

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 25th MEETING

Chairman:

Mr. AL-SHAALI

(United Arab Emirates)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 94: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- (a) QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH,
AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY

OTHER MATTERS

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 94: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- (a) QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (A/46/3 (chap. VI, sect. B), A/46/56-E/1991/6 and Corr.1, A/46/137-E/1991/40, A/46/281-E/1991/112, A/46/315, 360, 361, 362, 366, 414 and 501/Rev.1)

1. Mr. WAN HANAFIAH (Malaysia) said that, despite the encouraging statistics contained in various United Nations reports, the social situation in many developing countries was far from satisfactory. The failure of Governments to provide adequate social development was due not to a lack of commitment on their part but to a shortage of resources caused by negative economic growth. Many international development agencies were also suffering from a lack of resources. Developing countries aspired no less than developed ones to improve the living standard of their population but were suffering from deteriorating terms of trade, protectionism, high interest rates, debt and a myriad of other international economic problems which had kept them out of the mainstream of world economic development. It was clear from the interim report on the world social situation (A/46/56) that the peace dividend which could legitimately be expected from the end of the cold war had been slow in coming.

2. His own country had launched a new development policy in 1991 aimed at promoting balanced development and continuing the fight against poverty, while seeking to achieve equitable growth. Strategies would be adopted in various sectors, including the development of social services which would focus on education and training, health, housing, the environment and social services for young people and the disabled. With a view to making optimum use of human resources, emphasis would also be placed on the promotion of the family in recognition of its status as a contributor to and beneficiary of economic progress. In that connection, he welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on progress made in the preparations for the International Year of the Family (A/46/362). He also fully endorsed the view that, in planning and executing the programmes for the year, special attention should be given to socio-economic and cultural conditions in developing countries and to technical cooperation activities intended to assist those countries.

3. With regard to the report of the Secretary-General on policies and programmes involving youth (A/46/360), he joined the Secretary-General in underlining the need to provide the resources required to undertake the activities recommended in the proposals for the preparation of a draft world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond. He favoured an action-oriented programme geared to practical objectives, taking into account the problems facing young people all over the world, particularly drug abuse and crime. The programme should focus on the promotion of training activities for young people, especially those in disadvantaged groups and in rural areas,

(Mr. Wan Hanafiah, Malaysia)

to prepare them to participate in progress and development in their countries. Young people were a country's main asset and it was only right that Governments should provide for their education and training in order to promote national development. The role of the private sector, particularly the multinationals, should be mentioned since they had the resources and the expertise from which young people could benefit. Private sector support for government-sponsored youth programmes was therefore of immense importance. In 1985, Malaysia had adopted a national youth policy under which training centres had been established and then expanded to meet the growing demand for skills training for young people who were unemployed. In line with its aim of promoting self-reliance among young people, in 1987 the Government had also established a special economic development trust fund for young people to provide them with financial assistance in setting up their own businesses, particularly in the field of agriculture, manufacturing industry and commerce. Given the importance it attached to young people, his country intended to contribute to the preparation of the draft world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond, in the hope that it would provide an opportunity for a fruitful exchange of ideas and experience between countries.

4. He welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation on ageing for 1992 and beyond (A/46/361) and took particular note of the efforts being made to develop an operational strategy for 1992 to 2001. He welcomed the preliminary draft global targets on ageing for the decade 1992 to 2001 based on the International Plan of Action on Ageing, particularly that relating to the development and promotion of programmes to support family and social networks and maintain integration of the elderly in their communities. He hoped that, through the consultations to be held in the period up to 1992, the General Assembly would be able to endorse a set of practical global targets at its forty-seventh session. In Malaysia the Government had recently proposed measures to provide financial assistance to help keep the elderly in the community and reduce reliance on old people's homes.

5. Although they constituted only a small percentage of the population, the disabled had never been neglected in his country's social and economic development policies. The Government had adopted a national social welfare policy which envisaged increasing assistance for the handicapped, the disabled and the destitute to enable them to participate in and benefit from the socio-economic development of the nation through rehabilitation and training.

6. Mr. LINDGREN ALVES (Brazil), recalling the remarks made by the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization (A/46/1) concerning the coexistence of rising affluence and increasing poverty, considered that it was quite accurate to say that poverty undermined the cohesion of societies and States, destroyed the base of human rights and damaged the environment. He shared the Secretary-General's view that the revitalization of the United Nations, from which much was expected in the area

(Mr. Lindgren Alves, Brazil)

of development, should also involve a reinvigoration of the North-South dialogue. After many years of discussion, there could no longer be any doubt that economic and social questions were closely interrelated, that social problems could not be resolved without the necessary resources and that the living standards and social conditions could not be improved without sustainable and non-inflationary economic growth. However, economic growth alone was not enough; it must be accompanied by far-sighted social policies which formed an integral part of development planning at both the national and the international level. In the present-day world, the factors which had the greatest influence on social conditions and living standards, especially in the developing countries, were directly related to economic problems of an international nature. Only progress in international economic cooperation could solve the basic problems of trade and finance that distorted the international economy and that all too often pre-empted opportunities for development. His country therefore looked forward to taking part in the discussions on the possibility of convening a world summit for social development, on which consultations were in progress. It would be useful in due course to discuss the content and scope of that initiative, with particular reference to the close links between economic and social issues.

7. For the Brazilian Government, integrating social concerns into development planning was a priority. The Brazilian Ministry for Social Action had taken various initiatives to improve the social situation of the population in general and, in particular, to reduce malnutrition and infant mortality. It had also undertaken special programmes to assist the most underprivileged social groups, such as poor children and adolescents, the disabled and the elderly. Particular emphasis had been placed on the programmes intended to benefit children and youth. A major programme, funded by public and private sources, was also under way. It provided for the creation of a network of integrated services to provide destitute children with food and medical care and offer them cultural and sporting activities. Moreover, on 12 October, the Brazilian President had authorized the creation of a national fund for children and adolescents to which private individuals and companies could make tax-deductible contributions. That same day, he had launched a programme placing 5,000 youths, mainly street children, in apprenticeship in State-owned companies. It was important that the commitments undertaken at the World Summit for Children continue to receive government attention and that they be given concrete follow-up at the international level.

8. Brazilian society currently comprised over 10 million elderly citizens and was becoming increasingly conscious of the particular needs of that social group, as well as of the extremely valuable contribution which it could make to national development. Brazil supported the overall draft United Nations Principles for Older Persons, and it was convinced that they would be an important source of inspiration for future activities concerning the question of ageing.

(Mr. Lindgren Alves, Brazil)

9. The Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons contained interesting proposals based on the new approach of the United Nations, which proposed to move from awareness-raising to action. There was no doubt that equalizing opportunities for all citizens, including the disabled, contributed to increasing and diversifying the pool of human resources available to countries in order to promote their development.

10. Turning to the Secretary-General's interim report on the social situation in the world (A/46/56), he said that Brazil was pleased that, as the Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs had stated when introducing the item, the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs proposed to reorient the draft framework for the 1993 report on the world social situation so that it was in consonance with the requests set forth in paragraph 4 of resolution 1989/72 of the Economic and Social Council with respect, inter alia, to the negative trends in social indicators.

11. The report on the work being done within the United Nations system on improving quantitative and qualitative indicators on social conditions and standards of living (A/46/137-E/1991/40) clearly showed that the United Nations was aware of the complex problems posed by the conception of social indicators and of the work which remained to be done in that field. Nevertheless, some of the proposals put forward in the report required considerable refinement, and, in certain instances, should be expressed more clearly before being followed up by Member States or the Secretariat. He expressed doubts regarding the validity of the distinction made, at the request of Member States, between qualitative and quantitative indicators, since, as printed in the report, it was hard to conceive of indicators that were not based on quantitative inputs or that did not find universal expression. Also the distinction made between objective and non-objective indicators did not seem entirely useful. In his opinion, the usefulness of each type of indicator depended on the specific analytical context of the available figures. Sweeping generalizations should be avoided. The simplest indicators were not, therefore, always the best, since aggregation was often not only useful, but indispensable. As for the need to improve the indicators relating to the ecological aspects of development, more importance should be given to the measurement of patterns of production and consumption than to the methods of assessing the sustainability of such schemes and their impact on the protection and rational use of natural resources. Finally, more emphasis should be placed on the question of knowing when and how to combine composite indicators, which could be simultaneously revealing and extremely deceptive. An in-depth technical analysis of the pros and cons of combining economic and social indicators would, in that respect, be highly useful to Member States.

12. Mr. PARSHIKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) stated that in all countries, the meaning and quality of life depended largely on the social situation. If the countries of the world succeeded in agreeing to resolve social problems - and with the end of the ideological and political

(Mr. Parshikov, USSR)

confrontation that was now conceivable - they would finally constitute an international community worthy of such a name.

13. There were enough resources to provide everyone with nourishment, education, housing and care. With the end of the cold war, the senseless arms race no longer had any raison d'être. Disarmament had released enormous material and human resources which could be redeployed for the purpose of international cooperation in the political, economic, social and environmental fields, thereby assisting the joint search for solutions to the problems of society, foremost among which were the defence of the rights and interests of man, and particularly the most vulnerable groups: children, youth, women, the disabled and the elderly.

14. The improvement of the world social climate could be made possible only by calling upon the practical and historical experience of all countries. Only the United Nations was capable of creating an organic link between the national, regional, bilateral and multilateral dimensions of the struggle against the inadequacies of social development. It was therefore necessary to strengthen the means available to the main United Nations organ dealing with such questions, namely the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs at the United Nations Office at Vienna.

15. As for intergovernmental bodies, he hoped that broadening the composition of the Commission for Social Development would enable the latter to exploit the positive trends which had recently characterized its work and to become the central organ, not only of the Economic and Social Council, but of the entire United Nations system in order to reinforce international cooperation in the field of social development. Moreover, the Commission could serve as preparatory committee for the world summit for social development, should it be decided to organize such a meeting.

16. The regional dimension was one of the most interesting dimensions when it came to determining joint and effective solutions to the social problems of the time. Pan-European social cooperation could be guided by the Economic Commission for Europe, the relevant structures of the Council of Europe, the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Social Affairs in the European Region, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and non-governmental organizations. Such cooperation could draw inspiration from the CSCE conference on the human dimension which had just ended in Moscow; during the conference member States had dealt with the issue of protecting the rights of the disabled and had undertaken to ensure that disabled persons had the opportunity to participate fully and to enjoy equal rights in the life of society.

17. Regional cooperation should make it possible to formulate standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons, along the lines of those which an ad hoc open ended working group of government experts, created by the Commission for Social Development, had been asked to establish. Such

(Mr. Parshikov, USSR)

new standard rules would facilitate the implementation, at national level, of the World Programme of Action and other international texts.

18. By the year 2025, there would be 1.2 billion people aged over 60, accounting for 14 per cent of the world's total population. The international community should ensure that those who had done so much for society were not reduced to hardship once they had retired from active life. In that respect, the Soviet delegation was heartened by the efforts of the United Nations Secretariat to implement the programme of activities planned to mark the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the International Plan of Action on Ageing, which would be celebrated in 1992.

19. His delegation felt that, while the draft world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond should be as concise as possible, it should define precise goals and focus mainly on activities to be undertaken at the national level.

20. The International Year of the Family should serve as an occasion to examine the changing role of men and women in the family, single-parent families, large families and the balance between family and job responsibilities. International Year activities should be oriented towards the well-being and advancement of children and adults. The Year should also promote measures to implement the international strategies, conventions and declarations relating to the situation of women and children.

21. While the recent upheavals in the Soviet Union and throughout Eastern Europe were a sign of progress towards the establishment in Europe of States based on political pluralism and democracy, they also signalled greater political instability and severe economic problems and, thus, social tensions. Indeed, as noted by the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization (A/46/1), the restructuring of economic systems did not and would not by itself answer the demands of social justice. Social progress was in fact likely to be jeopardized because of the difficulties of the transition. The fight against hunger, disease, illiteracy and unemployment would not succeed simply by allowing free rein to market forces. It might even be said that neither privatization, denationalization nor deregulation of the prices of goods and services would by themselves solve social ills.

22. The apparent contradiction between social justice, on one hand, and freedom and democracy, on the other, could be resolved if political development was accompanied by equally effective economic and social measures. States could not survive the complete restructuring of their economies without developing in new directions. Deprived of certain traditional prerogatives, they were temporarily unable to shoulder the social responsibilities they had fulfilled in the past. States were living through a true period of transition and were no longer in a position to resolve complex social problems; at the same time, society did not yet have the material resources or institutions to do the job. The international community and,

(Mr. Parshikov, USSR)

naturally, the United Nations could help promote the process which had led the Eastern European countries to reject a system of State control and embrace democracy and market economy. It was only in unifying collective efforts that the international community could solve social problems, which were no less urgent than political, economic or environmental issues.

23. Mr. ADALA (Kenya) said that, in spite of its efforts to carry out long-term structural adjustments and economic reforms, Africa had not been spared by the severe economic and social crisis sweeping the developing world, which was faced with extremely adverse external conditions such as declining commodity prices, a heavy external debt burden and a growing outflow of resources from developing to developed countries. In fact, as pointed out by the Director of the Social Development Division, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, the number of least developed countries had doubled in the past 20 years; women, particularly in the developing countries, still did not have access to training and employment opportunities; by the end of the millenium, 30 to 40 per cent of the population in certain countries would suffer from some form of disability; the number of victims of drug abuse, alcoholism and AIDS was on the rise; and by the year 2025, persons aged 60 or above would represent 15 per cent of the world population and as many as 70 per cent of them would be in developing countries. Added to all that was the unpredictable world situation engendered by recent international political events. In order to grapple with those harsh realities, developing countries would have to rearrange their priorities with due regard for international political developments; in addition, they should bear in mind that development had to be built on a sense of security and confidence in the future; it could not be built on feelings of insecurity and uncertainty, which vulnerable groups in society, such as youths, the disabled, the elderly and families, could not fail to have.

24. In that connection, Kenya was proud of its achievements in reintegrating the disabled by providing them with employment opportunities; those achievements had been made possible by active nationwide campaigns spearheaded by the President himself, coupled with the high priority accorded to the concerns of the disabled under the Government's social development policies. The Government and the people of Kenya were collaborating with other Governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals to improve training, placement, employment and housing programmes for disabled persons to enable them, like other citizens, to reap the benefits of society. The Government was also using special education programmes to help disabled individuals reach their full mental, physical and intellectual potential. It encouraged them to work independently, by guaranteeing access to bank loans and other financial services on the same terms offered to other citizens. Many disabled persons had consequently formed cooperatives where they used their varied skills and training. His country was particularly pleased to host, within the framework of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, the XVII World Congress of Rehabilitation International, to be held in Nairobi from 7 to 11 September 1992, sponsored by the President of Kenya, who had been

(Mr. Adala, Kenya)

unwavering in his commitment to improve the living conditions of the disabled in this country.

25. His delegation supported the conclusions and recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report on policies and programmes involving youth (A/46/360) and took note of the valuable proposals concerning the strategy and timetable for the draft world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond. Unemployment was on the list of priority issues recommended by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa; that problem would soon reach alarming proportions in Africa failing significant improvement in the economic situation. To combat increasing and uncontrolled migration to urban areas and the attendant increase in demands for housing and social services, his country was endeavouring to improve the quality of life in rural areas so that the young people would remain. It was that very group which could play a particularly valuable role within the rural communities in the areas of hygiene, basic education, health and community programmes. The Declaration of the Heads of State and Government adopted at the World Summit for Children, had emphasized the importance of young people as partners in the effort to improve living conditions for children and carry out development programmes. The role of international and national youth organizations in the promotion and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was of particular importance. In that regard, his delegation was gratified that the Secretary-General had referred in his report to the role and contribution of a Kenyan youth association and would continue to provide support for the country's youth and encourage them to increase their participation in development activities.

26. As in most developing countries with a large rural population, care for the elderly depended on strong traditional family ties. That method had been successful with the exception of regions affected by the rural exodus, where the Kenyan Government had had to call upon non-governmental organizations and religious institutions to assist elderly persons whose younger relatives had migrated to the cities and were longer available to help. Aware of its primary responsibility to assist the elderly, his Government had continued to carry out family-support projects in urban and rural areas. It would endeavour to follow closely United Nations recommendations and guidelines in that field.

27. His delegation wished to express its satisfaction with the Secretary-General's report on the progress made in the preparations for the 1994 International Year of the Family (A/46/362). It associated itself fully with the recommendations contained therein and would shortly submit a report on Kenya's plans for celebrating the Year.

28. Mr. AL-HABASHI (Oman) said that his country attached particular importance to youth in the context of its policy for the development of human resources. Proof thereof was to be found in the many training establishments and centres created by the State to enable youth to participate in the

(Mr. Al-Habashi, Oman)

enlightenment of Oman society as well as in the substantial resources it had invested in the sector.

29. Concerning the aged, the social action of the Government of Oman was motivated by the Arab heritage and civilization and the spiritual values of Islam which advocated social solidarity and respect for the aged. In Oman society, the vast majority of the aged lived with their families. They nevertheless enjoyed social security, a pension system and a health insurance system. In addition, the families concerned could, with the help of the State, start commercial or industrial projects.

30. In regard to disabled persons, the Ministry of Social Affairs had, in 1980, introduced a specialized service responsible for looking after their welfare, their rehabilitation and integration in society. At the same time, the Sultanate was participating actively in international meetings and congresses and was guided in its activities by the international legal instruments adopted in that field

31. In addition, training programmes were continuing while working visits to friendly countries had been organized for the benefit of staff responsible for the rehabilitation of disabled persons and for making the population aware of the problem. In addition to providing artificial limbs to the indigent handicapped free of charge, the Government granted social coverage to 57 per cent of the families of such persons.

32. As regards health care, the use of the most modern therapeutic methods had made it possible to overcome many problems suffered by disabled persons. In the field of employment, national legislation stipulated that enterprises and institutions employing more than 50 persons must set aside 2 per cent of jobs for disabled persons. Moreover a wide-ranging study was currently under way with a view to determining the situation of disabled persons in the public service. Lastly, the authorities were employing all the media services to make the population aware of the potential of disabled persons and of means for preventing disablement with a view to developing positive attitudes towards such persons.

33. Mr. DANERI (Argentina) said that the growing economic interdependence and the political and economic upheavals which marked the current international situation had accentuated the serious contradictions which continued to exist between the growing prosperity of certain countries and the permanent erosion of the quality of life in most of the others.

34. As mankind was both the end and the means of development, it was an illusion to try to improve the economic conditions of human life without taking into account the political and social dimensions of the issue. His delegation considered that a world summit for social development, recommended in Economic and Social Council decision 1991/230, would represent one of the best means for undertaking an in-depth analysis of those questions.

(Mr. Daneri, Argentina)

35. The celebration of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the International Plan of Action on Ageing represented an opportunity to prepare guidelines on the issue and to draw up a balance of the progress made. His delegation welcomed the proposal for the preparation of a global action programme on ageing for 1992 and beyond as well as the creation of the Banyan Fund Association: A World Fund for Ageing.

36. The situation of young people, whose essential contribution to society it was unnecessary to recall, left much to be desired. The celebration of the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year, which coincided with the presentation of the World Youth Programme of Action towards the Year 2000 and Beyond, would enable the international community to promote strategies designed to improve the situation of youth. In that connection Argentina supported Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/11 for the creation of an open-ended ad hoc working group which would have the task of drawing up the draft programme of action on the matter.

37. Argentina attached great importance to the family as the basic unit of society and therefore to the preparation of the activities connected with the celebration of the International Year of the Family in 1994.

38. On the issue of disabled persons, his delegation greatly welcomed the preparations for the elaboration of a long-term strategy to the year 2000 and beyond and approved the principle of the new guidelines for the equalization of opportunities and the participation of disabled persons in society which would make it possible to establish a society for all by the year 2010.

39. Mr. STREJCZEK (Poland) emphasized that, for the past few years, the international community had become increasingly aware of the need to develop new approaches in order to find solutions for social problems. His delegation considered that, in the continuing restructuring of the United Nations, which retained an essential coordinating role at the international level, it would be desirable to make a single organ of the General Assembly responsible for the economic and social sectors, since it was clear that the issues in those two sectors could not be separated. It would therefore be particularly appropriate to deal with the world economic and social situation in a single report. That could provide an opportunity to analyse the impact of transition to a market economy and of related structural adjustment on social conditions.

40. In connection with preparations for the International Year of the Family, the idea for which had been put forward by Poland five years earlier, his delegation wished to inform the Committee that it was the President of Poland himself who would head the Polish Committee for the International Year of the Family. It considered that the commitment of the United Nations to support and coordinate measures designed to resolve the problems of families should lead to the creation at the national level of corresponding institutions which would have the responsibility for promoting the goals of the Year. It was to be hoped that the limited resources available would not prevent the Coordinator

(Mr. Strejczek, Poland)

for the International Year of the Family and his small secretariat from completing their mission.

41. His delegation also considered that the proposal for convening a world summit on social development was very interesting and hoped that it would lead to a fruitful exchange of views between Member States and non-governmental organizations in various United Nations bodies.

42. Mrs. BUTIKU (United Republic of Tanzania) recalled the noble objectives of the Declaration on Social Progress and Development (elimination of poverty, hunger and malnutrition, equitable income distribution, elimination of illiteracy, improvement of living conditions and realization of social justice, introduction of new international relations enabling every nation to have equal access to scientific and technological progress and to ensure the development of the human person) but stressed that 20 years after the adoption of that Declaration, the majority of developing countries, particularly in Africa, were in a state of extreme poverty which generated social tensions that could easily lead to chaos.

43. The changes which were currently turning the world's political scene upside down should make it possible to devote greater resources and effort to the promotion of progress and justice in the social field.

44. Her delegation believed that the concerted efforts of all Member States would produce positive results in that area. Social development required action at the national and international levels, through bilateral or regional cooperation and in the various forums provided by the United Nations system. Social development was closely related to economic development, since social progress was both an end in itself and a means of furthering economic development. Her delegation therefore supported the proposal to convene a world summit for social development, and was pleased that the Secretary-General had appointed a special representative to hold consultations on the subject. Since the special representative's recommendations and conclusions would undoubtedly be instructive, her delegation was prepared to cooperate fully.

45. Since young people represented the future of nations and had been the nucleus of all socio-economic and socio-political changes at every juncture of history, the Tanzanian Government sought to encourage rural development to stop the mass migration of young people to urban centres, where gainful employment had become increasingly hard to find. It tried to solve the problem of restlessness and unemployment among young people by encouraging them to undertake income-generating self-employment in the informal sector, and had introduced skills training in schools at the early levels to prepare young people for future self-reliance. Since education was seen as a principal vehicle for addressing the youth unemployment problem, her Government was investing heavily in education programmes.

(Mrs. Butiku, United
Republic of Tanzania)

46. Her delegation welcomed the progress made in the implementation of the World Programme of Action and the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. However, more could and should be done to realize the objectives established. Undoubtedly, the Decade had increased the international community's awareness of the problems of disabled persons, especially in the developing countries. However, the integration of the disabled into social, economic, political and cultural life was still just as important as it had been at the time of the Programme's adoption. Her Government believed in totally integrating the disabled into society without marginalizing them into special groups requiring special treatment. The equalization of opportunities for the disabled and efforts to ensure that no segment of society was forgotten, especially in time of need, must be emphasized.

47. In Tanzania, families still had basic responsibility for the elderly. However, in the absence of family support, the State and voluntary organizations cooperated to care for the elderly and would continue to do so.

48. All of those vulnerable groups constituted members of the family. She therefore hoped that the International Year of the Family would focus special attention on the specific difficulties faced by each member of the family unit.

49. The 1989 Report on the World Social Situation (E/CN.5/1989/2) stated that all citizens should enjoy equal access to public services and benefits and that resources should be distributed more equitably among regions and among social groups. Those principles underpinned the Tanzanian Government's approach to development at the family, village, regional and national levels. Tanzania sought to give individuals themselves, from the grass-roots level up, the opportunity to determine their own needs and priorities. Although its resources were limited, equity was the determining factor in their distribution.

50. The report also stated that a reduction of tensions in the world economy might be conducive to a major reduction in armaments, which would, in turn, make it possible to devote more resources to the promotion of social progress. Thus, some possibilities might be to write off bilateral public debts, to reduce interest rates, to reschedule debts owed to multilateral agencies and to increase the net flow of resources to developing countries. The report's content was not mere speculation, since the link between disarmament and development, repeatedly acknowledged at the United Nations Conference on Disarmament and, most recently, at the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, had gained universal acceptance. Her delegation therefore urged the international community to consider those proposals seriously and to implement them in order to promote social progress.

51. Ms. MUCAVI (Mozambique) said that the item under consideration was extremely important, since Member States and the entire international community were uniting their efforts to establish a social environment that would promote a better future for mankind. Her delegation appreciated the Secretary-General's very informative interim report on the world social situation (A/46/56-E/1991/6) and the analytical work being done within the United Nations system on improving quantitative and qualitative indicators on social conditions and standards of living (A/46/137-E/1991/40), since those indicators were especially important in precisely measuring the social conditions and standards of living in developing countries, particularly in Africa. Although those documents gave an overview of the role and activities of different United Nations bodies in the social field, she regretted that they did not adequately cover the specific problems of the developing countries, where the deterioration of the economic and social situation was still very alarming. In addition to their internal difficulties, such countries had to bear the burden of external debt and its consequences. Without adequate economic and financial resources, it was unlikely that Governments would be able to meet the basic needs of their populations in such areas as food, education and health care.

52. For its part, Mozambique continued to face enormous difficulties as a result of the war of destabilization which had ravaged the country for almost 16 years and had destroyed many social-service facilities and infrastructures. That situation, coupled with the devastating natural disasters of recent years, had made the current social situation more acute, affecting hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians and forcing them to abandon their homes to seek refuge elsewhere. Of the country's 15 million inhabitants, about 90 per cent lived under very difficult social conditions. According to the United Nations Children's Fund, about 200,000 children were in a situation of near-abandonment, and Mozambique's infant mortality rate was among the highest in the world, while its annual population growth rate was estimated at 2.6 per cent. The report also indicated that disabled persons constituted about 5 per cent of the country's population. In a situation of conflict exacerbated by adverse economic and social conditions, the disabled, along with children and the elderly, were among the groups most directly affected. If governmental organizations were to support the disabled, they must begin by studying the phenomenon of disability and the problems affecting disabled persons, and must then define a policy for caring for such persons and ensuring them full enjoyment of their rights. Since the same applied to elderly persons, Mozambique had begun an evaluation process on their situation and their major needs. Efforts had also been made to mobilize community resources and to promote public education to increase awareness of the needs of those social groups and of possibilities for integrating them into society.

53. It was in that framework that her Government had set up a Department of State for Social Affairs, mandated to elaborate policies for the promotion of a national social security system which would protect the disadvantaged and guarantee rehabilitation of the disabled. Mozambique had also adopted economic and social policies for the needy aimed at alleviating the burden of

(Ms. Mucavi, Mozambique)

the high cost of living, which was a direct consequence of the structural adjustment measures introduced in 1987. It would continue to provide food subsidies and health care for the majority of the population and to guarantee free access to education.

54. Her Government was committed to achieving a peaceful settlement of the conflict which was largely responsible for the appalling situation in her country. After a relatively long interval, negotiations between the Government and RENAMO had resumed in September in Rome with encouraging results. The two sides had finally agreed to begin negotiations on matters of substance, including a cease-fire.

55. Since financial and material resources were vital to the implementation of policies to protect vulnerable groups, her delegation expressed its profound gratitude for the assistance that had been provided by friendly countries, governmental and non-governmental organizations and the United Nations.

56. Mr. SHOMAKHI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that it was at the initiative of his country that the International Year of the Disabled Persons had been celebrated in 1991, thereby raising awareness of the needs of those persons who, as members of society, had the same rights as others and represented a valuable resource for development. As part of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1993), many countries had established national committees to encourage national initiatives and make the public more sensitive to the concerns of disabled persons, in an effort to realize the three objectives of the World Programme of Action: protection, rehabilitation and equality of opportunity.

57. Nevertheless, the interest aroused by the issue in 1981 had faded, as demonstrated by the decrease in the number of national committees and the diminution of efforts to achieve the Decade's objectives. The international community must, therefore, turn its attention once again to that task.

58. In that connection, his delegation stressed the need to implement resolution 42/58, in which the General Assembly had recommended the establishment of national disability committees, bearing in mind the guidelines in that field, to which he wished to draw the attention of Member States and governmental and non-governmental organizations.

59. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya welcomed the convening in 1992 in Vancouver, Canada, of an Expert Group Meeting for a Long-Term Strategy to End of the Year 2000 and Beyond, in order to implement the World Programme of Action beyond the Decade.

60. At the same time it reaffirmed the need to implement General Assembly resolution 45/91, which called for a shift from raising public awareness to the establishment of a society for all by the year 2000.

(Mr. Shomakhi, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

61. His delegation wished to call attention to the other vulnerable groups in society: women, children and the elderly, which represented a large percentage of the population in every society. It attached particular importance to efforts in favour of those groups, in particular efforts to promote the transfer of skills, which would help countries develop their own action plans and rehabilitation programmes. In that connection, it commended the role played by the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Disabled Persons and welcomed the implementation of the objectives of the World Programme of Action (A/46/366). It believed that the Fund's mandate should continue after the end of the Decade in 1992. It urged Member States and governmental and non-governmental organizations to contribute to the Fund so that it could meet the growing demands of the developing countries.

62. Drawing its inspiration from the noble principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, his Government had in 1981 promulgated Act No. 3 which specified the allowances and benefits to which disabled persons were entitled, in areas such as housing, education, employment, tax exemptions, and access to public transport, in order to ensure their social and professional integration.

63. That text had been supplemented by Act No. 5, promulgated in 1987, which specified the protection modalities, defined the various categories of disability and the benefits to which each category was entitled and identified the role played by the rehabilitation centres.

64. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, which had a large number of people disabled by explosives and minefields remaining from the Second World War, planned to adopt measures to assist that group.

65. His delegation commended the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs in Vienna for its efforts, in spite of its limited resources, to implement the World Programme of Action. It also thanked the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Promotion of the United Nations Decade for Disabled Persons, who had taken effective action to mobilize funds. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya was in favour of strengthening the Centre so that it could successfully carry out its mandate.

OTHER MATTERS

66. The CHAIRMAN said that he had received a response from the Secretariat to the question raised by Austria concerning Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/16 adopted on 30 May 1991 in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to add specific recommendations, within the overall level of budget of the Organization, to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 to strengthen and rationalize the resources of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs in order to enable it better to fulfil its mandates and carry out its activities in the social and related fields and for the advancement of women.

(The Chairman)

67. The Secretariat stated in its reply (1) that the Secretary-General had provided a statement of programme budget implications and had indicated that the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 had already been formulated and submitted by the Secretary-General and that it would not be possible to give effect to the request contained in the draft resolution, which would appear to deal with administrative and budgetary matters which fell within the purview of the Fifth Committee; (2) that the position of the Secretary-General on the matter had not changed. The proposals concerning social development and humanitarian affairs, including the advancement of women, appeared in section 21 of the programme budget, and had been submitted to the Fifth Committee, together with the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC). It had never been envisaged that an additional report could be given to the General Assembly on the question; (3) that CPC had discussed the resolution in its report (A/46/16, para. 293); (4) that the assurance given by the Secretariat and reflected in the conclusions and recommendations of CPC (para. 294) referred to another report requested by the General Assembly in its decision 45/428, relating to the situation of the African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, and all other autonomous institutes. That report would be submitted to the Third Committee under item 94(b); (5) that should the Third Committee, upon consideration of the report on autonomous institutes, adopt a resolution with administrative and financial implications, a statement on programme budget implications would be submitted to the Third Committee and then to the Fifth Committee.

68. The General Assembly in its resolution 45/248 had expressed concern at the tendency of its Substantive Committees and other intergovernmental bodies to involve themselves in administrative and budgetary matters. At the same time, the questions raised by the Austrian delegation were legitimate, since policies and resources questions could not be separated because they were mutually dependent.

69. Paragraph 28 of the draft resolution submitted by Ghana (A/C.3/46/L.15) might offer a solution, since it provided in effect that the General Assembly should request the Fifth Committee to examine with particular care the proposed programme budget of the Secretary-General as it concerned the programme on the advancement of women. Should the Third Committee adopt the draft resolution, he could transmit it to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee prior to consideration of the report of the Third Committee in the plenary meeting and prior to consideration by the Fifth Committee of the relevant section of the proposed programme budget. The Fifth Committee would thus be informed of the particular concern of another main committee of the General Assembly.

70. Mr. KRENKEL (Austria) took note of the statement that the Chairman had just read out, while expressing surprise that a representative of the Secretariat had not come in person to present it to the Third Committee. It

(Mr. Krenkel, Austria)

was not an acceptable answer to the questions raised by his delegation and the other sponsors of resolution 1991/16. Careful study of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993 had shown that the Secretariat had done nothing to meet the request contained in the Council's resolution, which had been adopted by consensus. The Secretariat's statement that it had never been envisaged that an additional report could be given to the General Assembly was tantamount to deliberate disregard of the wishes of Member States and the Economic and Social Council, and that was unacceptable. Austria requested the Chairman to inform the President of the General Assembly of the situation and to ask him to look into the question with the Secretary-General in order to remedy it. It also asked the Chairman to inform the Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs and Secretariat Services, who was responsible for the statement. Austria urged that the proposals should be submitted to the Fifth Committee under section 21 of the proposed programme budget; since all the countries represented on the Third Committee were also represented on the Fifth Committee, there should be no problem in the proposals being submitted only to the Fifth Committee. His delegation would follow developments closely and reserved the right to speak again on the matter in the Fifth Committee.

71. Mr. MORA GODOY (Cuba) said that, since many representatives were not financial experts and did not understand all the workings of the Secretariat and the Third Committee, it would be helpful if they could have a copy of the Secretariat statement so that the Committee could decide what to do.

72. The CHAIRMAN said that he would do his best to have the Secretariat statement circulated to the members of the Committee; he therefore proposed, if the Austrian delegation had no objection, to take no action until the Committee had taken a decision in the matter.

73. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.