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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 15th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 16 April 1982, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. MRACHKOV (Bulgaria)

later: Mr. BORCHARD (Federal Republic of Germany)

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consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the
session.

The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1988 (LX)
BY STATES PARTIES TO THE COVENANT CONCERNING RIGHTS COVERED BY ARTICLES 13 TO 15
(continued)

Report of Mexico (continued) (E/1982/3/Add.8)

1. Mr. RUIZ-CABAÑAS (Mexico) said that although more than 80 per cent of his country's population was now literate, so reversing the situation which existed only 40 years ago, the problem of education was enormous. Whereas in 1940 the population had not yet reached 20 million, it was now 70 million and expected to grow to 100 million by the end of the century. As a result, more than half the population was under 20 years of age and the educational system would have to expand rapidly simply to maintain existing standards and make up short-comings.
2. The representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had referred to the statement in the report that the illiteracy rate in some States was barely 10 per cent while in others it was nearer 50 per cent and had asked what the Government was doing to reduce such imbalances. The problem of unequal development had been largely inherited from colonial times and in recent decades his Government had made greater efforts in the areas of highest illiteracy than elsewhere. To put matters in perspective, a state such as Guerrero with the highest current illiteracy rate of about 50 per cent was probably 95 to 98 per cent illiterate only 30 or 40 years ago. The reference in the report to states with over half a million illiterates and others with fewer than 10,000 referred to the extreme cases of Guerrero and Baja California only. The Government's "Education for All" Programme, in which all the states of the Republic participated, provided human and material resources which were directed so far as possible where needs were greatest, but the task was not an easy one. The Government did not seek to reduce illiteracy by means of schools alone since it was difficult to establish such institutions in villages of only 40 or 50 people in remote parts of the country. Over the last 10 years, radio and television had also been used to combat illiteracy and programmes had been designed especially to enable progress to be made.
3. The Libyan representative had also asked what groups were engaged in furthering education in Mexico. The answer was that although the State played by far the largest part, it was also possible for others, such as private individuals and groups, small neighbourhood communities or trade unions to establish schools provided they were non-profit making. Religious institutions as such were not allowed to set up their own schools for historical reasons, but priests as individuals could and did teach. As to the kind of encouragement given to private education, he pointed out that the State provided facilities such as land on which to build, funds and teaching materials for individuals capable of giving education. But the private sector was only a small part of the educational system. At all levels, from primary school to university, only about 8 per cent of all students were educated privately. As for the type of control exercised over private schools, he said that all educational institutions were subject to official plans and drew up teaching programmes for which the State provided the basic textbooks on a large scale - more than 100 million copies a year - free of charge,

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although others could also be used. The State also had the legal right to inspect private schools and ensure that their educational programmes conformed to official plans.

4. In reply to the question from the representative of Venezuela about provisions for the education of children with physical and mental handicaps, the estimate in the report that only 10 per cent of the children with such disabilities were in the educational system referred to those currently attending regularly and did not include the many who had attended school at some time or other but did so no longer. His country did not have the means to provide for all such children at the same time but they were not neglected and received various kinds of assistance. As for the Venezuelan representative's question why half of the country's primary schools did not provide complete primary education, the reason was that they were situated in tiny localities in remote areas. That did not mean that the 10 per cent of children who attended such schools could not complete their primary education since they had the possibility of going to other neighbourhood schools to do so. Up to date statistics for the number of schools providing incomplete primary education were not available although there had once been some 3,000. The problem was not one of financial resources but of finding teachers for schools in remote areas. Finally, in reply to the question about his country's priorities, the ending of illiteracy probably still headed the list but emphasis was also being placed on providing primary education for all children in the next few years and extending facilities for secondary and higher education, where demand was increasing rapidly and likely to prove a major challenge in the next decade.

5. The precise figures on literacy, primary and adult education requested by the representative of France had to be sent from Mexico and would be made available to him in due course. The answer to his question on regional disparities in the illiteracy rate and the extent to which they might be due to the funding capacity of state governments lay essentially in Mexico's uneven population distribution. The country numbered over 50,000 communities with a population of less than 1,000 inhabitants and over 100,000 communities with a population of less than 250 inhabitants, while the population of the capital, Mexico City, currently stood at 15 million. The principal challenge facing the country was therefore to achieve a more equitable distribution of wealth by improving educational and other facilities in small and remote communities. The fact that state governments funded 30 to 60 per cent of schools testified to their important role in education, within the limits of their available resources. Those states where special taxes had been levied in order to raise funds for the purpose had achieved the greatest reductions in the illiteracy rate. However, more Federal assistance was being sought by state governments in terms of both economic means and human resources.

6. To reply to the series of questions raised by the representative of the Federal Republic of Germany, education formed part of an over-all development plan under which all sectoral policies were geared to an over-all development goal. The fundamental educational target in the plan being to strengthen social and political awareness, the two objectives of raising educational standards and achieving a better balance between the arts and sciences in secondary and higher education were designed to eliminate functional illiteracy, to improve the qualifications of

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school-children wishing to enter the work force and to remedy the current shortage of technicians. The shortfall in the number of mechanical-engineering graduates, for instance, was estimated at 4,000 per annum. Although government policy was to make scientific careers more attractive in order for Mexico to reach self-sufficiency in technical expertise, State intervention was confined to the creation of special schools, leaving individuals their free choice of a career.

7. To answer the final question raised by the representative of the Federal Republic of Germany on the subject of grants, the aim of the Mexican Government in giving priority to job creation schemes was simply to raise the standard of living and thereby increase educational opportunities as a whole. The fellowship system was fairly extensive in that all state governments awarded scholarships at secondary school level, about 5 per cent of students enrolled at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, which numbered about 230,000 students, had their studies entirely funded by scholarships, and more than 15,000 post-graduate fellowships had been awarded for full-time study both in Mexico and abroad.

8. Mr. CHEN CHARPENTIER (Mexico) said that the representative of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic had asked about the reasons for the social inequality between regions, which was mentioned in the report. Those problems were not exclusively in the educational field and were attributable to a variety of historical and geographical factors. There were great differences between the populations and levels of development of individual states, but his Government was very conscious of the problem and planned to develop the country more evenly. Much progress had been made and there were special programmes for speeding up the development of the most backward areas. In reply to the question how long it would take to eliminate illiteracy altogether, it was probably true that formal illiteracy would have been abolished by the end of the decade. However, programmes would still be necessary to enable people to retain their acquired ability to read and write. The Byelorussian representative had also asked to what period the report referred when it stated that primary education had been made available for the first time in more than 7,500 localities and that children in more than 3,000 localities had been given the opportunity to obtain complete primary education. The figures referred to the school year 1978/79 and later statistics would not be available until the end of 1982. But current projections were for 26 of his country's 32 states to meet 95 per cent or more of all primary education needs in the 1981/82 school year, while the remaining six states would meet between 85 and 95 per cent.

9. In reply to the request from the representative of Bulgaria for more recent statistics on the results achieved in the field of primary education, he pointed out that the figures for 1979/80 in the report to which reference had been made were in fact provisional projections. However, it was estimated that the demand for primary school places in 1982 would be about 16 million, of which some 15.8 million would be provided. It was believed that it would be possible to accommodate all children requiring places in primary schools by the beginning of the following school year. In reply to the question about how many students worked and studied at the same time and what facilities were provided for them, he could not for the moment provide precise statistics. His own provisional reply would be

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that it was difficult to estimate the numbers of those who were both working and studying, especially in rural areas where that happened more widely at the primary education level because of the custom of family members working together on the land. In urban areas, the incidence of combined work and study was probably greater at secondary and higher educational levels because time-tables were more flexible and it was easier to make the necessary arrangements. As for the provision of scholarships and grants to enable students to continue their education, again no precise statistics were available because many private schools, non-government institutions and trade unions gave such assistance in addition to the State.

10. In reply to questions raised by the representative of Japan, he said that his Government's dual target in reducing illiteracy as a whole was to bring down the adult illiteracy rate from 20 to 10 per cent and to reduce the percentage of children not receiving basic education. A number of measures had already been taken by the Government to bring 100 per cent of school-age children into the educational system by providing assistance in terms of free textbooks, school meals and transport. At the same time, it had created a number of boarding schools in remote areas so that children did not have to travel long distances to school. Those schools taught, amongst other things, basic agricultural techniques. The incorporation of all school-age children into the primary education system would of course ultimately depend on a rise in national income and better distribution of wealth. One of the Government's priorities was therefore a job-creation scheme under which more than 1 million jobs had been created each year, a figure which exceeded the rate of population growth by a wide margin. Yet another measure geared to extending primary education was to establish bilingual primary schools for the indigenous population. The answer to the Japanese representative's second question was that the only link between specific development and production requirements and education was provided indirectly by the creation of schools for certain specializations which were in considerable demand.

11. In reply to the representative of Norway, he pointed out that the State exercised its control over broadcasting on the one hand by means of licences to broadcast issued by the Ministry of Communications and on the other by laying down a specific policy on the fundamental orientation of broadcasting material, as outlined in paragraph 141 of the report. It also regulated the amount of time taken up by commercials.

12. On the subject of languages, he said that there were 41 indigenous languages in addition to more than 200 dialects. A number of establishments, such as the National Institute of Anthropology and the National Institute of Indigenous Peoples' were dedicated to the study and preservation of not only those languages and dialects but also indigenous cultures as a whole. The Government had launched extensive bilingual educational programmes involving teacher-training courses with a view to not only teaching Spanish to the monolingual indigenous population but also maintaining its awareness of its own culture. There were also wide-ranging programmes to preserve the artistic and cultural heritage of indigenous peoples, the main concern being to keep their traditions and practices alive by adopting them to development targets rather than to impose alien technologies. However, it was impossible from the practical point of view to provide higher education in

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indigenous languages, there being too many of them and the demand being too scarce. He would make available to the Norwegian representative in due course the detailed programme of the National Institute of Indigenous Peoples, which, in so far as he knew, sought to preserve the cultural heritage of those peoples by carrying out anthropological and linguistic studies, sponsoring bilingual teacher-training programmes and schools, and providing assistance in the fields of health, communications and the national and international marketing of goods produced by indigenous peoples.

13. Finally, regarding the questions asked by the representative of the Soviet Union, he said it would be difficult to apply an ethnic criterion in determining what proportion of the population was Indian in a mixed-race society such as Mexico. However, the fact that 9 per cent of the population was bilingual would give some idea of indigenous population levels. He would supply the representative of the Soviet Union with the exact figures for the number of bilingual schools at a later date. As to the principle of compulsory primary education, it must be noted that, whereas article 3 of the Mexican Constitution established the principle of compulsory primary education, which was provided free of charge, the minimum age for work did not facilitate the attainment of that objective in rural and backward areas, where seasonal peaks in the agricultural cycle tended to interfere with schooling. In major cities, on the other hand, there were probably only a few residual pockets of urban population groups, such as recent immigrants, whose children did not attend school.

14. The CHAIRMAN said that the Working Group had now concluded its consideration of the report submitted by Mexico.

15. Mr. Borchart (Federal Republic of Germany) took the Chair.

Report of Mongolia (E/1982/3/Add.11)

16. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia) took a place at the Committee table.

17. Mr. ENKHSAIKHAN (Mongolia), introducing his Government's report (E/1982/3/Add.11), said that articles 13 and 15 of the Covenant were covered by article 80 of the Mongolian Constitution, which stipulated that all citizens of the Mongolian People's Republic had the right to education. That right was guaranteed by means of free tuition, the extension of the network of general education schools, special secondary schools and higher educational establishments, a system designed to improve trade qualifications, as well as a State system of grants for students attending special secondary schools and higher educational establishments. Another constitutional provision, article 83, stipulated that all citizens enjoyed equal rights in the economic, cultural, social and political life of the country and guaranteed that all nationalities living on the territory of the Republic could develop their national cultures, and receive tuition and conduct business in their own native languages.

18. The constitutional rights of citizens in all spheres of cultural and social life were moreover protected under the Criminal Code, infringements being

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considered crimes against the State punishable by deprivation of liberty or exile. In addition, article 189 of the Criminal Code stipulated that intentional destruction of or damage to cultural monuments or objects under State protection was punishable by deprivation of liberty or a fine.

19. The cultural heritage of ethnic groups was protected by a special Cultural Monuments Protection Act. The rights of authors and rights to inventions or discoveries were protected by the Civil Code. Infringement of those rights was punished in accordance with the degree of gravity of the offence.

20. It was clear from the first part of the report that significant progress had been made in abolishing illiteracy and expanding public education. The achievements in that respect would perhaps be better appreciated if compared with the situation in pre-revolutionary Mongolia, i.e. before July 1921. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, Mongolia had established a written alphabet known as the Uighur alphabet, whose contribution to the spread of education and culture had been considerable. Several other alphabets had also been subsequently developed and used. Mongolian literature, which had originally been based primarily on oral poetry, and Mongolian historiography, had both expanded with the establishment of a written language and grammar.

21. Under the feudal system, few had enjoyed the benefits of Mongolia's cultural heritage. The country's cultural revival had been interrupted in the seventeenth century by the Manchu invasion, when Mongolia had become totally isolated. The ensuing repression had left Mongolia one of the most backward countries in the East, with the vast majority of the population completely illiterate.

22. Since the establishment of the People's Government in 1921, Mongolia had eliminated illiteracy and developed an education system covering all levels. Today one quarter of the population was studying in some form of educational establishment.

23. Enormous attention was paid to the physical and mental development of children, and to the development of their personality and moral qualities. Additional measures to promote the welfare of children with physical and mental disabilities continued to be taken.

24. Some 17.5 per cent of the State budget would be allocated for education in 1982, an increase of more than 21 per cent over 1975. From 1981 to 1985, over 40 per cent of the budget would be allocated for social and cultural needs. Kindergartens would be established and boarding schools opened for the children of herdsmen. Substantial numbers of new teachers would be trained.

25. Approximately 5 per cent of the Mongolian population were Kazakhs. In 1940 only 24 per cent of adult Kazakhs had been literate. Today, illiteracy had been completely eliminated, and 80 per cent of Kazakh adults had attended general secondary or vocational schools. Schools providing tuition in the Kazakh language had been established, while radio broadcasts were made and periodicals published in Kazakh. The rights provided for under article 15 of the Covenant were fully implemented.

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26. Mongolia maintained close links with scientific and research institutes in other countries. It had, for example, co-operated with the Soviet Union in space research.

27. Mr. MARDOVICH (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that Mongolia was clearly taking steps to further the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights by making education free and by developing scientific and technical education and higher education. The Government was making strenuous efforts to provide educational opportunities to those who had been denied them in the past - an inspiring example. The entire population seemed to be pursuing educational goals. Mongolia had long since made primary education compulsory.

28. The country had totally eliminated inequality and had by-passed the capitalist stage of development in achieving socialism. Mongolia had worked an educational miracle.

29. Mongolia's geography was complex, with a scattered population. It would be interesting to learn exactly how the Government had solved the problem of educating children in remote areas. Institutions providing vocational training had the task of educating and of preparing pupils for work. Further details of the role of such institutions in the Mongolian education system would be welcome. The Working Group would also like to have further details of Mongolia's efforts to ensure access to world literature and culture. In particular, what authors were the most popular?

30. Mr. AKAO (Japan) asked what the enrolment rates were for day, evening and other schools. Was it possible for children to change from one kind of school to another before completing the specified number of years? With regard to the social composition of students in higher education, did the provision of grants depend on social background? Did the enrolment rate for manual workers differ from that of non-manual workers?

31. Mr. MRACHKOV (Bulgaria) said that Mongolia had made remarkable progress in public education and in the development of science and culture. It should be noted that all education was free, and that the Government had established an effective uniform system of education ranging from the pre-school to the tertiary level.

32. He wished to know whether the State provided higher education for the children of workers and stock-raisers. What was the nature of the six institutions of higher education in the country? What type of specialists did they train? With reference to primary education, he asked how long a period it covered. The report stated that pupils had been concentrated in large primary and secondary schools. What steps had been taken by the Government to ensure attendance by children living far from such schools?

33. Mr. BOUFFANDEAU (France) said that Mongolia had made strenuous efforts to develop its system of education. He requested information on the number of students in higher education, and on the ratio of men to women in secondary and higher education. The report suggested that only 6.2 per cent of workers had received higher education. Did the Government regard that percentage as satisfactory? Did access to higher education depend on a student's economic background?

34. Mr. SOFINSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the Mongolian report was clear and shed light on the questions which the Working Group considered. The popular view of Mongolia as a country of barren steppes was inappropriate. It was, in fact, a beautiful country with an ancient culture. The country had languished under the Manchu yoke for three centuries, during which all scientific and educational progress had been halted and medical care denied, so that the population had remained static.

35. Development had resumed with the establishment of the Mongolian People's Republic in the 1920s, since when the achievements in all areas of education had been remarkable, the most salient being the provision of all forms of education free of charge. The Government was aware of the problems which remained, and under the forthcoming five-year plan the number of students would increase by 10 to 12 per cent. A substantial proportion of students would be in boarding-schools, an important consideration for a country with many stock-raisers.

36. Mongolians, conditioned by the vast expanses of the steppes, were by nature and tradition philosophers, poets and humanists. The establishment of the Republic had provided the material basis for all Mongolian citizens to enjoy access to culture and science. The cultural attainments of the people were truly remarkable, while the thirst for scientific knowledge had led to the discovery of rare archaeological finds. Mongolia was a treasure-house of culture.

37. With reference to the table contained in paragraph 46 of the report, he wished to know what the precise meaning of "average number" was.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

