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Chairman: Mr. Cissé (Senegal)

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

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The meeting was called to order at 10.35 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/49/204-E/1994/90, A/49/205-E/1994/91, A/49/213, A/49/287-S/1994/894 and Corr.1, A/49/294, A/49/307-S/1994/958, A/49/381, A/49/422-S/1994/1086, A/49/434, 435, 462 and Corr.1, and 506; A/C.3/49/4/Rev.1)

1. Mr. STEFANOV (Bulgaria) said that his delegation welcomed the decision to convene the World Summit for Social Development, to be held in Copenhagen in March 1995, and believed that it should adopt specific goals and actions in its final documents. Much preparatory work remained to be done and concerted efforts by Member States were indispensable in order to complete the drafting exercise at the third session of the Preparatory Committee. The draft declaration and draft programme of action were interrelated: the draft programme of action should clearly specify ways to achieve the goals laid down in the draft declaration and should include specific international and regional initiatives for drawing up national plans and programmes and evaluating the overall role of the United Nations system in carrying out the actions proposed. The draft programme of action should, in particular, set forth practical measures to ensure that the decisions adopted at the World Summit were followed up.

2. The social aspects of reform in countries, like Bulgaria, which had undertaken a radical transformation towards a free-market economy were becoming increasingly important. While the prime responsibility for the success of the transition lay with the Governments and peoples of the countries concerned, the magnitude of the reform was such that significant international support was necessary. Bulgaria was confident that the United Nations and related organizations would continue to facilitate the access of those countries to major markets.

3. In the past several years, his country had made considerable progress towards establishing the legal basis for a market economy and consolidating democratic institutions. Appropriate measures had been taken to bring the overall functioning of the economy and trade policy into compliance with international rules and practice. Nevertheless, those efforts were being seriously undermined by the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, which had closed Bulgaria's traditional route to the markets of Western Europe. His Government's strict implementation of the sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had resulted in heavy economic losses and placed severe pressure on social spending. Despite the introduction of social safety measures, growing unemployment had become a major issue. The deteriorating living standards of a significant part of the population could harm economic and political reforms.

4. In the general environment of economic liberalization, his Government was implementing a number of special-assistance programmes for vulnerable groups such as the disabled, the elderly and unemployed youth. Long-term programmes

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had been adopted at the municipal level to prevent disabilities, promote rehabilitation and equalization of opportunities and provide information and education to the disabled. The role of national non-governmental organizations was particularly important. Bulgaria had also taken special measures to provide social protection to elderly persons and was doing its best to address their needs and create good conditions for retired people.

5. His country was actively participating in observing the International Year of the Family. A national coordinating committee was responsible for preparing, monitoring and following up activities for the Year. Measures to address the needs of young families, many of which were severely affected by housing shortages and unemployment, were being carried out by governmental bodies and a number of national non-governmental organizations.

6. Ms. WHITE (Canada) stressed the need to rethink the current approach to social development. Something was amiss when conventional economic indicators were positive but unemployment and poverty were on the rise. High levels of poverty and unemployment increased the danger of social conflict. A comprehensive approach was necessary in order to improve social, economic and environmental factors in any development strategy. In order to ensure peace and stability, investing in people must be at least as important as investing in military hardware. That message should emerge clearly at the World Summit for Social Development. The Summit should also recognize the dignity and potential of people living in poverty. The draft declaration should stress that people who lived in poverty were quite capable of finding solutions to their problems when given the means to do so.

7. The issue of gender equality and equity must also be one of the major messages to emerge from the World Summit. Moreover, good governance, respect for human rights, sound monetary and fiscal management, open trading systems and enhanced access to markets were essential for creating an environment conducive to development.

8. Most countries, including Canada, were searching for new ways to create jobs, reduce poverty and prevent social disintegration. The World Summit would be a catalyst in that regard. The issue of unemployment, in particular, should be given greater attention in the draft programme of action. The World Summit must also make a strong plea for a global partnership. With increasing demands for available funds, the need to pool resources and talents became even more apparent. Other concepts such as sustainable livelihood and sustainable human development should be further exploited.

9. During the International Year of the Family, the celebration across Canada of the strength and value of family ties was a manifestation of a deep-rooted public awareness of the need to ensure the well-being of families. That attitude would last long after the official celebrations were over. Canada placed high priority on ensuring that elderly persons had the opportunity to live productive, independent and dignified lives and sought to ensure them income security, access to high-quality health care and social services, and safe and affordable housing. Following the World Summit for Children, her

Government had implemented programmes focusing on poverty alleviation and the promotion and protection of children's rights. The Canadian International Development Agency supported programmes in developing countries, spending about \$1 million per day on children.

10. The United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons had promoted considerable progress in dealing with issues of concern to persons with disabilities in her country. The recent Commonwealth Games in Canada had given new meaning to the concept of equality and integration. It was important for all countries to monitor the implementation of the Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. The appointment of the Special Rapporteur for the Standard Rules demonstrated the leadership by the United Nations in that field and should lead to new and creative approaches to dealing with disability issues.

11. Mr. MONGBE (Benin) stressed the need to take stock of what had been achieved and assess what remained to be done in preparing for the World Summit for Social Development. He noted with satisfaction that the draft declaration contained most of the elements for a consolidated text to serve as a basis for negotiation at the next session of the Preparatory Committee.

12. His delegation welcomed the structure of the draft declaration and programme of action, which embodied a people-centred approach to development and a commitment to international cooperation with emphasis on Africa and the least developed countries. To be acceptable to all, however, the draft declaration should refer clearly to the moral duty of all States to give full attention to the social dimension of development; and should also call for the advancement of rural women in developing countries, particularly in Africa, the integration of the activities of the informal sector into a structured economic framework, the mobilization of financial resources, and international cooperation based on partnership. With regard to the draft programme of action, the Secretariat should prepare a detailed cost estimate by January 1995, together with reliable data on the different types of poverty for use by States.

13. Due attention should also be given in the draft programme to institutional matters at all levels. At the international level, for instance, the work of the Commission for Social Development should be revitalized on the basis of the results of the Summit. On the question of resources, implementation of the concept of "20/20" - as discussed in the draft programme of action in document A/CONF.166/PC/L.13, sect. V.E - under which 20 per cent of developing countries' domestic budget and 20 per cent of donor countries' development assistance would be allocated to human development, would greatly increase the resources available for social development.

14. He welcomed the adoption of the subject of poverty as one of the main themes for the World Summit. Measures in favour of the elderly, too, were of vital importance. African countries considered the elderly as a precious component of society. The Summit should also take full account of the needs and contributions of persons with disabilities. Lastly, recalling that 1994 was the

International Year of the Family, he welcomed the activities of the United Nations and related organizations in that celebration.

15. Mr. STOIAN (Romania) noted that, after the end of the cold war, the international community had rediscovered the importance of social development in the context of new socio-political realities. Peace, stability, democracy, human rights, economic development and social progress were closely linked, and must be taken into account in the interest of genuine international cooperation and improvement of the standards of living of all members of society. Each country had to find its own solutions to such problems as poverty and unemployment through well-defined and viable policies in a context of sustainable, people-centred development, that took account of the most vulnerable elements of society. Social development should emphasize social integration through measures in the fields of health, education and training. The World Summit should define a new global social covenant and lay down guidelines for its implementation.

16. The World Summit should give a new impetus to social policy, regardless of each country's level of development. Industrialized nations needed to adapt to new realities; countries with economies in transition had to harmonize social imperatives with the cost of economic reform; and in developing countries, economic growth and the establishment of adequate social conditions were indispensable for reducing poverty. The Summit should study the correlation between social, economic and political dimensions; there could be no sustainable development without peace, nor peace without development.

17. The entire United Nations system should redefine its social development role through its institutions. Closer cooperation between the United Nations, the specialized agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions was essential. The International Labour Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund should all contribute to both the preparation of the Summit and the implementation of its decisions.

18. The current free-market reforms in Central European States had seriously affected the most vulnerable sections of the population, and had given rise to soaring unemployment. That posed a serious danger to social stability and economic reforms and called for urgent measures. The World Summit should give clear guidance to those countries.

19. Romania considered that the family, as the fundamental social unit, was central to social policy. The celebration of the International Year of the Family had had considerable positive effects, and had led to successful actions in his country. Romania also attached great importance to the integration of young people. The celebration in 1995 of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and of the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year would certainly produce new priorities regarding the place of young people in the world.

20. The elderly, who could make a positive contribution to social development, also deserved particular consideration. The proclamation of the International Year of Older Persons in 1999 would serve as a useful reminder of the problems arising from demographic changes such as population ageing. Regarding the disabled, despite some progress in recent years, there were still obstacles to their full and equal participation in social development. His Government's policy was oriented towards the prevention of incapacity and the readaptation and social integration of the disabled. The implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities would tend to eliminate social and physical obstacles to their participation in social and economic life.

21. Mr. BEN AMOR (Tunisia) said that globalization of the many social problems besetting the world constituted a new challenge to the entire international community; only solidarity between developed and developing countries could lead to a solution. He hoped that the United Nations system would provide increased support for new and effective social policies. The World Summit should be seen as a unique opportunity to reaffirm the international community's commitment to people-centred development and international cooperation. Strengthening social integration, alleviating poverty and promoting productive employment constituted the basis of any collective undertaking to that end.

22. Tunisia, which shared other nations' attachment to social advancement, relied on the creative genius, political maturity and sense of responsibility of its men and women to fight against those factors which undermined development. Such reliance had made it possible for his country, despite limited resources, to achieve considerable social progress, with particular focus on the vulnerable members of society.

23. Tunisia was prepared to make its contribution to the construction of an international community united for peace and progress, and was fully aware of the need for solidarity among nations and of the possibilities for complementary action through innovative forms of cooperation such as co-development. There could be no common destiny among peoples without a common approach to planet-wide social problems.

24. Mr. ANSARI (India) said that the Declaration which should emerge from the World Summit should be a forceful statement of current social problems and challenges. It should outline a shared vision for the future, describing clearly the interrelationship between the three core issues - poverty, unemployment and social integration.

25. Greater equality was needed within societies, though not at the expense of natural resources, the conservation of which would ensure equality for future generations. Equality between societies was also necessary, particularly in access to resources and technology. The draft declaration and programme of action prepared for the Summit rightly referred to those needs. They also correctly stated that measures to enhance social development were primarily matters for individual nations. At the international level, what was vital to developing countries was the adoption of measures with respect to trade, foreign

investment, technology flows, debt and official development assistance to enable them to tackle the problems of social development.

26. Social development needed to be placed within the context of constitutionally defined rights, such as the right to equality and freedom of speech, and development-oriented rights such as the right to food and shelter. Both types of rights had been guaranteed or promoted by his Government.

27. Poverty eradication was feasible, and he estimated that by the year 2000 poverty levels in India would have been reduced to 5 per cent of the population, which would probably comprise very vulnerable groups who should be covered by social welfare measures as opposed to development action. His Government aimed for realistic planning based on estimates of individuals' food and non-food requirements and taking account of State provision for minimum needs, while at the same time setting definite targets. India stood for the eradication of poverty and the reduction of the relative inequalities that also existed in society.

28. He regretted that the final documents for the Summit emphasized reallocating resources for official development assistance rather than supplementing them. He called for a comprehensive solution to the problem of external debt, incorporating innovative measures targeting not only those countries which had accrued arrears, but also those which had continued to meet their obligations at considerable cost.

29. Follow-up action should take the form of strengthening existing institutions rather than creating new structures, since effective follow-up depended more on the political will to cooperate than on the structure of interaction. He said that monitoring of the implementation of the programme of action could be done only at the national level, through Governments accountable to the electorate. At the regional and international levels, what was important was the exchange of information. Lastly, he recommended that, in the period leading up to the Summit, work should concentrate on specific commitment and action rather than unproductive redefinition of terminology.

30. Miss AL-HAMAMI (Yemen) said that her delegation believed that poverty alleviation, productive employment and social integration - the three core issues of the World Summit for Social Development - must be tackled in a radical manner and not merely embodied in a declaration and programme of action that would be difficult to implement. Social development must be placed within an objective framework that took account of the characteristics of each society, and must be linked with economic development, human rights and peace and security. There was also a need to raise the political level at which social questions were discussed at the national and international levels.

31. Her delegation hoped that the declaration and programme of action to be adopted by the Summit would reflect the fundamental issues presented by the delegation of Algeria on behalf of the Group of 77. Their consideration by heads of State and Government would create a unique opportunity to focus the attention of the latter on the principal objectives and strategies involved.

32. Coordination between States and the United Nations concerning the necessary commitments would ensure support for national efforts, particularly in the least developed countries. Such support would help to create economic conditions enabling developing societies to provide the opportunity to all sectors of society to participate in social development, thereby promoting the integration, through participation in production, of marginalized groups that would otherwise constitute a burden on society.

33. The Summit would not solve the core problems merely by adopting a declaration and programme of action. It must be able to generate political momentum and clarify perceptions if it was to stimulate national action and international cooperation through a new commitment to the achievement of a better life for all peoples.

34. Mr. ANDREASSEN (Norway), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that they considered the forthcoming World Summit for Social Development to be a milestone in international cooperation on social issues, focusing as it did on the need to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom, a fundamental objective of the United Nations, and providing an opportunity to take wide-ranging policy decisions at the highest political level. The Summit would complement the work of the most recent conferences on human rights and on population and development and the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in Beijing, and, taken together, they would define the global agenda for social development. The next challenge would be to follow up that work, strengthening the United Nations role in development while avoiding compartmentalization into numerous functional commissions with parallel reporting arrangements.

35. Disabled people constituted the largest disadvantaged minority in the world. The adoption by the General Assembly of the Standard Rules for the Equalization of Opportunities for Disabled People had been an important step towards enabling such people to participate fully in society. The Nordic countries urged all Member States to commit themselves to the implementation of the Standard Rules, both at the international level by helping to fund the Special Rapporteur and the panel of experts and at the national level by elaborating plans of action for the implementation of the Standard Rules in cooperation with organizations for disabled persons. Such national disability plans should include the three themes of equal opportunities, rehabilitation and the prevention of disabilities, as outlined in the Secretary-General's report on Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (A/49/435). He noted that, while the main responsibility for implementation lay with national and local government, the United Nations system also had an obligation to implement the Standard Rules.

36. There had been a vast increase in the proportion of old people since the beginning of the century. Although it was accurate to speak of elderly people as vulnerable when discussing their care requirements, they were also valuable repositories of knowledge and experience. Social policy should therefore not only attempt to enhance and prolong their lives but also encourage their full participation in society, as happened in the Nordic countries, where the support

and advice given to the elderly enabled them to make their own decisions, even when they were in institutions. Elderly people should have their own homes throughout their lives, and care services and existing institutions should be reorganized to make that possible.

37. The goals of the International Youth Year in 1985 were still valid - to enhance the participation of youth in society and to encourage their contribution to peace and development. Attempting to provide young people with education, employment, a healthy environment and the enjoyment of rights and freedoms would show them that society was willing to listen to them. Increasing the influence of young people over decisions affecting them would help to avoid future social problems, and he suggested that Member States could perhaps send youth representatives to the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. It was also important to involve young people in further work on the draft world youth programme of action.

38. The recent increase in drug abuse, including alcohol abuse, had resulted in tremendous suffering both in human terms, through family disruption, and in social terms, through the economic costs of lost manpower, crime and public health expenditure on treatment and rehabilitation. Only effective international cooperation could solve such problems, with the United Nations playing a more active role in the fight against narcotics, in collaboration with the United Nations International Drug Control Programme as part of the Decade against Drug Abuse.

39. Lastly he called for innovative approaches to counteract the social disintegration and exclusion which were mainly the result of unequal development and distribution of wealth, poverty, unemployment and the violation of human rights, in order to mobilize people to take part in decisions about their own future.

40. Mr. AL-MARRI (Qatar) said that economic development and social development went hand in hand and complemented each other. While economic development had received greater attention in the past, the international community was beginning to accord increased attention to social questions.

41. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/85, questions relating to youth had been given a prominent place in ongoing United Nations activities for indigenous peoples, human rights, the family and population and in the preparations for the forthcoming conferences on social development and on women. In the final document adopted by the Eleventh Ministerial Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Ministers had urged the specialized agencies of the United Nations to intensify their efforts to formulate action-oriented programmes for the development of youth and had called for a United Nations world programme of action for youth towards the year 2000 and beyond to be adopted by the General Assembly on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year in 1995.

42. In Qatar, the Youth and Sports Authority established in 1990 had been assigned the tasks of formulating general policy for youth welfare, training

leaders, supervising projects, establishing clubs and awarding prizes. The National Olympic Committee, established in 1979, was the chief sponsor of sporting activities in the country.

43. Qatar provided educational and health services to all free of charge and was endeavouring to expand its adult literacy programmes and to establish special classes for the disabled. As a Muslim society, the country accorded a special place to the family and did everything possible to strengthen it and to increase its cohesion.

44. Mr. BORJAL (Philippines) said that his Government had recently implemented two plans for social reform and national economic recovery to be achieved in consultation with various sectors of society. The plans focused on vulnerable social groups and poor geographical areas, addressing minimum basic needs with the aim of improving the quality of life and expanding the base of the decision-making process.

45. With respect to disabled persons, his Government had enacted legislation making it mandatory for public establishments and transport to provide better access, and more recently legislation to facilitate the integration of people with disabilities into the mainstream of society. That legislation was already having an impact on the disabled in the Philippines, most of whom lived in rural areas. There was growing awareness of the potential and rights of persons with disabilities. His delegation planned to introduce a draft resolution on the implementation of the Standard Rules and of the Long-term Strategy for the Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons.

46. The social plight of children living in especially difficult circumstances - on the streets, in areas of armed conflict, in refugee camps or in regions ravaged by disaster - required urgent action. It was necessary to ensure that they received medical care, food, shelter and education. It was also necessary to formulate a draft convention on issues related to the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. He welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on policies and programmes involving youth (A/49/434) and was heartened by the final draft of the United Nations world youth programme of action.

47. His country, where children constituted 46 per cent of the population, had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had launched a national plan of action for children based on it. One eighth of its human-resource budget was earmarked for education and health care. With respect to the elderly, it adhered to the principles of independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity, and its medium-term development plan encouraged their active participation in social development.

48. Mr. GUNASEKERA (Sri Lanka) said that, with the end of the cold war, it was time for the international community to tackle the root causes of conflict: poverty, unemployment and the absence of social cohesion. To that end, a comprehensive, internationally shared vision of development was required. Social instability in one part of the world could have adverse effects on

stability and prosperity elsewhere. Thus all countries stood to gain from development in the poorer countries. He called, therefore, for the pragmatic and broad-minded participation in development of the countries that controlled the world's resources.

49. The world community must take advantage of the opportunity for decisive action provided by the forthcoming World Summit for Social Development. It must do so by moving beyond a "replay" of known positions and the traditional approach of building a consensus around the lowest common denominator. His country would continue to participate in the ongoing negotiations under the able leadership of the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee.

50. His delegation thanked the Secretary-General for his report on policies and programmes involving youth (A/49/434) and looked forward to the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year in 1995. Youth issues were intertwined with the issues of social development and peace and security. Young people constituted the majority of the world's population and could be a force for stability and prosperity or a vehicle for instability and violence, depending on how society treated them. His country therefore supported the priority given once again to youth issues and the participation of youth in national and international decision-making processes by the Eleventh Ministerial Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. Similarly, it supported the draft resolution recently submitted by the Non-Aligned Movement to focus attention on youth during the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. It expected the Commission for Social Development to finalize the world youth programme of action and to submit it through the Economic and Social Council to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session. It was pleased to note that the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) had already formulated their own youth programmes to coincide with the launching of the world youth programme in 1995, and that the African region was pursuing efforts to that end.

51. With regard to the United Nations programme on disabled persons, his delegation wished to express its appreciation to the Secretariat for its efforts to promote the implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. It noted with satisfaction the appointment of a Special Rapporteur for the Standard Rules and hoped that the necessary contributions would be made to support his activities. Implementation of the Rules was of particular concern to countries faced with an unexpected increase in the number of disabled persons.

52. His delegation also wished to thank the Secretary-General for the draft plan of action to implement the Long-Term Strategy to Further Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and was pleased to note that it contained an array of national, regional and global measures drawing on the experience gained during the Decade of Disabled Persons. It hoped that the Committee would be able to reach a consensus decision to recommend adoption of the Long-Term Strategy.

53. Mrs. BANGOURA (Guinea) welcomed the international community's new awareness of social problems and reiterated her Government's support and great expectations for the World Summit for Social Development. Its three core issues - social integration, poverty and employment - were decisive for the internal and external security of nations. Yet, in a context of international upheaval and recession, economic and social inequalities continued to grow both within and among nations, with disastrous social consequences. Any strategy for sustainable development must be based on an integrated approach that addressed the social, economic, cultural, political and environmental aspects of development.

54. Her country shared the views expressed by the Group of 77 and China regarding the declaration and plan of action to be adopted at the World Summit. Furthermore, those documents should call for specific, realistic measures that would encourage an economic and political environment favourable to social development, address the concerns of all regions and encourage the participation of all development actors. National and international strategies were needed. At the national level, Governments should increase budget allocations to the social sector. At the international level, the developed countries should facilitate the transfer of technologies, institute appropriate trade policies and provide training assistance to the least developed countries. As for the question of follow-up to the Summit, the declaration and plan of action should underscore the need for the Bretton Woods institutions to take social costs into consideration in designing their programmes. Lastly, she stressed that it was important for the international community to work together to make the Social Summit a success.

55. Despite its economic problems, her country was striving to improve its people's social conditions. Many associations for young people, women and the elderly had been organized for that purpose. Under its human development programme, significant progress had been made in providing primary health care, basic education and drinking water.

56. Her delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the status and role of cooperatives (A/49/213). Faced with increased unemployment and deepening poverty as a result of structural adjustment programmes, developing countries were becoming more alert to the possibilities offered by cooperative business enterprises. Her Government's efforts had led to the formation of a great number of cooperatives. However, owing to a lack of resources, it was impossible for existing cooperatives to operate normally and equally impossible to create new ones. Assistance from the international community was therefore imperative. Her delegation supported the Secretary-General's recommendations with respect to cooperatives, especially the idea of instituting an annual international day of cooperatives, which would help to inform both people and Governments of the possibilities offered by cooperative enterprises.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.