



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 54th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. SOBHY (Egypt)

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ORGANIZATION OF WORK

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 80: UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN: EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE (continued) (A/34/357, A/34/542)

- (a) IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 3519 (XXX): REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/34/471, A/34/113, A/34/391)
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- (e) WORLD CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN: REPORT OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE CONFERENCE (continued) (A/CONF.94/PC/12, A/34/657 and Add.1)

1. Ms. KEKEDO (Papua New Guinea) said that the national development strategy of her country took into account the principle, embodied in the Constitution, of the equal participation of men and women in all political, economic, social and religious activities. In 1975 the Government of her country had established the National Council of Women, a non-governmental organization which would be financed by the Government until it became self-supporting. There were also other non-governmental women's organizations in the country, such as church women's groups, the Young Women's Christian Association and the Country Women Association.

2. She stressed the value of women's work in the home and in subsistence agriculture. At the same time, she said it was absurd to speak of equality, development and peace for women if the developed countries did not help in establishing the new international economic order to increase the equality of income distribution and access to social services which constituted the basis of development.

3. In order to achieve the aims of equality, development and peace, her Government had set itself the task, as a matter of priority, of providing assistance for agriculture in rural areas and for women in those areas. Since 1975 women had been allowed to attend agricultural schools; women were thus no longer forced to migrate to urban areas but could cultivate their own land. The Government had also organized courses to teach women how to use and repair farm implements and to assist women in eliminating malnutrition in the country. Furthermore, rural community health centres had been established, with emphasis on preventive medicine.

(Ms. Kekedo, Papua New Guinea)

4. Working women in her country had the right to six weeks of maternity leave with pay and to additional periods without pay but without loss of seniority. Furthermore, paternity leave was granted to men if there were other children in the family and no other help was available. Efforts were also underway to inform the population with regard to the need for better family planning.
5. Her Government welcomed the fact that consideration was being given to ensuring the participation of representatives of women from the least developed countries in the conference at Copenhagen; she urged the General Assembly to include in that group of countries the island developing countries. Also, additional material should be gathered relating to women in the South Pacific.
6. Mrs. SIBAL (India) reported on the ESCAP regional preparatory meeting, held in New Delhi in November 1979, with the participation of 26 countries. The meeting had studied progress in achieving the objectives of the Decade at the national level, with particular stress on the establishment of national machinery for integrating women in the development process; the establishment of guidelines and a plan of action for the second half of the Decade; and measures to be taken by the organs of the United Nations system to promote the objectives of the Decade. With reference to each of the areas of the subtheme of the World Conference, namely employment, health and education, the meeting had identified urgent and critical issues and problems, determined short-term strategies and long-term plans and established guidelines.
7. The preparatory meeting had recommended to the specialized agencies and to other United Nations bodies that they should consider establishing units to ensure the full participation of women in development and that the specialized agencies should develop and implement programmes as necessary for that purpose. The preparatory meeting had also recommended that the agencies should undertake studies to ascertain the levels at which women were currently employed in their respective headquarters and field offices, so that those levels could be raised.
8. Her delegation hoped that the recommendations of the ESCAP regional preparatory meeting would be borne in mind by the Conference secretariat, especially in the preparation of the draft plan of action for the second half of the Decade. Her delegation also drew attention to the request made to the Secretary-General of the United Nations that he should submit the report of the ESCAP regional preparatory meeting to the 1980 World Conference; it likewise hoped that, if the General Assembly decided to approve the holding of a third session of the Preparatory Committee for the World Conference, the report of the ESCAP meeting would be made available to that Committee.
9. Mrs. OBIAGO (Nigeria) said that equality of treatment for all citizens of her country, regardless of their sex, religion or ethnic group, was enshrined in the Constitution and that a large number of women held key positions in the public sector and the professions. Women with less education participated fully in the private sector of the country's economy; however, much still needed to be done to improve the lot of women in rural areas. Nigerian women had organized themselves

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(Mrs. Obiako, Nigeria)

into all types of societies and associations based on cultural, social, economic and professional interests. All of those organizations had as their major goal the improvement of the status of women at all levels.

10. Her Government had established a Department for Women's Affairs in the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. The Department would oversee women's activities in Nigeria and would provide advice concerning the aims of the World Plan of Action of the United Nations Decade for Women.

11. It was apparent that additional resources would have to be provided for the preparation of the World Conference. Her delegation attached great importance to the matter of documentation and felt that documents should not only be satisfactorily prepared but should also be made available well in advance of the Conference, so that delegations would have enough time to study them and prepare their statements. With regard to participation in the World Conference, the Third Committee should consider with sympathy the difficulties faced by some third world countries in sending representatives to conferences. The United Nations should provide appropriate assistance to those countries so as to ensure the participation of their representatives.

12. Her delegation felt that the Preparatory Committee for the World Conference should hold a third session, in order, inter alia, to consider reports from the regional preparatory meetings, which were of great importance for the review and appraisal of the first half of the Decade (1975-1980) and the programme of action for the second half of the Decade (1981-1985).

13. Ms. ESKELINEN (Finland) said that the 1980 Copenhagen Conference would provide an opportunity for evaluating and specifying measures aimed at the improvement of the status of women, which had been initiated as a result of the International Women's Year at the national, regional and global levels. There was growing awareness of the role of women in economic and social development, not only as beneficiaries of that development but also as active contributors to it. It was vitally important that their role should be integrated in the whole development process at all levels, so that so-called women's programmes were not planned and implemented separately. That interaction between women and development should be taken into account in national development planning; at the international level the idea should pervade the entire United Nations system and should find specific expression in the programme of action of the second half of the Decade and in the new international development strategy.

14. Improvements in the status of women presupposed favourable changes in the status and role of men, which enhanced the possibilities of both men and women for realizing their full potential in the family and in society. Countries interpreted that concept in different ways, depending on their cultural and socio-economic background. In countries where women had achieved equal or nearly equal status with men from the legal standpoint, the main problem was to bring about the necessary attitudinal changes in order to translate legal equality into practice.

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(Ms. Eskelinen, Finland)

15. It was to be hoped that the programme of action to be adopted during the Copenhagen Conference would meet the needs and aspirations of countries at different stages of development. The programme of action must not duplicate the World Plan of Action, but rather specify and develop further priority programmes, taking into account objectives of major concern to women, including equality between men and women. Other long term objectives relating to the concern of women for future generations should also be considered, for example, the environment and population questions. In the specific recommendations that should be included in the programme of action, special attention should be devoted to employment, health and education. In that connexion, the experience of the specialized agencies concerned must be taken into account, and the measures and goals adopted by other United Nations organs and during other United Nations conferences must be incorporated. The experience gained during the first half of the Decade suggested that measurable goals and specific recommendations on national machinery were the most effective from the point of view of implementation.

16. Her delegation endorsed the recommendation that a third meeting of the Preparatory Committee should be held the following spring. The Commission on the Status of Women would thus be able to take up consideration and appraisal of implementation of the World Plan of Action, and the Preparatory Committee would be able to complete the draft programme of action for the second half of the Decade.

17. Her delegation fully supported the budget proposals submitted by the Secretary-General of the World Conference in document A/34/657 and believed that it was vital that they should be adopted in order to complete preparations for the Conference.

18. Mrs. STOLTENBERG (Norway) said she believed that the preparations for the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women were proceeding satisfactorily and that it was desirable that a third meeting of the Preparatory Committee should be held, since that body had not yet been able to consider a large number of the substantive documents.

19. The Copenhagen Conference would not be a new Mexico Conference but would, rather, follow it up and make the already existing World Plan of Action more operational. Her delegation was of the view that the documents and debates of the Conference should be based on the situation in the various regions, without an attempt being made to adopt a global approach. Ideally, the major document should be a brief document outlining general problems and analyses, as well as recommendations to the United Nations system and the international community. The remaining documents could be the regional plans of action reflecting the subtheme of the Conference.

20. The important differences between the various regions would thus be taken into account. The problems of women all over the world could not be reviewed in documents with a global scope, which would be of little practical use for the work of the Conference. That was one of the reasons why it had not been possible in Mexico to advance beyond the introduction and chapter 1 of the Plan of Action.

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(Mrs. Stoltenberg, Norway)

21. The very size of large international conferences diminished the sense of purpose and reality of their debates: perhaps, therefore, it would be desirable for national delegations to be smaller than they had been in Mexico in the interests of a more business-like atmosphere, more orderly debates and more concise results.

22. Since improving the status of women was one of the ways to promote economic and social development, that question should be closely linked to the activities of all the United Nations organizations and bodies concerned with development. It was therefore necessary that there should be a high-level body with the power and the mandate that would enable it to influence the rest of the system. Her delegation suggested that the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation should be entrusted with the task of co-ordinating women's programmes with development planning in general. That work would not replace the important work of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs at Vienna, but would, rather, constitute a mechanism for communication between the Centre and the United Nations system.

23. Mrs. TILLANDER (Sweden) said that in order to strengthen the economic and social position of women it must be recognized that their work was as necessary as that of men. The subordinate role of women must be changed, and equality must be attained not only by means of formal reforms but also in everyday reality. Men must also be able to change their role in working life and in society so that mothers and fathers could combine work and family life on equal terms.

24. Economic and social development was inseparably linked to the promotion of equality for women but it was not sufficient in itself to guarantee women greater justice and equality. Over-all economic progress must go hand in hand with the struggle for economic and social justice for women. Moreover, women must be involved in the development process from the very beginning. In that connexion, the establishment of the new international economic order must take the problems and experience of women into account.

25. All countries had a right to their own culture, but there were customs that were degrading to some members of the family. She was referring specifically to female circumcision, a primitive, painful and humiliating custom that was practised in a number of countries. That was a question that was not normally referred to in public, and it was to be hoped that the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women would deal with the problem.

26. With regard to the draft convention on the elimination of discrimination against women, she emphasized that equality between men and women would not be secured by means of actions aimed only at women: she therefore welcomed the fact that the draft took duly into account the principle that men and women should be given equal treatment. The effects of the convention would depend largely on the review and follow-up mechanisms. For that reason her delegation, together with the delegations of Kenya and Yugoslavia, had submitted a proposal concerning a review mechanism similar to that provided for the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which it hoped would be adopted by the Committee.

27. Mrs. SHAHANI (Philippines) stressed that the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women that was to be held at Copenhagen in 1980 must be action-oriented in order not to compromise the results already achieved at the Mexico Conference. She shared the view expressed by the representative of Norway that, at times, a global approach obscured specific regional differences and needs. Her delegation endorsed the budgetary allocations envisaged in document A/34/657. It believed that the number of Vice-Presidents of the Conference should be limited so that they could function effectively, but that the principle of equitable geographical distribution should be observed.

28. Her delegation had been a member of the drafting committee that had drawn up the preliminary draft guidelines for the programme of action for the second half of the Decade (A/CONF.94/PC/12, annex I). In that connexion, she noted how important it was that the relationship between the status of women and national and international economic development should be taken into account at Copenhagen. The role of women must also be given an appropriate place in the new development strategy that would be considered in 1980, as well as in the establishment of the new international economic order.

29. Before the Committee took decisions concerning the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, she wished to ask the Assistant Secretary-General for Social and Humanitarian Affairs whether the records of the session of the Board of Trustees held at Geneva in October could be made available; she also wished to know what further measures had been taken by the Secretariat following that first session, particularly with regard to the Institute's staff, and what was its current financial position.

30. Her delegation considered useful the report of the representative of India concerning the ESCAP regional preparatory meeting for the Conference, held recently at New Delhi, which had resulted in interesting proposals.

31. Mrs. LORANGER (Canada) said that the problems of women were basically the same everywhere and that, regardless of the level of development of a country, it was always possible to make progress through the exchange of experience. It was therefore desirable that the 1980 Conference should be action-oriented and should seek solutions to problems already identified.

32. Her delegation strongly supported the proposals in document A/34/657. It was the Committee's responsibility to take decisions on the issues submitted to it and not to leave them to the Preparatory Committee or to the Conference itself. In regard to the number of Vice-Presidents, her delegation was prepared to support any reasonable proposal, always provided the principle of equitable geographical distribution was observed.

33. The unprecedented number of countries which had replied to the 1979 questionnaire was indicative of the interest which had been aroused by the Conference and of the need for documentation of high quality. That interest must be carried forward in the form of support for the Conference itself and for the implementation of its conclusions. Canada was in full agreement with the preparatory arrangements made by the Government of Denmark.

34. Mrs. AKAMATSU (Japan) said that in the preparation of the documentation for the 1980 World Conference the highest priority should be given to the item on the review and evaluation of the progress made and obstacles encountered in attaining the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women. The item was of the greatest importance in connexion with the formulation of the programme of action for the second half of the Decade. The Conference must concentrate on the search for measures of a practical nature for the improvement of the status of women. Her delegation wished to express its appreciation to the Government of Denmark for its generous offer, which was a clear demonstration of Denmark's deep commitment to the goals of the Conference. She called upon delegations to co-operate in minimizing the burden which the host country must shoulder.

35. Japan had recently made an important contribution to the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women and, as a matter of principle, considered that the Fund should be transferred to Vienna, which was the location of the Secretariat organ responsible for managing and administering the Fund, namely, the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs.

36. Japan was ready to co-operate with the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women as well as with all other activities connected with the Decade. The results of the regional conference which had recently been held in New Delhi would also contribute to the success of the World Conference in 1980.

37. Mrs. BARRY (Senegal) said that for the past 20 years her Government had been following a policy which had encouraged the advancement of women and that policy had been reflected in the establishment of a number of organs responsible for finding practical solutions to their problems. In order to avoid the dissipation of resources and initiatives, her Government had established a State Secretariat on the Status of Women which was responsible for the implementation of national policy.

38. Her delegation supported the proposals made by the Preparatory Committee in document A/34/657 and considered that that Committee should hold a third session in order to fulfil its mandate. It should resolve the questions which had been submitted for its consideration, including the rules of procedure of the Conference and the number of Vice-Presidents.

39. Mrs. SYLVESTER-HENRY (Grenada) said that women had participated actively in overthrowing the previous régime in her country, had contributed to the achievement of human rights and democracy in Grenada and were currently represented at all levels of national life.

40. Following the revolution, the Government had started training programmes to rectify the critical situation in which women had found themselves: 70 per cent of the unemployed were women and 80 per cent of women lacked adequate training. The Youth for Reconstruction Programme was an example: its purpose was to train youth of both sexes to develop a revolutionary awareness and to organize them for the fight against economic and social problems which affected the country.

(Mrs. Sylvester Henry, Grenada)

41. Women were also participating actively in agriculture and in animal husbandry. Included among programmes in which the women of Grenada were active were the distribution of milk to children, adult literacy, construction of roads and public buildings and a number of handicraft projects.

42. The Ministry of Education of Grenada had embarked on a programme to improve the quality of education of women at all levels. The number of scholarships had been increased with the co-operation of the Governments of Cuba, Kenya and Tanzania. The Government had also made right most of a long-outstanding debt due to the University of the West Indies, thus enabling women of working-class families to attend the regional institution once more.

43. The People's Revolutionary Government of Grenada had proclaimed equal pay for equal work, thus complementing the equal legal status of men and women already provided for with respect to citizenship and inheritance laws.

44. The first national women's seminar had been held in Grenada in June 1979 with the participation of more than 1,000 regional representatives and representatives from Grenada organizations in North America. They had dealt mainly with the rights and legal and social status of women in Grenada and their role in the current revolutionary process.

45. Mrs. SAELZLER (German Democratic Republic) said that the General Assembly, in approving the theme "Equality, Development and Peace" for the United Nations Decade for Women, had confirmed the direct interdependence between the implementation of equal rights for women in all countries and the preservation of peace. The World Conference to be held in 1980 would show the extent to which the provisions of the World Plan of Action had been translated into practice. Her delegation, in its capacity as a member of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference, proposed that all necessary steps should be taken to ensure that a draft resolution would be submitted to the World Conference regarding the participation of women in the struggle for the strengthening of international peace and security and against colonialism, racism, racial discrimination, foreign aggression and occupation and all forms of foreign domination, pursuant to paragraph 5 of resolution 32/142. The German Democratic Republic had submitted a working paper on the matter to the Secretary-General in the middle of 1979.

46. The development of the German Democratic Republic was itself evidence of the great importance which it attached to social questions, to guaranteeing an education free from discrimination on grounds of sex, to providing comprehensive health care for women and to including them fully in professional life. In the German Democratic Republic 83.9 per cent of women worked. The number of weekly working hours for women had been reduced in order to enable them to cope with their family responsibilities. Women were ensured effective participation in policy-making and occupied a high percentage of posts at all management levels.

47. The situation in the world made it necessary to concentrate every effort on tasks which would serve the cause of preserving peace. The prevention of nuclear war, together with détente and disarmament, meant security for women themselves and for their families.

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43. Mrs. FLOREZ (Cuba) said that the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women would make it possible to appreciate the progress which had been made since the 1975 meeting held in Mexico City. The work accomplished by the Preparatory Committee for the Conference during its first two sessions had been positive. Her delegation supported the convening of a third session of the Preparatory Committee at the beginning of 1980 to discuss issues and documentation to be submitted to the Conference as well as specific measures which should be included in the programme for the second half of the Decade. During the second session it had not been possible to take definite decisions because the regional meetings, whose conclusions had to be taken into account, had not yet been held.

49. In the Preparatory Committee her delegation had supported the preparation of reports on special measures to assist Palestinian women, an item to which it attached great importance, and on the effects of apartheid on the situation of women in southern Africa.

50. In regard to document A/34/657, the additional appropriation requested for the World Conference was acceptable. Nevertheless, she had some doubts on the expenditure proposed for strengthening the information activities of the Conference. She also had reservations regarding part V of the report and, in particular, on the proposed meeting of journalists after the Conference, at a cost of \$87,200. She would appreciate clarification of the purposes of such a meeting.

51. In the opinion of her delegation, based on experience at the World Conference of 1975, the 1980 meeting should operate with two main committees and a working group, which could meet simultaneously. She considered, moreover, that the number of Vice-Presidents of the World Conference should be determined by the Assembly on the basis of equitable geographical distribution.

#### ORGANIZATION OF WORK

52. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions on item 80 as a whole should be 1 p.m. on Friday, 23 November.

53. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.