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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 10th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Monday, 23 April 1984 at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. BENDIX (Denmark)

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by States parties to the Covenant concerning rights covered by articles 6 to 9  
(continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

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

Report of Venezuela (continued) (E/1984/6/Add.1)

1. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mrs. Rodriguez and Mr. Veitia (Venezuela)  
took places at the table.

2. Mrs. RODRIGUEZ, said that under article 84 of the Constitution the State had an obligation to ensure that all who could work were able to do so. In order to meet that obligation it sought to stimulate the economy by providing loans and long- and short-term financing to large and small industries so that they in turn could generate employment. One third of the labour force of Venezuela was employed by the State.

3. The Department of Economy and Employment of the Ministry of Labour comprised two divisions, relating respectively to operations and programmes and methods. The latter had three sub-divisions responsible respectively for orientation, research into the labour market and operational analyses. The division of operations had two sub-divisions; one was responsible for monitoring and supervision, the other - the Technical and Professional Bureau - supervised the labour exchanges and employment agencies which were run by the Department.

4. The number of persons covered by the social insurance system came to 8,120,000. In the five-year period 1974-1978 a further 1.7 million persons had joined the system and double that number had been added in the five-year period 1979-1983. The system was compulsory and contributions were paid by both workers and employers. It did not include unemployment insurance and, as pointed out in paragraph 53, it did not extend to all parts of the country. However, the possibility of introducing a single health insurance system providing health coverage for the entire country through public health bodies in close relationship with the social security system was being studied.

5. The courses provided by the National Training Institute were free and were given in the evenings and during the day. Upon completing a course a worker was awarded a diploma certifying that he was qualified to work in a particular field. Figures concerning the number of persons trained by the Institute could be found in paragraph 12. There were also technical schools and institutes which were open to anyone who had completed the third grade of basic primary education. Such schools and institutes were scattered all over the country.

6. Under Venezuelan law workers were free to form unions and associations; the only non-unionized workers that came readily to mind were domestic workers, whose circumstances made it difficult for them to form unions. Since Venezuelan law did not specify minimum wages for given tasks she could not answer the question

(Mrs. Rodriguez)

regarding the minimum wage of non-unionized workers. Regarding the right to strike, she said that the police, the army and members of the legal profession did not have that right.

7. Through their unions workers helped to establish the rules relating to conditions of work and influenced the decisions of management. Regarding the participation of workers in private enterprise she said that Venezuelan law did not provide for self-management; however, some firms allowed their workers to participate actively in management decisions.

8. According to the Labour Act the ordinary working day was not to exceed eight hours (seven hours if the work was done by night). The work week was not to exceed 48 or 42 hours depending on whether the work was performed by day or by night, but normally the respective lengths were 44 and 40 hours.

9. The wage increase referred to in paragraph 20 applied to all employees whether in the public or the private sector. In connection with paragraph 29 of the report she said that individuals could invoke the relevant ILO Conventions as they had become part of Venezuela's domestic legislation. The minimum age for workers had been set at 14 years.

10. Concerning the question how the Government regulated the activity of the transnational corporations, she said that the oil industry had been nationalized in 1975 and that a central firm had been established with various operating subsidiaries. A few contracts had been signed with transnational corporations for technical services; they were governed directly by the provisions relating to foreign capital and by the relevant provisions of the Cartagena Agreement.

11. Referring to the question regarding the number of foreign workers, she said that, in 1983, 166 applications from such persons had been processed. Of those, 84 had been approved, 19 denied and 63 remained pending because the necessary documentation had not been submitted.

12. Concerning the developments relating to safe and healthy working conditions, she said that a Department of Social Security had been established in the Ministry of Labour to direct and co-ordinate social security policy and to monitor compliance with safety and health regulations in the workplace. In 1983, a commission had been established to advise it. The Department had links with numerous national and international bodies in the health and safety field, and with ILO and WHO. The Division of Industrial Safety, which was part of the Department carried out safety inspections and organized seminars. It also issued building permits and provided technical consultancy services to business. There were 1,625 national industrial safety committees.

13. Mr. VEITIA (Venezuela) said that the national minimum wage had tripled in the last 10 years. Naturally the national minimum wage was higher than the minimum wage for rural workers (40 bolivars daily as compared to 25).

(Mr. Veitia, Venezuela)

14. Concerning discrimination against women, he said that in the last year Venezuela had ratified a number of conventions designed to protect the rights of women, including the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Under Venezuelan law women enjoyed the same opportunities as and equal remuneration with men. Indeed, Venezuelan women occupied prominent positions in all walks of life. Individuals could bring allegations of failure to observe the provisions relating to equal opportunities and remuneration for women to the courts. The labour courts were empowered to study such cases and to determine the appropriate penalty.

15. The penalty imposed on firms which did not abide by the safety regulations provided for by law ranged from fines to temporary or permanent closure. The function of the industrial safety committees in individual establishments (para. 34) was to monitor operations so as to detect any irregularities in the workplace.

16. Regarding the question on the domestic political affiliation of trade union organizations and whether they had ties with international organizations, he said that the largest trade union confederation in Venezuela - the Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela, which represented about 75 per cent of all workers - maintained close contact with similar bodies at the international level. The two main political forces - Social Democrats and Christian Democrats - were represented in that confederation, as were at least 10 other political parties.

17. Concerning the legal guarantees of the workers' right to strike he drew attention to paragraph 44 of the report. Under the Labour Act all conciliation procedures had to have been exhausted before any suspension of work, whether initiated by the workers or by the management. One of those procedures was the Arbitration Board, a body on which workers, management and the Ministry of Labour were represented. An employer could not dismiss or take action against an employee for any legal activities engaged in by the latter in connection with a labour dispute. Notice of a strike against or closure of an establishment and of any decision to end the strike or reopen the establishment must be given to the civil authorities of the jurisdiction in which the action was to take place. The Ministry of Labour, acting through the labour inspectorate, determined whether or not a strike was legal. If it was illegal, the law provided mechanisms for forcing workers to return to work. In the event of a strike which might endanger the health or the economic life of the population, the Government could take steps to bring about the resumption of work after issuing a special decree giving the reasons for the measures.

18. During the period 1976-1978, private investment in real terms had increased at an average annual rate of 27 per cent. In the years 1979, 1980 and 1981, that rate had fallen to 23 per cent, 19 per cent and 11 per cent respectively. That drop had been partly offset by increased public investment which had risen from 41 per cent in 1979 to over 60 per cent highlighting the mixed nature of Venezuela's economy whereby the State used its oil revenues to finance major projects in basic industries such as mining, oil, and steel.

(Mr. Veitia, Venezuela)

19. The purpose of the recent call for a 10 per cent increase in the number of workers employed in the private sector by the end of June 1984 was, inter alia, to reduce unemployment. Labour stability was a major achievement of recent years. According to the Act prohibiting arbitrary dismissal no worker could be dismissed without cause; the task of determining whether a dismissal was justified was assigned to tripartite committees, consisting of representatives of management, labour and the Ministry of Labour. In the event of an unjustified dismissal the employer was required to pay the worker double the compensation required under the Labour Act including double the compensation required in lieu of notice. In some firms the workers had negotiated contracts which provided for the amount to be triple that required under Labour Act. There were currently over 2 million people who were covered by collective agreements.

20. According to the Labour Act a major function of the unions was to represent their members to ensure that provisions of the Act were observed. If a worker was unjustly dismissed the unions were responsible for informing the appropriate labour officials of irregularities in the implementation of the provisions and for representing their members in the labour courts.

21. The CHAIRMAN said that the Working Group had concluded its consideration of the report of Venezuela.

22. Mrs. Rodriguez and Mr. Veitia (Venezuela) withdrew.

Report of Japan (continued) (E/1984/6/Add.6)

23. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Kaneko, Mr. Kojima and Mr. Nakamura (Japan) took places at the table.

24. Mr. NAKAMURA (Japan), speaking in reply to questions raised by the members of the Working Group, noted that many speakers had asked about the measure aimed at raising the mandatory retirement age. It should be explained that employment for life was customary in Japan. The practice had numerous social and economic advantages. Given the expectancy of life-long employment, workers' morale was high, industrial relations were good, and there was little need for unemployment relief.

25. Some experts had asked for figures on the level of unemployment by age group. In 1983, the figures were 4.5 per cent for the 15 to 24 age group and 3.1 per cent for persons over 50. That might suggest that youth unemployment was a social problem, but in fact unemployment among older people was the real issue for the ratio of job openings to job applications in 1983 was 1.7 to 1 for the under 20 age group but 0.1 to 1 for persons over 50. In other words, the latter had only a 1 in 10 chance of being re-employed in a society where lifetime employment was the norm.

26. The retirement system was not a compulsory one. Employees were generally requested to leave their jobs on reaching retirement age, but in many cases companies offered further employment, normally at a lower wage. Often, the bigger companies re-employed retired workers at their smaller subsidiary enterprises.

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(Mr. Nakamura, Japan)

27. Concerning the specific age for retirement, he said that 31 per cent of the working population retired at 55 or earlier and 49.4 per cent at the age of 60 or over.

28. Several speakers had wondered whether raising the retirement age was an effective means of combating unemployment. There was no contradiction between reducing unemployment and extending the retirement age. Indeed, it was a practical policy: inter alia because the employer knew the strengths and weaknesses of the worker and was in a good position to make use of his potential.

29. The Government intended to concentrate mainly on preventing unemployment since, as had been explained, there was little need to encourage re-employment. It gave special subsidies to employers who endeavoured to prevent redundancies even during periods of recession and sought to maintain the practice of lifetime employment.

30. Vocational guidance was provided by the Public Employment Security Office. They concentrated on helping school-leavers. In job counselling and placement, the emphasis was less on the need for narrow specialization than on the opportunities for finding rewarding work in the wider sense. The same applied to the education system. Schools provided general education, and employers could safely invest in the specialized training of skilled workers in the knowledge that they would normally stay with the same company for life.

31. With regard to labour mobility, the Government paid job-seeking allowances and transportation costs to encourage workers to move into outlying areas. New housing was also provided in those areas at low cost.

32. Clarification had been sought with regard to the first sentence in paragraph 8 of the report. It simply meant that a criminal, for example, would not be free to choose his occupation.

33. More details had been requested about the Basic Vocational Training Plan. It was not so much a plan as a set of guidelines for stimulating further technological innovation. In a rapidly aging society it was essential to develop a system of lifelong training. The Government offered substantial subsidies to employers providing such training.

34. With regard to measures to assist the handicapped, employers were required by law to offer 1.5 per cent of new jobs to handicapped persons. Employers who failed to meet their quota paid a monthly fine, the amount of which varied according to the extent of the shortfall. Employers who exceed their quota, on the other hand, were rewarded: they received 20,000 yen per month for each handicapped person they recruited above their quota.

35. Concerning the role of unions in implementing employment measures he said that the unions defended the interests of the workers by helping to protect jobs and maintain the tradition of employment for life. There was a new trend for unions to seek guarantees of job security in exchange for facilitating the introduction of

(Mr. Nakamura, Japan)

new technology. The unions played a key role in stabilizing employment by promoting the expansion of business activity, and they also played a large part in devising promotion and wage-payment schemes.

36. In reply to the question on the distribution of the labour force he said that in 1982, 27.6 per cent of the total female work-force had been engaged in manufacturing, 26.4 per cent in the trade sector and 29.1 per cent in the service industries. The figures for male workers were 28.3 per cent, 18.5 per cent and 16.2 per cent respectively. Female workers were, therefore, largely employed in tertiary industries which were mainly small- and medium-size enterprises. Male workers, by contrast, tended to be employed in the larger enterprises.

37. In answer to the question on the wage differential, he said that wages were calculated on the basis of seniority, past and potential future contributions and academic career. Although women earned only 52.2 per cent as much as men the gap was narrowing. Among younger workers, women earned approximately 10 per cent less than men. Another factor that tended to depress the average of women's earnings was the large number of women employed in the tertiary-lower-paid-sector.

38. With respect to the question concerning safety and health, he said that cases could be turned over to the prosecutor's office if it was felt that the matter should be dealt with in a criminal court. Disincentives, however, were perhaps less important than incentives in the prevention of safety and health hazards. For example, an employer might pay a lower rate of contributions if the enterprise had a low accident rate. The Government also promoted voluntary efforts on the part of employers' associations to reduce industrial accidents, such as the research being carried out by the Occupational Injury Prevention Association on possible carcinogenic chemicals.

39. There were no figures available on the number of workers who worked more than eight hours per day. Although some workers in the service industries worked more than 2,300 hours per year, 55 per cent of workers worked less than 2,000 hours per year. Concerning the "partial" five-day working week he drew attention to the note to paragraph 54, adding that three quarters of all workers had two days of rest per week. There were two procedures for setting minimum wages. Most were set by the Minimum Wage Council, while a small number were established by outside contracts. Where many minimum wages had been set either at the regional or industry level, the Minimum Wage Council provided guidelines, which tended to minimize the differences between them.

40. Although it was true that real wages had increased more slowly than the consumer price index, there had still been a slight increase in the real wage.

41. Concerning maternity leave, he said that women were allowed six weeks leave before and six weeks after childbirth. Women could, however, take a shorter leave after the child was born and return to work sooner.

42. Civil servants did not have the right to strike because their working conditions were regulated by law. However, workers in the electricity and coal

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(Mr. Nakamura, Japan)

industries had a limited right to strike, as long as such a strike would not cause a safety hazard and would not adversely affect workers in other industries.

43. Mr. KOJIMA (Japan) responding to a question concerning paragraph 104 of Japan's report, said that there was a bill before the National Diet to establish age 60 as the retirement age for both men and women.

44. With regard to the question on survivors' benefits, he said that there was no widowers' supplement because most beneficiaries were housewives without jobs, and because most men were covered by either pension insurance or national insurance.

45. In answer to the question concerning paragraph 105, he said that women paid lower contributions to the pension scheme because, prior to the introduction of the scheme women who retired early had not been entitled to a pension. Under the new Employees' Pension Law, women's contributions were gradually being increased in order to close the gap. The national pension applied to all who were not covered by employer pension schemes. There was no fixed retirement age for the self-employed, and they therefore had a choice of accepting a smaller amount at an early age, or a larger amount later.

46. Mr. KANEKO (Japan) said that his Government would take the Working Group's comments and suggestions into account in its second periodic report.

47. The CHAIRMAN said that the Working Group had concluded its consideration of the report of Japan.

48. Mr. Kaneko, Mr. Kojima and Mr. Nakamura (Japan) withdrew.

Report of Rwanda (E/1984/6/Add.4)

49. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Sibomana (Rwanda) took a place at the table.

50. Mr. SIBOMANA (Rwanda) said that his country's report clearly showed that the rights to work, to just and favourable conditions of work, to form and join trade unions and to social security were all guaranteed by Rwandan constitutional law. The difficulties which his country had encountered in implementing the Covenant were mainly economic ones. His Government had submitted its report with a view to opening the dialogue provided for under the Covenant, and it would welcome comments and questions.

51. Mr. KORDS (German Democratic Republic) expressed his appreciation for Rwanda's interesting report. He understood that the social measures to be taken by the Government of Rwanda might depend on the economic situation of the country; accordingly he asked how the Government planned to improve that situation and how those plans would be reflected in the revised social security legislation mentioned in paragraph 72.



52. Mr. TEXIER (France), referring to paragraph 7 of the report, asked how the Government was centralizing job applications and whether there were any local or regional agencies. The unemployment figures were extremely low; he would welcome further details, especially regarding urban unemployment and wage levels in the cities. Were there any exceptions to the maximum work week of 45 hours? He would have liked to know how many trade unions there were and whether there was trade-union pluralism. The number of beneficiaries under the social security system seemed low, no indication was given of the currency used in calculating the benefits.

53. He asked for more detailed information concerning the social security scheme and concerning the table contained in the annex to the report.

54. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO said that she too would like more information on why the unemployment rate was as low as 0.5 per cent nationally and yet in one area had gone as high as 6.3 per cent. She wondered if Rwanda was planning to include unemployment benefits in its revision of the social security legislation; and also whether widows and widowers had equal rights to survivors' benefits under the current legislation. Further, she wanted to know more about the women's groups involved in trade union activities, and about the ratio of women on the job market in Rwanda.

55. Mr. IYAMA (Japan) said that it would be useful if in its next report Rwanda provided more figures and statistics and some specific information on race relations in the country. Also, in view of the economic difficulties encountered, he wondered what progress Rwanda had made in extending the measures to ensure fair remuneration to all workers.

56. Mr. MITREV (Bulgaria) asked what would be legitimate grounds for dismissal of a worker under article 38 of the Labour Code (para. 9 of the report). Noting that the Minister responsible for labour affairs prepared the statistics on the employment market and that some of those statistics had been provided in paragraphs 10 to 12 of the report, he asked whether there were any plans to expand the labour relations information system, or to create a Government employment office where people could register for jobs. Also, what categories of workers were covered by the Act of 28 February 1967 (para. 13) and what categories were outside its scope? Were there any plans to provide maternity, unemployment or family benefits under social security in the near future?

57. Mr. JEMAIEL (Tunisia) asked what the Government was doing to offer vocational training to the 92.9 per cent of the population working in the agricultural sector.

58. The CHAIRMAN, speaking as the expert from Denmark, asked whether Rwanda could provide more up-to-date unemployment figures since those given in the report dated from 1978. Also, what was the reason for the discrepancy between the statement in paragraph 13 that all workers covered by the Act of 28 February 1967 received the same wage, irrespective of their origin, sex or age, and the statement in paragraph 27 that an annual evaluation of public employees determined their eligibility for increments or promotion? Noting that the right of public service

(The Chairman)

employees to strike was not recognized, he asked exactly what categories of workers were considered public service employees. Concerning the right to social security under article 9 of the Covenant he said that an explanation of the low number of social security beneficiaries would indeed be helpful, as would information on who was covered by the various social security schemes.

59. It was understandable that Rwanda had had difficulties in submitting its report; however, he hoped that it would be able to submit its report on articles 10 to 12 of the Covenant in the near future.

60. Mr. Sibomana (Rwanda) withdrew.

Report of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (continued) (E/1984/7/Add.7)

61. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Aslanyan (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) took a seat at the table.

62. Mr. ASLANYAN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), replying to questions on the report of the Soviet Union (E/1984/7/Add.7) said that he was prepared to distribute the Russian text of the USSR Law on Work Collectives, with an unofficial translation in French, to the members of the Working Group. Since the Law had come into force only in August 1983, it was too soon to tell how it was being implemented in practice; however, it had been brought to the attention of all work collectives throughout the country and workers now had legal guarantees of expanded rights and also material guarantees in the form of bonuses for outstanding work.

63. The Law on Work Collectives made the production brigades the primary unit of the work collectives - and hence the basic unit of the Soviet work force. The production brigades functioned on a profit-and-loss accounting basis, and were fully responsible for the quality and efficiency of the final production results of each collective. They were therefore given specific funds to distribute in salaries and bonuses. The brigades currently comprised only 40 per cent of Soviet workers, and the intention was to raise that percentage.

64. It had recently come to light that some trade union organizations had traditionally taken on the functions of work collectives, with resulting duplication of work. The new Law should eliminate that drawback. The Law was not one that could be implemented readily, by the courts; its implementation depended rather on much organizational work and on specific measures adopted by a great many enterprises.

65. In reply to the request for information on socialist competition he said that competitions were organized within each work collective, and also among several work collectives and in co-operation with trade union organizations, especially where a complex area of work was involved. The scale of socialist competition had grown considerably. In 1982, 109 million workers had engaged in aggressive competition. It was considered a most important method of enhancing efficiency and productivity; also, by providing an opportunity for improving skills and showing creativity and innovation, it attracted workers to management positions and

(Mr. Aslanyan, USSR)

furthered the interests of the entire collective. All workers had to be publicly informed of the conditions of the various socialist competitions and the results were publicized; work collectives which won competitions received bonuses as did outstanding workers.

66. The comrades' courts were public bodies elected by open ballot for two-year terms by collectives of no less than 50 members. They could consider cases involving matters such as absenteeism, intoxication, lateness, dishonest work, work stoppages, failure to observe occupational safety and health precautions, damage to company equipment or its diversion for personal use, petty embezzlement and hooliganism; and they could take actions such as reprimanding or making public apologies to enterprises or other concerns, imposing fines of up to 10 roubles, and recommending that employees be transferred, demoted or deprived of certain benefits. Decisions could be appealed within seven days and the salary of the employee in question was suspended until the dispute was resolved. The courts were obliged to report once a year at a public meeting to their collectives.

67. Further information had been requested on the three economic incentive funds discussed in paragraph 32 of the report. In 1981, the material incentive fund amounted to 7 billion roubles (representing approximately 8 per cent in additional benefits per industrial worker), the fund for social and cultural measures and for housing construction amounted to 2.4 billion roubles and the production development fund amounted to 7.1 billion roubles. The total of 26.4 billion roubles in those three funds represented 42 per cent of the profits in 1981, and that entire amount remained in the enterprises for their use, while the remaining 58 per cent of profits was turned over to the State for centralized allocation.

68. The basic salary, on the average, accounted for 80 per cent of a worker's salary and the collective and individual bonuses for 20 per cent.

69. As for the term "leading workers" used in paragraph 34 of the report, the proper word would have been "managers".

70. Replying to the request for statistics on trends in salaries and prices for consumer goods since the last report he said that prices had been generally stable since 1959 while salaries had risen steadily. As a result, real income had risen 13 per cent in the last five years.

71. As for possibilities of part-time work for retired or disabled persons he said that retired persons were given the opportunity to do easier kinds of work, at home if they wished, and a Medical Labour Expert Commission had been set up to determine the fitness of disabled persons who sought employment and to issue binding instructions to enterprises on their hiring and on the kind of work they could perform.

72. The minimum salary in the Soviet Union was 70 roubles per month, plus additional benefits from social consumption funds. The average salary in industry was 182 roubles, and the highest salary was 500 roubles. There were no paupers in the Soviet Union.

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(Mr. Aslanyan, USSR)

73. There was no unemployment in the Soviet Union. The various enormous construction projects currently under way and the expansion of production in all areas had created a standing need for a huge labour force.

74. Only the trade union organizations could apply sanctions against workers; if a worker was dismissed, he could always find work elsewhere, although his dismissal did entail certain material losses like loss of seniority or of claim to certain other benefits. As indicated in the report there were various legal guarantees of protection against dismissal from work.

75. Concerning the question about the right to strike, he said that there was no Soviet legislation forbidding strikes and, indeed, the Soviet State had repealed the Tsarist penal law which had severely punished strikes and sit-downs. There was no need for an explicit legal norm on the matter, since under socialism all enterprises were social public property with no hostile outside force acting upon the workers, so that strikes could not fail to backfire on the workers themselves. Moreover, the necessary machinery existed to resolve work conflicts, through the broad powers given to the trade union organizations to guard the interests of workers against encroachment by administrators. The workers' representatives in the people's control bodies, under the trade union organizations, monitored both working and living conditions, and the workers themselves could criticize conditions, just as the population could make complaints about public activities. There was also a highly diversified court system to protect workers' interests. The system applied also to work collectives.

76. Some experts had questioned the advantage of trade union unity and had extolled the value of trade union pluralism. Trade union unity was one of the Soviet Union's greatest accomplishments, and the system had been chosen, not imposed, because of the advantages it offered workers. Both pluralism and unity were good, and the expression of opinion was not stifled under either system.

77. Medical care was governed by the basic legislation of the Soviet Union and the Union Republics, which guaranteed free health care from skilled doctors at home or in hospitals. Prescription medicines had in most cases to be paid for, but the cost was minimal.

78. Concerning how the social consumption funds were allocated he said that the funds were used for collective purposes such as building sports and cultural facilities and for individual benefits such as pensions, social and disability insurance and education allowances. The State paid 80 per cent of the education costs of students at all levels through those funds. In 1981, benefits under social consumption funds had amounted to 120 billion roubles, or 456 roubles per capita; by the end of 1985, the amount was expected to rise to 144 billion roubles.

79. Persons working in Siberia and other areas in the far east with unfavourable climatic conditions received as much as twice the usual salary, 12 to 18 additional days of annual leave, paid home leave every three years, and early retirement at either 50 or 55 years for men and 45 or 50 years for women. All such benefits applied to local workers in those areas as well.

(Mr. Aslanyan, USSR)

80. Regarding the request for further information on family assistance, working mothers received paid leave to care for children up to the age of one year and leave without pay up to the age of three and a half years. During such time they retained their jobs and seniority. Also, either parent received three days' paid and four days' unpaid leave to care for a sick child.

81. Regarding the procedure for determining pensions, he said that the scale for old-age pensions ranged from 100 per cent of the salary at retirement at the lowest salary levels to 85 per cent at the middle levels, on down to 50 per cent at the highest levels.

82. There were no restrictions on the workers' right to choose their profession: workers were free to move where they wished to exercise a profession for which they were qualified. Regarding employment opportunities, the Job Placement Bureaux mentioned in the report placed over 3 million persons annually.

83. Regarding the concern that the stricter disciplinary punishments applied to repeat offenders might be too harsh, it should be understood that no disciplinary punishment was ever in effect beyond one year.

84. Concerning attendance at pre-school institutions, he said that more than 45 per cent of all children currently attended such institutions. They were still not enough to satisfy demand and steps would be taken in the near future to remedy the situation. There was also a system of boarding schools and schools with extended school days for the benefit of working parents: in the 1980/81 school year, 10.7 million children (one fourth of all secondary school students) attended such schools, and by 1985 the number was expected to be 14 million.

85. Finally, occupational accidents had decreased by 24 per cent between 1975 and 1980, and occupational diseases by 25 per cent.

86. The CHAIRMAN said that the Working Group had concluded its consideration of the report of the Soviet Union.

87. Mr. Aslanyan (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) withdrew.

The meeting rose at 7.10 p.m.