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SESSIONAL WORKING GROUP OF GOVERNMENTAL EXPERTS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 5th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 16 April 1986, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. RUIZ-CABAÑAS (Mexico)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1988 (LX)
BY STATES PARTIES TO THE COVENANT CONCERNING RIGHTS COVERED BY ARTICLES 10 to 12
(continued)

Initial report of Zambia (continued) (E/1986/3/Add.2)

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Lichilana (Zambia) took a place at the table.

1. The CHAIRMAN, speaking as a member of the Working Group, said that he would welcome information on the way in which recent trends in the international economic situation had affected Zambia and the standard of living of its people. He also wished to know what role the State played in promoting economic and social development with a view to ensuring enjoyment of the rights set forth in articles 10 to 12 of the Covenant.

2. Mr. BENDIX (Denmark) said that Zambia should be commended for its ratification of the Covenant in 1984. Its report, however, clearly reflected a lack of experience in preparing such reports. In that regard, the introductory statement by the representative of Zambia was a useful supplement to the report itself. Motivated solely by a desire to be helpful, the Working Group should invite those Governments which lacked expertise to avail themselves of the services of the Centre for Human Rights when preparing reports.

3. Referring to paragraphs 2 and 3 of the report of Zambia, he said he would welcome an explanation of how article 4 of the Constitution was compatible with article 13 thereof, which protected the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual.

4. The establishment of an Office of the Investigator-General was an interesting development. He wondered whether it was envisaged to extend the mandate of that Office to promote the implementation of the rights of individuals in the private sector as well.

5. Mr. YAKOVLEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), recalling a criticism voiced at the previous meeting, said that each expert in the Working Group had a right to his own ideas and positions. Other experts should not, therefore, try to impose their ideas on their colleagues.

6. Zambia, despite the difficulties caused by its lack of economic development, had ratified the Covenant and had submitted its initial report. Its representative had shown a willingness to answer questions and to inform the Working Group not only of his Government's accomplishments but also of its failures and its difficulties. That reflected the role played by the Zambian Government in international co-operation and in the promotion of economic, social and cultural rights in Zambia.

(Mr. Yakovlev, USSR)

7. He would be interested to hear the views of the representative of Zambia on the link between the right to development and the current world economic crisis on the one hand, and the enjoyment of economic and social rights on the other. In his view, those elements were all closely interrelated. Moreover, he wished to know whether African countries saw a link between the nuclear-arms race and the implementation of those rights, since the arms race consumed resources which could have been used to tackle poverty and starvation and to promote economic and social rights.
8. Zambia's report, though concise, described a number of revolutionary changes taking place in the country, which were related to the implementation of articles 10 to 12 of the Covenant. The provision of free medical services to citizens and non-citizens alike was an example that even some developed countries would do well to emulate.
9. Zambia for a long time had been a victim of colonial and racist exploitation. It would therefore be interesting to learn how the various principles embodied in the United Nations Charter and in other international instruments were reflected in Zambia's Constitution, its legislation and the policies of the Government, and implemented without discrimination of any kind. He was convinced that in Zambia the principle of full equality before the law was respected, and it was interesting to observe a country, itself the victim of colonial exploitation, implementing policies to combat discrimination.
10. He did not agree with the view that there was no connection between the question of shelter and the Covenant. It was not possible to speak of people's well-being without concerning oneself with the question of adequate shelter. While others were entitled to disagree, it would be absurd to adopt a contrary position. The Government of Zambia should be commended for establishing the National Housing Authority in order to upgrade housing standards in both urban and rural areas.
11. Much of mankind, particularly the peoples of Africa, were confronted with desertification and the unavailability of potable water. Zambia's efforts to make potable water available to all therefore represented an important step towards implementing the provisions of the Covenant relating to health care.
12. Mr. MRACHKOV (Bulgaria) said that Zambia's ratification of the Covenant and the submission of its initial report (E/1986/3/Add.2) showed the will of that country to participate in international efforts to promote human rights. While the report reflected a lack of experience in the preparation of such reports, the information it contained on the economic and social realities of Zambia was far richer than might be expected from its content.
13. More details should be provided on the information contained in paragraph 14 of the report. He would also welcome additional information on the benefits available to married people under the Income Tax Act, referred to in paragraph 13 of the report.
14. Finally, he wished to know what effect the country's external debt had on the standard of living of Zambians.

15. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUENO (Spain) congratulated the representative of Zambia on his country's ratification of the Covenant and on the submission of its initial report. While it was clear that technical assistance was needed in the preparation of future reports, the Working Group should take note of Zambia's efforts to implement the rights set forth in the Covenant.

16. She wished to know whether efforts were being made in the field of education similar to those made in the field of health and whether free education was provided in Zambia. She would also welcome information on the extent of the participation of youth and women in the labour force, the level of unemployment in Zambia, and whether the current anti-corruption drive was a response to an existing situation, and if so, how long that situation had existed. Finally, she inquired whether the age of legal majority of 21 years had been established by tradition and whether a reduction of that age to 18 or 19 years was being contemplated.

17. Mr. BEN HAMIDA (Tunisia) said that the report of Zambia showed the will of that country to engage in a constructive dialogue with the Working Group and to participate, despite its limited resources, in the international effort to promote human rights. The report and the introductory statement described in a very sincere manner not only the achievements of Zambia but also the obstacles encountered by that country in its efforts to implement economic, social and cultural rights. Clearly, many of those obstacles were due to external causes beyond the Government's control. The introductory statement had emphasized the lack of financial inflows, expertise and technical skills, which had made it difficult to realize the enjoyment of certain rights. That illustrated the effect of the economic crisis on the ability of countries, particularly developing countries, to implement fully the rights set forth in the Covenant.

18. Mr. TEXIER (France), reiterating the comments made regarding lacunae in the report of Zambia, especially where general data on the country were concerned, said that the report provided a further argument for the need to furnish technical assistance in the preparation of country reports. Zambia had in any case taken a good first step.

19. It was excellent that medical services were provided free of charge in Zambia. It would be interesting, however, to have information on the country's major medical problems, such as endemic tropical diseases or a high infant-mortality rate, and on the Government's main difficulties in dealing with those problems.

20. Referring to the comment by one of the other experts that one of his judgements was absurd, he emphasized that he personally had an absolute respect for freedom of speech and would hope that other experts would respect his right to say what he thought.

21. Mr. LY (Senegal) praised Zambia for its efforts to implement the Covenant and agreed that in the next report it should arrange the various points along the lines of the Covenant - a technical rather than a substantive matter. In paragraph 12, the report should have given details of the law in question so that members could

(Mr. Ly, Senegal)

judge the extent to which it implemented the Covenant; the same could be said for paragraphs 13 and 15. An overview of the difficult economic situation in Zambia that was impeding its efforts to implement the Covenant would have been instructive: the Government had, for instance, a well-defined agricultural policy but for the moment could not proceed towards the goals set. In addition, he inquired how the Government viewed the protection of the many immigrant workers in Zambia.

22. Mr. LICHILANA (Zambia) said that he would do his best to reply to the questions raised, and would ensure that the next report of Zambia would be as detailed as the Working Group desired.

23. Mr. Lichilana (Zambia) withdrew.

Initial report of Venezuela (continued) (E/1980/6/Add.38)

24. At the invitation of the Chairman, Miss Pulido (Venezuela) took a place at the table.

25. Miss PULIDO (Venezuela) observed that any questions to which she was unable to reply would be referred to her Ministry of Foreign Affairs for an answer.

26. Regarding the legal status of the Covenant in Venezuela, the procedure for integrating all international instruments into domestic law was to pass a special law adopting them as such, and that had been done in the case of the Covenant. Since many of the human-rights norms of the Covenant had already existed in the Venezuelan Constitution, the Covenant was generally not directly invoked before the courts, but there was nothing to prevent an individual from doing so if he so wished.

27. As to the State's role in solving social problems, the Constitution had no ideological rigidity and could therefore accommodate all currents of political thought in a pluralistic democracy, as well as all political parties. Venezuela had developed a form of State capitalism: it had a mixed economy where the means of production could belong to either the public or the private sector. The system involved the establishment of basic rights like the right of economic freedom and the right of property, under State protection. At the same time, the State had various powers to intervene in the economy by taking planning, regulatory and promotional measures. The State was considered an instrument of society, serving the common good, social justice, democratic order and respect for human dignity, as outlined in the preamble to the Constitution. The State was expected to ensure the safety and well-being of its people and see to it that all shared equitably in the national wealth through economic development. It was responsible for helping all sectors of society and for advancing the creative development of each citizen. The State's role in achieving social justice therefore extended to the provision of health services, housing, transport and other public services.

(Miss Pulido, Venezuela)

28. Article 116 of the Labour Act provided six weeks of maternity leave for pregnant women before and after delivery, and such leave could be extended for certified medical reasons. There was no provision for paternity leave. The Ministry of Youth (currently being reorganized as the future Ministry of the Family) was responsible for ensuring that working women were not dismissed because of pregnancy, and had set up a special service to hear complaints to that effect. Similar services were provided by the Office of the Public Prosecutor, and there were plans to set up such services also in the regional women's bureaux. Under the Labour Act, a pregnant woman, like any other worker, could be dismissed on the grounds of an unjustified absence of three days or more, insubordination, failure to perform her duties, and similar failings.

29. The Civil Code had been revised in 1982 and it now stipulated that all children, whether born in or out of wedlock, or adopted, received equal treatment under the law. The new Adoption Act of 1984 had, however, kept the distinction between simple adoption, where the child maintained relations with its natural parents, and full adoption, where there was no contact with the natural parents; the sole criterion of the law was the good of each child.

30. Under the revised Civil Code, men and women acquired equal rights and duties through marriage. Marriage entailed the obligation of mutual support and gave women the right to assume their husband's name. Temporary separation for a valid reason was permissible. Both spouses must care for the home and share expenses; a spouse delinquent in those duties could be obliged to fulfil them at the request of the other. Both spouses must reach decisions jointly and administer the family property equally. The minimum age for marriage was 14 years for women and 16 years for men, and the consent of both was required before marriage could be entered into. Rape did not constitute a grounds for marriage, and it was considered that mistaken identity precluded true consent. Minors not of marriageable age required the consent of their parents, unless the girl was pregnant or already had a child or had conceived a child which her male partner recognized as his own.

31. The Labour Act protected women by excluding them from certain kinds of work such as night work or work considered dangerous. The women's movement in Venezuela, however, had long struggled for equality and the National Women's Bureau of the Ministry of Youth had proposed an amendment to the Labour Act that would eliminate any provisions limiting a woman's right to enter certain professions.

32. The Constitution entitled women to participate in politics and in business affairs on an equal footing with men, by prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of sex. Women had the right to vote and to be elected to public office. Women themselves had fought for the full exercise of such rights, and there were now women in leadership positions in the Congress, in the foreign service and in the municipal councils. The Acción Democrática, the party which had spearheaded the struggle for women's rights, had recently raised its goal from 15 to 20 per cent as the targeted proportion of women in executive positions. The National Women's Bureau supported political, trade-union and religious groups and non-governmental organizations working on behalf of women, as did the Inter-American Commission of

(Miss Pulido, Venezuela)

Women. In the executive branch of the Government, 10 per cent were women, including two ministers; in municipal government, the proportion of women had moved from 6.5 per cent in 1975 to 21.5 per cent in 1985. In the teaching profession, women constituted 85 per cent at the pre-school and primary-school level, 49.7 per cent at the secondary-school level and 31.5 per cent in higher education. The director of the major obstetrical hospital in Venezuela was a woman.

33. The 1973 revision of the Labour Act had made the provision of day-care facilities obligatory in any firm with more than 29 employees. In Valencia, for instance, an industrial zone, 50 per cent of the businesses had established day-care facilities. In 1981, 79 per cent of the labour contracts provided for day-care facilities. The public authorities had established both centralized and decentralized organizations to set up such facilities.

34. The Minors Protection Act, which was part of the Venezuelan Civil Code, contained provisions regarding child abuse and juvenile offenders. The most important attribute of patria potestas was the physical and mental well-being of minors. Parents were obliged to care for and protect their children and ensure their upbringing in accordance with ethical and moral principles. When those duties were not fulfilled, the minor was considered as having been abandoned. A child could not be considered the property of his or her parents, and parents had no right to inflict severe punishment on their children, intentionally causing physical harm or producing irreversible injuries, including death. Parents could punish their children only in a way which corresponded to the age and development of the minor. For that reason, whenever it was necessary to impose a major sanction on a minor, the parents had to appear before a juvenile court. In such cases, it was always necessary that the minor considered himself to be in a dangerous situation. Venezuelan law preferred the idea of "correcting" rather than "punishing" minors, and parents who engaged in excessive punishment of their children could lose their right to patria potestas or be prosecuted under the Penal Code.

35. In everyday life, there were situations in which minors experienced maltreatment when they were abandoned, or when they committed crimes which placed them in danger. Venezuelan penal and correctional legislation provided for special guardianship in cases where a minor was the perpetrator or victim of crimes or dangerous conduct, as provided for in the Penal Code and in the Law on Vagrancy. In Venezuela, there were various bodies which dealt with child-abuse allegations.

36. According to a 1980 study, one out of every four adopted children was a foreigner. As to the differences between Venezuelan citizens and non-citizens, article 45 of the Constitution guaranteed foreigners the same duties and rights as Venezuelans, subject to the limitations or exceptions contained in the Constitution and various acts. Basically, the difference between Venezuelans and non-citizens had to do with political rights. Nevertheless, foreigners could be granted the right to vote in municipal elections.

(Miss Pulido, Venezuela)

37. The Constitution prohibited discrimination based on race, creed or social position. In addition, titles of nobility and hereditary distinctions were not recognized. Venezuela had enacted special laws to prevent discrimination between men and women with regard to remuneration.

38. Venezuela's external debt and the fall in oil prices had adversely affected the standard of living. The State had taken measures to rationalize its expenditure and to maintain the quality of services in order to guarantee social rights. However, the serious financial and economic situation had delayed the implementation of certain social programmes and had made it necessary to abandon others. The unemployment rate and the cost of living had risen, and the resulting fall in consumption had led many enterprises to lay off workers and introduce a hiring freeze.

39. With regard to Venezuela's demographic policies, there were no restrictions on the movement of the population and no limits on the number of children a couple could have. Over a long period, Venezuela had experienced rapid population growth as a result of a high fertility rate. In the twentieth century, improved public health had led to a drop in morbidity and mortality rates. The bulk of the population was concentrated in the cities, especially Caracas, Maracaibo and Valencia. In 1971, the volume of internal migration was 2.3 million persons in a population of 10.7 million. The proportion of urban population was declining as a result of the gradual slackening off of migration from rural areas and the decline in the fertility rate.

40. In the past, Venezuela had welcomed immigrants from other Latin American countries who had sought political asylum and better economic opportunity. When such foreigners entered the country in accordance with legal procedures, they did not present a problem. In 1980 and 1981, the Venezuelan Government had offered illegal aliens the opportunity to legalize their status. The status of foreigner did not prevent immigrants from enjoying all economic, social and cultural rights. However, the status of illegal alien could result in deportation. Between 8 and 10 per cent of the Venezuelan population was made up of immigrants, including illegal immigrants.

41. In recent years, the annual inflation rate in Venezuela had been 12.5 per cent. Since 1983 that rate had been difficult to calculate owing to the unpredictable economic situation, especially the fall in oil prices, but the current annual rate could be estimated at somewhat more than 15 per cent. In 1984 the gross national product had been 348,454 million bolívares, and the average income had amounted to 2,667 bolívares a year. It was important to point out that oil accounted for 93.3 per cent of all Venezuelan exports. The Labour Act did not establish a minimum wage, since that was decided by the labour unions. Only non-unionized workers had a minimum wage; in the rural sector, it was 30 bolívares a day.

42. The NORVEN stamp referred to in paragraph 20 (e) of the report was not a commercial stamp. It consisted of a distinctive symbol which signified that a product was manufactured in accordance with the quality-control norms approved by the Ministry.

(Miss Pulido, Venezuela)

43. Minimum housing standards existed, and an office of the Ministry of Development protected leaseholders from possible speculation by landlords who took advantage of the housing shortage; it also regulated rents.
44. The Banco Obrero had been the first bank in Latin America to become involved with the programming, design, construction and financing of public housing. The national authorities could intervene in the construction of urban housing through the Ministry of Public Works, the National Health Institute and the Banco Obrero; the latter had recently become the National Housing Institute. A rural housing programme, founded in 1958, also existed. Between 1928 and 1968, the Banco Obrero and the Rural Housing Programme had promoted the construction of 505,285 housing units.
45. Venezuela had a compulsory social security system for civil servants and workers. Both workers and employers must make weekly or monthly payments to the Venezuelan Social Security Institute. Social security guaranteed the provision of medical care, surgery and medicines, as well as maternity care. Workers were also entitled to disability, old-age and death benefits. In 1984, a total of 143,784 workers had received pensions from the Social Security Institute. Of that number, 6,898 persons had received pensions for partial incapacity, 32,080 for disability, 31,685 for death and 73,118 for old age.
46. In 1975, the Venezuelan infant-mortality rate had been 43.32 per cent; by 1985 it had dropped to 35.88 per cent as a result of early perinatal care. The 8 per cent drop in the overall mortality rate was closely related to the decline in the infant-mortality rate. In 1980, the four principal causes of death in Venezuela had been: heart disease, 15 per cent of all deaths; accidents, 11.9 per cent; cancer, 8 per cent; and perinatal disease, 8 per cent.
47. In Venezuela, public hospitals provided care free of charge to all Venezuelans and foreigners. Health was a right guaranteed by the Constitution. Venezuela had a standard of health which approached the norms established by international bodies. In 1982, there had been 2.7 hospital beds per thousand inhabitants. However, in some cities, certain hospitals were overcrowded while, in other hospitals in the same cities, hospital beds remained unused for long periods. The distribution of medical facilities and personnel was not in keeping with the needs of the various regions of the country. The Venezuelan health-care system was characterized by the predominance of medical specialists over general practitioners. The Ministry of Health and Social Assistance provided for the prevention and treatment of illness. The structure of the health sector included more than 80 institutions which were trying to maintain their autonomy from the Ministry of Health. The Venezuelan Government was planning to establish a body to co-ordinate health services throughout the country.
48. Venezuela had a dental-hygiene programme for school children which was provided through the mother and child care centres of the Ministry of Health. In 1984, the Venezuelan Social Security Institute had provided dental care to 1,475,602 patients.

(Miss Pulido, Venezuela)

49. A special national commission had been established in Venezuela to deal with the problem of drug abuse. In the past 10 years, Venezuela had become a major centre of drug trafficking and consumption. In 1984, the Congress had passed a law on narcotics and psychotropic substances. The crime of drug trafficking was punishable by a prison sentence of 10 to 20 years, and possession of drugs was considered a serious crime. Unfortunately, statistics on drug abuse by young people were not available.

50. The Labour Act was valid for all enterprises. However, it was not possible to provide information regarding the percentage of workers and employers who did not obey that Act. It was also not possible to reply to questions regarding the Costs, Prices and Salaries Act and the Consumer Protection Act. Her Government would attempt to provide answers in the near future or would include them in the initial report on articles 13 to 15 of the Covenant.

51. Miss Pulido (Venezuela) withdrew.

Initial report of Madagascar (continued) (E/1980/6/Add.39)

52. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Rakotozafy (Madagascar) took a place at the table.

53. Mr. RAKOTOZAFY (Madagascar), responding to questions raised by Group members, said that in 1983 females represented 50.7 per cent, and males 49.3 per cent, of the estimated 9.5 million inhabitants of Madagascar. The urban population was 21 per cent of the total population. The birth rate was estimated at 44 per thousand, and the death rate at 13 per thousand. Currently, UNICEF estimated the infant-mortality rate at 68 per thousand. The mean natural population growth rate was 2.7 per cent per year. Women between the ages of 15 and 49 each had an average of 6.3 children. According to a 1984 population study, the Malagasy population would double approximately every 26 years if the natural growth rate was maintained at its 1984 level. Therefore, demographic aspects had a considerable impact on Madagascar's economic and social development policy.

54. Since the majority of Malagasy women lived in rural areas, it was more difficult for the Government to promote women's rights and to eradicate the centuries-old tradition of viewing women as objects.

55. Women's rights had been recognized in the 1975 Constitution and numerous other legislative texts. The Constitution outlawed discrimination based on sex, race, origin, religious beliefs and financial status. It guaranteed equal rights in the areas of education, vocational training, suffrage and culture, and equal access to public office, professions and employment. Lastly, it protected the family and encouraged its cohesiveness.

56. The bride's consent was necessary to validate a marriage. Malagasy legislation stipulated that the husband was head of the family, and his wife co-operated with him to ensure the moral and material guidance of the family and

(Mr. Rakotozafy, Madagascar)

child rearing. The husband could choose the place of residence. The wife was not required to bear her husband's name. Her special right of misitaka entitled the wronged woman to leave home and return to her family until her husband came for her. She could not be repudiated and enjoyed full legal capacity.

57. Regarding property ownership in marriage, Malagasy law provided that each spouse retained full ownership of his or her personal property and could freely dispose of it. Personal property included movable and immovable property owned at the time of marriage, or acquired during marriage through inheritance, donation, or bequest. The joint estate consisted of the spouse's income and common monies. The husband managed the joint estate, but the wife's consent was required in certain cases specified by law. If the marriage was dissolved, in the absence of a marriage contract the ordinary-law system applied, i.e., two thirds of the joint estate reverted to the husband, and one third to the wife. There was at present a strong trend to eliminate that rule, but it met resistance rooted in custom.

58. Two kinds of marriage were provided by law, a marriage performed by a registrar, and in rural areas, a marriage that was simply registered, following the usual formalities carried out by a representative of the civil authorities. Traditional marriage took place when the vodiondry, i.e., gifts in cash or in kind, were given by the husband-to-be to his future in-laws as an engagement pledge. That formality distinguished traditional marriage from casual unions and concubinage. The traditional marriage was validated once the marriage certificate had been drawn up by the registrar, upon presentation of the record drawn up at the time of marriage by a representative of the civil authorities. Spouses in traditional marriages could settle their disputes before either an ordinary court or a traditional court composed of a representative of the civil authorities and two members of the community in which the spouses last resided. The age of majority, 18 years, was the minimum age for marriage.

59. In 1976, the Office of Status of Women and Children and the Office of Population were set up within the Ministry of Population, Youth and Sports with a view to promoting the status of women and children and gradually integrating women in national development.

60. Regarding education and training, efforts had been focused on primary and secondary education, vocational training, adult education and the literacy campaign. Three principles underscored the new education and training system: democratization, decentralization and Malgachization. Schooling was compulsory and free for all children up to the age of 14. Basic-education schools had been built in many fokontany (traditional communal divisions). Level I education lasted five years. Between 1975 and 1979, 2,668 new schools had been constructed. There was a growing need for new teachers, met in part by young men and women in fulfillment of their national-service obligations. Decentralized communities played a major role in building schools themselves and ensuring school attendance. There were day-care centres in which children between the ages of 1 and 6 received an education based on community life, and which enabled mothers better to participate in economic, social and cultural activities.

(Mr. Rakotozafy, Madagascar)

61. Secondary education was divided into basic secondary education (level II) lasting four years, and specialized secondary education (level III) lasting three years. Higher education (level IV) was provided for young persons who had completed level III and had fulfilled their national-service obligations outside the armed forces.

62. A major obstacle to development was the high percentage of illiterates. Moreover, in 1976, 64 per cent of the 2.3 million illiterates were women. The Office of Adult Literacy and Education worked to eradicate illiteracy. It had set up functional literacy centres in the decentralized communities, staffed by young men and women in fulfilment of their national-service obligation. The Malagasy Socialist Revolution Charter stipulated that any citizen receiving instruction was required to participate in the national literacy campaign. The Office hoped for wider participation from other ministerial departments engaged in rural activities, such as the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Rural Development. For example, literacy courses were provided for mothers attending primary-health-care centres.

63. With regard to employment, the Constitution stipulated that work was an honour and a duty for every citizen. It was required of each according to his ability, and remunerated according to quality and quantity. Since women outnumbered men, the Government was understandably concerned to have women participate in the country's economic development. Consequently, the new Labour Code and other legislation had eliminated all sex discrimination. Recruitment, wages, and working conditions were the same for all. Some sectors, such as the army and aviation, barred women, but plans were under way to eliminate those barriers.

64. Under the pre-1975 régime, a large percentage of women, mostly from poor urban or rural environments, had not received education or professional training. In a campaign against female unemployment, the Ministry of Population had set up sewing and handicraft co-operatives in urban areas. Various actions had been undertaken by several ministries on behalf of rural women, including the setting up of a livestock co-operative and handicraft co-operatives. Decentralized communities and revolutionary groups had set up distribution co-operatives. The establishment of co-operatives seemed to be the most effective means of accelerating development. That trend could encourage women's participation in economic, social and political development. Furthermore, a new migration policy had been devised.

65. Regarding health policy, the Malagasy Socialist Revolution Charter advocated a focus on mass education and prevention of infectious diseases, especially in rural areas and among the poorest and most vulnerable groups, including women and children. Apart from the hospitals and clinics located mainly in cities, primary-health-care centres had been set up in the fokontany, administered by local staff. Construction of such centres, in which the local population participated, would be spread out over five years. Five hundred of the 2,500 centres planned were already operational. In addition, 500 health-care workers had been trained, of which 105 were women. Maternal and child health centres had been set up in the various districts. Those centres provided pre-marital, pre-natal, and post-natal examinations, and examinations for infants and pre-school-age children.

(Mr. Rakotozafy, Madagascar)

66. In its struggle against infectious diseases and malnutrition, the Government had set up various services, including sanitation, and had developed a programme for nutritional education conducted by teams of women.

67. With regard to infrastructure, the Government was planning to construct 20,000 housing units each year, and to proceed with rural electrification. Highway construction and improvement had been undertaken, and wells and dams were envisaged with a view to easing the strain on women's daily life.

68. The Office on the Status of Women and Children monitored progress made in favour of women. It collaborated with other ministries and with private bodies employing women. Despite actions taken by the Government between 1975 and 1981 to accelerate the integration of women in development, additional efforts were required. The current economic situation in Madagascar threatened government efforts to raise the standard of living. Food self-sufficiency had not been achieved. Although Madagascar produced 2.2 million tons of paddy yearly, it still imported rice to meet growing local demand.

69. Despite the socio-political risks which devaluation and other economic measures might have entailed, the Government had succeeded in improving the state of public finance by reducing inflation from 31 per cent in 1981 to 13.5 per cent in 1984, thereby maintaining Madagascar's international financial credibility. The \$2 billion foreign debt significantly affected national investment, which tended to neglect the social sector under the false impression that social expenditure was unproductive.

70. The CHAIRMAN said that the Working Group had concluded its consideration of the initial report of Madagascar.

71. Mr. Rakotozafy (Madagascar) withdrew.

OTHER MATTERS

72. Ms. KIMBALL (Secretary of the Working Group) read out a letter from the Secretary-General dated 24 January 1986, dealing with the financial crisis of the Organization, and possible ways to overcome it.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.