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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 20th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. von KYAW (Federal Republic of Germany)

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AGENDA ITEM 83: PRESERVATION AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL VALUES

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The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 83: PRESERVATION AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL VALUES (A/31/111)

1. Mr. MAKAGIANSAR (Assistant Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)* presented the document entitled "Preservation and further development of cultural values" (A/31/111), prepared by the Director-General of UNESCO, which described both the specific follow-up given by UNESCO to General Assembly resolution 3148 (XXVIII) and the current evolution of UNESCO's programmes which had a wider bearing on that theme.
2. The importance of the preservation and further development of cultural values to the future of all societies was considerable. The concept of culture itself was constantly evolving. UNESCO's efforts were designed to bring out the significance of the cultural dimension in the development of societies, especially those undergoing many different forms of rapid and profound change.
3. First of all, there was a need to bring out the ever-deepening relationship between culture and development. Culture was no longer viewed as a refined pleasure for an élite or as an amusement for the masses; it was a factor which was present in the totality of human experience. Development too was a total process.
4. Culture was seen, lived and transmitted in the form of a historical and constantly renewed heritage: the products and forms of creative expression and social communication, works of the imagination and the intellect, social needs and the creations which they inspired. But culture was too complex to be catalogued, for it expressed a people's being and presence both to itself and to the world at large.
5. The process of development was also bound up with that being and that presence. The widened concept of development, that had guided mankind towards a better vision of the meaning of culture in society, had also weaned mankind away from unilinear frameworks and strategies. Economic growth could not be an end in itself, nor could it be the ultimate criterion of well-being and progress. Economic development was certainly a necessary condition and nothing should be done to hinder its advance; however, it was not a sufficient condition in itself. The experience of the developing countries in recent decades had in fact shown clearly that material well-being alone did not suffice to meet the aspirations and needs of mankind. The requirements of scientific and technological progress should be related to social and cultural values, which were consistent with the notion of a balanced progress in which man felt secure and confident in his present and future situation. When one referred to social and cultural conditions, one meant social justice, the quality and wholeness of life and a meaningful relationship between the individual and the community. Viewed from another angle, cultural values could also be a

* The statement by the Assistant Director-General of UNESCO is reflected fully in the summary record, as agreed by the Committee.

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(Mr. Makagiansar)

factor of resistance to change. Economic and technical criteria could run counter to age-old norms of production and consumption and patterns of social organization. Fortunately, however, the cultural dimension could be an immense reservoir for innovation and for the discovery of authentic paths for development in present-day societies.

6. In recent years, UNESCO had been trying to define different roads to development, built on the uniqueness of cultural conditions, constraints and potentialities in a society. Within that context, cultural development must be a conscious, rational and planned effort to bring about the changes that a society saw fit to introduce with respect to the ways in which it interpreted its own heritage, with respect to the organization of present-day social and cultural life and with respect to a certain vision of its own future.

7. That view of development, in which the social and cultural dimensions were essential components, was reinforced by the search to define and bring about a new economic and social order. That new order would have to be based on new relations among States, the establishment of reciprocity and dialogue between equal partners. There too the cultural dimension occupied a central place, since a just and equitable order must necessarily recognize and foster the dignity of many different cultural identities, which transcended all disparities of wealth and power.

8. With reference to the relationship between science and technology on the one hand and cultural values on the other, he said that the transfer and adaptation of science and technology, which played a vital role in development, were eminently cultural phenomena. In the communications field alone, the fast pace of recent technological progress had spawned a vast and dense international network of ideas and information. It was through the integration of cultural and communications activities and policies and through a fresh examination of the conditions of communications systems that the aims of technological progress would be defined in a more satisfactory way.

9. That was just one illustration of the fact that the solutions to problems of science and technology could not be tackled only from the technical point of view. UNESCO had been giving close attention in its science and philosophy programmes to the interaction between scientific and technical progress and the social and cultural environment, which involved recognition of the fact that, like art, the products of technology had been partially moulded by the ideas of their period. In turn, technological changes themselves had brought about changes in the cultural scene and in cultural life.

10. In that context, he wished to quote a passage from the introduction by the eminent scientist Robert Jungk to a special issue of the UNESCO magazine entitled "Impact of Science on Society" (vol. XXIII, No. 4, October-December 1973) devoted to appropriate technology:

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"... The idea that there may be alternative technologies in itself implies the idea of technological pluralism in place of the until now almost universally accepted technological monism. In this case each social system and each political ideology, indeed each culture, would be free to develop its own particular line. Why should there not be a specifically Indian technology alongside Indian art and why should the African temperament express itself only in music or sculpture and not in the equipment which Africans choose because it suits them better? ...

"... This will seem an absurd flight of fancy only to those who think there is only one optimal way to convert scientific knowledge into technical know-how. Many supporters of what has so far been the uniform style of scientific and technological civilization simply will not grasp that anthropological, social, cultural and psychological factors can and indeed should also enter the picture."

11. That passage was about wholeness, authenticity and plurality, qualities which UNESCO was constantly seeking to reinforce in its programmes on cultural identity. The principle of cultural identity, whether that of a region, a nation, a people or a community, including ethnic or linguistic minorities, was one of the main lines of the programme. The promotion of a cultural identity was the search to create cultural conditions in the present-day world which enabled societies to arrive at an endogenous, self-determined path of development which, at the same time, contributed to values based on respect for pluralities and differences that made the world a truly human entity. That universalism would be nourished by the concrete and living reality of different cultures, by their works and indigenous values, recognized and appreciated by all peoples and freely exchanged for their mutual enrichment and true international understanding. That was among UNESCO's most characteristic contributions to attaining the goal of international peace.

12. Document A/31/111 which the Committee had before it gave a detailed description of the work of UNESCO in the preservation and presentation of the cultural heritage, in cultural studies and their dissemination, in cultural exchange and cultural development, in the social and cultural implications of scientific and technological progress, and in the free flow of information and the development of communications policies integrated with cultural policies.

13. With respect to the specific requests and recommendations to the Director-General of UNESCO contained in General Assembly resolution 3148 (XXVIII), the report indicated what had been done in those areas. For example, the study of "the legal implications flowing from the existence of legislation for the protection of the national artistic heritage, including problems of exchange and the voluntary return of various cultural works" was a built-in component of UNESCO's work towards elaborating international instruments for the protection of the cultural heritage. Similarly, the research called for in article 5 of the resolution was being carried out in various UNESCO programmes. The recent reorganization of the UNESCO secretariat, in which Culture and Communications were joined together in one Sector, headed by an Assistant Director-General, offered hope for achieving the objectives outlined. The "mass media" were a vast area in themselves, but, as the resolution recognized, any cultural action not integrated with modern systems and

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channels of communication would play only a marginal role. Inversely, UNESCO's work on communication systems and policies was now enriched by the encounter with the living cultural realities of member States. Communications themselves were a characteristic and effective means of expression of contemporary culture.

14. Through such links, UNESCO hoped to extend and improve its efforts to contribute to new, more widely shared and authentically defined ways to development, where not only economic but also cultural values and cultural exchanges and identities were understood, integrated and utilized more effectively for a better life for all peoples.

15. In conclusion he observed that mutual consultations between the United Nations and UNESCO had been most fruitful in the past, as witnessed by the General Assembly's sustained interest since its twenty-seventh session and requests for reports by the Director-General of UNESCO in the field of culture. The Director-General attached great importance to the growing international attention given to cultural values and he was confident that the Committee's discussions would prove to be a substantial contribution to international co-operation.

16. Mrs. MARICO (Mali), speaking on behalf of the African group, made a request to the Secretariat that the statement of the Assistant Director-General of UNESCO should be distributed as a working document of the Committee.

17. Mr. TREPCZYNSKI (Poland) said that the inclusion in the agenda of item 83, "Preservation and further development of cultural values", had been received with great satisfaction by his delegation. It added a new, permanent and very important dimension to the work of the Committee. The report in document A/31/111 constituted an excellent basis for discussion and future endeavours in that field, and his delegation fully supported the practical steps already taken and the proposals and conclusions of the report.

18. The preservation and further development of cultural values was a matter of deep interest and constant concern for his country. It always had been and still was an important component in the socio-economic development of Poland, which, because of its historical experiences, had many reasons to attach tremendous importance to the preservation and development of its cultural heritage. For more than 100 years, before the First World War, it had been subject to the pressures of imperialism which had tried to reduce it to bondage and isolate it from its own culture and during the years of Nazi occupation in the Second World War attempts had even been made to exterminate it. The preservation and development of its language, tradition and culture was one of the important factors which had enabled it to survive as a nation under such conditions. He fully understood and agreed with the assertion in the report that the right to one's own culture had to be viewed in the context of efforts to combat colonialism and racial, ethnic, linguistic or cultural discrimination.

19. Socialist Poland was now reliving a true renaissance of its culture in almost all fields. Not only did Poland comply with article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights concerning the right fully to participate in the

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(Mr. Trepczynski, Poland)

cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement, but, in addition, concrete and practical measures had been taken and social and economic conditions created permitting the effective exercise of that right. Polish culture was not an elitist one, nor one dominated by the mass media, but was a truly democratic culture with the broad and genuine participation of all strata of society. Moreover, exchanges between different cultures could make a genuine contribution to the enrichment of cultural values, on a national, regional and world scale, and Poland was engaged in cultural co-operation with more than 80 countries on all continents.

20. He denounced the misuse of science and technology to disrupt fundamental cultural values. Very often the achievements of science and technology, which should serve man, were used to destroy him. In that connexion, he said that he had in mind not only the insane and absurd arms race but also the use of science and technology in negatively influencing lifestyles, the social and cultural environment and aesthetic values. Cultural values ought to be the bases for the development of science and technology, which should be placed completely at the service of creativity and progress and the welfare of mankind.

21. The international community's concern for the problems of the preservation and further development of cultural values was not sufficiently strong, and the practical steps undertaken were inadequate. His delegation therefore fully agreed with the conclusion of the report stated in paragraph 65 that "an analysis of the problems raised by the General Assembly resolution eloquently reveals how much more remains to be done to increase universal awareness of the fundamental role of culture in the modern world in the context of the harmonious development of individuals and societies, the promotion of human rights and the right of peoples to self-determination, and international co-operation and peace".

22. It was necessary to adopt a resolution recommending the continuation of the efforts and research so efficiently and brilliantly undertaken by UNESCO and his delegation, together with delegations of several other countries, intended to submit a draft resolution to that effect at the following meeting.

23. Mr. ELIAS (Spain) said that the report of the Director-General of UNESCO (A/31/111) confirmed that the international community had available to it a body which was qualified to highlight the need for heightened awareness of the importance of culture, for it examined with precision and clarity the main aspects of the problem and stressed the interrelation of the various elements of development which were required to enable international life to move in a direction favourable to the human and social values that were the Committee's concern and fell within its competence. The report highlighted UNESCO's attention to the preservation of the cultural heritage of peoples as an essential factor in defining their identity and their participation in the common life of humanity; UNESCO thus complied with the tenets of General Assembly resolution 3148 (XXVIII) which drew attention to the need for harmonizing the diversity of cultural expressions with the unity of purpose required for true international co-operation.

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24. That problem was the reflection and parallel in the cultural field of that other reality which in a political field required the implementation of self-determination of peoples so that they could assume their own responsibilities for development in the international community. Affirming diversity was a prerequisite for the proper integration of a human group in a common task; humanity could not afford to ignore or discount the contribution of any of its components, for the exclusion of any one of them introduced factors which endangered the general balance of the world.

25. The world of culture was vast and complex. Aesthetic creations of all kinds were part of it and also, as the report indicated, lifestyles, languages, forms of coexistence and communication, teaching systems and, it might be added, the capacity of man and society to penetrate into their own spiritual world. Hence the defence and promotion of culture for the benefit of man and society should also be a creative function which should not be limited to measures of good administration but should inspire political action by both Governments and the international community. Culture should be the guiding light for politics and politics should not be allowed to dim that light.

26. UNESCO encouraged the role of aesthetic education as a means of furthering the appropriate development of man's emotional life and as a defence against the mechanization which threatened it. That attitude was shared and applauded by Spain, which was proud of its ancient and varied cultural heritage embodying the historic contribution of various sources and races which had formed it over the centuries; that historical evolution had enabled no fewer than four languages still alive today, namely, Basque, Galician, Catalan and Castilian, to develop as vehicles of cultural expression. The Spanish Government was preparing programmes to encourage and develop its various cultures as factors of inestimable value for the harmonious social growth of the country, which should balance and complement the economic development experienced in the past few years. One favourable circumstance was the fact that the various cultures were practically integrated and closely interrelated owing to the high level of interregional communication and internal migration in Spain. In that respect, the purposes of the Spanish Government coincided with the direction indicated by UNESCO's programmes.

27. Finally, he emphasized the importance attributed by his delegation to cultural items among the activities of the United Nations, since they could best contribute to the common good of humanity by preventing the evolution of the human being from suffering from the effects of badly controlled interests and irrationally administered technical progress.

28. Mrs. MAIR (Jamaica) expressed her appreciation of the report of the Director-General of UNESCO, which was an appropriate instrument for readjusting one's perspective with regard to cultural values and their implications for national development and international co-operation. As the inadequate development models of recent decades were being increasingly questioned and rejected, the underlying concept of human development on which they were based, which did not take into account the total human person, was being subjected to scrutiny. In dissociating the economic aspect of the human personality from its socio-cultural aspect, the

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(Mrs. Mair, Jamaica)

recent development strategies had continued the process of fracturing societies, a process started and well advanced by colonialism and imperialism. The experience of foreign domination from which most of the developing world had been emerging was a process which negated the integrity of many national cultures. In some regions of the Caribbean two aspects of cultural experience, that of the indigenous population and that of the forced immigrants from Africa, had been exploited, violated and denied; in the interest of healthy, creative and truly independent national growth, policies were now being formulated to restore that cultural heritage and to stress continuity rather than fragmentation, to assert the dignity and equal worth of each cultural component of the society and to strengthen the potential of each for enriching the development process.

29. In the vital field of science and technology, whose integration into the experience of the developing countries was essential for their progress, it was imperative to understand and place the proper value on authentic national cultural forms which expressed a people's response to the many challenges of daily life; that approach would ensure more rational and humane development strategies. Another aspect that must be taken into account was the impact of science and technology on ethical and aesthetic values, and the great responsibility which UNESCO had undertaken in that regard must be recognized. In her delegation's view, such activity should have the highest priority, having regard to the need to mobilize the vast majority of a population for the achievement of modern development, and the consequent need to communicate in terms of which would be meaningful to that vast majority.

30. In stressing the value of effective dissemination, one likewise underlined the right of all people to participate fully in the cultural life of their societies and to be able to make choices about their development options on the basis of the perception of their cultural heritage. That point, felicitously expressed in paragraph 45 of the report, was basically in accordance with the position of her Government and its national and regional policies and institutions. Among other activities, the Government of Jamaica had been host during the current month to a Meeting of Experts on Instruments of Analysis for Cultural Development, preparatory to the UNESCO Latin American Intergovernmental Conference in 1977; in the field of education and literacy, her Government had in recent years invested considerable resources in the eradication of illiteracy and it was proud to have received during the past month the bronze medal awarded by UNESCO for its effort in that field.

31. In the fundamental sphere of information and communication, her Government shared the concepts expressed in the report concerning the need to make maximum use, in a critical spirit, of the modern mass media. In the English-speaking Caribbean, Jamaica had been happy to support the first regional university programme for the training of journalists and other communicators. With respect to art education, she stated that a cultural training complex had recently been established in Jamaica which would cover the dance, theatre and music; that institution would provide an opportunity for the young people of the region to express their creative powers in an environment which rejected elitism and encouraged participation, preparing them to take part in the national life as teachers, communicators and interpreters of cultural values and goals.

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(Mrs. Mair, Jamaica)

32. In addition, Jamaica's National Institute of the Arts, with the very valuable technical assistance of UNESCO, had begun developing a programme to preserve and protect the national cultural heritage. Historical sites and artifacts had been restored and presented to the citizens of Jamaica as their legitimate cultural property. That was one of the most vital aspects of the preservation of cultural values and it was a field in which UNESCO could use its resources for promoting cultural equality between nations and international cultural co-operation. Gross inequities still existed from one country to another with respect to access to cultural property, and her delegation hoped that the requisite measures, based on an analysis of relevant national legislation, could be taken, so that world opinion could be informed of the problems and of the possibilities of achieving mutual respect among nations for each other's cultural property. It was to be hoped that the programmes directed by UNESCO which translated that important concept into effective and meaningful action would continue and be intensified.

33. Mr. LUTEM (Secretary of the Committee), referring to the request submitted by the African group, said that after various consultations it had been agreed that the statement by the Assistant Director-General of UNESCO would be reflected fully in the summary record of the meeting.

34. Mr. BADAWI (Egypt), Rapporteur, expressed his thanks to the members of the Committee and the Secretariat who during his recent illness had expressed their concern for his health and their wishes for his early recovery.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.