



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 44th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. O'DONOVAN (Ireland)

later: Mr. ESQUIVEL (Costa Rica)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 38: UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN: EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE
(continued) (A/36/3/Add.2, A/36/490 and A/36/620)

- (a) WORLD CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (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 (continued)
(A/36/63 and A/36/295 and Add.1)

1. Mr. HACKETT (Chief, Resources Planning Section), replying to a question raised at the 41st meeting by the representative of the Netherlands, said that during the biennium 1980-1981 expenditures for administration of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women had been \$271,400 and that almost 80 per cent of the proposed expenditure of \$938,600 for the biennium 1982-1983 was for administration. With regard to the balance, namely, \$201,000, the Secretariat wished to point out that there had been a technical error in the presentation of the budgetary data. The data shown in the budget estimates referred to anticipated funds earmarked for research, public information and related activities of the Decade for Women. The Secretary-General wished to remind the Committee that the extrabudgetary resources in the 1982-1983 budget estimates were indicative at best and that the actual level of activities would finally be determined by the availability of contributions to the Voluntary Fund. In the case of the Voluntary Fund, the proposed budget would be submitted to the Consultative Committee at its next session for comment.

2. Mrs. MAIR (Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser for Women's Development, United Nations Children's Fund) said that UNICEF's mandate required it to work with the poorest groups in the poorest nations, so that approximately 60 per cent of its resources went to assist the least-developed countries. Increasingly, in response to the clearly stated needs of Member States, UNICEF was addressing itself not only to the symptoms of underdevelopment but to its causes. All current surveys and studies indicated that women and children constituted the poorest of the poor and were thus a major and most urgent concern. The international community was not insensitive to those harsh realities. Whatever might be perceived in the economic and monetary situation which dictated policies of zero budget growth, there was no zero growth in the adverse circumstances that surrounded the majority of children and their families in the developing world.

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(Mrs. Mair, UNICEF)

3. As UNICEF, together with the rest of the United States system, equipped itself to meet the challenges of the 1980s with improved effectiveness, certain approaches were indicated. One was based on the need to refine integrated strategies of development, nationally and internationally, in accordance with the multifaceted dimensions of human needs. As multisectoral strategies were developed for the improvement of the human condition, the untapped human resources which existed in even the grimmest circumstances were increasingly drawn on. Within that context, the role of women was pivotal. The conviction that children's life prospects were predicated on improvement in the status of women underlay UNICEF's strategies for pursuing its mandate to children. In the evolution of those strategies, the past two years had been a critical period. The establishment of a UNICEF Knowledge Network for Women within its staff in 1979 had been accompanied by intensive stock-taking by all country offices regarding their activities for and with women. UNICEF's country programmes, as a consequence, stressed women's activities as vital components of basic services, and many attempted to enable women to engage more productively in income-earning activities and to participate more fully in community affairs.

4. A number of traditional activities for women such as sewing, knitting, crocheting and weaving continued to flourish in national, regional and even international programmes, despite the fact that they had been shown to have little income-generating capacity. There were inadequate support services such as child-care facilities to enable women to leave home for substantial periods of time for economic, public or self-improvement activities. Women were rarely to be found in decision-making or leadership roles even in countries whose policy statements regarding women were impeccable. Governments, while proclaiming the importance of women, too often gave low priority to and allocated insufficient funds for women's activities, a situation which became further aggravated in times of fiscal austerity. With those constraints in mind, UNICEF was co-operating vigorously with Governments and non-governmental organizations, in particular WHO, in projects in various parts of the world. For example, there was a UNICEF/WHO Joint Committee on Health Policy which had been established to focus on the delivery of primary health care. UNICEF and WHO had also developed a joint action programme for maternal, infant and child nutrition, including the promotion of breast-feeding, within the framework of primary health care. It was worthy of note that women, individually, in non-governmental organizations and through their Governments, had been in the vanguard of the process by which that programme had been developed and adopted by the World Health Assembly in 1981.

5. UNICEF had also been co-operating with the Voluntary Fund for the Decade for Women in a number of joint exercises both at Headquarters and in the field, and would welcome the extension of the Fund beyond the Decade. In addition, UNICEF participated in the informal interagency working group on women, population and development, chaired by UNESCO, which sought to design through interagency co-operation strategies by which the support of women could have a measurable influence on the achievement of development goals. UNICEF also looked forward to participating in the ACC Task Force on Long-Term Development Objectives which was scheduled to hold its first meeting in December 1981.

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(Mrs. Mair, UNICEF)

6. UNICEF did not underestimate the obstacles in the way of maximizing international assistance and interagency collaboration in the interests of women and children. Clearly a great deal remained to be done in that regard. Where the will to co-operate existed constraints were not insurmountable, and there was encouraging evidence, especially at the country and regional levels, where programmes were carried out, that such will did exist. UNICEF was making every effort to implement the relevant United Nations resolutions, including the recommendations of the Copenhagen Conference, on the employment of women in the secretariats of the specialized agencies and the United Nations bodies, having regard to both the number of professionals recruited and the increased proportion of women at the higher policy-making levels. UNICEF had the unique distinction within the United Nations system of having on its own staff two women Assistant-Secretaries-General.

7. Mr. FURSLAND (United Kingdom) said that the objective of achieving full equality for women needed to be viewed in the medium term as well as in the short term. Men's attitudes towards women and indeed women's attitudes towards their own roles stemmed from centuries of tradition in all societies. It was not realistic to expect to change such attitudes overnight. Nor should national Governments or the international community seek to dictate to women what they should want to do or be. That did not mean, however, that the international community should not maintain and, where appropriate, intensify efforts to ensure that all women enjoyed equal opportunities in all fields. His delegation was very conscious of the legitimacy of women's aspirations. No country which had women as its Head of State and its Head of Government, as did the United Kingdom, could be thought to be insensitive to the strengths and capabilities of women. That did not mean that the United Kingdom had eliminated sexual discrimination from its society. His delegation doubted that any society had as yet achieved that objective. Throughout the world, men were predominant at all levels of leadership, as was illustrated by the membership of the Third Committee, and to an even greater extent in other committees of the United Nations.

8. The women's movement did not seek special treatment or privileges, except in such specialized and biologically determined areas as childbearing. On the contrary, it objected to the suggestion that women needed special treatment and privileges since that implied that women were less capable than their male counterparts. In the United Kingdom, many women would regard such a suggestion as patronizing, and that was one of the reasons why his delegation objected to the draft Declaration on the Participation of Women in the Struggle for the Strengthening of International Peace and Security. If that draft had been designed to contribute constructively to the elimination of sexual discrimination, then his delegation would have been prepared to consider it sympathetically. In practice, it would perpetuate discrimination by according women special rights and privileges, which as equal members of society they did not want or need. For example, his delegation did not understand why women should be singled out as they were in article 4 of the draft, because, surely, all human beings were entitled to the rights specified in that text.

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(Mr. Fursland, United Kingdom)

9. In 1980, the Commission on the Status of Women, the appropriate expert body, had been unable to reach a decision on whether the draft Declaration should be elaborated. The General Assembly had subsequently decided to refer it to Member States for comment and to reconsider the matter again in 1981. Indeed, the principal common element in the history of the draft so far was that none of the bodies to which it had been passed had been ready to adopt it or to recommend its adoption. His delegation hoped that the Third Committee would not presume to adopt it and thereby seek to dictate to women what was good for them. It should refer the draft back to the Commission on the Status of Women, where there were people qualified by sex and by training to consider it.

10. One institution that had already rendered much practical help and assistance to women was the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women. The United Kingdom strongly supported the work of the Fund and had made a substantial contribution to it. It had also been privileged to represent its regional group on the Fund's Consultative Committee. His delegation fully appreciated the over-all responsibility for the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs for mobilizing activities for the advancement of women and the consequent need for the harmonization of its activities with the work of the Voluntary Fund. It should, however, be borne in mind that the Fund was a small one with limited resources, and if it was to continue to bring real benefits to women those limited resources would have to be administered with maximum effectiveness. The criterion of effectiveness should therefore be paramount in determining how the Fund was administered and where its operations were based. His delegation was not persuaded by arguments that the Fund's operations should be moved to Vienna. In order to function effectively, the Fund needed close and easy contact with national Governments, through their Permanent Missions; with the expert technical appraisal services of agencies such as UNDP, UNICEF and the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development; and with the disbursing agencies, in particular UNDP. None of those facilities and opportunities would be available on a similar basis in Vienna. The United Kingdom whole-heartedly supported the view expressed by the Fund's Consultative Committee that a decision on the administrative location of the Fund for the remainder of the Decade was an immediate necessity. His delegation therefore hoped that the Third Committee would be prepared to indicate its firm desire that the Fund's operations should continue to be handled from New York until 1985. As for the future of the Fund's operations after the end of the Decade, his delegation would welcome more time to consider that matter in the light of the Secretary-General's report and other factors.

11. His delegation believed that, despite some unacceptable elements, the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the Decade, adopted at the Copenhagen Conference, contained some practical and realistic proposals of direct relevance to women. With regard to the Secretary-General's proposals for the implementation of that Programme, he said that the United Kingdom was considering how best to give effect to the Secretary-General's call for co-ordinating machinery.

12. In conclusion, he said delegations would have noted that the United Kingdom, among other countries, had now signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

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13. Mr. Esquivel (Costa Rica) took the Chair.

14. Miss NICOLAIDOU (Greece), speaking on agenda item 88, said that the Government of Greece recognized the importance of drawing up plans and programmes for women at national, regional and international levels in order to ensure their full participation in the development of the society to which they belonged. Inequality between women and men was mainly a matter of their respective traditional roles and certain political, social, economic and cultural factors inherent in each society. In recent years, particularly with the advent of the Decade for Women, growing support for the advancement of women had helped them to emerge from the stereotyped role to which they had been confined over the centuries. However, while the number of women involved in the economic process at the national and international level was gradually increasing, women's burden had not become any lighter, since they carried on their new functions in addition to their traditional role as guardians of the home: there had been no change in men's traditional role and consequently there was no equitable sharing of responsibility in the family and in society.

15. Her Government believed that the building of a modern and harmonious society depended on the liberation of women, and it was considering four-fold action to that end: legal measures to guarantee women's rights and eliminate discrimination; economic measures to abolish discrimination in employment, with equal pay and equal opportunities for women in urban and rural areas; political measures to include more women in decision-making positions - there were three women in the new Greek Cabinet and 13 in the new Parliament; and measures to ensure social and cultural equality, without discrimination and with equal opportunities in vocational training.

16. Since women represented half the population of the world and one third of the official labour force, they were just as important as men in a country's economic, political and social development. Women's equality with men and their advancement nationally, regionally and internationally would assure the wellbeing of mankind.

17. Mrs. AKAMATSU (Japan), speaking on agenda items 88 and 89, said that, while the United Nations Decade for Women had brought considerable progress in improving the status of women throughout the world, many problems remained and there was much still to be done to achieve equality between the sexes.

18. Following the World Conference of the International Women's Year, held in Mexico City, the Government of Japan had established a Headquarters for the Planning and Promotion of Policies Relating to Women in 1975, and a National Plan of Action in 1977, the Plan to be implemented by means of a set of medium-term priority targets under successive five-year plans.

19. At the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women held in Copenhagen in 1980 the Japanese delegation had strongly supported the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women and Japan had signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Headquarters for the Planning and Promotion of Policies Relating to Women had recently formulated priority targets for the second half of the Decade

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(Mrs. Akamatsu, Japan)

in the National Plan of Action, on the basis of a statement of views by the Advisory Council to the Prime Minister on Women's Affairs. The targets involved nine areas of high priority: improvement of the status of women; participation of women in decision-making; education and training; equal employment opportunities and equal treatment for men and women; measures to solve problems relating to child care; respect for motherhood and health; a stable life for women in old age; women's welfare in farming and rural areas; and international co-operation on women's issues. The Government was at present studying changes in existing laws and regulations and other measures with a view to ratifying the Convention; in fact, the Ministry of Justice had already started work on the requisite revision of the Nationality Act. The priority targets also included co-operation in United Nations activities, promotion of economic and technical co-operation with developing countries, with special emphasis on agriculture and the development of human resources, and promotion of the participation of women in international organizations and conferences.

20. The action in her country would not have been possible without the support of Japanese women, and especially women's non-governmental organizations. The Japanese Government pledged its support for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and would endeavour to ratify it at the earliest possible date. It trusted that the Convention would soon be universally accepted. It also pledged its full participation in United Nations activities in the interests of women, through which - particularly the Commission on the Status of Women, of which Japan was a member - it looked forward to helping to improve the status of women throughout the world.

21. Japan attached great importance to the activities of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women in such fields as technical co-operation and development, in which particular emphasis was placed on the participation of women in the development of the least developed, land-locked and island countries. The Government had contributed a total of over \$1 million and was considering the possibility of a further contribution in 1982. Her delegation wished to express appreciation to the senior Social Affairs Officer of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs for her administration of the Fund and to urge that efforts should be made to involve more countries in the activities of the Fund's Consultative Committee, possibly by reconsidering the Committee's composition.

22. Her delegation expressed the hope that the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, under its new Director, would soon be in full operation, and it looked forward to a comprehensive report on the Institute in 1982. Japan had contributed \$100,000 to the Institute during the current year and was ready to continue full co-operation in the future. Her delegation also looked forward to hearing about preparations for the World Conference to be held in 1985 at the conclusion of the United Nations Decade for Women, and about what progress had been made by Member States in implementing the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women.

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23. Mr. OTTO (Austria), referring to agenda item 88 (b), noted that in its resolution 34/156 in 1979 the General Assembly had decided that the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women should remain in New York, the decision to be reviewed at the current session on the basis of a report to be submitted by the Secretary-General. The report, which was now before the Committee, was based on intensive consultations with the Consultative Committee on the Fund, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations agencies concerned and on views expressed by Member States. As head of the Division for Social and Humanitarian Affairs in the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he confirmed that the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, which was responsible for the management of the Fund, was now fully established in the Vienna International Centre and was working with commendable efficiency and effectiveness. Nearly all the replies to the Secretary-General's questionnaire to organizations and Governments concerning the future of the Fund were in favour of its activities continuing beyond 1985, a view shared by the Consultative Committee and the Administrator of UNDP.

24. The question of the relocation of the Fund was, in his opinion, mainly an administrative and management matter and he felt that it should be referred to the Secretary-General for consideration. He was impressed by the Secretary-General's arguments in the report for relocating the Fund with the Centre, and in the likely event of the Committee deciding that the Fund should continue beyond the Decade, his delegation would be firmly in favour of it being fully integrated in the Centre, co-operating closely with other United Nations units concerned with development programmes. He assured the Committee that co-ordination would present no problem in Vienna.

25. The Fund had a distinctive role among the funding sources in the United Nations system, and his delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that it should serve as a catalyst for selected projects benefiting women, priority being given to related programmes and projects for the least developed, land-locked and island developing countries.

26. He was confident that the Committee would find a solution acceptable to all delegations for what was essentially an administrative problem, and that it would agree to the Secretary-General being requested to inform the Committee, after a suitable interval, of the managerial and organizational arrangements for the relocation of the Fund within the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs. It would be understood that in making the arrangements the Secretary-General would take all necessary steps to ensure the effective and economical implementation of such a decision without disruption of the Fund's activities.

27. Ms. ELMIGER (World Health Organization), speaking on agenda item 88, said that women's full participation as active and decision-making agents in the process of development called for adequate and equitable access to health, and that women's health depended on their development. Women generally faced the same health problems as men, but suffered from a great many additional risks because of their lower social and economic status, the cultural conditioning which relegated them to secondary positions and the extra physical demands of parenthood. Women's social and economic health conditions were crucial to the prospects for development.

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(Ms. Elmiger, WHO)

28. In recent years Governments and international organizations had repeatedly stressed the urgent need to improve the situation of women in health and development, and the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women, in emphasizing employment, education and health, subscribed to an interrelated approach. The recognition of the interdependence of health and other aspects of development was fundamental to WHO's strategies for achieving the goal of health for all. Its concern for women in relation to health and development was expressed not by the promotion of programmes solely for women, but by including aspects of special interest to women in each area of the organization's programme. WHO was fully committed to initiatives aimed directly at the improvement of women's health, and its activities were geared to highlighting the priority needs and problems specific to women in order to give them greater visibility. Particular attention was given to the role of women in traditional and family health care, and the importance of women's organizations in primary health care was recognized as part of the role of community participation in the organization and promotion of health.

29. Specific activities of WHO relating directly to women in health and development included: participation with UNICEF, FAO, UNFPA, ILO and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) in an interagency working group on women, population and development; participation in a working group on psychosocial consequences of violence, in co-operation with the Netherlands Ministry of Health and Environmental Protection; the convening in December 1981 of a meeting on sex differentials in mortality, to be hosted by the Australian National University; organization of a consultation on women as providers of health care, which had taken place in December 1980, as one of several approaches to the implementation of a UNFPA/WHO-sponsored project, with emphasis on equity and social justice for women; and the preparation by most of the WHO regional offices of regional plans of action or health programmes of action for the second half of the United Nations Decade for Women, defining priority areas and making recommendations for action.

30. WHO was also planning to issue documents of three types: reports summarizing current research on areas crucial to women's health, with emphasis on the relationship between the status of women and health; reports summarizing WHO's policy and programmes on women as health care recipients and providers; and public brochures and articles highlighting women's health needs and the action women could take for family and community health.

31. Mr. URIARTE (Chile) said that his delegation welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women (A/36/564), which summarized the specific proposals put forward and the measures adopted by States, agencies and organizations in the United Nations system to ensure the full implementation of the relevant Programme of Action. Even in the short time that had elapsed since the World Conference, appreciable efforts had been undertaken in accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/136 and with resolution 1981/12 of the Economic and Social Council. However, he reiterated Chile's reservations in connexion with the Programme of Action and its opposition to the clearly political and selective resolutions adopted at the World Conference.

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(Mr. Uriarte, Chile)

32. The political elements introduced at that Conference had prevented participants from reaching the necessary consensus on the adoption of the World Programme of Action and the relevant resolutions. Therefore, it was important to make careful preparations for the world conference to be held in 1985 to review and appraise the achievements of the Decade.

33. At the national level, the Chilean authorities had continued to implement measures to promote greater participation by women in all areas of national activity. For example, the National Secretariat for Women was carrying out far-reaching programmes in the fields of training, adult literacy and the marketing of the products produced by women's groups, all of which helped women to develop their possibilities of working at home and increasing family income. Chilean women participated in all types of work, from manual to professional. In addition, the activities of women volunteers and women's groups had made a substantial contribution in such fields as education and the arts. Women had always participated in government work and increasingly held positions of responsibility in the private sector.

34. Referring to the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women, he expressed his delegation's satisfaction at the increase in the quality and quantity of the activities in which that Fund participated. The report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/36/646 described the efforts undertaken to carry out an intensive technical and humanitarian programme. In view of the importance of the Fund's activities and the effective way in which resources were being used to satisfy the urgent needs of many women in different parts of the world, his Government had decided to maintain its voluntary contribution for the 1982 fiscal year.

35. His delegation was convinced that, with adequate resources and working in co-operation with the relevant regional centres and institutes, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women could make a valuable contribution to the implementation of the Programme of Action and to the attainment of the objectives of the new International Development Strategy. To do so, the Institute must immediately begin work at its new headquarters in Santo Domingo. His delegation was certain that the appointment of Mrs. Pasticci-Ferencic as Director of the Institute would ensure its success. The Chilean Government had voluntarily contributed financial support to the Institute in 1981 and had decided to maintain its contribution for the subsequent fiscal year.

36. In conclusion, he pointed out that Chile had signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in July 1980 and therefore welcomed its entry into force on 3 September 1981.

37. Mrs. SAELZLER (German Democratic Republic) observed that the fundamental rights embodied in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had, with the Convention's entry into force on 3 September 1981, become valid international law. That milestone in efforts to achieve the equality of women had resulted from the active commitment of women in many countries; it benefited women in all countries, especially those where women's participation in

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(Mrs. Saelzler, German
Democratic Republic)

political, economic, social and cultural affairs had not yet been comprehensively guaranteed. Women's active support for economic and social progress could be enlisted by ensuring them the right to education and vocational training and by guaranteeing their involvement in professional life.

38. On the basis of its own practical experience, the German Democratic Republic considered that women represented an essential force in a country's development along peaceful lines, and the success of that endeavour was determined by the extent of women's involvement in the affairs of society.

39. Her delegation had, on several occasions, reported on the success achieved in that connexion in the German Democratic Republic and had drawn attention to the two basic conditions which must be met if women were to become truly equal partners of men: the relevant domestic legislation must provide women with the necessary social security and an opportunity to acquire sound knowledge and skills; and society must provide conditions whereby women could be sure that their knowledge and skills could be applied to work in all spheres of the economy and in political life.

40. The Mexico World Plan of Action, the Copenhagen Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women provided effective machinery to ensure the equality of women in all spheres of life. Accordingly, those provisions must now be put into effect, while taking into account each country's special conditions. However, she expressed concern that despite the sound foundations thus provided further results might not be forthcoming because a number of States had not supported those chapters of the Programme of Action, reflecting basic requirements for achieving the equality of women, in which special reference was made to the maintenance of peace and to the combating of all contrary developments.

41. In many countries serious problems hampered the fulfilment of women's rights. For example, the consequences of the economic crisis, such as unemployment, affected women in particular, and higher arms expenditures resulted in cuts in social budgets.

42. The World Congress of Women, held from 8 to 13 October 1981 in Prague, had once again highlighted the dangers created by the growing threat of war. The participants had therefore called for practical measures to stop the arms race and all forms of aggression and to start negotiations immediately for the political settlement of explosive international problems; in other words, they had called for measures to confront those that appeared to be ready to trigger a nuclear disaster.

43. Accordingly, her country considered that it was essential for the current session of the General Assembly to adopt the draft Declaration on the Participation of Women in the Struggle for the Strengthening of International Peace and Security and against Colonialism, Apartheid, All Forms of Racism and Racial Discrimination, Foreign Aggression, Occupation and All Forms of Foreign Domination thus supporting

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(Mrs. Saelzler, German
Democratic Republic)

the commitment of women to world peace. Women had always suffered the most from the consequences of war, as women in her country knew from their own experience. The adoption of the draft Declaration would significantly help to achieve equal rights for women throughout the world; moreover, the draft was in full conformity with the Convention, which stated, inter alia, that the cause of peace required the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields. Attempts to represent women's struggle for the maintenance of peace as a propaganda campaign diverted attention from the real problems and must be emphatically rejected.

44. In her country's opinion, there were many pre-conditions for the realization of full equality for women; the German Democratic Republic, rising from the devastation caused by the Second World War, had been meeting those pre-conditions step by step. Women in her country were proud of their accomplishments and were determined not to let anyone destroy them. The greatest factor currently undermining the happiness of women, and of mankind, was the growing threat of war. Women in many countries had realized that they must work actively to prevent the outbreak of war. In that connexion, she observed that the statement made by the representative of one country, to the effect that a peaceful world was central to the aspirations of women everywhere was in direct contradiction to that country's plans to deploy new medium-range missiles in certain countries of Western Europe and to produce neutron weapons. The women of the world would not be deceived by tactics designed to divert attention from the principal issue, namely the question of war or peace. In fact, women in her country, and in many other countries, had reacted with indignation at the news that neutron weapons would be produced, in deliberate disregard of the vital interests of peoples. They could not understand why the Soviet Union's repeated offers to negotiate on the question of détente had still not been answered.

45. Women in the German Democratic Republic enjoyed new social conditions which guaranteed their fundamental human rights; they realized that their destiny and that of their families was closely connected to the destiny of the nation as a whole. They therefore had a sense of solidarity with all peoples struggling against imperialism, fascism, colonialism, neo-colonialism and apartheid and for liberty and independence. That solidarity was illustrated by the fact that the Democratic Women's League had raised 2.5 million marks for the provision of textbooks and teaching aids to countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia.

46. Referring to preparations for the holding of a world conference on the United Nations Decade for Women in 1985 (A/36/564), she observed that major efforts would be required in the remaining four years of the Decade if the equal participation of all women in the building of a peaceful world was to be achieved.

47. In conclusion, she said that the German Democratic Republic had been the second country to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, a fact that reflected the great importance it attached to the implementation of the provisions of that instrument. Her country appreciated the activities conducted by the United Nations to that end and was always prepared to co-operate in the implementation of the objectives of the Decade.

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48. Mrs. KRAVCHENKO (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that her country attached great importance to activities at the national and international levels to improve the position of women. Of prime importance were those undertaken at the national level, upon which the ultimate success of the United Nations Decade for Women depended.

49. In her country concern about systematically improving the status of women, especially mothers, and increasing their role in all spheres of social life had been raised to the level of State policy. The principle of full equality between men and women, proclaimed with the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution, had been reaffirmed in the USSR Constitution adopted in 1977. Equal rights for men and women in all areas of life were guaranteed by a special system of social, economic and legislative measures. In a socialist society, ensuring real equality and constant progress with regard to the position of women was a major goal of State regulation and an obligatory component of economic planning in all areas of production and in the distribution of national income. During the first half of the United Nations Decade for Women, which had coincided with the tenth five-year plan, a number of measures had been taken to improve still further the social position of women and families in the USSR. State expenditure on social assistance to mothers and social services for children had risen 150 per cent in the period 1970-1980. Priority in housing was given to families with three or more children. All the conditions which allowed women to combine motherhood with active participation in various areas of productive and social life were being created in her country. The Soviet Union led the world both in the number of women specialists and in the percentage of the total number of specialists who were women. In her country nine tenths of all able-bodied women worked and more than half the total number of manual and non-manual workers were women.

50. However, as Lenin had said, equality between men and women did not mean that their productivity and general working conditions should be identical. The Soviet State was implementing a whole range of measures relating to labour and health protection for women and aimed at improving the system of maternal and child welfare. They included paid maternity leave, after which the woman had the right to return to her previous place of work, guaranteed breaks at work to feed the child, special work protection during pregnancy and free medical aid, all of which guaranteed women not only the right to work but also the right to be mothers and homemakers.

51. Women could not be socially active without participating in social activities and the management of affairs of State. The number of women who occupied various positions of responsibility or who were deputies to the higher and local organs of Soviet power was constantly increasing. Women currently accounted for one third of the deputies to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and approximately half the deputies to local Councils. Thus, women were able to combine harmoniously their social, political, professional and family responsibilities and had become free and fully equal members of Soviet society.

52. The Guidelines for the Economic and Social Development of the USSR for 1981-1985 and the Period up to 1990, adopted at the Twenty-sixth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, contained new measures to improve further the position of Soviet women. In September 1981, in accordance with the social

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programme adopted at the Congress, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the Council of Ministers of the USSR and the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions had adopted a decision on the order and time-frame for implementing measures to improve both State aid to families with children and retirement pensions. Once those measures had been implemented, the material position of more than 4.5 million families with children and about 14 million pensioners would be improved. The measures mapped out by the Twenty-sixth Congress would significantly increase the well-being of every Soviet family and would further improve the position of women in the USSR and make them more socially active.

53. One of the most important international events during the Decade for Women had been the World Conference at Copenhagen in 1980. She recalled that, in assessing the first half of the United Nations Decade for Women, the Conference had indicated that the process of promoting the participation of women in the life of society should not be concerned simply with education, employment and health, important as those questions were, but should embrace equally the three fundamental goals of the Decade: equality, development and peace. The Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women was highly regarded by the States and peoples of the world. That Programme was a valuable document since it made the solution to the questions of equality of women and their involvement in the development of their countries directly dependent on progressive and democratic changes, above all at the national level. It also correctly emphasized that the decisive factors in improving the position of women were the strengthening of peace and international security, the cessation of the arms race, the reduction of military budgets, the guaranteeing of disarmament, the establishment of a new international economic order on a just, equal and democratic basis and the broadening of co-operation among States. Its provisions were particularly relevant at a time when the most reactionary imperialist groups were carrying out a policy of exacerbating the international situation and unleashing the arms race.

54. Indeed, the arms race put a heavy burden on women and on all working people. In many countries it entailed grave social consequences, increased unemployment and inflation, the closure of schools and hospitals and children's institutions and the curtailment of many social programmes. The massive resources spent on the production of deadly weapons could be used to tackle basic problems in the interest of the people. It was therefore quite logical that women were becoming more and more actively involved in the movement against the arms race and for peace and international security. One example of that movement was the "Peace March - 81" which had taken place in Western Europe from 22 June to 6 August 1981 and had included thousands of men and women who displayed true courage in protesting against the planned installation of new forms of nuclear missiles. The World Congress of Women, which had taken place in October 1981 at Prague, was another outstanding chapter in the history of the world movement for peace and disarmament. She recalled that Mr. Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, had, in his greeting to the participants, noted the political importance of the meeting, the desire for world peace and the need to remove the threat presented by nuclear weapons to life itself. Women in her country supported the peace-loving foreign policy of the Soviet State and joined with all

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peoples in a tireless struggle to strengthen international peace and security, for social progress, freedom and democracy. They were fighting resolutely to remove the threat of a new war, something which had been underlined at the September 1981 session of the Presidium of the Committee of Soviet Women, which was celebrating its fortieth anniversary. The resolutions adopted at that session affirmed that women in the Soviet Union would continue to fight actively for a peaceful future and would do their utmost to help implement the decisions of the Twenty-sixth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union aimed at ensuring lasting peace on earth.

55. Her delegation fully supported the draft Declaration on the Participation of Women in the Struggle for the Strengthening of International Peace and Security and against Colonialism, Apartheid, All Forms of Racism and Racial Discrimination, Foreign Aggression, Occupation and All Forms of Foreign Domination. That document had been supported by the World Conference and its adoption at the current session of the General Assembly would be a major contribution to achieving the goals of the United Nations Decade for Women.

56. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which had received wide international support, was of fundamental importance for the activities of the social organs of the United Nations and for the implementation of the goals of the Decade for Women. The realization of its provisions should be seen as one of the priorities of future United Nations activities for improving the situation of women. The General Assembly should call on States which had not yet done so to become parties to the Convention.

57. In conclusion, she stressed that her delegation supported the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the Decade in full, and felt that it should be universally implemented. As before, her delegation was prepared to co-operate constructively with other delegations to work out effective measures with a view to fulfilling the Programme of Action in order to achieve as quickly as possible the lofty goals of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace.

58. Mrs. VOHN (Denmark), speaking on behalf of her own delegation and those of Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, said that the Assistant Secretary-General had rightly drawn attention, in her introduction, to the fact that the International Development Strategy now specifically referred to the interdependence between improving the conditions of women and attaining major global and sectoral goals. For the first time, the Strategy included women in all aspects of the development process, as both beneficiaries and participants. A new international economic order could not be achieved unless inequality between men and women was eliminated.

59. However, only very slow progress had been made during the first half of the Decade and, in many cases, the situation of women had become worse. Therefore, determined political efforts were necessary at both the national and international levels if the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the Decade was to be implemented satisfactorily.

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60. The reports before the Committee on measures taken to implement General Assembly resolution 35/136 showed that a number of international organizations had initiated very useful activities to improve the conditions of women and to enhance their participation in the development process. However, such organizations must integrate the solutions of the social and economic problems affecting women in the planning and implementation of regular programmes and activities, not only in those specifically designed to achieve progress for women. In that connexion, the United Nations Development Programme had rightly pointed out that recognition of the importance of women's participation in development would not in itself ensure that such participation was achieved. International organizations must therefore examine how the obstacles - lack of experience and competence, bureaucratic inertia and persistent attitudinal barriers - could be overcome so that organizations could play their proper role in enhancing the situation of women.

61. Improving the situation of women was a fundamental guideline in the development assistance provided by the Nordic countries, the ultimate goal being to achieve the total and equal integration of women in the development process. If that goal was to be attained, women must be integrated on an equal basis in development programming. In the planning and execution of individual projects, the Nordic countries therefore devoted special attention to ensuring that such projects benefited women or, at least, did not have negative effects on them.

62. A major step towards achieving equal rights for women had been the entry into force on 3 September 1981 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Her delegation was encouraged by the number of States that had signed or ratified the Convention thus far, and it looked forward to the establishment of a committee to monitor the compliance of States parties with its provisions.

63. Article 11 of the Convention, which dealt with the elimination of discrimination in the field of employment, was very important since the current economic recession affected women even more than men in that regard. Emphasis must therefore be placed on the fact that women had the same right to employment as men.

64. A primary objective, both nationally and internationally, must be to provide easier access for women to all levels of education. That could be achieved by improving educational opportunities for young women and expanding the possibilities for retraining in general. More active employment counselling was also needed to help women entering the labour market.

65. The Nordic countries had taken various measures to encourage women to embark on untraditional careers with a view to improving their opportunities in the labour market and ensuring that they had the same access as men to all kinds of employment. Some Nordic countries had also taken steps to give women priority in fields of education that were dominated by men.

66. Shorter working hours for both men and women could help to ensure equal participation in the labour market and equal sharing of work in the family.

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Serious efforts should be undertaken to lighten the family workload of women. Men's equal participation in work at home and in child care offered a partial solution. Improved provisions for the granting of leave for both parents at the birth of a child or in the case of illness would also help to eliminate stereotyped sex roles.

67. In that connexion, she drew attention to the ILO Convention, adopted the previous summer, on the problems encountered by workers with family responsibilities.

68. During the Copenhagen Conference the Nordic delegations had stressed the importance of ensuring equal participation by women in the decision-making process at all levels. To that end, the Nordic Council of Ministers had recently held a conference in Copenhagen to discuss the obstacles women confronted in being appointed to decision-making bodies and in participating in advisory, planning, managerial and governing functions both in individual enterprises and in society. A resolution adopted at that conference stated, inter alia, that, in all the Nordic countries, the increased education of women and their participation in the labour market had not been coupled with an equal increase in their participation and influence in the decision-making process and in political life. Therefore, the Conference had recommended that research should be undertaken specifically in the fields of the political organization of women, equal status and equal opportunity policies and women's participation in the established decision-making system. Accordingly, she stressed that a qualitative change in the nature of decision-making bodies was necessary to ensure that the areas of experience represented by women, through their work in society, were sufficiently included in politics and in decision-making.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.