

Social Control of Technological Development

49. The technological revolution which has already begun in the advanced industrial economies will profoundly change the conditions of the environment and resource management within the life-time of the present generation. Moreover, the impact of this change will be experienced worldwide. Micro-electronics, robotics, weapons technology, bio-engineering - plus innovations which are not yet dreamed of - will transform the circumstances of both individuals and the structures of society in the world as a whole.. 50. Technology is not simply a matter of objective science or inanimate machines. It is always guided by particular interests and designed according to human values, whether implicit or explicit. It has to be brought under social control in order to use the positive opportunities offered by new technologies for humankind, to minimise the risks and the dangers of uncontrolled developments and to prevent socially unacceptable technologies.

51. Social progress requires, and inspires, technological progress. What is needed is technology appropriate to the different conditions, experiences and levels of development prevailing in the North and in the South. There must be a substantial transfer of suitable technology - and of basic technological know-how - between North and South. The North has much to learn from the experience of the South, especially its use of low-waste technologies. There should be social dialogue, and democratic political control of the context in which new technologies are introduced. This should ensure that their availability: - contributes to autonomous development in the countries of the South, mobilising their resources rather than wasting them, and creating new jobs rather than increasing unemployment; - humanises labour, promotes human health, and enhances safety in the workplace; - facilitates economic rights and increases the scope for popular decision-making in working life.

52. In order to ensure that these standards are met throughout the world there must be institutions and procedures for assessment of technology. Innovation should be introduced in accordance with social needs and priorities as expressed through democratic debate and decision-making.

53. Manipulation of human genetic material and exploitation of women through new reproductive technologies must be prevented. Likewise ways must be found to protect humanity from nuclear danger and chemical risk.

Disarmament and Development

54. Disarmament agreements between the Superpowers will do more than remove the threat of annihilation from the planet. With such agreements in place, many of the resources now wasted on thermonuclear, chemical, biological and conventional weapons could be released for investment in economic and social development programmes in the South. Disarmament between the East and West should be linked with programmes for justice between the North and South.

55. A proportion of the substantial funds which the highly industrialised countries of the West and the East would save as a result of negotiated disarmament should be utilised to create a multinational fund to promote a secure and sustainable development in the countries of the South.

