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PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE  
UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON  
THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT  
Intergovernmental Working Group on the  
Declaration on the Human Environment

REPLIES TO QUESTIONNAIRE OF 21 DECEMBER 1970 CIRCULATED BY THE  
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE IN CONNEXION WITH THE  
PREPARATION OF A DRAFT DECLARATION ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Addendum

71-09278

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

6 May 1971

Preliminary remarks on the elaboration of a draft Declaration  
on the Human Environment

1. The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic supports the idea of elaborating and adopting a general declaration on the human environment which should be marked by brevity and clearness both in content and formulation. It should contain the main principles of international co-operation among States and the main trends of activity of international organizations in this field. The declaration should be of inspiring and mobilizing nature; it should call for the solution of various problems of living environment. It should not go into much detail and it should in no way limit the activities directed at the improvement of the human environment. In this respect one has to be aware of the fact that even well meant directives are not only an instrument of stimulation but, very often, in a way also a limiting factor for other activities which are not expressly mentioned in the directives. This should be avoided in the declaration.

2. In the sphere of rights the declaration should be formulated very rationally and sensitively. The relationships of individuals towards the State and the relationships among individuals and social groups are and should be provided for in the constitutions and laws of the individual States and in the legal norms derived therefrom. At most the declaration should state that the human right to a suitable human environment belongs to the fundamental human rights and that this fact should find a reflection in the respective national laws. However, in what way this should be implemented is already a question of the legislative methods of sovereign States.

As for the sphere of international relations, the declaration should proclaim that States do not have the right to cause damage to the human environment on the territory of their neighbours. This, of course, includes also damage to such elements of the human environment which are of international importance and which are very often declared to be the common property of all mankind.

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3. The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic assumes that a preamble in such a significant document will be unavoidable. This preamble could be based on the following principles:

(a) The biosphere constitutes the material basis of life on earth. The part of the biosphere in which humanity exists is the human environment.

(b) Man is influenced by his environment. But at the same time, the environment changes and receives its final shape as a consequence of the economic activities of human society.

(c) Thus human society is the creator of living conditions for future generations.

In this preamble the declaration should cover the relationship between the problems of the human environment and the international situation, since only in conditions of peace, security and normalized international situation can necessary prerequisites be created for an intensive effort for systematic improvement of man's human environment at both national and international levels.

4. Czechoslovakia is of the view that it does not suffice only to protect the existing environment against various damages, but that it is simultaneously necessary to create an environment corresponding to modern human society, i.e., to assume an active approach to the solution of human environment problems, to concentrate one's attention on the causes of damage, and not on its consequences.

In this direction the declaration should first of all urge the undertaking of complex scientific and research work aimed at a perfect mastering of the process of industrialization, town planning, transport, power and water supply and the securing of food for the constantly growing numbers of world population.

5. From all that has been said it follows that Czechoslovakia is inclined to the view to formulate the declaration on the basis of substantive problems of the human environment.

6. The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic is fully aware of the relationships between the environment and various activities of modern human society. In accordance with our point of view the relationship between economy and human environment should be most suitably expressed by an appeal for giving priority to common social interests before the interests of individuals or groups, an appeal for a purposeful departure from the ideas of the consumer society and for the

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development of a highly rational society with a planned management of social functions and planned use of natural resources and the biosphere as such, with planned renewal and creation of the living environment, etc.

7. There is no insurmountable contradiction between human environment and economic growth. Governments should, therefore, direct their actions in this field generally in such a way that economic growth should not endanger human environment on the one hand, and that measures aiming at improving the quality of human environment should not constitute an obstacle to economic growth on the other hand.

8. A substantial share of means which in a number of countries are being dispersed on the satisfaction of the needs of a relatively small social stratum should without any doubt be aimed at securing a high standard of living for future generations. In this sense, the declaration should proclaim, as a general need of the further existence of human society, the creation of conditions for a rational development of the human environment and of humanity as a whole.

9. On the other hand, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic is of the view that the declaration should not distract itself in dealing with individual problems which, moreover, are of unstable, temporary nature. The declaration should set forth, first of all, relations and questions of long-term nature so that it would not be necessary to amend the declaration in too short a time after its adoption.

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