

UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC  
AND  
SOCIAL COUNCIL



Distr.  
GENERAL

E/1980/WG.1/SR.12  
23 April 1980

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

First regular session, 1980

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

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 12th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Monday, 21 April 1980, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. NAGY (Hungary)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF THE REPORTS SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL  
RESOLUTION 1988 (LX) BY STATES PARTIES CONCERNING RIGHTS COVERED BY ARTICLES 6  
TO 9 OF THE COVENANT (continued)

Report of Bulgaria (E/1978/8/Add.24)

1. Mr. MRATCHKOV (Observer for Bulgaria), introducing the report of Bulgaria, said that the People's Republic of Bulgaria had always supported the activities of the United Nations and its specialized agencies to promote and protect human rights as a way of achieving international co-operation as envisaged in Article 1, paragraph 3, of the Charter. It followed a consistent policy in that sphere which derived from the very nature of the socialist State. The Government's domestic policy was centred on man, his fundamental rights, legitimate interests and deep-seated aspirations, and its foreign policy was firmly oriented towards the maintenance and strengthening of world peace. That policy was enshrined in Article 3, paragraph 1, of the Constitution.
2. In pursuing its policy of firm support for the international protection of human rights, Bulgaria had acceded to many international conventions concerned with human rights, including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the three conventions on the equality of women, and it had been one of the first States to ratify the International Covenants on Human Rights. Bulgaria had ratified 80 of the 153 conventions adopted by the International Labour Organisation and ranked fifth among the Member States in respect of the number of conventions ratified. It had ratified some very important conventions which were directly concerned with economic and social rights, such as the three conventions on trade union freedoms (Nos. 11, 87 and 98), the Force Labour Convention (No. 29), the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No. 111) and the Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100). The Bulgarian Government, which was anxious to meet fully the responsibilities it had voluntarily assumed, scrupulously ensured the implementation of the provisions of the conventions it had ratified by making appropriate changes in its legislation.
3. With regard to the persons who were protected by the national labour legislation, the 1951 Labour Code and the Pensions Act of 1958, as well as other related acts, had originally been designed for workers and employees only; the members of co-operative farms had had a separate legal régime. In the course of the 1960s, as the country's economic development proceeded, the process of equalizing the two legal régimes had begun; the first steps had been taken in 1960 and 1961 when the rules on occupational hygiene and safety had been extended to co-operative farms, and subsequently, other measures of a similar nature had been introduced. Since 1976, agro-industrial complexes had been established consisting of the co-operative farms and industrial enterprises in the agricultural

(Mr. Mratchkov, Observer, Bulgaria)

sphere. They had been incorporated in the National Agro-Industrial Union, and its new rules had been published in the Official Journal No. 25 of 28 March 1980. Article 35 of those rules laid down that the legal régimes for work and social security were henceforth applicable to all persons employed in agro-industrial complexes, including the members of co-operative farms. In a broader context, those changes formed part of the country's socio-economic development within the framework of an advanced socialist society, one of the principal goals of which was to achieve equality in the social situation of workers and agricultural labourers.

4. Detailed information on the realization of the rights covered by articles 6 to 9 of the Covenant was to be found in the report. Nevertheless, he would draw attention to a few significant points and provide additional information about developments since the end of the period covered by the report. In connexion with article 6 of the Covenant, the legal regulation of the right to work in Bulgaria's social system was not limited to the proclamation of that right but emphasized the political, economic and legal guarantees which ensured the free and genuine exercise of that right. Article 40, paragraph 3, of the Constitution provided that the State guaranteed the right to work by developing the socio-economic system of socialism. The political guarantees of the right to work derived from the very nature of the socialist State. The economic guarantees derived from the planned nature of socio-economic development including the constant growth of the productive forces, the creation of a sufficient number of jobs and the eradication of unemployment. The legal guarantees were numerous and were enshrined in the labour legislation in force and, above all, in the Labour Code of 1951. The percentage of employed persons was a clear demonstration of the real and effective exercise of the right to work; of a total of some 8.5 million inhabitants in 1978, over 4 million were employed. The right to work was exercised freely and without hindrance and was ensured in practice by the mechanisms for the conclusion and termination of labour contracts. Under article 15 of the Labour Code, the labour contract must be concluded on the basis of mutual consent. The legal system for the termination of labour contracts was based on two main principles: the freedom of the worker to terminate the labour contract unilaterally with notice (art. 30) and the right of the enterprise to dismiss a worker only in a limited number of cases (arts. 31 and 33) so that the worker was protected and ensured real stability in employment.

5. On the question of the right to just and favourable conditions of work, under article 7 of the Covenant, he informed the Working Group that under Decree No. 50 of 10 November 1979, basic salaries had been increased by between 25 and 30 per cent, the minimum wage had been increased by 25 per cent, and special allowances had also been raised. The implementation of the legislative provisions concerned with safety and hygiene formed part of a wide-ranging programme for improving labour protection which had been an integral component of the five-year socio-economic development plan for 1971-1975, and of a similar programme included

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(Mr. Bratchkov, Observer, Bulgaria)

in the five-year plan for 1976-1980. The programmes involved considerable investment on the part of the State and enterprises which had increased almost four times from one five-year plan to the other. In accordance with article 41 of the Constitution and article 68 of the Labour Code, the basic rates of remuneration and the various additional supplements were based on an objective evaluation of the professional skills required, the responsibilities involved and the difficulty of the work, irrespective of whether the work was carried out by men or women. In order to enable women to gain professional skills, the State pursued a policy of equality of professional training opportunities for men and women in the context of the public education system. On 1 November 1978, 44 per cent of the students who had completed higher studies, and 87 per cent of those who had completed intermediate higher studies, were women. In the academic year 1978-1979, nearly half the students at the educational establishments were women and over 52 per cent of the university students were women. Naturally, there were still problems in that sphere; for example, the professional qualifications of women were not always adequate for the work entrusted to them and the family commitments of women did not always permit them to improve their professional qualifications. The State was taking steps to alleviate the burden of housework and improve services and working conditions.

6. On the question of the freedom to form trade unions, under article 8 of the Covenant, the right to set up trade union organizations was recognized under article 52, paragraph 1, of the Constitution as one of the aspects of the fundamental right of association, and that principle was further developed in article 2 of the Labour Code. The trade unions were among the principal social organizations of the country because of the impressive number of members (almost 4 million) and the many and important functions which they performed. Between 1972 and 1977, the total membership of the Bulgarian trade unions had increased by 1,063,000, and most of the new members had come from the co-operative farms. No prior authorization was required either to form a trade union or to hold a constituent assembly, and there were no preconditions for recognition as a corporate entity. Bulgaria had a single trade union system which was established and maintained according to the freely expressed wishes of the workers and organizations concerned; it was not imposed by the law or by administrative means. Thus, legally, other trade unions could be established unless they were directed against the established socialist system or the rights of citizens or propagated fascist or any other anti-democratic ideology (art. 52, para. 3, of the Constitution). The trade unions participated in the management of production units in selecting candidates for managerial posts in the State economic organizations and adopting internal rules on remuneration for work. They protected the interests of workers because they had the right to prevent the implementation of illegal decisions or instructions of economic bodies and they had to be consulted by the management of the enterprise on the dismissal and transfer of workers. The trade unions also had certain public functions; they administered social security for cases of temporary disability and also had full responsibility for supervising the implementation of legal provisions concerned with labour protection.

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(Mr. Mratchkov, Observer, Bulgaria)

7. Bulgaria's social legislation was in a state of constant evolution, in the course of which it was necessary to take into account the country's socio-political conditions and economic possibilities as well as the progressive norms of international law. The Bulgarian Government had resolved to take all necessary measures to honour its international commitments.

8. Mr. VOLLERS (Federal Republic of Germany) noted that it was stated on page 4 of the report that young specialists assigned to appropriate posts were appointed on an obligatory basis. He asked whether that was an exception to the principle that each citizen had the right freely to choose his occupation and under what circumstances young specialists were assigned to posts on an obligatory basis.

9. It was indicated on page 40 that unemployment compensation was paid for a maximum period of 13 weeks; he asked what happened in the case of individuals who were partially disabled if they were unable to obtain work within that period.

10. In connexion with the statement on page 8 that the Bulgarian Constitution made it the obligation of every citizen capable of work to do socially useful work according to his abilities and qualifications he asked whether that meant that an individual could be obliged to do work for which he was over-qualified or to change his residence in order to take up a suitable job. He asked whether that provision was implemented on a voluntary basis or whether an individual could be required to take up a particular job.

11. It was mentioned on page 14, and elsewhere that the system and rates of pay in the various industries and occupations were determined by the Council of Ministers. Since all industrial establishments were State establishments, he asked whether the State, as the owner, fixed wages on a unilateral basis, or whether there was any participation by the workers and trade unions.

12. Since the comments on article 8 of the Covenant were rather brief, he hoped that the representative of Bulgaria would elaborate on the tasks of the trade unions and their competence, the manner in which they could negotiate wages and working conditions, whether there were collective agreements between trade unions and industrial enterprises, and whether the constitutional right of citizens to form trade unions which were not part of the single system had ever been exercised.

13. It was mentioned on page 15 of the third report of the International Labour Organisation (E/1980/35) that the rules of the Bulgarian trade unions provided that they accepted voluntarily the guiding role of the Communist Party; he asked whether that meant that a newly formed trade union which did not accept that role would be contrary to the Constitution and the law or whether it would be possible for it to exist.

14. In connexion with the statement on page 32 of the report that strikes did not occur in Bulgaria, he asked whether that meant that the trade unions were always in agreement with the Council of Ministers and industrial enterprises about wages and working conditions and whether trade unions maintained strike funds in case they ever decided to strike. He asked whether any new trade unions which envisaged the possibility of a strike would be able to hold a strike under the law and the existing system.

15. Mr. ABDUL-AZIZ (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), noting the statement on page 18 that the trade union bodies had the right to intervene and prevent the implementation of any illegal decisions or instructions of economic bodies or officials relating to the protection of the working and living conditions of the body of workers concerned, asked whether it was the trade union bodies themselves which decided that decisions or instructions were illegal, or whether other bodies took that decision and the trade union bodies acted on it.

16. Mr. SVIRIDOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the report of the People's Republic of Bulgaria convincingly showed that the provisions of the Covenant were being effectively implemented, in practice, in that country. It was important to note that the legal guarantees of the provisions contained in articles 6 to 9 of the Covenant were combined with the necessary social, economic and political conditions for the realization of those rights. The report provided clear proof of Bulgaria's achievements in the social sphere as a whole and in the field of human rights in particular and it amply demonstrated that Bulgaria's legislation was fully in accord with the provisions of the Covenant.

17. He asked what guarantees existed under Bulgarian legislation against the illegal dismissal of workers and what Bulgaria's experience was about that problem, which was very serious in a number of countries which belonged to other socio-economic systems. He also asked what the hours of work were.

18. Mr. VOICU (Romania) commended the Bulgarian Government's planned approach to preparing young people for productive work in society. In addition, the vocational and on-the-job training provided to workers free of charge was one of the outstanding achievements of the Bulgarian State.

19. Mr. SALMENPERÄ (Finland) asked what resources the trade unions had at their disposal to supervise labour protection, and specifically, how many full-time staff were involved.

20. Mr. SAMSON (International Labour Organisation) said that since the third report of the ILO (E/1980/35) had been submitted very recently, he understood that the Bulgarian Government might find it difficult at the current stage to comment in any detail on the section concerned with Bulgaria. The representative of Bulgaria had pointed out that his country had ratified a considerable number of ILO Conventions, and that fact had been recognized in the report.

21. With regard to the implementation of article 6 of the Covenant, the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations had suggested that provision should be made in the regulations governing collective farms to permit the members of such collectives to terminate their membership unilaterally by giving notice. The Government of Bulgaria had indicated that measures to that end were under consideration. The Committee of Experts had also requested information regarding special labour services in construction or agriculture in lieu of military service.

22. In connexion with the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No. 111), the Committee of Experts had requested information regarding measures to permit a broader participation of women at the higher levels of employment. That question had been based on information regarding the problems which were recognized to exist in that field, and the observer for Bulgaria had indicated that measures were being taken to remedy the situation.

23. With regard to article 7 of the Covenant, the Committee of Experts had felt that it would be useful to have additional information regarding procedures for promotion with a view to ensuring that decisions on promotion were based on considerations of seniority and competence.

24. The Committee of Experts had also requested further information regarding guarantees for members of co-operatives with respect to rest periods and the limitation of working hours since previously the Labour Code had not been applicable to that category of workers. The representative of Bulgaria had just informed the Working Group of his Government's recent decision to extend the protection of labour legislation to the members of co-operatives.

25. With regard to the implementation of article 8, the Committee of Experts, referring to the Convention concerning the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise (No. 87), had raised a question regarding the legal rights of members of co-operative farms to establish organizations to promote and defend their interests. As indicated in the third report of the ILO, the Bulgarian Government had pointed out that, in practice, many members of collective farms had joined trade unions. The Committee of Experts was concerned, however, about the legal position of the members of collective farms. Perhaps the statement made earlier by the observer for Bulgaria regarding the recent decision of the Government to extend the application of labour legislation to the members of collective farms served to clarify the situation.

26. With regard to the right to establish organizations of one's own choice, the Committee of Experts had referred to the provisions of Bulgarian legislation relating to the guiding role in society assigned to the Communist Party, the prohibition of organizations directed against the socialist system and the granting of legal personality to certain trade union groups by the Central Council of Bulgarian Trade Unions. It had felt that those provisions might render it impossible in practice to establish organizations that were independent of the existing trade unions and of the Communist Party, and he requested clarification on that matter.

27. Lastly, the Committee of Experts had requested additional information concerning the conditions in which the right to strike could be exercised.

28. Mr. SVIRIDOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the representative of the ILO had failed to respect the agreement which had been reached in the Working Group that representatives of specialized agencies could make statements of a general nature, but could not direct specific questions to the representatives of reporting States.

29. Mr. MRATCHKOV (Observer for Bulgaria), replying to the questions asked by the representative of the Federal Republic of Germany, said that under the legislation which had been in force in Bulgaria for some 20 years, young specialists, upon completion of their studies, were placed in jobs in accordance with the needs of the national economy. That arrangement did not apply to all young specialists, but only to those whose skills and qualifications were in particular demand for the development of the national economy. The number of young people affected varied from year to year, depending on the country's economic requirements. Since higher education had been free since 1954, the State in exchange required students to work for a period of three years in various priority branches of the national economy. Before entering university, students signed an agreement to work wherever they might be assigned upon completion of their studies. Work assignments were decided upon by a special commission composed of representatives of the universities and enterprises. Whenever possible, the commissions took into account the preferences of students, and in the great majority of cases, the assignments were accepted willingly. The arrangement was enormously beneficial not only for young people themselves, since it gave them an opportunity to apply their professional knowledge and perform the work for which they had been trained, but also for the national economy.

30. With regard to unemployment benefits, the article of the Labour Code which provided for the payment of compensation for a maximum period of 13 weeks, dated from 1951. That period had been chosen because it was a reasonable period of time for any job seeker to find employment. Although the article was still in force, it was rarely applied because the conditions for which it had been designed no longer existed. The country was in fact, experiencing a manpower shortage, and there was work for all who sought it.

31. Reference had been made to the obligation to work laid down in the Bulgarian Constitution. It was a principle of Bulgarian society that every citizen must perform socially useful work. That obligation was primarily of a moral nature, as evidenced by the fact that the Penal Code did not provide for the punishment of idleness as such, but merely punished the obtaining of illegal income from sources other than regular work.

32. The representative of the Federal Republic of Germany had asked about the arrangements for determining rates of pay. While the authority for determining rates of pay had been delegated by the National Assembly to the Council of Ministers, decisions regarding wages and salaries as well as all matters relating to working conditions and labour protection in the broadest sense, were taken by the Council of Ministers only after consultation with the Central Council of Bulgarian Trade Unions.

33. On the question of freedom of association, he indicated that in Bulgaria trade unions had two main purposes: first, to help resolve problems relating to production and ensure the implementation of the country's five-year plans, and second, to protect workers against excesses of the bureaucracy, non-compliance with laws relating to labour protection, and any arbitrariness on the part of management or other economic organizations. In accordance with article 9 of the Labour Code, trade unions were responsible for negotiating collective agreements and in so doing they presented the views and demands of the rank-and-file to management.

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(Mr. Mratchkov, Observer, Bulgaria)

34. The representative of the Federal Republic of Germany should understand, better than most, the "single trade union" system in Bulgaria, since it seemed that such a system also existed in his country. In Bulgaria, the system was voluntarily accepted by the workers and there were no legal obstacles to the establishment of other trade unions, provided that they were not directed against the fundamental rights of citizens and did not propagate Fascist or any other anti-democratic ideology.

35. On the question of the guiding role assigned to the Communist Party in Bulgaria, he indicated that article 1 of the Constitution, which provided that the Communist Party was the guiding force of the State and society, merely reflected the actual situation obtaining in the country since 1944. The Communist Party laid down over-all policy guidelines for the country's social and economic development, but took no part in the day-to-day running of the trade unions. There was no law governing the internal affairs of trade unions, and the leadership of trade unions was elected by the members themselves. As to the question regarding a trade union which refused to recognize the guiding role of the Communist Party, such a union, if it existed, would not be unconstitutional, provided that its activities were not contrary to the provisions of article 52 of the Constitution.

36. The laws of Bulgaria did not expressly recognize the right to strike. That was not an omission, but a reflection of the prevailing economic and social conditions in the country; it was unnecessary for workers to resort to the mechanism of the strike since they had other, more efficient, means at their disposal; trade unions were directly involved in the determination of wages and salaries and in the decision-making process as it related to conditions of work, the supervision of labour protection and the administration of the social security system. Although the right to strike was not recognized in law, strikes were not prohibited, and there were no legal provisions for the punishment of strikers.

37. A question had been asked regarding the right of trade unions to prevent the implementation of illegal decisions of economic bodies or officials. That right had been recognized in an order of the Council of Ministers in 1958 and subsequently incorporated into the Labour Code in 1976. The trade union committees had the power to suspend the application of a decision by management which they deemed illegal, and then to refer the matter to higher administrative and trade union bodies for a final ruling on the legality of the decision. The significant feature of that arrangement was that the matter was ultimately decided upon jointly by a trade union body and an administrative body.

38. With regard to the questions asked about the guarantees against the illegal dismissal of workers, he said that one of the central objectives of Bulgaria's legislation concerning the employment relationship was to limit the employer's right to terminate a labour contract to a number of well-defined cases. The Labour Code provided that in the event of an illegal dismissal, a worker had the right to bring the matter before a conciliation commission. The decision of the conciliation commission could be appealed before a trade union committee, and ultimately, before the courts. If the dismissal was ruled to be illegal, the

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(Mr. Mratchkov, Observer, Bulgaria)

reinstatement of the worker was ordered. Moreover, the wronged worker was entitled to compensation in an amount of up to two months' pay for the period during which he had been out of work as a result of the dismissal. The aim of the procedure was to protect the rights of workers, ensure justice and correct violations of the law.

39. Replying to the question asked by the representative of the Soviet Union concerning working hours, he indicated that the legal regulations governing work hours in Bulgaria had constantly evolved over the years. In 1951, the Labour Code had provided for a six-day working week of a total of 48 hours for all workers irrespective of occupation. In 1956, the length of the working week had been reduced to 46 hours, and in 1967, on an experimental basis, it had been reduced to five days and a total of 42 and 1/2 hours. In 1975, a decision had been taken to make the 42 1/2-hour five-day working week the general rule for all workers.

40. Lastly, a question had been asked regarding the personnel responsible for supervising labour protection in Bulgaria. A special act adopted in 1973 gave full responsibility and authority for the supervision of labour protection to the trade unions. The Central Council of Bulgarian Trade Unions employed some 500 inspectors for that purpose. In addition, the Ministry of Public Health monitored compliance with the laws relating to occupational health and assigned some 320 officials to that work. The inspectors employed by the Central Committee of Bulgarian Trade Unions and the Ministry of Public Health worked full-time and enjoyed a wide range of powers enabling them to rectify illegal situations and institute legal action to protect workers. Comprehensive regulations on the supervision of labour protection had been adopted in 1979 by the Central Council of Bulgarian Trade Unions.

Report of Australia (E/1978/8/Add.15)

41. Mr. JOSEPH (Observer for Australia) said that his Government would have liked to have had more notice of the Working Group's consideration of its report, and also information about the modalities for the consideration of the report.

42. Introducing the report of Australia, he said that his Government accepted the rights covered by the Covenant and was progressively implementing them. Its policies at both the federal and State level were designed to maintain and, if possible, improve the standard of living in the country. Australia was a very egalitarian country as could be seen, for example, from the housing situation and income differentials. In such matters as full employment, the right to work and the right to organize, Australia's record was second to none. Such caveats and reservations as could be made were to be attributed to technical considerations or were the reflection of common sense.

43. Australia had ratified the principle Conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) relating to articles 6 to 9 of the Covenant and would continue to strive fully to implement their provisions. His delegation welcomed ILO's comments on the report submitted by Australia and would transmit them to the Australian

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(Mr. Joseph Observer, Australia)

Government. Although Australia had made no formal declaration concerning the applicability of the Covenant to Norfolk Island, which was populated exclusively by Australian citizens, the internal arrangements covering employment on the island were very similar to arrangements in force on the mainland.

44. The policies described in the report were still being pursued. A consistent theme of the report was his Government's determination to solve the problems of unemployment and inflation. His Government also saw the need for investment incentives. It was encouraging to note that in the latter half of the preceding decade the rate of inflation had decreased.

45. An open multilateral system was needed in order to promote free trade and an international division of labour and to improve economic and social conditions in both Australia and other countries, particularly the developing countries that were Australia's neighbours. Unfortunately, the industries in which Australia was most competitive, which were basically agricultural industries, also happened to be those in which there were the greatest international barriers. If world markets for agricultural products could be opened up his Government's social policies would benefit accordingly. Moreover, Australia would then be in a position to lower its remaining trade barriers, thus having a direct impact on the welfare of third world countries, particularly neighbouring countries.

46. Mr. SALMENPERÄ (Finland) asked to what extent, if at all, the system of compulsory arbitration restricted the right to strike.

47. With regard to the reference on page 42 of the report to statistical information concerning the incidence and nature of industrial accidents and occupational disease in Australia, he wished to know whether uniform information on the subject would be available in the future.

48. Mr. VOLLERS (Federal Republic of Germany), referring to the information provided on page 23 regarding unemployment guarantees and assistance, wished to know the length of the period during which an employee could draw unemployment benefits and what requirements had to be satisfied in that connexion. He wondered, for example, whether the employee was obliged to accept any type of employment offered after a certain amount of time had elapsed.

49. It was not clear from the information provided on page 53 whether or not public servants had the right to strike. In that connexion, he drew attention to the information concerning public servants and members of the police force and of the armed forces that was provided on page 28 of the second report of the ILO (E/1979/33).

50. With regard to the question of equality of remuneration, he asked whether the information supplied on pages 24 and 25 of the second report of the ILO concerning the guaranteed minimum wage was still applicable and, if so, which categories of workers were not entitled to a guaranteed minimum wage.

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(Mr. Vollers Federal Republic of Germany)

51. In connexion with the last paragraph on page 27 of the second report of the ILO, he requested further information regarding registered and unregistered unions.

52. Mr. RANGACHARI (India) said that it was encouraging to hear the representative of Australia draw attention to the link between international economic conditions and the domestic economic situation. He hoped that Australia would take the lead in the endeavour to reduce existing inequalities and particularly to remove certain barriers to trade with developing countries.

53. With regard to the information supplied on pages 9 to 14 of the report of Australia concerning federal legislation against discrimination, he noted that section 9 of the Racial Discrimination Act made no mention of discrimination on grounds of religion or sex. In that connexion, he requested clarification about the situation regarding equal opportunities and remuneration for women in the light of the reference to "family considerations" in the third paragraph on page 33 and of the information provided on pages 35 and 36 of the report.

54. Ms. RICO (Spain), referring to the "Medibank" scheme described on page 58 of the report, asked how it was decided who should receive coverage under that scheme. She also wondered why Australia did not consider it necessary to establish a national health scheme to cover all citizens.

55. Mr. MWANJABALA (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the questions of the causes of unemployment, conditions for immigrant workers, and assistance in the event of unemployment or lay-offs were issues that gave rise to concern regarding the situation in Australia. He also noted that, as indicated on page 55, there was no government-financed social insurance scheme in Australia.

56. Mr. SVIRIDOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), referring to the question of discrimination against women, drew attention to the statement on page 7 that, in the four years of their operation, the National Committee on Discrimination in Employment and Occupation and the six State Discrimination Committees had been noticeably successful in bringing about the elimination of legislative and regulatory provisions, and of policies and practices, inconsistent with national policy on discrimination in employment. In that connexion, he wished to know whether there were currently any regulatory provisions that permitted discrimination in employment and, if so, whether any steps were being taken to eliminate them.

57. He requested further information regarding the statement at the top of page 15 that unemployment had worsened during the 1976/77 period, particularly among married women, young persons and older workers. He also wished to know the current level of unemployment, particularly on a regional basis. He asked what steps were being taken to eliminate unemployment and guarantee the right to work.

58. In connexion with the statement on page 36 that the equality of minimum wage rates for male and female employees was realized fully in all State jurisdictions except Western Australia, he requested information concerning current provisions in that respect. He asked whether there were still regions in Australia in which equality of minimum wage rates for male and female employees did not exist.