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Chairman: Mrs. Helvi SIPILÄ (Finland).

AGENDA ITEM 53

World social situation: report of the Secretary-General (*continued*) (A/8380, A/8403, chap. XV, sect. A; A/C.3/XXVI/CRP.1, E/CN.5/456, E/CN.5/456/Add.1 and Corr.1, Add.2 to 4, Add.5 and Corr.1, Add.6 and 7, Add.8 and Corr.1, Add.9 to 16)

GENERAL DEBATE (*continued*)

1. Mr. KUSSBACH (Austria) said that the 1970 *Report on the World Social Situation* was not only voluminous but also comprehensive. In particular, he welcomed the method used in drawing up the report, since it contained information on global trends and developments in the social field over the period corresponding to the latter half of the First United Nations Development Decade. It thus provided a vantage point for an evaluation of world-wide social change and progress, and highlighted the social problems which the United Nations would have to confront in the course of the Second Development Decade.

2. He did not think, however, that the discussion had to be confined to general comments on the report, for the experience of individual countries might be very useful to other nations. Consequently, he wished to indicate some of the main features of social development in his own country. According to the census figures, the population in 1969 had increased by 4.39 per cent with respect to the previous year; at the same time, there had been a decrease in the percentage of the economically active population. That was partly attributable to the increasing number of young people receiving an education and to the fact that, by law, it was possible to retire early under certain conditions. Moreover, the higher standard of living also contributed to the decrease in the economically active population. Economic growth was a prerequisite of social development and it therefore seemed appropriate to indicate how the Austrian economy had been developing in recent years. In 1969, the gross national product had been 6.4 per cent higher than in the previous year while the corresponding figure for the national income had been 6.8 per cent. Rapid economic growth, a high standard of living and, as a consequence, limited manpower resources had led to a necessary reorientation in labour policy. Thus, the Law on the Promotion of the Labour Market, which had entered into force on 1 January 1969, gave workers and employers every help in adjusting rapidly to changes in the labour market. The Austrian Government considered that opportunities for retraining should be provided for those who wished to change their job, and the same applied in the case

of rural workers who decided to leave agriculture and enter industry. The Government also intended to pay more attention to the problems of working women, including, in particular, women who had stopped working for family reasons and wished to go back to work. The new Law also provided for increased vocational guidance for young people.

3. Health conditions were another major factor in the social welfare of the community. In that field, the indicators most commonly used were the death rate and the rate of infant mortality, as well as the number of doctors and hospital beds available. Although health conditions were constantly improving in Austria, the death rate had been increasing since 1953, a development that was partly attributable to the change in the age structure, for the number of older persons had continued to grow. Infant mortality was decreasing slightly. As to medical personnel, the number of doctors and nurses was rising. The Government intended to establish an institute for national health for the purpose of information, documentation and research in that field and also for the training of health personnel. In addition, great progress was being made in the field of environmental sanitation.

4. In 1969, a total of 91.4 per cent of the population had been entitled to various social security services. The constant increase in social security costs had led to an unsatisfactory financial situation, but the competent authorities were endeavouring to seek a long-term solution.

5. In Austria, the problem of housing had improved considerably in recent years: 6.7 additional dwellings per 1,000 inhabitants had been produced in 1969. What was more, the quality of housing had improved and the dwellings were now much better equipped than in the past.

6. Social problems included those of young people. Questions such as employment, economic development, national health and housing very much affected the younger generation. There were two main aspects to the problems of youth: what national communities could do for the young and how the young could participate in and contribute to the development of national society. The Austrian Government attached great importance to the active participation of young people in social development. As the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs had stated at the 1946th plenary meeting of the General Assembly on 30 September 1971, it was imperative for youth to continue to feel involved in the work of the Organization and it would be of special importance for the United Nations to seek a new commitment by the younger generation to the purposes and ideals of the United Nations. Lastly, he wished to emphasize that world social problems could only

be solved on the basis of large-scale planning of economic growth and social development, which were closely inter-related. The same could be said of the various social factors on which social conditions depended. He therefore believed that only a unified approach to development problems could secure real progress.

7. Mrs. GEREB (Hungary) said that the *1970 Report on the World Social Situation* showed that in many countries the social situation had not improved and, in some cases, had even deteriorated. The data contained in the report were not always accurate or clear and it was not possible to make realistic comparisons. For example, there were no data on social conditions in the socialist countries of Asia. The authors of the report had endeavoured to present an over-all study of the existing situation but the result was more in the nature of a simple description of phenomena which was frequently superficial. In a study of that type, it was necessary to indicate which of the data enumerated were most characteristic, to analyse them and to draw the necessary conclusions. Another defect of the report was that it failed to reflect the fact that there were two different social systems in the world, i.e. the socialist and the capitalist systems. The standards and characteristics of the one did not apply to the other; accordingly, if the aim was to analyse the social problems of one of the two systems, the characteristics of the other could not be used as criteria. However, the authors of the report, using the problems of capitalist society as a basis, had tried to evaluate the situation in all countries in precisely that way. Such a method was unacceptable, particularly in the United Nations, whose Members were countries with differing social situations but with the same rights, from every point of view. That erroneous method detracted from the objectivity of the report, a fact which could be seen above all in the parts devoted to the fundamental problems of capitalist society, which failed to make an objective analysis of such problems as unemployment, the economic and social disparities and contradictions between exploiters and the exploited classes, educational privileges, various forms of discrimination and so on.

8. It had been maintained that a country's social level depended on its population movement. Her delegation believed that the wealth of the world was sufficient to meet the needs of all mankind if it was equitably and appropriately distributed. The report made a careful study of various aspects of industrialization, the importance of which had been exaggerated. It was not a decisive factor, for very few countries in the world could be called industrialized. Moreover, the report did not bring out the fact that there were countries which were not so highly industrialized but which resolved social problems much faster than did industrialized countries. For example, in the United States and other highly industrialized countries, the pensions system, social assistance in the education of children, and other such features lagged far behind when compared with many less industrialized socialist countries.

9. Her delegation considered that the determining factor in a country's social level was the method of distributing the national income. In countries with a capitalist system, only part of the national income was used for the working masses, whilst the remainder served the interests of the owners of the means of production. In socialist systems, on

the other hand, the whole of the national income was employed on behalf of the entire population.

10. Accordingly, she suggested that, in the preparing of the next report it should be kept in mind that the differences in the social situation in the various countries were founded on differences in methods and in the distribution of the national income, depending on the social system involved.

11. As to the social situation in the developing countries, there were large gaps in the report. No mention was made of the influence of the vestiges of colonialism or of neo-colonialist trends, nor of the influences of the foreign capital which entered some countries and hampered the strengthening of economic and political independence.

12. Chapter V, concerning the socialist countries (E/CN.5/456/Add.5 and Corr.1), did not faithfully reflect the results achieved in those countries. In Hungary, between 1966 and 1970, national income had risen by 40 per cent, the real income of wage-earners by 30 per cent and real wages by 17 per cent, while in agricultural co-operatives average earnings had reached the level of those of workers. The social security system now covered 98 per cent of the population; benefits to agricultural workers had improved substantially, family allowances had increased and a new form of allowance had been introduced for mothers. In addition, 320,000 housing units had been built between 1966 and 1970. The fourth five-year plan envisaged an increase in national income of between 30 and 32 per cent, a rise in real *per capita* income of between 25 and 27 per cent and an increase in real wages of between 16 and 18 per cent, together with the construction of 400,000 housing units. The Government of Hungary allocated substantial sums for primary, secondary and higher education. The children of industrial and agricultural workers had full access to higher education and now accounted for roughly 45 per cent of all students. All those figures therefore demonstrated the great difference that existed between the social systems.

13. Her delegation hoped that the criticisms of the various delegations would be taken into account in the preparation of the next report on the world social situation.

14. Mr. BUSUEGO (Philippines) noted that during the First United Nations Development Decade the economic side of development was given primary attention while the social side was relegated to the background. For the Second Decade, however, noteworthy international measures had been adopted in the social sphere. For example, 1969 had seen the adoption of the Declaration on Social Progress and Development, 1970 the proclamation of the International Development Strategy and also, in 1970, the acceptance by the General Assembly of the unified approach to economic and social planning in national development, as embodied in resolution 2681 (XXV).

15. The *1970 Report on the World Social Situation* stressed the fact that basic aspects of the social conditions reported four years previously had further deteriorated, particularly in the developing countries. That was abundantly clear from the increased disparities between the developed and developing countries, the deteriorating living

conditions of the masses and the widening of the gap within countries between the rich minority and the poor majority.

16. Unemployment, according to the report, was greater than ever before in the developing countries, and as much as 30 per cent of the labour force might be unemployed in some of those countries. The report stated that the situation would grow worse unless very radical measures were put into effect to mitigate the consequences of the so-called "explosion" of the labour force. In that regard, the ILO had recommended a number of urgent measures to alleviate the unemployment problem, including the intensive utilization of labour in production, the dispersal of industry from the crowded urban areas to the rural areas and the co-ordination of education and training with projected expansion in productive activities. The ILO had adopted some important measures culminating in its World Employment Programme for the 1970s. Great benefits were expected from that programme. His own Government was focusing special attention on employment in its 1971-1974 Development Plan, in which its aim was to cut unemployment from 7.7 to 5 per cent. It was being assisted by the ILO and had recently established a National Industrial Vocational Training Programme funded in part by UNDP.

17. Another element necessary to improve the world social situation was the equitable distribution of income and wealth. Still another was agrarian reform to be carried out through the provision of adequate aid by the Government for the farmer. The Philippines had, for a number of years, been implementing a comprehensive land reform programme and had recently created a new department at the ministerial level, called the Department of Agrarian Reform.

18. An additional measure that would help to ensure the more equitable distribution of income and wealth was the adoption of a system of direct taxation with proportionately higher taxes on luxury goods. A measure with similar intent was the provision of welfare services to low-income families. Social services were essential and the fact that they too frequently received inadequate emphasis in development plans was regrettable.

19. His Government was determined to improve the lot of its people through structural and institutional reforms and through the efficient utilization of its resources. The public and private sectors in his country were joining hands in the social development effort. An example in that regard was the establishment of a private independent foundation called "Philippine Business for Social Progress" to which interested firms had decided to donate at least 1 per cent of their annual net profits with a view to strengthening the social fabric of the Philippines. That served to demonstrate the profound awareness of both Government and the private business sector of the immediate need to introduce social changes.

20. For all that, the developing countries were clearly in no position to advance without the assistance of the developed countries; nor should it be forgotten that co-operation among the nations of the globe was the only way of averting heightened tension and animosity.

21. All matters relating to development should, in his delegation's opinion, be considered in a single body, which

should adopt a unified approach to the economic and social aspects of development. It was to be hoped that the chapter on Asia in the next report would be sub-divided into sections on east Asia, south-east Asia and south-west Asia respectively.

22. Mrs. CABALLERO (Mexico) observed that in view of the astonishing strides made by science and technology it was now possible to provide for the welfare of all mankind. Yet the grievous phenomenon of poverty continued to exist. Mexico, a peace-loving country, believed that man could make his world a far better place to live in than it was if, instead of waging war he would address himself to the battle against want. The fundamental right of men of all nations was the right to a decent life in which material and spiritual needs were satisfied. Poverty—a phenomenon which all countries, even the richest, had to cope with today—was a complex problem since it was the source of many evils, including, for example, ignorance—because poverty kept or drove children away from school—insanitary conditions and deficient diets, along with their ill effects. Furthermore, poverty was closely tied up with the housing shortage, both in rural and urban areas. Mexico had made every effort to tackle the problem but it defied solution because of the population growth and the steady exodus of people from the countryside to the towns, which eventually resulted in the creation of poverty belts around the larger cities.

23. Mexico had one of the highest rates of population growth in the world, namely 3.4 per cent per year. A total of 46.6 per cent of the population was under 15 years of age, indicating the urgent need to create soon a very large number of jobs to absorb the expanding labour force. Along with unemployment there was under-employment, which affected more particularly the agricultural occupations, where a considerable part of the labour force was under-utilized because of the lack of jobs. In that regard Mexico had, since the 1910 revolution, cultivated social rights as well as individual rights with a view to regulating land tenure and protecting labour. The road to development likewise implied the provision of education for all the social strata. In 1970 Mexico had spent almost 12,000 million pesos on education and had at the same time made every effort to raise the rate of school attendance. Estimates showed that almost three quarters of the 6 to 14 age group went to school, that almost a quarter of the youth between 15 and 19 years of age received secondary schooling, and that one twentieth of the youth between 20 and 24 attended higher educational establishments.

24. Another phenomenon common to the developing countries and existing in Mexico too was the decline in the human resources applied to rural activities and an increase in the industrial labour force. Approximately 49.3 per cent of the economically active population worked in primary activities and the rest in industry and commerce and in transport and other services.

25. A sustained human effort, led by the most highly qualified groups, was called for to overcome the difficulties facing the Mexican people. The socially and economically privileged minorities must realize that their own standards of living could not be maintained and could certainly not improve while so many other groups around them were

living in poverty and want. Similarly, the rich countries would see their development checked if they were surrounded by a world of poverty. What the developing nations needed from the powerful nations was fair treatment rather than assistance in the form of well-meaning charity—a very fine but always inadequate gesture. The developing countries could then pursue the exploitation and use of their natural and human resources in freedom from the restraints which had been holding them back for centuries. As the President of Mexico had stated at the 1952nd plenary meeting of the General Assembly on 5 October 1971, Mexico realized that it must remedy its present shortcomings through the efforts of its own people but it also requested other countries, particularly the most powerful ones, to ensure that international relations were based on fair and equitable treatment.

26. Lord GOWRIE (United Kingdom) pointed out that the *1970 Report on the World Social Situation* was considered by most of the 60 Governments which had replied to the Secretariat's questionnaire to be the most useful of the 84 United Nations publications they had received. The main lesson of the report would seem to be that, despite ethnic, regional, cultural and political differences, the social needs of mankind were the same everywhere. The needs were not difficult to identify: food, shelter, family life, friendships, creative opportunities, social and spiritual values and a sense of cultural continuity. The report urged all sectors to participate in development. One sector which had too often been forgotten was women. The disparity began with education, vocational training and technical assistance, and continued on the labour market where a distinction was made between "men's work" and "women's work". Any integrated approach to development should take into account the potential contribution to be made by women and should endeavour to ensure the maximum development of their abilities.

27. Another burning problem of the times was the environmental crisis: the struggle to reconcile the need for economic growth with the no less pressing need to preserve, and if possible extend, the ecological system on which all life depended. The environmental crisis was also a social crisis.

28. If it was accepted that social needs were not impossibly difficult to identify, then the difficulty of fulfilling them appeared less daunting. There was no denying the political and cultural differences in the world. Nevertheless, in London as in Moscow, and indeed in nearly all modern cities, new buildings of an unvarying architectural monotony, while improving health conditions, had not, generally speaking, created a socially viable environment. However deplorable their poverty might be, many developing countries had at least escaped the problems of narcotics, crime, mental illness and the destruction of so many natural values crucial to the culture and identity of a country. Wealth was of little value if its fruits destroyed human health or freedom or possibility. There was nothing new about such questions, but the world was beginning to ask them collectively and to feel less threatened by the admission of mistakes. The United Kingdom had been the pioneer of that urban industrial civilization which had now spread throughout the world and which had brought not only great benefits but great ills. Yet the developing countries,

which accounted for 70 per cent of the world's population, looked towards the material techniques generated by such a civilization for the satisfaction of their essential needs. The common task, therefore, was to satisfy those needs while lessening the dangers; that would only be possible if all worked in unity, without divisions into groups or ideological systems. The gravity of the problems of the world reduced the differences between powerful countries to their true dimensions.

29. He would like to address a few words to the representatives of the developing countries. In the United Kingdom he lived side by side with young people who were passionately global in outlook and concerned about the third world. They had grown up in an England where imperialism had little meaning and were free from historical guilt. A third world whose politicians paid constant lip service to concepts of historical guilt might well disillusion them. The world had better things to do than to indulge in sterile rhetoric; it could do much in the sciences and in technology and, above all, in finding ways of distributing the riches of the planet. In all that there was enough to occupy minds and energies; what was perhaps lacking was enough time.

30. Mr. MOYNIHAN (United States of America) said that, while there was much that was admirable in the report, there were some shortcomings which should be pointed out. Firstly, it should be borne in mind that the previous report had appeared in 1967; hence the authors of the report before the Committee had had three years in which to prepare it. Yet the result was not satisfactory. As far as the United States was concerned, there was scarcely a sentence in the report which a social scientist could approve. For example, in chapter VII (E/CN.5/456/Add.7), it was stated that according to recent estimates even the working poor in the United States would number about 5 million by 1974, an increase of more than 2 million over 1967. It should be borne in mind that the United States had excellent statistics, which, moreover, were published regularly. According to United States statistics, the number of working poor had been about 15 million in 1967 and the number was expected to drop to about 10 million by 1974. In view of those facts, he wondered where the data appearing in the report came from. Later in the report it was stated that the United States was considering the establishment of a guaranteed minimum annual income of \$1,600 for a family of four. The correct figure was \$2,400. It was difficult to accept that a United Nations document could be so behind the times. It was also stated that a recent evaluation of the Community Action Programme indicated that, as a catalyst for institutional co-operation and programme co-ordination, it did not show great success. He himself had published a book some years earlier in which he had more or less predicted that outcome, but he knew of no evidence that established it. Unfortunately, those were not the only mistakes in the report; there were others, perhaps not so serious but equally important. In foot-note 76, in the English and French texts, reference was made to a book entitled *The Crisis of the Negro Intellect*, by H. Cruse. The real title was *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, which was quite different. Foot-note 62 cited a work by himself and Nathan Glazer; the citation was not accurate.

31. There was, however, something far more serious. The methodology of the report was the result of a succession of choices reflecting what was either convenient or possible in the circumstances. The nations of the world fell into two groups: those which allowed no criticism of government and those which allowed and even encouraged such criticism. The United States belonged to the second group; it did not fear criticism but would rather fear its absence, for it knew that liberty lived in protest and that democracy prospered in conditions of change.

32. The Soviet representative had referred at the 1826th meeting to the apparently negative situation prevailing in the United States and had mentioned, among other things, the trade union protests against certain policies of the Administration. He would like to make it clear that trade union protest, as also student protest, professional protest, minority protest and so forth, were characteristic of United States democracy. Basically, the report reflected the differing levels of public criticism of government and society in the different nations and regions of the world. The Soviet representative had said that the Soviet people lived in harmony and that there were no conflicts. That was not the case in the United States, where there was much discord and considerable conflict. That had always been so and he hoped that it would always be so.

33. The United States, like many Members of the United Nations, had a colonial past, which it had overcome with great difficulty and not a few mistakes. Like other undeveloped nations, it had drawn on great resources of foreign capital to develop its economy. Yet there were differences, and they too were important. It was therefore of great importance that official reports of the United Nations on social matters should confine themselves to data about which approximately uniform international definitions could be agreed upon. It was impossible, for example, to find an international definition for social harmony or to agree on what processes impeded social change. The task of the United Nations should be to publish reports consisting primarily of standard social statistics of high quality, calculated to set a standard for the Governments of the world and to provide a resource for scholars everywhere.

34. Mrs. WARZAZI (Morocco) said that the *1970 Report on the World Social Situation* was a valuable mine of information which provided a clear picture of the facts. The report made it quite clear that, despite the progress made in the last decade, achievements in the social field had fallen short of the needs. It showed, for example, and with a certain fatalism, that despite all the efforts of the developing countries, the rich countries were becoming richer and the poor countries poorer. It also showed that structural dualism was still a decisive element in the social situation of the developing countries. Furthermore, it concluded that it would be impossible to achieve social progress without a political compromise on the part of each of the Governments concerned and without a fair and disinterested attitude on the part of the developed countries towards the developing countries.

35. She wondered, however, why the report made no mention of the reasons which had led to the present-day world being divided between countries which had riches in abundance and others which were submerged in poverty,

why it did not mention, for example, wars, colonialism, systematic racial policies, illegal occupation of territories and so forth. It did not state that the developing countries needed to live in peace, without interference, in an atmosphere of free collaboration based on common interest and not on exploitation.

36. The problem of the population explosion was a good example of the disparity to which she had referred. Only through education, full employment and an improvement in the level of living would that problem become less urgent; in other words, it was a vicious circle for the developing countries, but it could become a great problem one day for the developed countries too, which would become islands of wealth in a sea of poverty. While the poor countries did not know what to do with the masses of young people seeking a future, the chief problem of the industrialized countries was the difficulties of the aged. Furthermore, the rapid and constant changes in the number and composition of the population brought about the difficulties of internal migration and the unprecedented exodus of the rural population to the towns. All that ended by complicating the question of employment opportunities, for almost 30 per cent of the labour force in the developing countries was under-employed.

37. The report stated that, in order to overcome under-employment, Governments should encourage the establishment of small and medium-sized businesses that could absorb the unemployed workers, rather than promoting the establishment of large modern businesses. The following questions then arose: were they then to oppose progress and to prevent, for example, the introduction of modern techniques in agriculture on the pretext that they prevented the employment of agricultural labour? Were the poor countries forever destined to lag behind progress? If that were so, the prospect for the developing countries would be appalling.

38. The report, however, adopted the contrary position when it said in the introduction (E/CN.5/456) that despite the general expansion of the manufacturing sector, agriculture had not undergone extensive modernization. A more consistent position would have been desirable in that matter. On the other hand, the authors were to be congratulated on their support of the idea of agrarian reform to solve the problem of the agricultural labour force, at the same time permitting the introduction of modern techniques in agriculture. The majority of the population of Morocco were rural workers and a considerable amount of public investment was being devoted to improving their lot. The Moroccan Government was trying to change the agrarian structure of the nation and, in addition to distributing land, it had put into effect a complex system of support, accompanied by teaching and technical assistance. In order to reduce intermediate costs, it had reformed the marketing sector and had set up, among other things, a central office for the evaluation of the products on the international market, ensuring a more regular and better income for the farmers.

39. Moreover, in order to prevent the rural exodus, efforts had been made to improve rural conditions by providing electricity, water, housing, markets, schools, etc., in addition to improving the transport network and information

media. It should be borne in mind, however, that in the matter of agrarian reform, as in so many others, the peoples of the world were not cut to the same pattern and that consequently any experiment, however positive, to be introduced in a country must be in harmony with the social, cultural and humanitarian realities of that country and be adapted to the temperament of the people.

40. In order to carry out all those reforms, it was certainly essential, both in the economic and in the social field, to plan the needs, means, methods and objectives and, as the report stated, to eliminate administrative and political defects. Above all, however, it was essential that every country should be able to have the full and free use of its own wealth and should be the sole master of its natural resources. The authors of the report had not given that point much attention. It could be said, however, that a developed country was a country which exploited its resources to the full and it might be asked whether the others, the so-called developing countries, which were producers of the raw materials essential for the progress of mankind, were not partly responsible for their own situation. It was indeed time that those countries realized their strength, organized themselves and formed a united front in order to gain recognition of their rights.

41. The example of the oil-producing countries should be followed by those which were producers of other equally essential commodities. The under-developed countries should shake off their lethargy and, even at the cost of some sacrifice, should organize themselves in order to become masters of their own destiny at last. Her delegation hoped that the draft resolution to be adopted by the Third Committee would include some reference to that need.

42. In reading chapter X of the report, devoted to health (E/CN.5/456/Add.10), she had wondered whether progress

and economic and technical development had any real effect on the well-being of the people of the industrialized countries. It was true that such diseases as malaria, tuberculosis and cholera were frequent in the developing countries, but those diseases were simply epidemics, whereas in the developed societies there were more serious diseases in the social field, such as mental illness, drug addiction, alcoholism, etc. The developed countries should give those evils serious attention, for their moral equilibrium and the security of their people depended upon their doing so; in fact, their whole future depended upon it. The relaxation of established ways, the disintegration of the family, the lack of faith, would produce great changes in those societies. The developing countries would therefore do well to bear in mind the experience of the more advanced countries and avoid making the same mistakes.

43. There were natural resources and an extraordinary human potential in the world and it was essential that all countries, great and small, should work to build a better world. They should ask themselves what was the use of the arms race, in which enormous sums were spent that could be used to promote the social development of the less fortunate countries. When the developing countries were free from the nightmare of war, exploitation, discrimination, violence and injustice, they would be able to devote themselves fully to their social progress. On that day it would be possible to say that political will had triumphed over ambitions and interests, which were an insuperable obstacle in the way of the understanding and international peace desired by all the peoples of the world.

44. The CHAIRMAN reminded the Committee that the time-limit for the submission of draft resolutions was 11 a.m. on Monday, 11 October.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.