



Sixty-second General Assembly
Third Committee
34th Meeting (PM)

THIRD COMMITTEE CALLS ON ASSEMBLY TO DESIGNATE 2 APRIL WORLD AUTISM DAY

Assembly Called on to Encourage, Facilitate Establishment of Cooperatives among Excluded Groups

Acting without a vote this afternoon, the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) approved eight draft resolutions which called on the General Assembly to take action on an array of issues, ranging from eliminating all forms of violence against women, through strengthening the United Nations crime prevention programme, to designating one special day as World Autism Day.

A draft resolution on the rights of the child was also introduced today, which the Committee is expected to take action on at a later date. The impetus behind that text, as explained by the representative of Portugal, speaking on behalf of the European Union, was the ongoing violation of children's rights all over the globe and the need to do much more to highlight the issues preventing them from fully enjoying those rights.

The resolution on intensifying efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, approved as orally amended this afternoon, would have the Assembly call on the international community, including the United Nations, regional and subregional organizations, to support national efforts to promote the empowerment of women and gender equality in order to enhance national efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls. The text further states that such efforts would include development and implementation of national action plans on the elimination of violence against women and girls.

The Committee also approved a draft resolution on international covenants on human rights, which would recommend that the Assembly emphasize that States must ensure that any measure to combat terrorism comply with obligations under relevant international law, including set out by the international covenants on human rights. The text would also call on the Assembly to stress the importance of avoiding the erosion of human rights by derogation.

A draft resolution on international cooperation against the world drug problem, which was also approved, would have the Assembly reaffirm that countering that problem is a common and shared responsibility that must be addressed in a multilateral setting with an integrated and balanced approach. According to the text, such approaches must be carried out in conformity with the United Nations Charter and other provisions of international law and fully respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, as well as the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of States.

Another resolution approved today on World Autism Awareness Day would have the Assembly designate 2 April as World Autism Awareness Day, to be observed every year beginning in 2008.

Yet another text today on follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family would have the Assembly urge Member States to create a conducive environment to strengthen and support all families, while recognizing that equality between women and men, as well as respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all family members are essential to family well-being and society at large.

Also approved today, as amended, was a draft resolution on the United Nations African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, which would have the Assembly call upon all Member States and non-governmental organizations to continue adopting concrete practical measures to support the Institute in the development of capacity and in the implementation of its programmes and activities.

Another text on cooperatives in social development, called on the Assembly to encourage and facilitate the establishment, as well as development, of cooperatives among excluded groups to generate employment opportunities and harness the potential and productivity of such groups.

The resolution on strengthening the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, in particular its technical cooperation capacity, would have the Assembly draw attention to emerging issues such as urban crime, child sexual exploitation, fraud and identity theft, and international trafficking in forest products such as timber and wildlife. Member States and relevant international organizations would also be urged to develop strategies, in cooperation with the Programme, to address transnational organized crime, including trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants, illicit manufacturing of and transnational trafficking in firearms, as well as corruption and terrorism.

Action on a draft resolution on eliminating the use of rape and other forms of sexual violence as instruments to achieve political or military objectives was deferred for a later date.

Statements preceding action on a draft resolution were made today by the representatives of Mongolia, Pakistan (on behalf the "Group of 77" developing countries and China), Netherlands, United States, Qatar, Sweden (on behalf of the Nordic countries), Benin, Italy, Venezuela and Mexico.

Statements following action on draft resolutions were made today by Portugal, United States, Colombia and the Russian Federation.

The Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) will meet again at a time to be announced.

Background

The Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) met today to hear the introduction of a draft resolution on the Rights of the child (document A/C.3/62/L.24), before taking action on a number of draft resolutions.

A draft resolution on Cooperatives in social development (document A/C.3/62/L.6) would have the General Assembly urge Governments, international organizations and specialized agencies, in collaboration with national and international cooperatives, to fully utilize and develop the potential and contribution of the latter to meet social development goals such as poverty eradication; generate full and productive employment; and enhance social integration. The Assembly would also encourage and facilitate the establishment as well as development of cooperatives among excluded groups to generate employment opportunities and harness the potential and productivity of such groups.

A draft resolution titled Follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond (document A/C.3/62/L.8), would have the Assembly urge Member States to create a conducive environment to strengthen and support all families, while recognizing that equality between women and men as well as respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all family members are essential to family well-being and society at large. It would also have Member States note the importance of reconciling work and family life and recognize that both parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child.

The draft resolution on Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (document A/C.3/62/L.15/Rev.1) would have the Assembly call on the international community, including the United Nations, regional and subregional organizations, to support national efforts to promote the empowerment of women and gender equality in order to enhance national efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls. Such efforts would include development and implementation of national action plans on the elimination of violence against women and girls.

A draft resolution on Eliminating the use of rape and other forms of sexual violence as instruments to achieve political or military objectives (document A/C.3/62/L.16) would have the Assembly urge States to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence. It would also urge States to end impunity by investigating, prosecuting and punishing those responsible for rape and other forms of sexual violence, including members of armed forces.

A draft resolution on World Autism Awareness Day (document A/C.3/62/L.22) would have the Assembly designate 2 April as World Autism Awareness Day, to be observed every year beginning in 2008. It would also encourage Member States to take measures to raise awareness about children with autism throughout society.

A draft resolution on the International Covenants on Human Rights (document A/C.3/62/L.25) would see the Assembly strongly appeal to all States that have not yet done so to become parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Assembly would also call for the strictest compliance by States parties with their obligations under these two instruments. It would emphasize that States must ensure that any measure to combat terrorism complies with obligations under relevant international law, including obligations under the International Covenants on Human Rights. The Assembly would also stress the importance of avoiding the erosion of human rights by derogation.

A text on the United Nations African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (document A/C.3/62/L.11) would have the Assembly reiterate the need to further strengthen the capacity of the Institute to support national mechanisms for crime prevention and criminal justice in African countries, while urging States members of the institute to continue making every possible effort to meet their obligations to the entity. The Assembly would also call upon all Member States and non-governmental organizations to continue adopting concrete practical measures to support the Institute in the development of capacity and in the implementation of its programmes and activities.

A draft on Strengthening the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, in particular its technical cooperation capacity (document A/C.3/62/L.12/Rev.1) would have the Assembly reaffirm the importance of the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, as well as the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. It would invite Member States to identify best practices in combating trafficking in persons, and urge the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to increase collaboration with intergovernmental, international and regional organizations. It would go on to draw attention to emerging issues such as urban crime, child sexual exploitation, fraud and identity theft, and international trafficking in forest products, including timber, wildlife and other forest biological resources. Member States and relevant international organizations would also be urged to develop strategies, in cooperation with the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, to address transnational organized crime, including trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants and illicit manufacturing of, and transnational trafficking in, firearms, as well as corruption and terrorism.

A text on International cooperation against the world drug problem (document A/C.3/62/L.13/Rev.1) would have the Assembly reaffirm that countering the world drug problem is a common and shared responsibility that must be addressed in a multilateral setting with an integrated and balanced approach and must be carried out in full conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and other provisions of international law. Such approaches would also have full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of States and for all human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Assembly would also urge States that have not done so, to consider ratifying or acceding to all the provisions of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1954 (as amended by the 1955 Protocol), the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971, the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols as well as the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

Introduction of Draft Resolution

The representative of Portugal, on behalf of the European Union, introduced a draft resolution on the Rights of the child (document A/C.3/62/L.24). Given the violation of children's rights all over the globe, she said, much more had to be done to highlight the issues that were preventing them from fully enjoying their human rights. The draft highlighted the vital role of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, its Optional Protocols and United Nations mechanisms in protecting and promoting those rights. It also detailed the challenges faced by all States vis-à-vis the rights of the child. The current draft also highlighted the urgency of eliminating violence against children, and recommended that the Secretary-General appoint a Special Representative on the issue, who would act as a high-profile and independent global advocate to promote the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children. It was hoped that all delegations would support the draft.

Action on Draft Resolutions

The Committee then took action on a draft resolution on Cooperatives in social development (document A/C.3/62/L.6). For the record, the Secretary, Moncef Khane, read out a number of revisions that had been made since the introduction of the draft.

The representative of Mongolia said that he was delighted to announce that a number of other countries have joined in co-sponsoring the draft resolution. He looked forward to the text being approved by consensus.

The draft was then approved as orally revised without a vote.

Speaking about the draft on Follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond (document A/C.3/62/L.8), the representative of Pakistan, on behalf of the Group of 77 developing countries and China, as well as the co-sponsors, said that he was pleased to announce that, after a number of open and bilateral consultations, consensus had been reached on an important resolution. He thanked Qatar for its support in facilitating the draft, and then read out a number of minor revisions. He said that, adopted by consensus, the draft would provide immense help in meeting the objectives of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

The draft was then approved, as orally revised, without a vote.

The representative of Portugal said that the European Union attached great importance to family issues, and had taken measures to address a number of family-related issues, such as parental leave and living conditions of vulnerable families. Families made a valuable contribution to societies, but for policies to succeed, they had to be inclusive. Families the world over had changed; they were living, dynamic entities. The diversity of families had to be recognized. The Union understood that all references to the family in the draft reflected such diversity.

Speaking about the draft resolution on Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (document A/C.3/62/L.15/Rev.1), the representative of Netherlands said that the current revision had the support of over 60 co-sponsors, and followed the adoption of last year's resolution, which was adopted by the General Assembly by consensus. The draft resolution would call upon the United Nations to intensify efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women.

She also drew attention to an error in the draft before the Committee, and requested a correction.

She thanked all delegations for their participation on the draft resolution, and said she was confident that it could be adopted without a vote.

The draft resolution was then approved, as orally amended, without a vote.

The representative of the United States reaffirmed his country's commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, based on several understandings; among others, that it did not create legally binding obligations on States under international law. The United States understood that references to the Beijing Declaration as well as its Platform for Action and their 5- and 10-year reviews did not create any rights and did not recognize a right to abortion, nor constitute approval of it. His country supported post-abortion care and other medical treatment and did not consider such treatment to constitute abortion-related services.

The representative of Colombia said that his country had co-sponsored this draft resolution as it had the year before, and noted its understanding of a reference to forms of violence against women. The Colombian delegation expressed support to all delegations for their support of the text.

Turning to the draft on Eliminating the use of rape and other forms of sexual violence as instruments to achieve political or military objectives (document A/C.3/62/L.16), the representative of the United States asked for action to be deferred.

The Chairman, Raymond Wolfe (Jamaica), then announced that the Committee would revert to the draft in due course.

The Committee then took up the draft on World Autism Awareness Day (document A/C.3/62/L.22), with the representative of Qatar, its main sponsor, expressing appreciation for the support it had received from delegations.

The draft was then approved without a vote.

Speaking on the draft resolution on International Covenants on Human Rights (document A/C.3/62/L.25), the representative of Sweden, on behalf of the Nordic countries and co-sponsors, said that it was a biannual resolution that focused on the essential need for States to accede to and implement the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural rights and the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights. A large number of delegations had engaged in negotiations, and some delegations had become co-sponsors for the first time. She expressed thanks for the great flexibility that had been shown during negotiations.

The representative of the United States said that his delegation would join consensus with the express understanding that it did not imply that States must become party to instruments to which they were not a party or implement obligations under human rights instruments to which they were also not a party. In addition, it was the long-standing view that economic, social and cultural rights were not justiciable or enforceable in the same way as civil and political rights.

The draft was then approved without a vote.

Speaking about the draft on Crime prevention and criminal justice (document A/C.3/62/L.11), the representative of Benin thanked all delegations who had taken part in the drafting of the text, and apologized for not circulating the list of co-sponsors in time. He informed the Committee that a letter was being circulated with revisions to the text.

The representative of Benin then read out amendments to the draft resolution.

The draft resolution was then adopted, as amended, without a vote.

The Committee then turned to the draft on Strengthening the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, in particular its technical cooperation capacity (document A/C.3/62/L.12/Rev.1), with the Secretary making a statement on programme budget implications.

The representative of Italy, the main sponsor, said that the draft had been the result of more than three weeks of intensive informal consultations in which many delegations had participated. Thanks went out to all for their constructive attitude, which resulted in consensus. The draft took a balanced approach to the wide range of activities undertaken by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; it should help that Office achieve its goals in a sustained and targeted way.

The representative of Venezuela referred to preambular paragraph 13, saying that it had not been agreed in any relevant forum that actions against transnational organized crime and terrorism were "a common and shared responsibility". It was the right of Member States to define their own security and defence needs, he said.

The Committee then approved the draft resolution without a vote.

The Committee then addressed the draft resolution on International cooperation against the world drug problem (document A/C.3/62/L.13.Rev.1). The Secretary read a statement on programme budget implications.

The representative of Mexico said that her country was pleased to inform the Committee that many other countries had joined the list of co-sponsors. For the Committee to be able to adopt the draft resolution without a vote, Mexico had held several consultations, placing emphasis on outstanding challenges. Moreover, the draft had also taken on board specific measures to deal with drug-related crimes, among other things.

She noted corrections to the text which had been submitted, and read them out. She thanked all the delegations for their support, and said that she hoped the text be adopted by consensus.

The resolution was then adopted, as orally amended, by consensus.

The representative of the Russian Federation said that they had looked for a way not to break consensus, but were disturbed that the resolution did not contain provisions that would halt the spread of opium from Afghanistan. His delegation, therefore, could not co-sponsor the resolution. As Afghanistan's opium production constituted 93 per cent of the world market, the Russian Federation believed that omitting reference to the country in the resolution to the Assembly weakened the common international efforts to put an end to a major threat in the spread of drugs.

