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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Thirty-eighth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 15th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Wednesday, 10 February 1982, at 4.30 p.m.

<u>Chairman:</u>	Mr. POUYOUROS	(Cyprus)
later:	Mr. GARVALOV	(Bulgaria)

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The meeting was called to order at 4.45 p.m.

FURTHER PROMOTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF THE PROGRAMME AND METHODS OF WORK OF THE COMMISSION; ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES AND WAYS AND MEANS WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS (agenda item 11) (continued) (E/CN.4/1496; E/CN.4/1982/1 and 2; E/CN.4/1982/NGO/4; A/36/440)

1. Mr. KOOIJMANS (Netherlands) said that at the previous meeting his delegation had heard with great dismay the announcement by the Director of Human Rights that he would shortly terminate his functions. In his delegation's view, the departure of the Director would mean the loss to the United Nations and the Commission of a man who had tried to give a voice to the innumerable persons whose voices had not been heard or who had lost their voice forever, a man who had tried to plead the cause of those who did not find an advocate in their own society. The Commission and the United Nations were greatly indebted to the Director for the courageous way in which he had contributed to the promotion of human rights, and his delegation wished to express its gratitude to him.
2. Referring to the item under consideration, he said that if the current human rights activities within the United Nations were compared with those undertaken 10 or 15 years previously, some striking differences would be noted. The emphasis had shifted from standard-setting to the problem of how to ensure that the accepted standards were genuinely implemented in the national practice of States. Attention had been focused more and more on the question of what could be done to put an end to human rights violations. In that context, there had been over the past few years, in both the Commission and the General Assembly, a growing willingness of Member States to criticize various human rights situations. His delegation welcomed that new frankness and was also gratified that the United Nations had been able to decide to take action with respect to an increasing number of such situations.
3. On the other hand, he was aware of the limitations of the methods currently applied by the United Nations for promoting effective respect for human rights. Public criticism could be a valuable means of influencing the authorities of a country where violations of human rights occurred, but it might also make such authorities reluctant to respond positively if they felt that that might undermine their prestige. Action by the United Nations with regard to human rights abuses should be guided exclusively by humanitarian considerations, but when such action was decided upon by bodies composed of government representatives, it was impossible to rule out political considerations. Furthermore, since the Commission and the General Assembly only met for certain periods of the year, the United Nations was often not able to react quickly to certain large-scale violations of human rights.
4. In the opinion of his delegation, therefore, it would be extremely valuable if the United Nations appointed a high official who would be in a position to make his good offices available through direct contact with the authorities concerned in order to bring about better observance of human rights. Such an official should be able to act quickly on his own initiative and without the politicization which was virtually inevitable in collective decision-making by the United Nations. To that end, his Government had for many years supported the establishment of a post of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

5. His Government did not regard a High Commissioner as a cure-all who would provide an immediate solution to all serious human rights problems, but it was convinced that the establishment of such a post would greatly enhance the capacity of the United Nations in the human rights field. It had therefore been heartened by resolution 12 (XXIV) of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, in which the Sub-Commission had expressed the view that the establishment of such a post would be highly valuable.

6. In dealing with the question of enhancing the capacity of the United Nations to promote human rights, the important role of the Secretariat should not be overlooked. The Division of Human Rights performed its functions in an admirable manner but it was under constant pressure because the means at its disposal insufficiently reflected the important expansion of those functions in recent years. Strengthening the capacity of the Division was indispensable in order to enable the Secretariat to discharge its functions adequately.

7. With regard to the deliberations of the open-ended working group established in accordance with Commission resolution 28 (XXVI), he regretted that the group had not succeeded during the previous year in submitting specific proposals concerning the over-all analysis of ways of further promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms. However, the Group's discussion of a number of problems and ideas had been constructive and had contributed to a better understanding of them. It might be useful to continue those discussions during the current session in order to explore further the possibilities for finding common ground.

8. Since the subject-matter of the over-all analysis was extremely wide, the Group would have to limit itself to certain themes, and it might be advisable for it to concentrate on the functioning of the Commission. One problem that deserved continued study was the possibility of the occurrence between the Commission's regular sessions of human rights problems which required urgent attention. His Government had made it clear on several occasions that it favoured some sort of intersessional role for the Commission, which included both the possibility of special sessions and that of intersessional activities by the Bureau. His delegation hoped that the group would succeed in making progress on that issue. At the same time, the group might also examine the functioning of the Commission during its regular sessions. In that connection, he drew attention to the closing address which had been made by the previous Chairman at the end of the thirty-seventh session and in which mention had been made of some less than satisfactory aspects of the Commission's functioning.

9. With regard to the development of public information activities in the field of human rights, he referred to Commission resolution 24 (XXVII), which mentioned, inter alia, the dissemination programme of the Secretariat covering international instruments on human rights. His delegation attached great importance to that programme and wished to point out that one of the major achievements of the previous year in connection with human rights instruments had been the adoption by the General Assembly of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. His delegation recommended that the Secretary-General should disseminate that extremely important Declaration widely as a matter of priority and in as many languages as possible. It also

suggested that the Secretary-General should issue and give the widest possible dissemination to a pamphlet containing the text of the Declaration, together with the relevant articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in the six official languages of the United Nations.

10. Mr. DYRLUND (Denmark) said that his delegation could not but express its deep regret at the announcement by Mr. van Boven that he would not continue in his important position as Director of the Division of Human Rights. The Director had made an impressive and dedicated contribution to the work of the United Nations in the field of human rights, and his delegation wished to associate itself with the expressions of thanks and appreciation made by previous speakers.

11. Since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations had achieved a number of important results in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. International instruments such as the International Covenants on Human Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the procedures established to supervise the application of their provisions had contributed considerably to universal and effective recognition of human rights. Nevertheless, the international community was still far from its goal of ensuring for everyone the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

12. As the legislative and standard-setting work relating to the promotion and protection of human rights had progressed, attention had naturally been increasingly directed towards observance and implementation of international instruments and towards international co-operation in response to gross violations of human rights. It was clear that the international community was not adequately equipped to respond to massive and flagrant violations of human rights. Even with sufficient information, it was often difficult for the United Nations to make the necessary decisions to act quickly in the event of serious human rights violations. It was also no secret that there took place in the world severe violations which received little or no attention, with tragic implications for the thousands of individuals concerned. Against that background, his delegation believed that a key question to be dealt with under the item under consideration was how the United Nations could adjust its work in the human rights area in order to respond practically and effectively to massive violations of human rights.

13. His delegation had repeatedly pointed out the need for the United Nations to be able to deal urgently with cases of gross violations of human rights outside the sessions of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on Human Rights. In his Government's view, the establishment of the post of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights would meet that need. In that connection, his delegation noted with interest the view expressed by the Sub-Commission in resolution 12 (XXXIV) that the establishment of the post of High Commissioner would be highly valuable in advancing the promotion and protection of human rights in the world.

14. With regard to the working group which was to convene at the current session, his delegation regretted the lack of results at the previous session. That had perhaps been due to the fact that the proposals before the group had been too numerous and diversified to enable agreement to be reached on specific issues. His delegation wished to suggest, therefore, that the group should concentrate on a specific theme relating to the work of the Commission. In that context, his delegation attached particular importance to the possibility of convening meetings of the Bureau of the Commission during intersessional periods, including emergency meetings. His delegation would also favour discussing proposals which could make the meetings of the Commission more efficient. In addition, consideration should be given to the possibility of alternating the discussion of some agenda items from year to year.

15. The Secretariat and, in particular, the Division of Human Rights had a crucial role to play in the efforts of the international community to promote human rights. In that regard, his delegation emphasized the importance of providing the Secretariat with adequate infrastructure, staff and resources. The redesignation by the Secretary-General of the Division of Human Rights as a "Centre for Human Rights" was therefore strongly supported by his delegation.

16. On the question of the development of public information activities in the field of human rights, he said that the need for general information about human rights issues had often been stressed in resolutions adopted by the Commission and steps to that end should be further encouraged. It would be appropriate for the United Nations to publish as soon as possible the text of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Religious Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, adopted by the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session. Member States should of course take action to ensure the widest possible dissemination of that and other United Nations instruments. The information issue was also highlighted in General Assembly resolution 36/169 concerning the observance of the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In preparations for the anniversary in Denmark, particular emphasis was being placed on human rights debates in educational institutions in order to increase the younger generation's awareness of the importance of the promotion and protection of human rights.

17. Mr. BEAUINE (Canada) said that, in his delegation's view, the time had come for the Commission to draw up a provisional balance sheet of what it had accomplished during the past five years in response to the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly to undertake an overall analysis of the alternative approaches and ways and means for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

18. The results were, in fact, far from convincing, given the time and sincere efforts expended by several members of the Commission to make progress in the matter within the working group. Despite the numerous constructive suggestions made during the work of the group, it had not succeeded in reaching agreement. In the meantime, the human rights situation in the world had continued to evolve, but the ways and means available to the Commission to deal with the situation had remained unchanged. In the circumstances, it was not surprising that serious questions should be raised concerning the future of the group and its mandate.

19. In his delegation's opinion, the Commission had made the group a jack-of-all-trades and it was doubtful that anything specific would emerge from it unless the Commission took immediate steps to introduce some order into its proceedings. The Commission must give it an opportunity to show what it could do by entrusting to it a well-defined task and imposing a specific time-limit. In the light of the results achieved, the Commission would be in a better position to decide on its future and to make the necessary recommendations to the General Assembly on the most appropriate manner in which to continue the task which had been entrusted to it five years previously and which it had unfortunately not yet been able to fulfil. The group should therefore confine itself to a single task, that of formulating precise proposals on the manner in which the Commission should henceforth organize its work and adapt itself to prevailing circumstances.

20. The greatest weakness of the Commission lay in the fact that every year, during the 10 months which followed its annual session, it entered a period of hibernation while the human rights situation in the world continued to evolve in a manner which was frequently disastrous. Such a state of affairs was highly undesirable and could no longer be tolerated. There were a number of possible solutions, and his delegation was prepared to explore them within the group.

21. In his opinion, the group should not at the current stage discuss other proposals aimed at improving the methods which could be used by the United Nations to promote the enjoyment of human rights. On several of those proposals, members of the Commission had differing views and it would serve no purpose to request the group to try to reach an unattainable consensus. It would therefore be for the Commission, and possibly the General Assembly, to take a decision on those proposals as and when they were presented in the form of separate resolutions. For example, proposal concerning the establishment of the post of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was one which the General Assembly had, in resolution 36/135, requested the Commission to consider at its thirty-eighth session. In that connection, note should be taken of the view expressed by the Sub-Commission that the establishment of such a post would be highly valuable in advancing the promotion and protection of human rights in the world.

22. His delegation attached great importance to the redesignation of the Division of Human Rights as a "United Nations Centre for Human Rights". It was high time that such a centre existed and his delegation therefore requested the Secretary-General to remedy the shortcoming as soon as possible.

23. With regard to public information activities in the field of human rights, he noted that the General Assembly had recently adopted a programme of activities in preparation for the celebration in 1983 of the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which stated in its introductory paragraph that every individual and every organ of society should strive by teaching and education to promote respect for the rights and freedoms proclaimed in the Declaration. It was therefore necessary to improve the information activities of the Division of Human Rights. He found it particularly regrettable that so

little publicity had been given by the United Nations to the proclamation by the General Assembly of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, and he would be grateful if the Secretariat would draw the attention of the United Nations information services to the importance of disseminating the text of that Declaration.

24. The Division of Human Rights should be equipped with an adequate library in order to carry out the tasks entrusted to it. In order to reduce costs, the Secretary-General might perhaps appeal to Member States to donate to the Division works published in their territory.

25. In 1979, the Commission had decided that the United Nations Yearbook on Human Rights would henceforth be issued every year on a fixed date. However, he had not yet seen a single issue and he expressed his Government's concern at the Secretariat's tardiness in implementing the resolution. If the Yearbook was to be of value, each new issue should contain detailed information which could be used by Governments, the media and the general public in their daily activities. What was needed was a genuine reference book which was updated every year and not a history textbook. His delegation would welcome information from the Secretariat concerning its intentions regarding the implementation of the resolution in question.

26. With regard to the question of ways and means for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, he stressed that the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities could and should play an increasingly active role in the pursuit of the Commission's objectives.

27. Mr. HUTTON (Australia) said that it was fruitless to expect the working group to reach consensus on the complex and difficult issues it had had before it the previous year and that the right course was to seek solutions within the Commission itself. In his opinion, the group should concentrate on practical proposals which could command general agreement.

28. The agenda item under consideration was mainly concerned with the promotion of human rights. Various approaches to that goal were possible. His delegation had for several years attached importance to developing appropriate public information activities. Although he welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the item (E/CN.4/1496), a close reading indicated that a great deal more could be done. High priority should be given to the dissemination of international instruments on human rights and he strongly supported the wide dissemination, in as many languages as possible, of the inspiring and universally significant Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.

29. Much work on human rights being done in academic and other institutions was of direct relevance to United Nations activities. However, the United Nations was not adequately equipped to keep track of such research and did not currently serve as an effective point of reference for those engaged in it. He would be glad to discuss with other members of the Commission ways of improving that situation.

30. In recent years, there had been a tendency for the discussion of over-all analysis to be confined to an exchange of views between those seeking structural changes in the United Nations human rights machinery and those concerned with ideological questions about the definition of human rights issues. It was incumbent on all members of the Commission to find a better basis for constructive dialogue. One of the contentious issues had been the proposal to establish a High Commissioner for Human Rights. The mandate of such an official would be seriously undermined if consensus was lacking at the outset of his appointment. His delegation was, however, optimistic that consensus could be reached on the terms of reference for the post and it was ready to discuss the proposal further.

31. It would be useful to consider how the working group's discussion of the over-all analysis of alternative approaches might yield practical results. It was perhaps unrealistic for the group to attempt a fruitful discussion of all of them. The time could be more productively used if, by agreement, the group concentrated on one or two issues. One such issue might be how the Commission itself functioned during its annual session and the scope for intersessional activity. In view of the Commission's primary responsibility for examining ways and means for promoting human rights, there would seem to be scope for enhancing its role.

32. He had been deeply moved by the announcement by the Director of the Division of Human Rights of his departure. Some might rejoice, but many delegations and Governments would deeply regret it. Members of the Commission should bear in mind that the reactions of citizens, not only banded together in non-governmental organizations but also as individuals, were of great importance for the work of the Commission.

33. Mr. MARTINEZ (Argentina) said he could express neither surprise nor regret at the announcement made by the Director of the Division of Human Rights. He had not been surprised because he had read in that day's issue of The Guardian some injudicious comments on the subject. Nor was he sorry, since on more than one occasion his delegation had found itself obliged to point out in the Commission, in the Economic and Social Council and in other United Nations organs deviations on the part of the Director from the obligations which the United Nations Charter and Staff Regulations imposed on international civil servants - deviations which took the form of malicious statements, information leaks and undesirable administrative practices. It was only by fulfilling their obligations that international civil servants could hope to have their prerogatives and independence of judgement fully respected. The Director had once again behaved unconventionally in making to the Commission a statement which was not an objective introduction to the agenda item under discussion, but expressed his own feelings and his differences with the leadership of the United Nations. Such comments could be taken to imply a lack of understanding on the part of the Secretary-General of human rights problems. The facts were quite otherwise: the present Secretary-General had stressed at his first press conference that human rights were one of the fundamental responsibilities of the United Nations and the Secretary-General himself. It might well be asked, if the Director had major policy differences with the leadership of the Organization, on whose behalf he had been speaking when he had addressed the Commission.



34. Turning to the agenda item under consideration, he said that the Commission had already given effective support to the promotion of human rights by the part it had played in the UNESCO International Conference on the Teaching of Human Rights in 1978, by its encouragement of the establishment of national institutions for the promotion of human rights in accordance with domestic legislation and by its constant pressure on Governments to adopt measures to publicize the work of United Nations human rights bodies. However, other proposals remained in abeyance. One such proposal was for the establishment of a High Commissioner for Human Rights, which had been under discussion since 1978. The important point about that proposal was that the role of the Commission within the United Nations system should be harmonized with the work of other international and regional bodies concerned with human rights. Other proposals were the redesignation of the Division as a "Centre for Human Rights", and the possibility of intersessional meetings of the Bureau. Lastly, there was the question of holding emergency sessions of the Commission in response to urgent reports of massive and flagrant human rights violations. His delegation would take an active part in discussing such proposals in the working group. Five years after the General Assembly had adopted resolution 32/130, it should be borne in mind that the Commission had not yet worked out a balanced long-term programme.

35. Emergency situations should be defined only by consensus within the General Assembly: no interpretation should be made by bodies which were not universal in nature. There should be no double standards, which led to politicization. The current programme and agenda of the Commission did not promote the indivisibility and interdependence of human rights referred to in General Assembly resolution 32/130, nor encourage the analysis of situations in countries with full respect for national realities. With regard to international co-operation, the Commission's present method was condemnation, followed by confrontation and stalemate which precluded any real possibility of negotiation. Such a procedure diminished the Commission's chances of making an effective contribution to the serious problems affecting the peoples and individuals concerned.

36. Ms. DERMENDJIEVA (Bulgaria) said that there could be no more explicit definition of the role of the United Nations in encouraging respect for human rights than that set forth in the Charter. Experience proved that, given a readiness on the part of Member States to comply with their obligations, the United Nations could and did accomplish its main tasks of combating mass and flagrant violations of human rights and drafting international instruments on human rights.

37. Her delegation appreciated the fact that an extensive system of international bodies dealing with human rights problems in accordance with the Charter and relevant international agreements was already in existence as a sound basis for co-operation among the international community. However, it could not be claimed that the United Nations had found an effective solution to all current human rights problems.

38. The Commission had worked intensively on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 32/130. One of the main points in its over-all analysis was the role of the Commission as the main intergovernmental organ in the field of human rights. There was no doubt that the most important condition for its effective functioning was to focus on the fundamental problems relating to the promotion of human rights rather than deal with secondary problems, usually with counterproductive results. In that connection, her delegation supported a review of the Commission's mandate. The Economic and Social Council had taken an important first step in that direction by its adoption of resolution 1979/36, as a result of which the Commission's composition had been enlarged, its sessions extended and its mandate widened. The way had thus been prepared for great improvements in the Commission's work; but there were still some interesting and useful ideas to be discussed, such as the drafting of a long-term programme of work pursuant to resolution 32/130.

39. In the opinion of her delegation, the organizational structure and capacity of the United Nations system in the human rights field were satisfactory; any improvement efforts should focus on the more effective functioning of existing bodies, particularly the Council and the Commission. It doubted whether any new organ, particularly an administrative one, established to promote respect for human rights would in fact improve the Organization's activities. Bulgaria remained firmly opposed to the establishment of the post of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for a number of reasons. Firstly, although the Charter called upon all Member States to co-operate in promoting the enjoyment of human rights, differences in views were too wide to enable a High Commissioner to function effectively. Secondly, there was wide disagreement about the mandate for such a post. Thirdly, it was hard to see how a High Commissioner could cope with the staggering number of issues which at present burdened the agendas of the Third Committee of the General Assembly, the Council, the Commission and other United Nations bodies; moreover, such a post would not have the status of that of Secretary-General of the United Nations. Fourthly, pursuant to the Charter, only the Secretary-General could offer good offices and a United Nations presence in the event of disputes; States in need of advice already had recourse to the advisory services programme. Fifthly, facilities for evaluating the implementation of State policies relating to human rights already existed in the form of the Committee on Human Rights, the Council's Working Group on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. On that subject, the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, in adopting resolution 12 (XXXIV) and decisions 2 (XXXIV) and 3 (XXXIV), had clearly overstepped its mandate.

40. Her delegation intended to co-operate fully with the open-ended working group during its consideration of proposals, including one which it had itself submitted.

41. Mr. Garvalov (Bulgaria) took the Chair.

42. Mr. MAKSIMOV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that international co-operation in promoting and encouraging human rights and fundamental freedoms was impossible without due regard to the basic aims of the United Nations, which included international peace and security, friendly relations among States on the basis of equality and self-determination, and non-interference in internal affairs.

Much progress had been made, under United Nations auspices, in promoting human rights under those conditions. The way to achieve more effective promotion of human rights, therefore, was to improve the ability of the existing United Nations system to give effect to the principles set forth in particular in General Assembly resolution 32/130, which stressed the relationship of civil and political rights with economic, social and cultural rights, and the need to investigate gross violations of human rights stemming from apartheid, all forms of racial discrimination, colonialism, foreign domination and occupation, aggression, and threats to national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

43. Any appraisal of human rights programmes should concentrate on measures to protect the most fundamental human right - the right to life, on measures to do away with unemployment, illiteracy and other social evils still suffered by millions, on gross violations of human rights in the occupied territories of the Middle East and those stemming from racial discrimination and apartheid, and on the practices of the military junta in Chile. Matters such as the Programme for the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, the adverse consequences for human rights of assistance given to the racist régimes in southern Africa, and effective measures to guarantee the full enjoyment of rights throughout the world must also be considered.

44. In his delegation's view, the United Nations structure already contained too many bodies, with the result that there was occasional duplication. Some of those bodies carried out tasks which fell within the competence of the machinery established by the International Covenants on human rights. Improvements in the United Nations system should be sought by reducing the excessive number of groups, sub-commissions and similar bodies and thus reducing expenditure. Perhaps the open-ended working group could pay particular attention to the role of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, whose members often seemed to act in a personal capacity and at times exceeded the Sub-Commission's mandate, thus prejudicing the element of international co-operation essential to the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

45. The working document prepared in 1981 by the delegations of Bulgaria, Mongolia and Poland could form a sound basis for development of the Commission's programme. The document was based on six important points, to which a further point - the right to live in peace - could perhaps be added. The most important matter the working group could look into might be the procedure followed under Council resolution 1503 (XLVIII), which had been rendered obsolete by the International Covenants and their more efficacious procedures. Other organizational measures which deserved consideration included the periodicity of the Sub-Commission's sessions, which could perhaps be biennial rather than annual, thus enabling its members to give greater attention to the matters referred to it by the Commission; the resultant reduction in cost would be an important factor.

46. Human rights could be effectively guaranteed only in conditions of international co-operation and respect for those rights by all States. The United Nations had established a number of instruments and procedures for that purpose; and Member States were called upon to submit reports on the measures they took in fulfilling their obligations to safeguard human rights. In considering ways and means to improve the effectiveness of the United Nations system, particularly in regard to human rights, the valuable experience gained from those procedures could not be overlooked.

47. Some Western States were advocating new supranational human rights bodies, while failing to adhere to existing international agreements. Current international law was based on the principle, enshrined in the Charter, of respect for the political independence and territorial sovereignty of States; it was up to each State to conduct its own social, economic and political affairs with due regard to the principles of international law. The best forms of international protection for human rights, therefore, were international agreements legally binding on the signatory States. But those States which advocated the creation of a supranational body for human rights clearly wished to use it as a cloak for interference in the internal affairs of others.

48. The Byelorussian SSR and other socialist countries actively supported international co-operation in the field of human rights. The principle of universal respect for those rights was embodied in the Constitution of the Byelorussian SSR, which stood for the development of fruitful collaboration among States in order to safeguard human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for measures which would benefit all peoples in their quest for peace and security.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.