally revised without a vote.

32. It was so decided.

33. Draft resolution A/C.3/45/L.15, as orally revised, was adopted.

34. The CHAIRMAN announced that the Committee had concluded its consideration of the second cluster of items.

AGENDA ITEM 89: EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNITED NATIONS INSTRUMENTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND EFFECTIVE FUNCTIONING OF BODIES ESTABLISHED PURSUANT TO SUCH INSTRUMENTS (continued) (A/45/3, chap. V, sect. A, A/45/205, 207, 216, 222, 227, 230, 264, 265-267, 269, 270, 272, 280, 636, 668, annex, 707)

AGENDA ITEM 93: HUMAN RIGHTS AND SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS (continued) (A/45/3, chap. V, sect. A, A/45/580)

AGENDA ITEM 97: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (continued) (A/45/202, 222, 265, 269, 473)

AGENDA ITEM 105: INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS (continued) (A/45/3, chap. V, sect. A, A/45/40, 174, 178, 403, A/45/597, 598, 657; E/1990/23)

AGENDA ITEM 106: ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE (continued) (A/45/205, 222, 225, 265, 270)

AGENDA ITEM 109: TORTURE AND OTHER CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT (continued) (A/45/44 and Corr.1, A/45/189, 205, 207, 216, 225, 227, 230, 254, 264, 266, 280, 405, 615, 633)

AGENDA ITEM 110: ENHANCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PRINCIPLE OF PERIODIC AND GENUINE ELECTIONS (continued) (A/45/202, 203, 205, 225, 227, 230, 254, 264, 265, 266, 267, 269, 270, 272, 280, 626)

35. Mrs. ATTAH (Nigeria), speaking on agenda item 89, said that the United Nations role in the field of human rights had been outstanding and valuable, especially in standard-setting activities. The effective and smooth functioning of the human rights treaty bodies as a coherent and integrated system would largely determine the ultimate success of the United Nations in ensuring respect for human rights. She referred in that connection to the conclusions and recommendations contained in the study by the independent expert on possible long-term approaches to enhancing the effective operation of existing and prospective treaty bodies (A/44/668) and the report of the third meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies (A/45/636).

36. A binding and universal adherence to human rights instruments was not only a necessary but an important component for the achievement of universal respect for and observance of all human rights. The Nigerian delegation therefore called for universal adherence to the human rights instruments. It fully supported the recommendation by the persons chairing the treaty bodies that steps should be taken to promote greater interaction among the treaty bodies as a means of contributing to the effective development of the human rights treaty system as a whole. It would therefore fully support either the institutionalization of the meeting of persons chairing treaty bodies at periodic intervals or the establishment of an inter-treaty-system committee with the objective of achieving greater co-ordination of the treaty régime.

37. Financing had constituted a serious obstacle to the effective functioning of some of the treaty bodies, particularly the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the Committee against Torture. Her delegation firmly maintained that the human rights treaty bodies should not be rendered inactive by non-compliance with financial obligations by some States Parties. The activities of the treaty bodies should be financed from the regular budget of the United Nations. While voluntary funding was helpful, it could not provide adequate resources for achieving the goal of sustainable progress in the promotion of human rights.

38. On the immediate and related issue of secretariat services, she said that her delegation fully supported the recommendation that the Secretary-General and the General Assembly should ensure that more resources were provided for secretariat servicing to enable treaty bodies to function effectively. Since the work of the Centre for Human Rights had significantly increased, the resources made available to the Centre and its subsidiary bodies had to be increased in order to enable it to meet its work-load and expanded responsibilities.

(Mrs. Attah, Nigeria)

39. Her delegation wished to express its satisfaction with the work of the Task Force on Computerization. It supported the recommendations of the Task Force on the establishment of an appropriate data base for storing and processing information on the reporting system, and welcomed the completion of the manual on reporting produced by UNITAR and the Centre for Human Rights. Nigeria was unequivocally committed to ensuring the effective and smooth functioning of the treaty bodies. Her Government's policy goal was to work for the harmonisation of the activities and operations of the human rights treaty bodies and to ensure that the effects, practices and jurisprudence emerging from the actions and interactions of the treaty régime were not limited to the accessory States parties but had wider application to the international community as a whole.

40. Turning to agenda item 97, on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, her delegation noted with satisfaction the increasing number of States that had acceded to or ratified the Convention. The ratification process was under way in Nigeria and her Government looked forward to participating at the first meeting of States parties in February 1990.

41. The United Nations should be commended for establishing a set of credible and useful standards in the area of the protection of the child. The appointment by the Commission on Human Rights of a Special Rapporteur on specific issues relating to protection of the child, the establishment of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the recent Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Summit for Children clearly demonstrated the concern of the international community for the plight of children. Now the task of the international community was to translate the rights specified in the Convention into national laws and practices.

42. Turning to agenda item 109, she said that Nigeria strongly condemned the continued violation of the rights of the child in South Africa, and called on the international community to take urgent action to remedy that unacceptable situation. Her delegation demanded the immediate and unconditional release of all detained children and an accounting for all missing and disappeared children. It believed that the elimination of apartheid would create conditions for the full realization of the rights of children in South Africa. Her delegation also condemned the practice of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, wherever or whenever they might occur. It was imperative that the international community should act in concert to ensure compliance with established standards.

43. She concluded by reaffirming the unswerving commitment of the Government of Nigeria to the defence and protection of human rights. The international political situation, particularly the developments in Eastern Europe, had created favourable conditions for the enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. However, it was impossible to ignore the fact that the sharp deterioration in economic and social conditions had seriously impaired the ability of the populations of the countries of that region to realize their fundamental and inalienable rights. The international community must not only reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, but it must pay equal attention to the promotion of social progress and improved standards of living.

44. Mr. BARAL (Nepal) drew attention to the remarkable change in attitudes in international relations that gave human rights high priority on foreign policy agendas and saw in that change evidence of an unprecedented convergence of ideological positions hitherto unrealized by the world community. However, as stated by the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organisation (A/45/1, sect. VI), resolution of conflicts, observance of human rights and the promotion of development together wove the fabric of peace; if one of those strands was removed, the tissue would unravel. It was now understood that development that did not consider the global needs of the human person became an absurdity. The Charter objective of "social progress and better standards of life" was possible only in "larger freedom".

45. Special consideration should be given to the financial situation of the human rights treaty bodies, particularly the crisis which had adversely affected the activities of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination since 1986. His delegation urged Member States to take due account of the recommendations put forward by the third meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies contained in the annex to document A/45/636.

46. Nepal was fully committed to ensuring the exercise of basic human freedoms. The time had come for all States to accept common humanitarian norms based on fundamental freedoms and democracy in order to reach a global consensus on the effective implementation of rights. Democracy had emerged as a prerequisite for development and Member States must ensure a minimum degree of democratisation in their societies.

47. Mr. OGURTSOV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that although scientific and technological developments had raised living standards and laid a solid basis for the implementation of human rights, careful consideration should be given to the moral and social consequences of scientific progress, particularly environmental degradation. In that connection, he stressed the need to find an acceptable balance that would ensure observance of basic human rights and at the same time promote the development of science and technology. Although contemporary society could not function without scientific and technical advances, they must be controlled and evaluated according to the extent to which they enhanced the well-being of the individual, the enjoyment of freedom and security.

48. Certain scientific and technological advances were fraught with dangers for the exercise of the rights of the individual, the well-being of society and general living standards. Not all scientific discoveries and innovations should necessarily be put to use; mechanisms should be established for evaluating scientific advances particularly their possible secondary and long-term consequences. It was essential in that regard to determine whether the advantages to be derived were greater than the foreseeable negative consequences. Such an evaluation process must be conducted at the international level in the interest of all peoples. The right to participate in the taking of such decisions was a basic human right.

(Mr. Ogurtaov, Byelorussian SSR)

49. The Chernobyl nuclear disaster was one of the world's worst catastrophes. Since its consequences unfortunately could not be eliminated, all peoples and the entire biosphere must simply adjust to the irreversible post-Chernobyl situation and endeavour to reduce its effects to a minimum.

50. Mrs. BANGOURA (Guinea) said that the States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, whose growing number reflected the political will to protect children, must take all the necessary legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to ensure their access to and adequate financing of medical services, health care and education. Efforts to implement the Convention should aim at protecting the rights of children and creating a healthy environment in which they could grow up. Developing countries, especially the least developed ones, required support from the entire international community in order to achieve those objectives.

51. The situation of African children merited particular attention. Their survival often depended on such factors as drinking water supply and a healthy environment. The situation of children in Liberia was particularly tragic and more than half of the 520,000 Liberian refugees in Guinea were children. Her delegation called upon the entire international community to save the children of Liberia and their country from massive destruction.

52. Her Government had made a considerable effort to improve the living conditions of children. It had set up a programme to ensure primary health care for pregnant women and babies. Health centres had been established in the most remote areas of the country in order to provide immunization coverage. UNICEF had supplied the centres with equipment and medicine and was also participating in a national educational and sanitation programme. The Ministry of Social Affairs was conducting a programme to raise public awareness of the situation of Guinean children and their rights. The general national reform being carried out by the Government accorded special attention to children's access to education. In that connection, her delegation expressed gratitude for the assistance provided by the various United Nations agencies, particularly UNICEF, which was making a considerable effort to improve the living conditions of mothers and children in Guinea. In spite of the progress made, however, child mortality remained very high. She therefore called on the United Nations, especially UNICEF, to develop an information policy aimed at rural population groups to help them to improve their lives and those of their children.

53. Mr. BARKER (Australia) said that the elaboration of the framework of international law enshrined in the human rights treaty system - a labour of more than 40 years - was a major United Nations achievement. The wide adherence to the International Covenants demonstrated the universality of the principles they expressed. Australia urged those States which had not ratified or acceded to the Covenants to consider doing so as a matter of priority and called on the United Nations to provide technical assistance to Governments at their request to enable them to assimilate the norms of the Covenants international legislation into their own legal systems and to comply with reporting obligations. It also called on the

(Mr. Barker, Australia)

United Nations to increase its efforts to publicize its Bill of Rights and the work of the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

54. Australia welcomed the two new instruments adopted at the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and looked forward to the adoption of an International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families.

55. His country was particularly interested in the draft universal declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, the draft declaration on the right and responsibility of individuals, groups and organs of society to promote and protect universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the draft body of principles and guarantees for the protection of mentally ill persons and for the improvement of mental health care, but considered that the emphasis should now shift to implementation of existing instruments. Effective implementation depended largely on Governments, which must ensure that they complied with treaty obligations both in observance of human rights standards and in timely and adequate reporting.

56. With regard to the growth of the treaty system, he noted that there were now six bodies monitoring treaties, with a total of over 530 States parties, double the number 10 years previously. The growth in the system, which had been qualitative as well as quantitative, had brought many problems which had not been foreseen by the drafters and negotiators of human rights instruments, some of which required urgent attention to prevent the system from collapsing under its own weight.

57. The independent expert who had studied the question had noted that the combination of the proliferation of standards, the range and depth of activities of the policy-making organs and the number of treaty bodies could make it difficult to maintain a consistent approach to the application and monitoring of human rights standards. Consistent interpretation of those standards was essential for the coherence of the treaty system and its credibility as a demonstration of the international community's commitment. Careful observance of General Assembly resolution 41/120 was essential in work on new standards.

58. The question of resources had two aspects: the problems of financing by States parties and the need for adequate secretariat resources to service the treaty bodies: the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee against Torture, which had to rely on States parties for financing, had both had to cancel meetings. It was essential to find a way of putting those bodies on a sounder financial footing, and Australia was willing to examine with others the possibility of meeting all treaty body costs within the regular budget without prejudice to other priority human rights areas. He noted in the Secretary-General's report to the Economic and Social Council (E/1990/50) the extreme pressure placed on the Centre for Human Rights, whose work-load had increased

(Mr. Barker, Australia)

enormously as a direct result of the expansion of the range of human rights instruments in force, and urged that action should be taken.

59. On the question of reporting procedures, his delegation believed that the submission of periodic reports for examination by and discussion with the expert committees was an important factor in strengthening States' acceptance of accountability for their record in promoting and protecting the human rights of their citizens. The approach was particularly appropriate at a time when countries were reviewing their attitudes to human rights and looking for more co-operative action, since it encouraged constructive dialogue and fostered a more open and less defensive attitude. However, preparation, submission and consideration of periodic reports had imposed great strain on the monitoring bodies and on national bureaucracies and streamlining was essential. Some measures had already been taken and pre-sessional working groups, in particular, had proved a cost-effective means of dealing with the volume of reports. Cross-referencing might be valuable but would be difficult to implement on a large scale. Further study was necessary.

60. He was pleased to note that the consolidated reporting guidelines and the manual for the guidance of States parties prepared by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) in co-operation with the Centre for Human Rights had been completed and urged their distribution as soon as possible. Moreover, since the processing of information was a major part of the work of the treaty bodies, the effective use of computer technology would help to solve their problems by making the reporting system more flexible, by making information more readily accessible and by facilitating the provision of information on other human rights matters in response to requests by the Secretary-General. It would also increase Secretariat productivity.

61. Mr. HENNESSY (Ireland), referring to agenda item 106 and the progress made in achieving the objectives of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, said that, while it was encouraging to note from the report of the Special Rapporteur that a number of countries, including the Soviet Union, had taken important measures aimed at ensuring religious freedom, religious intolerance continued to exist in all regions of the world.

62. Infringements of the rights and freedoms embodied in the Declaration usually led to the infringement of other human rights, such as the right to life, liberty and security of the person, freedom of movement and freedom of opinion and expression, and it was disturbing to note that the Special Rapporteur had reported an increase over the past year in alleged violations of the right to life in connection with the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms of religion and belief.

63. The Special Rapporteur had pointed out that violations could be due to a wide variety of circumstances, such as restrictive legislation and failure by public authorities to observe national laws purporting to ensure freedom of religion. In his delegation's opinion, however, an equally significant cause was the existence of tensions between religious groups which masked a complex matrix, often rooted in

(Mr. Hennessy, Ireland)

history, of political, social and economic forces. In such situations, it was only by tackling root causes that a basis for lasting stability could be established. Generally speaking, however, religious intolerance was an inability to accommodate differences and diversity. That being so, good laws were necessary but not sufficient: tolerance and respect for the rights of others must be encouraged in all societies as the essential basis of all efforts to promote and protect human rights, with educators and religious leaders playing an important part. Problems of religious intolerance often arose in connection with minority rights, and work on the protection of freedom of religion or belief should take that aspect into account.

64. His delegation was encouraged by the growing willingness of Governments to co-operate with the Special Rapporteur, which confirmed the validity of the Special Rapporteur's dual mandate, namely, to examine incidents inconsistent with the Declaration and wherever possible to pursue dialogue between Governments and religious communities. It was a sign of the progress made that an appointment which had originally been contested, had now been renewed for a further two years.

65. His delegation urged all Governments to pay careful attention to the Special Rapporteur's recommendations for future action. With the coming tenth anniversary of the Declaration on the elimination of religious intolerance, it would be particularly useful for Governments to consider national and regional measures to ensure its effective implementation, and for the anniversary to be marked by emphasis on public information and activities related to the publication, dissemination and implementation of the Declaration.

66. Mr. PIBULSONGGRAM (Thailand), speaking on agenda item 97, said that the World Summit for Children had adopted a strategy that promised better protection and development for children, a blueprint that would assure their survival. The World Declaration and Plan of Action gave national Governments, international organizations, bilateral aid agencies and non-governmental organizations a solid framework for implementing their own programmes of action.

67. Almost 20 million of Thailand's population of 55 million were children under the age of 14. Promotion and protection of children was an integral part of the Government's national economic and social development plan and the current five-year plan placed great emphasis on survival, development and protection services. The right to survival was society's basic obligation to all newborn infants and young children and that entailed adequate nutrition, living standards and medical services for children and assistance to young mothers and mothers-to-be, including education about child feeding. As a result of those measures, maternal mortality in Thailand had been reduced by more than 50 per cent in eight years and infant mortality by 20 per cent in the past three years. Primary health care was available in nearly 90 per cent of Thai villages. Six years of compulsory education were provided for all Thai children and the period would soon be increased to nine years.

(Mr. Pibulsonggram, Thailand)

68. A major Government concern was how to protect children from abuse and exploitation. The strengthening of Thai laws and regulations on child labour, together with on-site inspections, had been very effective and the extension of compulsory education to a period of nine years would also help to reduce child labour.

69. In August 1990 the Government of Thailand, in co-operation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), had hosted the First National Assembly on Child Development in Bangkok, attended by representatives from governmental and non-governmental organizations. The Assembly had focused mainly on the minimum basic needs of children, with the object of adopting policies and developing new strategies for action. The National Declaration on Children adopted by the Assembly, which reflected provisions in the Declaration of the New York Summit, would provide guidelines for those drafting Thailand's next five-year plan, due to begin in 1992.

70. The proclamation of 1990 as the International Literacy Year had been important for international efforts to promote the rights and the development of the child. Education was an inalienable right of every individual, a cornerstone of civilized society and the key to survival. His Government had therefore taken great pride in hosting the World Conference on Education for All, in March, in co-operation with UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP and the World Bank. The essential thrust of the Conference had been that literacy was not the preserve of the few. It was no longer a luxury, but a universal necessity.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.