



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 41st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. O'DONOVAN (Ireland)

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81-57741

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/36/SR.41
19 November 1981
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

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

AGENDA ITEM 88: UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN: EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE: (A/36/3/Add.20; A/36/620; A/36/490)

- (a) WORLD CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/36/564)
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AGENDA ITEM 89: STATUS OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/36/63, A/36/295 and Add.1)

1. Mrs. SHAHANI (Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs), introducing the two items, said that in accordance with the Programme of Action of the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women held at Copenhagen in 1980, the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade had set forth as one of the major objectives to be pursued by all countries that of securing women's equal **participation** both as agents and as beneficiaries in all sectors and at all levels of the development process. Much was known about the effects of development on **women**. It had been learned that the benefits of development were often spread **unevenly** and unfairly and hardly reached women.
2. Accordingly, much thought had been given to designing and developing **strategies** at the national and international levels with a view to maximizing **their** beneficial effects on women. To that end, the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs was organizing at Vienna in December 1981 an Expert Group **Meeting** on Women and the International Development Strategy in the light of current and anticipated global economic needs. Women must be viewed as persons entitled **to realize** their full potential and also in terms of their present and future **contribution** to the development process. The Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, through its Advancement of Women Branch, had the task of **helping to** achieve that goal.
3. The review of United Nations activities relating to women that was before the Committee was complemented by reports presented to the Second Committee under item 69 (1). Also, in conformity with the provisions of paragraph 16 of General Assembly resolution 35/136 on the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, the Committee had before it a report (A/36/564) on measures taken by the United Nations system to implement that resolution.

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(Mrs. Shahani)

4. There was growing evidence of improvement in the procedures for co-ordinating the activities of United Nations organizations and agencies as they related to women in development. The Centre had contributed significantly to the harmonization of those activities, and there were other Secretariat bodies which had been examining questions relating to women, including the ACC Task Force on Rural Development, the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistics and the Joint United Nations Information Committee. Informal arrangements for ensuring smooth co-operation between the various bodies had been devised.

5. For instance, there had been an increase in the number of agencies and organizations which had designated a unit to act as the focal point for women's questions in regard to internal co-ordination and external co-operation; before 1980 there had been 15 such focal points, and 11 more had since been established. Another example was the extension to all developing regions of regional-level arrangements for inter-organizational consultations.

6. The Committee had before it a report on the Status of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. That instrument represented a most significant step in the promotion of the equality of women, and when the members of the Committee to monitor compliance with the Convention were elected the Center for Social Development would assist by providing **secretariat** resources for a reporting system.

7. The report on the Draft Declaration on the Participation of Women in the **Struggle** for the Strengthening of International Peace and Security deserved **careful** consideration. World Peace was related to the question of the effective **participation** of women in society. In the next programme budget period the Centre would devote considerably more resources to the study of that important **matter**, particularly in terms of how women could play a more effective role in **promoting** peace.

8. The Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women had been praised for its vital role in supporting the activities of the Decade. The Committee had before it the annual report on the management of the Fund, as well as a report on the future of the Fund.

9. In resolution 34/156 the General Assembly had expressed its desire to see the activities of the Fund continued beyond the Decade and requested the **Secretary-General** to study that question and report on his consultations **concerning** it to the Assembly's thirty-sixth session. It had also decided to **review** at the current session the question of the location of the Fund.

10. The most significant aspect of the Fund's operation had been its catalytic and innovative role. It had served as an agent for change in areas where funding was difficult to obtain or non-existent. Those activities benefited projects which employed low-income women, particularly in rural areas. The Fund also supported human resources development in projects aimed at enhancing the capacities of national planners, administrators and field workers to develop comprehensive measures for women's advancement within over-all national development processes.

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(Mrs. Shahani)

In connexion with the Committee's review of those questions, the report of the Secretary-General on the Future of the Fund (A/36/647) had also been put before it. The conclusions of the report set forth compelling reasons why the Fund should be continued beyond the Decade.

11. The resources of the Fund would continue to be crucial for supplementing the efforts that were being undertaken within and outside the United Nations system for the advancement of women. Co-operation among United Nations organizations and agencies would be strengthened to ensure a more comprehensive approach. The continuation of the Fund beyond the Decade would allow for the development of existing programmes and the implementation of new ones based on the experience of the Decade. Its continued existence was essential to supplement measures to achieve the goal of women's integration in the development process as set out in the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women and in the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade. Members might wish to decide that the Fund should be continued beyond the United Nations Decade for Women. She would like also to reiterate the Secretary-General's appeal for more contributions to the Fund.

12. On the question of the location of the Fund, she pointed out that logic and sound administrative practice would suggest that the Fund should be physically integrated within the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs in Vienna. The continuing interrelationship between the activities financed from the Fund's resources and the regular work programme on the advancement of women would be facilitated by that integration. If the Committee decided that the Fund should be relocated, the Centre could then consolidate its administrative and substantive resources for the optimal effectiveness of the Fund's operations and, in so doing, could strengthen its ability to realize the goals of the Decade.

13. In conclusion, she announced that the Secretary-General had appointed Mrs. Chafika Sellami-Meslem, of Algeria, as Director of the Branch for the Advancement of Women and Mrs. Dunja Pastizzi Ferencic as Director of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women.

14. Mrs. TAVARES DE ALVAREZ (Dominican Republic) said that her statement would focus on the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, which was to be located in the Dominican Republic.

15. In the efforts to promote wider participation by women in development, the Institute had been entrusted with the task of formulating training programmes for women. It would therefore collaborate with national, regional and international institutes and with intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in efforts to improve the status of women.

16. The Institute's activities would be conducted in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women and Their Contribution to Development and Peace, 1975, and with the World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year. In addition, the Institute would organize exchanges of information and of all kinds

(Mrs. Tavares de Alvarez, Dominican Republic)

of research directed towards the advancement of women. In that context, training activities, symposia, courses and seminars would be arranged in co-operation with organizations of the United Nations system, and fellowships and grants would be provided for research and training.

17. The main objective of the Institute was to implement the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women, and also to supplement and co-ordinate the activities being carried out in that field, both by the United Nations system and by other organizations.

18. Her delegation was pleased to inform the Committee that a headquarters agreement had already been concluded with her Government and that the building that was to house the Institute would be opened shortly. In addition, she pointed out that the Institute was an autonomous body established under the auspices of the United Nations, and that it would be financed by voluntary contributions. Its activities would be directed by a Board of Trustees, which would report to the Economic and Social Council, through the Commission on the Status of Women; the latter would review and approve the Institute's work and budget. The eleven members of the Board of Trustees, appointed by the Economic and Social Council, were persons of recognized competence who represented different cultures and different levels of development. The professional staff of the Institute would be selected with due regard for the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

19. In view of the more positive attitude adopted to women in international fora, as reflected in the Programme of Action, the resolutions adopted at the Copenhagen Conference and the inclusion of women in the development process, it was now urgently necessary to examine ways of strengthening their over-all participation. The Institute would be in an excellent position to contribute to the attainment of that objective. However, it must have sufficient financial resources, and Governments must therefore either provide financial support to the Fund or make contributions in kind to the Institute itself.

20. In conclusion, she said that the Institute would be a legacy of the United Nations Decade for Women and would be the centre where continuing efforts would be made to give practical effect to the motto of the Decade: "Equality, Development and Peace."

21. Mrs. DEVAUD (France) said that she would confine her statement to the three concepts expressed in the motto of the United Nations Decade for Women: "Equality, Development and Peace."

22. With regard to equality, she pointed out that 30 States had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; and it could therefore be considered that that international instrument had entered into force. That did not mean that the equality of women had been realized at the professional or political levels, but it did have the advantage of bringing discrimination against women to the attention of decision-makers and the public at large.

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(Mrs. Devaud, France)

23. In her delegation's opinion, discrimination against women would not disappear until the very poorest women, and women living in rural areas, had access to the same general opportunities as other women. In addition, practical measures should be taken to make up for the time lost in the advancement of women.

24. With regard to United Nations activities to promote the participation of women in development, she was surprised to note that emphasis was usually placed on the development aspect and that consideration of that item had been entrusted to the Second Committee. The fact was that the question of the status of women came within the competence of the Third Committee; and she hoped that the third Committee and the Commission on the Status of Women would contribute to the study of that question. As her delegation had already stated in the Commission for Social Development of the Economic and Social Council, economic development could not be considered without social development, and the Third Committee should not therefore be excluded from the discussions on development.

25. She welcomed the fact that the United Nations system had made efforts to involve women in development, but noted that some of the measures concerned had been left in abeyance because of a lack of resources and of staff. The many local, regional and international programmes adopted by the regional commissions were another positive element, although she was sorry to see that the Economic Commission for Europe had not yet distinguished itself in that area and that it had been left to other European bodies, such as the European Communities and the Council of Europe to elaborate joint guidelines, recommendations and studies concerning women.

26. The Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women was very important, and she hoped that it would go on receiving the aid it needed to continue its positive work. In addition, the Fund should determine its needs very precisely in the context of the world-wide study to be submitted to the General Assembly in 1984. Also, the Commission on the Status of Women and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women should be consulted during the elaboration of that study.

27. With regard to the objective of peace set for the Decade, it would be impossible to exaggerate the need to use the resources now devoted to armaments for eliminating the hunger and poverty that were the real enemies of mankind. In connexion with social peace, which was a human rights concept, measures must be taken to put an end to illicit traffic in women and children.

28. Her delegation wished to stress the importance of women's participation in a better world. In that respect, the international community should centre its efforts on the poor countries; however, women's increasing participation in economic life must also be promoted in the industrialized countries. Minor regulations and legislative provisions were imperceptibly changing the social environment and contributing to the gradual humanization of living conditions. As a well-known trade unionist had said, women, who had become aware of their subordination as women, tended to have a broader and deeper understanding of the need for non-alienated, freer and more human social relations. Most of the cultural trends that had emerged over the past 15 years, concerning both women and men, were consistent with attitudes which people tended to regard as feminine. Were not women gradually and imperceptibly shaping the framework of a new society?

29. Mrs. REYNOLDS (United States of America) said that a process of economic recovery was under way in her country, which was seeking to bring governmental expenditure under control and reduce taxes and inflation that seriously affected the poor. Despite the need for budgetary control, her Government would continue to provide substantial funds for projects to assist women in the developing countries.

30. She was glad to say that President Reagan had appointed outstanding American women to senior positions. The Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations was a woman, and so was the recently designated United States Ambassador to UNESCO. For the first time in history, the President had appointed a woman - a distinguished journalist - to the Supreme Court of the United States.

31. With regard to the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women, the United States delegation had attended the World Conference at Copenhagen in 1980 in the desire to contribute to a Programme of Action that would provide direct assistance to women throughout the world by developing appropriate national, regional and international guidelines on such **issues** as education, discrimination and women in development. But the focus on **substantive** women's issues had been abandoned and the Conference had become a **victim** of those who preferred to focus on the political polemics of the **Middle East** situation. Her country would continue to participate in those **activities** of the Decade which would be beneficial to women, and in particular **efforts** to attain the objectives of the Decade: equality, development and peace. **Propaganda** must be left behind and attention must be given to the real problems of women. It was all too common for women to be denied equality. They were **usually paid** less than men for similar work and often were not paid at all. **The true problems** of women were the need for better food, better health facilities and care, education, and less arduous work. Those were the improvements that **women needed**.

32. The United States was a major contributor to the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women. Her delegation urged all nations which had **not yet done** so to contribute to the Fund and its work. As the Assistant **Secretary-General** for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs had emphasized **during the** current session, the Fund was in urgent need of money to continue **its programme** for the rest of the Decade. However, it could not afford the risk **that its work** might be disrupted by relocation of its headquarters. The **contribution** of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had been essential **to the Fund's** success, and the Fund would not be able to operate as efficiently **if it were** relocated in Vienna.

33. **The** draft Declaration on the Participation of Women in the Struggle for the Strengthening of International Peace and Security would do nothing to advance those goals, nor to improve the status of women. Instead of deeds and concrete financial assistance, it offered words. So far, the principal sponsor of the draft Declaration had contributed little to the Fund. Some Governments apparently found it easier to offer words rather than practical assistance to women.

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(Mrs. Reynolds, United States)

34. Her own country's bilateral assistance for women's projects in the fiscal year 1980 had totalled \$15.7 million, while for the fiscal year 1981, which had ended on 30 September, the figure was \$24 million. Those figures did not include programmes in the fields of health, nutrition and family planning which, had they been included, would have brought the figures to \$26.1 million in 1980 and \$35.7 million in 1981.

35. The Government and people of the United States of America were deeply committed to the objectives of the Decade for Women, namely equality, development, and peace: equality because it was a basic human right and because if half the world population was subjected to discrimination, its contribution to mankind would be diminished; development because the other objectives became meaningless for women where poverty, disease and illiteracy held sway; and peace because it was the universal hope of all peoples. There was an old saying that in times of peace sons buried their fathers, while in war fathers buried their sons. For women, it might be said that in times of war, women buried their sons and daughters, and their fathers, husbands, brothers and sisters as well.

36. Mrs. PILLIS-DUVEKOT (Netherlands) said that the strategies adopted at Mexico City and Copenhagen aiming at women's full participation in development included action in three spheres: first, action to change social and economic structures; second, action to increase women's contribution to decision-making processes; and third, action to solve the problems of underdevelopment. However, what was required to achieve the goal of women's full participation was not merely an array of specific actions, but first and foremost a general change in attitudes and mentality in all sectors of society. The review and appraisal of progress achieved during the past six years indicated that the integration of women into development had been formally accepted by most Governments. In her country, efforts were being made to formulate a national programme of action based on the Programme of Action adopted at the Copenhagen Conference, taking into account the views and ideas of women's groups and organizations. Those women's groups and organizations were the main channel of communication between women and Government, at the local, regional and national levels.

37. In the past few years, the Netherlands had been actively supporting the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women. The purpose of the Fund was to improve the living and working conditions of the poorest categories of women in the developing countries, through projects involving credit facilities, income-generating activities, training, small-scale agriculture and research. With its low overhead costs, thanks to UNDP, and its use of existing channels, including non-governmental organizations, the Fund stood out as a positive example of co-ordination and co-operation within the United Nations system. The interests of the Fund and of its beneficiaries would be best served, if it continued to be located in New York, where it could maintain daily contacts

(Mr. Voicu, Romania)

but of the 1980 session. One might think that there had been some mistake but, no, that summary record had been published on 22 October 1981.

43. Summary records served two purposes: to enable delegations to study more thoroughly the substantive statements made by representatives and by members

(Mrs. Pillis-Duvekot, Netherlands)

could not provide the necessary assistance and advice which was available from the New York-based agencies. It was to be hoped that by the end of the Decade United Nations agencies would have integrated the activities of the Voluntary Fund in their regular programmes. To that end, the Netherlands had made considerable financial contributions to specific women's programmes conducted by ILO, UNICEF, FAO and other organizations.

38. It was disturbing that, because of budgetary constraints, United Nations agencies were less willing to give priority to activities for women in the context of their regular programmes, for it was especially in times of economic difficulty that women's needs warranted increased attention. She would like to raise two points of an administrative and budgetary nature. The first concerned the recommendation made by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in its report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1982-1983. The Advisory Committee had recommended that the tasks of the liaison officer at Headquarters for the Advancement of Women Branch in Vienna should be assumed by the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs. Her delegation could not agree with the Advisory Committee's recommendation in that respect and would prefer to see the post of liaison officer maintained.

39. Secondly, she would like information from the Secretariat on the proposed expenditures to be financed by the Voluntary Fund. During the biennium 1980-1981, expenditures for the administration of the Fund had amounted to \$271,400. Proposed expenditures for the biennium 1982-1983, as reflected in the proposed programme budget, totalled \$938,600. Her delegation would like to know how much of the latter amount was intended for the administration of the Fund and what part was to be used to finance posts in the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs in Vienna. The Fund's resources should be used for projects and programmes in the third world and not for posts in the Vienna office.

40. With regard to agenda item 88 (c), her delegation still maintained that the Declaration in question was not necessary. So long as the basic needs of women in many countries could not be met, the elaboration of additional international declarations must not be given priority. The draft Declaration had little relevance to the efforts being made to improve the situation of women.

41. Mr. VOICU (Romania) thanked the Chairman for having asked the Secretariat to ensure that delegations could obtain the complete text of the statement made by Mrs. Shahani, Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, and requested that the statement should be reflected as fully as possible in the summary record of the meeting. He hoped that the record would be made available to delegations as quickly as possible.

42. In that connexion, he observed that the situation concerning the publication of summary records had become critical. He had just received the French text of the record of the Committee's 3rd meeting, held on 23 September 1981. At that rate, the summary record of the current meeting would be distributed after the Committee had concluded its work for the current session. That very day, he had also received the Spanish version of the record of the Committee's 40th meeting,

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(Mr. Voicu, Romania)

but of the 1980 session. One might think that there had been some mistake but, no, that summary record had been published on 22 October 1981.

43. Summary records served two purposes: to enable delegations to study more thoroughly the substantive statements made by representatives and by members of the Secretariat, and to enable them to submit corrections to their own statements. He would therefore like to know what happened when summary records were distributed after the end of the session. A possible solution might be to give priority to the summary records of meetings dealing with questions of substance and treat as secondary those of meetings concerning the organization of work and procedural questions. He expressed the hope that the service responsible for drawing up the summary records - a very important task - would carefully study the problem of the speed with which the records were prepared, so that delegations could obtain at least those for the first two months of the session.

44. The CHAIRMAN expressed admiration for the research the representative of Romania had done, especially in connexion with the Spanish version of the summary record of the 40th meeting in 1980. The Chair was fully aware that summary records were not being issued with due regularity, and the Bureau had received complaints in that regard. There existed a general problem which delegations should bear in mind in that connexion. Because of the volume of documentation, the mere production of documents was difficult, and an order of priority must be established. The documents needed for each Committee's daily work were dealt with first, and summary records were given second priority.

45. In connexion with the organization of the Committee's work, it had been requested that the voting on the draft resolutions relating to agenda items 75 and 91 should be postponed. He therefore suggested that the voting should take place on Monday, 9 November, when mechanical voting facilities could be made available to the Committee.

46. With regard to resolutions having financial implications, the General Assembly had specified that Committees should adopt such draft resolutions before 1 December, so that the Fifth Committee could consider them before transmitting them to the plenary Assembly. He therefore suggested that the time-limit for the submission of draft resolutions on agenda items 12, 129 and 138 which had financial implications should be 20 November.

47. It was so decided.

48. A letter had been received from the President of the General Assembly indicating that the Assembly had decided to allocate to the Third Committee the new agenda item 138 entitled "New international humanitarian order". He suggested that the Committee should consider the new item together with items 12 and 129 during the period from 19 November to the end of the session.

49. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.