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Chairman: Mr. Cissé (Senegal)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 95: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD
SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY
(continued)

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 95: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (continued) (A/49/24 and Add.1, A/49/213, A/49/204-E/1994/90, A/49/205-E/1994/91, A/49/287-S/1994/894, A/49/294, A/49/307-S/1994/958, A/49/381, A/49/422-S/1994/1086, A/49/434, A/49/435, A/49/462 and Corr.1; A/C.3/49/4)

1. Mr. MARUYAMA (Japan) said his delegation wished to reaffirm, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Declaration on Social Progress and Development, that the international community should work for both social progress and economic development, in order to fulfil human aspirations and ensure human dignity and security. Despite the social progress that had been achieved, recent changes had often had the most serious effect on the most vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, the elderly and children. In the context of the preparations for the World Summit for Social Development, Japan had championed the causes of achieving social justice, meeting basic human needs, developing human resources and promoting human rights. He hoped the summit would produce a consensus on how to achieve those objectives and begin a constructive dialogue between developed and developing countries. It should also emphasize the importance of giving special attention to African countries, the least developed countries and countries in transition, as well as the importance and effectiveness of South-South cooperation among developing countries in the interest of sustainable social development.

2. Japan firmly believed that the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities was essential for the mobilization of human resources and the improved integration of socially marginalized groups. It therefore welcomed the adoption by the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, and hoped that a greater number of Member States would reaffirm their moral and political commitment to respecting those rules. At the national level, long-term programmes for the disabled, formulated in 1982 and retargeted in 1987, had been re-evaluated and revised in 1993 to meet changing needs in the areas of public awareness, education, employment, health, welfare, environment, sports and arts, and international cooperation. At the international level, his Government had contributed \$100,000 to the United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability earlier in 1994. During the current discussion on the draft declaration and programme of action in preparation for the World Summit for Social Development, Japan was campaigning, along with numerous States and non-governmental organizations, for awareness of the goals of full integration of persons with disabilities in social development, and equal opportunities.

3. Japanese society was ageing rapidly; the Japanese Government consequently attached particular importance to international efforts to create both a conceptual framework and practical guidelines, which would be helpful in addressing that challenge. He also welcomed the initiatives taken by the General Assembly to further the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing of 1982, as well as other aspects of the United Nations

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programme on ageing such as the adoption of the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, the global targets on ageing for the year 2001, and the Proclamation on Ageing, which would promote new opportunities for the elderly and foster recognition of the benefits that flowed to society from the ageing of the population. Japan encouraged the early commencement by the international community of preparations for the International Year of Older Persons in 1999.

4. Differentiated approaches should be devised to address the needs of socially vulnerable groups such as the disabled, the elderly and youth. In every instance, however, the emphasis should be on equal participation, improvement of human rights conditions, and empowerment. Recognizing that the year 1995 would mark the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year, his Government was of the view that the anniversary and the World Youth Programme of Action to the Year 2000 and Beyond to be adopted on that occasion would provide a unique opportunity to rediscover the potential of youth in a proper political, economic and social environment. Countries should ensure that youth was fully integrated into development. His delegation wished to stress the importance of equal access to education and better employment opportunities for young people, in a spirit of gender equality and tolerance of diversity. Protecting youth from drugs, crime, hunger, malnutrition, disease and poverty should be a foremost goal for all countries; that was in the interest of the young and also of the societies in which they lived.

5. The World Summit for Social Development should be a forum for revitalizing the international community's discussion in the social field, for providing momentum to the formulation and implementation of national policies, plans and programmes, and for coordinating the efforts of all social entities in favour of sustainable social development.

6. Mrs. MASKEY (Nepal) said that, while social development was the primary responsibility of Governments, the international community also had an obligation to help with endeavours to alleviate poverty. It was regrettable that the peace dividend which had been hoped for with the end of the cold war, and the economic prosperity which was expected to go with it, had not materialized. She welcomed the forthcoming World Summit for Social Development and Fourth World Conference on Women, and hoped that they would help to alleviate the effects of poverty and give a new impetus to efforts to increase women's participation in development activities and the decision-making process. The identification of poverty, unemployment and social disintegration as core issues for the World Summit was especially welcome; poverty was still rampant in most developing countries, particularly in the least developed and land-locked States. The situation of developing countries, particularly African countries, should be given special attention by the international community. Human respect and dignity could be restored among the poor on the basis of the principles of the right to development and social justice. A people-centred approach to development needed to be promoted. In that respect, Governments, the United Nations system, the international community, private entrepreneurs, non-governmental organizations and cooperatives should be mobilized. Above all, there should be an increased participation of women. The generation of employment opportunities was the most effective way to combat poverty, provided

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that wage levels were sufficiently high. The Nepalese Government had set up a national committee to prepare for the World Summit, and was participating actively in the preparations for the Summit. Its efforts to combat poverty and encourage social development, which included the allocation of more than 20 per cent of its budget to the social development sector, were none the less hampered by illiteracy, ignorance and the caste system.

7. The International Year of Disabled Persons and the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 37/52, had greatly contributed to devising the programmes to give disabled persons the same opportunities as other citizens. In Nepal, many of the disabilities were caused by lack of immunization for all, malnutrition, industrial accidents or natural disasters. To improve the conditions of the disabled, a national committee on disability had been set up. In each district, the Government had established a committee for special education, providing support to schools which educated persons with different types of disabilities. Many non-governmental organizations were supporting the Government's efforts. Great numbers of children in Nepal were still deprived of primary health care and basic education because they were obliged to work in order to help their parents or support their families. To alleviate that problem, the Government had made education free up to the beginning of secondary school, and enacted various regulations condemning the use of child labour and guaranteeing children's rights. The Nepalese Constitution of 1990 also guaranteed equal opportunities to all, irrespective of race, sex, language or religion. The Government had restored human rights and fundamental freedoms in the country, and was fully engaged in improving the living conditions of marginalized sections of society by providing services such as health and sanitation, safe drinking water, education and food security.

8. Miss REIMER (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the Danish Youth Council and as youth representative on the Danish delegation to the General Assembly, noted that 1995 would be the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year. Those prospects, along with the World Summit for Social Development to take place in Copenhagen in March 1995, had aroused great expectations. Just as children hoped for presents on their birthday - although, sadly, many had nothing to look forward to but fear, insecurity and disappointment - she would express a few wishes in the name of all the children and youth of the world: that the 18 countries which had not yet ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child should do so; that the system for monitoring the Convention on the Rights of the Child should be strengthened by empowering the Committee to receive and consider complaints and by mandating a special rapporteur to make inspections in the countries concerned; that the Copenhagen Summit should see a breakthrough for sustainable human development in the fight against poverty; and finally, that all Member States should decide to send youth representatives to the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

9. Her delegation felt that the time had come to focus attention on children and young people, who were only asking for a fair start in life. It was possible to create a world in which children would not have to live in fear, in

which they would feel secure and could have faith in the future. Those, in fact, had been the intentions of the General Assembly when they had adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989. She was very pleased to note that 166 countries had already ratified the Convention.

10. However, five years had elapsed since the adoption of the Convention and there were still indications of serious violations of children's rights. In addition, the Committee monitoring the implementation of the Convention was overloaded with work, because the very number of ratifications had resulted in a host of reports for consideration. The monitoring mechanism needed to be strengthened in order to give the Convention a chance to become the powerful instrument it was meant to be. She welcomed the recent decision by the States Parties to the Convention to increase the annual number of Committee meeting sessions from two to three. However, additional measures were needed. The Committee should be empowered to receive and consider complaints from individuals or groups who claimed that their rights under the Convention had been violated. A similar system was in use, for instance, in connection with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Her delegation also suggested that the Commission on Human Rights should appoint a special rapporteur to supplement the Committee's work. The special rapporteur would monitor respect for the fundamental rights of children by making inspections in all countries, whether or not they were parties to the Convention and whether or not they had accepted the right of individuals to bring complaints.

11. Turning to the subject of poverty, she noted that poverty had many faces, from those who struggled for daily survival to those who found themselves out of work and unable to support themselves and their families. She stressed that every child had the right to adequate food, clean water, good housing, reliable health care and, last but not least, a basic education. That dream seemed unlikely to come true as long as everyday life for the people of the world was determined by policies narrowly focused on economic growth, trade and development assistance. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were continuing to assist Governments in implementing structural adjustment programmes; although they had recently agreed to take social consequences into account in their programmes, they need to intensify their efforts in that direction.

12. She recalled that in 1993, UNDP had declared that poverty had its greatest impact on children and was a denial of future generations and that in most developing countries, poverty was often caused less by a shortage of resources than by their uneven distribution. The obvious and difficult challenge was to redistribute the world's resources in an appropriate way, both within countries and between them. She was pleased that the United Nations had accepted the challenge by organizing the World Summit on Social Development.

13. Danish youth were very enthusiastic about those new prospects for sustainable human development. They would do everything they could to help realize them. Non-governmental youth organizations had already planned many

activities to take place along with the Summit. But that enthusiasm could easily turn to bitter disappointment, if Member States did not feel a responsibility to apply the new approach to the struggle against poverty. She hoped that the Summit in Copenhagen would mark the start of a new era, because poverty anywhere was a threat to prosperity everywhere.

14. Her delegation welcomed the proposed world youth programme of action to the year 2000 and beyond as an attempt to create a coherent youth policy within the United Nations system. Regrettably, children and young people were not participating enough in that process. In 1993, the youth representative from Denmark had asked for more youth representation at the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly. Only three nations had heeded her appeal. The celebration of the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year and the plenary meeting of the General Assembly on youth issues would make sense only if young people chosen by young people were participating.

15. Ms. CHEN Wangxia (China) said that, although the end of the cold war had raised hopes for economic prosperity, the present era was beset by a host of social ills: poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, population explosion, refugees, illegal immigration, drug trafficking, crime and unfair treatment of segments of society such as women, children and the disabled. All countries were increasingly demanding that international cooperation should be strengthened in order to resolve those problems. Since the Charter had assigned to the United Nations the task of promoting economic and social development, it was expected that the Organization would focus its main efforts on developing countries, which encompassed the majority of the world's population. The differences among States, however, had resulted in the emergence of different social problems, which called for the adoption of different priorities, policies and measures. Therefore, in order to be effective and equitable, international cooperation should be applied on the basis of mutual respect and benefit, without politicizing the problems of economic and social development and without strings attached.

16. Her delegation was encouraged that the international community had been according greater importance to such problems, as demonstrated by the many international conferences devoted to them. She hoped that developed countries would make greater commitments in the field of social development and that the United Nations would do more in that area, particularly for third world countries.

17. She welcomed the upcoming World Summit for Social Development as a significant event in that field. The Chinese Government had actively participated in the preparations and would contribute wholeheartedly. Her delegation felt that addressing the three core issues of the Summit would have a decisive impact on sustainable development. The most important of the three, the alleviation and reduction of poverty, was the key to enabling human beings to enjoy the means of subsistence and the benefits of development. While advocating that different countries should have the right to choose different development strategies, her delegation emphasized the need to strengthen international cooperation and to enhance the role of the United Nations. It

called upon the international community to provide more financial and technical assistance to developing countries.

18. On the occasion of the World Summit, China had organized a series of important events. It had held a national working conference on social development and formulated an outline programme for national development for the period 1996-2010. It had also organized the first large-scale exhibition on social development achievements from 24 to 29 September 1994, involving 30 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities and over 20 ministries of the central Government. It held an international symposium on social development in Beijing from 7 to 9 October 1994, which had considered issues such as the eradication of poverty, the role of Governments, and norms and methods for measuring social development. It had produced and submitted to the United Nations a national report on China's social development. Furthermore, the Chinese preparatory committee for the World Summit had done extensive publicity work in China to familiarize people with the Summit and to encourage them to participate actively in the work of social development.

19. With respect to youth, the Chinese delegation recalled that since the proclamation of International Youth Year in 1985 the international community and individual countries had, under the themes "participation, development and peace", drawn up comparable policies and plans for youth and initiated various activities which had produced results. The Chinese delegation had studied the Secretary-General's report (A/49/434). It believed that the draft world youth programme of action was an important measure for promoting work in that field. The draft world youth programme was very significant as it had a bearing on several billion young people in the world and on their future. The Programme should clearly point out that the new post-cold-war situation had created hopes as well as new problems for young people. It should carry out in-depth analysis of the various problems and ills of present-day societies and the way they affected the youth of all countries and, in particular, the serious consequences they had entailed for developing countries. It should draw on the results of recent international conferences in order to propose guidelines and recommendations that were factual, reflective of the specific needs of youth and practical.

20. For the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year, China had established a coordination group for celebration activities. The group had already drafted programmes, including extensive international exchanges, which would enable young people to play a greater role in solving contemporary problems and to be prepared to face the difficult tasks of the next century.

21. With respect to the disabled, in order to achieve the goal of participation by all in society by the year 2000, it was imperative that the international community should reach consensus on the need for full participation by the disabled in society. The Chinese delegation was happy to note that several recent important international conferences had all incorporated into their agenda the realization of the equal rights of disabled persons and their full participation and had proposed measures and recommendations in their programmes of action. The specialized agencies of the United Nations system, regional

commissions and organizations also encouraged and supported the participation of disabled persons in their respective programmes.

22. In that connection, she mentioned the sixth Olympiad for Disabled Persons of the Far East and South Pacific Regions, which had been held in Beijing in early September 1994. Over 2,000 athletes, coaches and officials and over 1,300 journalists from 42 countries and regions had attended the event. Over 30,000 Chinese volunteers had contributed to an event which had no precedent in the history of the Olympic Games in terms of scale and number of participants. Under the slogan "Equality, participation, friendship and progress", the games had allowed disabled people to show their will, their power and their strength and by so doing to demonstrate forcefully the significance of the participation of disabled persons in society. The Chinese Government and people would continue to make contributions to the cause of the disabled persons of the world.

23. Mr. PALLAIS ARANA (Nicaragua), speaking also on behalf of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama, noted that the 1990s had been a turning-point in the history of Central America. Its Governments, conscious of the poverty rife in the region and the danger to the future which it represented, had committed themselves to transforming Central America into a region of peace, liberty, democracy and sustainable development.

24. To that end, they had adopted two great principles - human development and Central American solidarity - as pillars of a policy of economic growth with social equity. The main strategies of the policy must be food and nutrition security and transformation of the system of production. The social and economic policies to be elaborated around those strategies would contribute to the development of production and the broadening of the internal market and opportunities for employment, within a legal framework which would guarantee respect for human rights and eliminate the structural and collateral factors which lay at the root of violence. Just as the region had found the road to peace, it should also demonstrate its creativity in finding a way towards sustainable growth, by establishing a regional platform that would clearly define the type of society to which it aspired and that would serve as a foundation for coordination, harmonization of efforts and harnessing of resources.

25. As the Governments of the region had stated it was necessary to adopt new and integrated policies in order to satisfy the population's basic needs in the short term and to create conditions which would allow families and communities to participate in the development process. One way of doing that would be to provide training programmes. The Governments of the region wished to present to their people, to friendly Governments and to cooperating and international agencies a strategy, a platform and a goal, as part of a new process for national and regional development. That process rested on five essential points - equity, stability, self-sufficiency, productivity and sustainability.

26. The concept of equity meant ensuring a sustainable balance through the just distribution of goods, services and opportunities according to the needs, rights

and responsibilities of individuals. The concept of productivity meant producing efficiently and effectively goods, services and factors which contributed to the improvement of the quality of life. The concept of self-sufficiency entailed countries of the region gradually acquiring the means to satisfy the population's basic requirements, while absorbing any changes that might take place at national and regional level. The notion of stability concerned the capacity for managing variables inside and outside the region within the framework of globalization. Lastly, sustainability could be defined as the regional capacity to use and produce resources of all kinds through established methods and processes, while retaining the ability to evolve in accordance with the social dynamics.

27. From that perspective, the principle of human development, the goal of reducing poverty and the strategy of food and nutrition security aimed to consolidate an order of well-being and economic and social justice for Central America. To that end, the Governments of the region had proposed the common aim of sustained reduction of the regional rate of poverty by at least 2 per cent a year, which would be feasible if they addressed themselves at the same time to the collateral effects and the structural causes of poverty. They continued to adopt practical means for implementing the agreed strategy, platform and goals.

28. During the Ecological Summit for Sustainable Development, held at Managua, Nicaragua, the week before, the Central American Presidents and the Prime Minister of Belize had adopted an instrument establishing an alliance for sustainable development, which contained a regional strategy for coordination and consultation. Its principal objectives were: the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women; the reduction of the number of persons living in extreme poverty; the reintegration of refugees and displaced persons into a secure and stable Central America; the inclusion of the criteria of subsidiarity, community solidarity, reciprocity and self-management in poverty eradication policies, and human development on a priority basis.

29. Similarly, the International Conference for Peace and Development in Central America, to be held at Tegucigalpa, Honduras, in October 1994, would provide an occasion for Central American leaders to engage in debate with representatives of Central American civil society and the international community on the new agenda for the future of Central America, an integrated sustainable development strategy based on the consolidation of peace, the affirmation of democracy, social and economic development and environmental preservation. The Conference should also provide an opportunity for relaunching the dialogue on the Central American isthmus.

30. Those two meetings should enable the Central American countries to define the platform they planned to present at the forthcoming Summit of the Americas, to be held at Miami in December 1994, and at the World Summit for Social Development, to be held at Copenhagen in March 1995. The Central American countries expected new commitments to be undertaken at Miami concerning trade liberalization, flexibility in immigration policies, support for poverty eradication programmes and capacity-building efforts. At the World Summit, they would describe the experience they had acquired in implementing programmes to

ensure the transition from a phase of conflict to a phase of development. That experience was reflected in the declaration of commitments to displaced populations and those affected by conflict or extreme poverty, adopted by the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA), held at Mexico City, Mexico, in June 1994.

31. The Central American countries were convinced that the stage of armed conflict had passed and that they must now respond to the challenge of development. Social problems, made more acute by the implementation of tough structural adjustment programmes, the net transfer of resources and the external debt burden, were a time bomb. In that connection, the World Summit for Social Development would afford a unique opportunity to formulate proposals and establish a broad consensus around the idea that social development must become a fundamental element in the consolidation of peace. The Central American countries hoped that, during its next sessions, the Preparatory Committee would adopt a political declaration calling on the members of the international community to assume responsibility for fulfilling the objectives of the World Summit and an action plan outlining specific measures for narrowing the huge gap between North and South.

32. Mr. ALDOSARI (Bahrain) said that social development should bring about lasting progress and an integral part of overall development, a precondition for peace among peoples. As societies were increasingly destabilized by disparities between different parts of the world, it was becoming urgent to address the root causes of social problems. The economic crisis, which had direct repercussions on social development, must also be brought under control.

33. Development policies and programmes should focus on the most disadvantaged categories and seek to increase the production capacity of the poor. His delegation believed that the international community must discharge its responsibilities with regard to food security and thereby help to eliminate poverty, reduce differences in living standards and satisfy social needs. Social services had a decisive role to play in that connection. Policies to control unemployment and create jobs should enable all members of society to participate in economic and social development.

34. As for social integration, encouragement must be given to any initiative to strengthen solidarity among the different sectors of society and ensure social cohesion, while respecting the values peculiar to each society. In that connection, programmes for the family - the basic unit which ensured the economic and social protection of youth, the elderly and the disabled - were vital.

35. His delegation hoped that the World Summit for Social Development would help to mobilize efforts for development and socio-economic progress. It also hoped that the positions stated during the preparatory meetings would give participants a clear picture of the problems. That should facilitate the elaboration of a programme of work for the Summit and of the final declaration to be adopted at Copenhagen.

36. Mr. WOIE (Norway), recalling that the General Assembly had in its resolution 47/85 invited Governments to include more youth representatives in their delegations to the General Assembly, expressed the hope that the number of youth representatives participating in the debates of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly would be greater than it had been during the current session. The world programme of action for youth towards the year 2000 and beyond should be included in the agenda of the fiftieth session. In accordance with resolution 45/103, a plenary meeting of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly should be devoted to the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year. His delegation hoped that, as proposed by the Secretary-General in his report on policies and programmes involving youth (A/49/434), the General Assembly would allot sufficient time for consideration of the topic of youth.

37. As a result of a General Assembly initiative, the Youth Forum of the United Nations system, held at Vienna in 1991, had brought together 150 representatives of national, regional and international non-governmental organizations for youth and agencies of the United Nations. The next meeting of Youth Forum would be held in 1996; thereafter, the Forum would meet biennially.

38. While youth lacked diplomatic skills, experience and respect for formal procedures, they did have the necessary enthusiasm, open-mindedness and creativity to confront problems; a dialogue with youth would not only create a new dynamic in the entire United Nations community but would also enable large groups of the population to participate in decision-making processes all over the world. The International Conference on Population and Development, held at Cairo, had stressed the importance of youth participation in controlling population growth. Its Programme of Action highlighted the link between the lack of education among young women in many countries and world population growth.

39. He pointed to a disturbing current trend, namely young people's lack of confidence in the established political system, which they no longer viewed as capable of guaranteeing their job security and access to education. That discouraged them from making use of their democratic rights. Uncertainty about their future, coupled with their lack of influence all over the world often left young persons indifferent or plunged them into despair. Those problems could be overcome if they were given an opportunity to participate in society and in the development of the world.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

40. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee would resume its debate on agenda item 95 on 31 October and 1 November following the negotiations to be held by the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit for Social Development. In view of the number of delegations wishing to speak on the question, the Committee would devote an additional meeting to consideration of that item. The time and date of that meeting would be announced shortly.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.