



General Assembly

Sixty-third session

66th plenary meeting

Wednesday, 10 December 2008, 4.30 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann (Nicaragua)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 4.30 p.m.

Agenda item 58 (continued)

Report of the Human Rights Council

Report of the Third Committee (A/63/435)

The Acting President: If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, may I take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the report of the Third Committee that is before the Assembly today?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Given that the 65th plenary meeting has been suspended to enable the Assembly to take action on the report of the Committee, I would like to propose that explanations of vote on the recommendation of the Committee contained in document A/63/435, if any, be made during the consideration of other reports of the Third Committee. If I hear no objection, it is so decided.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: We are celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, one of the greatest achievements of this Organization. It endowed humanity with a consistent, coherent, universal, sole body of human rights. History came to divide this sole body, resulting in greater focus

on civil and political rights to the detriment of economic, social and cultural rights.

That is not to say that we are satisfied with the level of attention paid to civil and political rights. Quite the contrary, it is our belief that all of us, States Members of the United Nations, must dedicate much greater efforts to fulfil our obligations to protect, promote, respect and fully realize all human rights for all, without discrimination of any kind. But, as we all agreed 15 years ago in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and must be treated in an equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis. In practice, that means that realizing economic, social and cultural rights is fundamental to promoting, protecting and respecting civil and political rights, and vice versa. Hence, paying less attention to some human rights is detrimental not only to those particular human rights, but to all human rights.

By adopting this draft optional protocol, the General Assembly will break down the walls of division that history built and will unite once again what the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed as a sole body of human rights 60 years ago. It will finally provide at the international level the same degree of protection to economic, social and cultural rights that has existed for civil and political rights since 1976. And it will do justice to the goals of the founders of this Organization, which were to ensure for all freedom from fear and freedom from want.

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Before we begin to take action on the recommendation contained in the report of the Third Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take a decision in the same manner as that used in the Third Committee.

The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Third Committee in paragraph 11 of its report. The Assembly will now take action on the draft resolution, entitled "Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights". The Third Committee adopted the draft resolution. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 63/117).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 58.

Members are reminded that the 65th plenary meeting of the General Assembly will resume immediately.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.