



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 45th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. O'DONOVAN (Ireland)

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ORGANIZATION OF WORK

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

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

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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; A/36/295 and A/36/295/Add.1)

1. Mrs. BARCENA (Mexico) pointed out that, one year following the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, the world situation continued to deteriorate and mankind was threatened by the arms race and by aggressive attitudes. The full implementation of the recommendations of the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women was a key element for the total integration of women in the development process. She drew attention in that respect to the report of the Secretary-General (A/36/564) and the various projects and studies mentioned in it, which were designed to promote the implementation of the Programme of Action.

2. She also commended the work of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs in Vienna, particularly the Branch for the Advancement of Women, in collecting information and following-up the activities being carried out within the framework of the Decade by the other agencies of the United Nations. Such a compilation could serve as a solid basis for the future elaboration of policies and programmes at all levels.

3. With regard to the work of the Third Committee, she pointed out that the Group of 77 would submit during the present session a draft resolution on the United Nations Decade for Women which would reflect the objectives of many countries on that subject and which her delegation hoped would be adopted by consensus. Her delegation had also sponsored a draft resolution concerning the work of the spouses of diplomats since it was convinced that the spouses of diplomatic representatives, consular agents and international officials should keep open all options to initiate and continue their own professional career.

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(Mrs. Fawthorpe, New Zealand)

Nevertheless, it would be for the Governments of countries in which diplomatic representatives, consular agents or international officials of both sexes were accredited to determine to what extent the performance of private and remunerated activities affected the privileges and immunities involved in the special status of diplomatic, consular and international officials.

4. Mrs. FAWTHORPE (New Zealand) said that, although New Zealand regrettably could not formally vote in favour of the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women, the Government of New Zealand, as it pledged to do at the time, had taken specific steps to implement the national level programme. Further information on New Zealand's implementation of the Programme of Action to date was currently being compiled for submission to the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs.

5. In the formulation of its aid policies, the Government of New Zealand now included as a specific criterion the need to take account of disadvantaged groups, including women, to ensure that their opportunities for participation were safeguarded. Her delegation noted with approval that a number of agencies, particularly UNDP, had taken steps to set in place similar, and even more comprehensive safeguards.

6. It was disappointing that the Secretary-General's reports on the Voluntary Fund had appeared so late. The Fund had so far done much to increase the direct participation of women in development projects designed to benefit the societies in which they lived.

7. The strong element of day-to-day co-operation between UNDP and the Voluntary Fund was a compelling reason for the retention of the Fund's administration in New York. Many of the countries whose women were the direct beneficiaries of the Fund did not maintain offices in Vienna. If the Fund's headquarters were transferred to Vienna, they would therefore stand to lose some of the easy access they now enjoyed.

8. With reference to item 88 (c) concerning the draft Declaration on the Participation of Women in the Struggle for the Strengthening of International Peace and Security, she agreed that the basic objective was a worthy one. There was, however, no agreement that women should be singled out as a special category in the struggle to attain international peace and security. Her delegation did not consider that the draft Declaration addressed the fundamental question. Priority should rather be given to the universal ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, an instrument which provided a firm basis on which to promote the participation of women in social, economic and political life, including those political concerns which the proposed Declaration sought to address.

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(Mr. Winter, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)

9. Mr. WYNTER (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said she would like to describe the context within which UNESCO action took place and how UNESCO perceived its own role in bringing about equality between men and women. She drew attention to two resolutions on the status of women adopted at the twenty-first session of the UNESCO General Conference. Resolution 13.1 enjoined the Director General to continue to develop activities that would achieve a significant improvement in the status of women. Under that mandate, special efforts were being made to achieve a type of education that changed the stereotypical roles hitherto assigned to men and women. To that end, UNESCO was working towards promoting the employment of more women in scientific and technological fields by placing renewed emphasis on the education and training of women in technical and vocational fields and by encouraging changes in the attitudes which currently had an adverse effect on the status of women.

10. Resolution 13.2 invited the Director General to intensify his efforts to ensure that the interests of women and men were equally promoted in the planning and implementation of programmes and to increase substantially the financial and personnel resources for programmes intended to improve the status of women.

11. Furthermore, the secretariat of UNESCO had adopted measures to increase substantially the representation of women at higher-level posts. During the present year, the Director General had appointed three women to such posts.

12. Miss WANG (China) said that her Government had always held the view that women's liberation was an integral part of the liberation cause of the peoples. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, Chinese women, who accounted for half of the population, had played an important role in the building of modern China. At the Copenhagen World Conference, Mrs. Kang Kechin, head of the Chinese delegation and a member of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, had signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Kinds of Discrimination against Women on behalf of the Chinese Government. The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress had formally ratified the Convention and had distributed copies of it to the departments and commissions of the State Council and the People's Governments of various provinces, to the municipalities, and to the relevant agencies for implementation. The All-China Women's Federation had convened a meeting of its Executive Committee immediately after the ratification of the Convention which stated that the provisions of the Convention relating to the protection of women from discrimination and on equal rights with men in all fields were consonant with the essence of the Chinese Constitution and the marriage and other laws of China.

13. The item before the Committee was most important. Women must be equal members of the human society. In old China, when the people had lived in poverty, women had had no equal rights. Women had now become masters of the country and they took part in the different activities of construction just as men did. In 1949, which had seen the beginning of the new China, there had been only 600,000

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(Miss Wang, China)

women employees, amounting to 7.5 per cent of the country's working population. The number of women employees had now increased to 31 million, or 32 per cent of the total of employees, which was 50 times the figure for the initial post-liberation period. Chinese women had won respect and praise by playing an ever greater role in the country's political, economic, cultural, educational and social activities. The provision of article 53 of the new Chinese Constitution, adopted at the fifth session of the National People's Congress in 1978, to the effect that women should have equal rights with men in political, economic, cultural, social and family life, had largely become a reality.

14. At the first session of the National People's Congress, there had been 147 women representatives, or 11.9 per cent of the total. At the fifth session of the Congress, held in 1978, the number of women representatives had increased to 741, that was to say, 29.20 per cent of the total. In the Chinese Government, there were 14 women Ministers and Vice-Ministers.

15. China was a developing socialist country. For social and historical reasons, Chinese women would continue to encounter many difficulties and problems on their path to advancement. Currently, the cultural, scientific and technological level of women and their professional management ability were relatively low, and the number of women in high-level technical and scientific posts was small. There also existed contradictions between domestic labour and social labour. As housework was not yet relieved by modern facilities, working women still shouldered heavy burdens of housework, even though the sharing of household chores between spouses had become a common practice in China. The Chinese Government, the women's organizations and the departments concerned attached great importance to the solution of those problems. The women of China were determined to redouble their efforts and, under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, to work hard to make China a modern, highly democratic and highly civilized socialist country.

16. In view of the Chinese delegation, the degree of women's emancipation was a yardstick for measuring the liberation of the whole of mankind. The Government of China was concerned about the liberation not only of Chinese women but also of all women everywhere in the world. If women's aspirations for equality and development were to be realized, it was essential to oppose all kinds of foreign aggression and threats to international peace and security.

17. Miss KOLAROVA (People's Republic of Bulgaria) said that progressive circles had been struggling for more than a decade to eliminate discrimination against women, as that was considered to be one of the indicators of a society's degree of advancement. Now, no urgent problem could be settled without the participation of half the human race. It was generally recognized that, like other important factors, social progress was secured through the achievement of equality between men and women and the full integration of women in all spheres of political, social, economic and cultural life. In that connexion, the United Nations must be commended for what it had done for the advancement of women, which had always had the support of the People's Republic of Bulgaria.

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(Miss Kolarova, People's Republic of Bulgaria)

18. Making a round-up of the basic ideas emerging from the documents that had been prepared as a result of the two world conferences for women, it could be seen that there was nothing which did not affect women equally with men and that the struggle for the equality of women could not be confined merely to women's problems. The elimination of discrimination on grounds of sex did not consist merely in a change of moral attitudes; it was a complex problem which had a number of different dimensions. In order to see women's problems in their proper perspective it was necessary to understand the historical reasons for the inequality of women. As was stated in the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women, "the inequality of women in most countries stems to a very large extent from mass poverty and general backwardness of the majority of the world's population caused by under-development, which is a product of imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism and also of unjust international economic relations". The United Nations was to be commended for having succeeded in placing the question of the equality and the integration of women in its proper context when it had formulated the three objectives of the Decade, namely, equality, development and peace. Those three objectives were closely related to each other; the achievement of equality for women had directly effected the solution of international political, economic, cultural and social problems.

19. Bulgaria attached great importance to the first part of the Programme of Action, where it was pointed out, among other things, that it was only in peace that progress could be made towards the achievement of the other objectives of the Decade. That fact assumed even greater importance at times when international peace and security were threatened, when every effort should be made to slacken tensions, to halt the arms race and to achieve disarmament. Without peace and security, there could be no progress, development or equality. The recognition of that interdependence had had an extremely positive effect on the efforts of the international community. It was precisely that concern which had led eminent statesmen and members of governments and parliaments, workers and peasants, representatives of science and culture, mothers and young people from 132 countries, 234 national organizations and 90 international organizations with different political, religious and philosophical beliefs to take part in the World Congress of Women: Equality, National Independence, Peace, held in Prague from 8 to 13 October 1981. In its Declaration and appeal to the Women of the World, the Congress called upon "the United Nations and its Member States to dedicate all their energies to the fulfilment of their primary obligation: to preserve and consolidate peace and to avert the threat of the extermination of mankind in a nuclear conflagration."

20. Taking the view that peace and development were the most important conditions for equality between men and women did not mean diverting attention from the essence of the problem. Unless those conditions existed, equality would be achieved in a situation of constant fear for the morrow, poverty and hunger, unemployment and social insecurity. For millions of Palestinian men and women, it meant equality in refugee camps, in constant danger and without their homeland;

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(Miss Kolarová, People's Republic of Bulgaria)

for men and women in Namibia and South Africa, it would mean equality under colonialism and apartheid. In that connexion, she expressed appreciation of the attention devoted by various competent bodies of the United Nations to questions of women and children living under apartheid in South Africa and Namibia, and in the occupied Arab territories.

21. Problems of equality for women could not be solved without first dealing with the complex political and socio-economic problems of the present day. Women could not be indifferent observers but must play an active part in the process. Bulgaria therefore supported the proposal to draft a declaration on the participation of women in the struggle for the strengthening of international peace and security.

22. Women already represented one third of the world labour force, and the establishment of conditions that would promote their full and active participation in political, social, economic and cultural life was not merely a problem of social justice but a social necessity. The full integration of women in both the productive and non-productive spheres of the economy raised a number of problems, the solution of which depended to a large extent on the nature of the social and economic system, the level of national income, and the principles of its distribution. In the socialist countreis, equality before the law had already been achieved, as well as equal education, professional training and employment, and equal pay for equal work. One of the first legislative acts of the People's Government of Bulgaria upon coming to power in September 1944 had been to adopt a decree on equal rights for women, which had been embodied in the Constitution of 1947 and further elaborated in the new Constitution of 1971.

23. In recent decades, there had been profound changes in the status of women in Bulgaria, particularly with respect to their increasing participation in all spheres of social life. In Bulgarian society, women worked, created, and participated in the social and political life of the country on an equal footing with men. They were active members of public and political organizations and exerted a strong influence on public opinion and social development. The economic status of women in Bulgaria was the same as that of men. Bulgarian women had equal professional opportunity and could apply their knowledge in all spheres of public and social life. At the twelfth Congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party, it had been declared that one of the chief aims of the State's social policy must be to create conditions making it easier for women to combine motherhood with active employment and participation in public affairs. One way of doing so was for society to undertake increasing responsibility for the care of children and to enlarge the capacity of kindergartens. Motherhood, which had been recognized as a social function for many years, was protected through the right of working mothers to a period of paid maternity leave which was one of the longest in the world.

24. The achievements of the People's Republic of Bulgaria in respect to the advancement of women were an integral part of the general progress of the

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(Miss Cao-Pinna, Italy)

socialist system. Accordingly, the People's Republic of Bulgaria had acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. That instrument, if universally accepted and applied, could play a decisive role in the noble cause of achieving equality between women and men. The People's Republic of Bulgaria stood ready to contribute to the efforts of the international community to that end.

25. Miss CAO-PINNA (Italy) said that the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women had emphasized that among the three objectives of the Decade - equality, development and peace - priority should be given to the strengthening of the role of women in economic and social development. The Conference had also specified three areas in which action oriented approaches were needed to solve the problems that women had to face in their integration in the development process. At the most recent Conference of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Non-aligned Countries, it had also been stressed that effective action was urgently required to remove obstacles and constraints to the full, effective and meaningful participation of women in national development. In that connexion, she would refer to the main documents on women's problems that had been circulated at the current session of the General Assembly in connexion with the work of the Third Committee and other bodies.

26. The Second Committee had before it document A/36/590, containing a comprehensive outline of a world survey on the role of women in development, to which other speakers in the Third Committee had already referred. She noted that a kind of dialogue had been established between the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly on the issue of the role of women in development, in accordance with the concern expressed previously in the Third Committee about achieving a close integration of the economic and social aspects of development through a dialogue between the two Committees. A further development in the same direction would be the approval, at a joint meeting of the two Committees, of the draft resolution in document A/36/C.2/L.26, initially proposed by Ecuador and Egypt and subsequently co-sponsored by Italy and other countries in the Second Committee. Since that arrangement did not seem feasible at the current stage in the work of the two Committees, her delegation considered that the documents referred to should be made available to the Third Committee, so that delegations could refer to them in the general debate on the United Nations Decade for Women.

27. Regarding the proposed outline of the world survey on the role of women in development, she said that her delegation agreed with the structure and content of the outline and in particular with the necessity of identifying the causes of the present ineffectiveness and distortion of the role of women in the development process, and of studying the existing relationships between women as individuals and the social environment, and the salient issues of women at all ages and at successive phases in the life cycle. The implementation of the world survey by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs would not be an easy task. However, the organizational procedures for the world survey provided for a mobilization of the whole system of the United Nations and for the

(Miss Cao-Pinna, Italy)

contribution of outside consultants. It was hoped, therefore, that the survey would help to further the dialogue already established by the Centre with the other administrative units and organizations of the whole system with a view to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women, as noted in documents A/36/485 and A/36/564, that were currently before the Committee.

28. It appeared from those two documents that many organizations and programmes of the United Nations system, which before the launching of the Decade had more or less neglected the potential role of women in the development process, were now increasingly committed to involving women in their financial and technical support activities. In that connexion, it was gratifying to note the actions that had been taken to ensure women's involvement in social and economic development by the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development and by UNDP.

29. A quite different approach to the problems of women emerged from the proposal to draft a Declaration on the Participation of Women in the Struggle for the Strengthening of Peace. The proposal dated from 1977, and neither the Commission on the Status of Women nor the World Conference and shown a particular interest in drafting such an instrument. The General Assembly was examining the item at the current session in implementation of decision 35/429, which had postponed its consideration to the thirty-sixth session, but no specific recommendations had been received from either the Commission of the Status of Women or the World Conference. Her delegation considered that, at the present time, and until the basic needs of women in the developing countries had been satisfied, there was no need to draft a new declaration on women. The concerns of the delegations which were in favour of drafting the document had already been expressed in various recommendations set for in the Programme of Action and in the resolutions of various United Nations organs.

30. Miss CAO-PINNA (Italy) Another reason why her delegation was not in favour of a new draft declaration on women was that the political matters which would constitute the subject of such a text were the concern of all people without any unjustified distinction on the basis of sex. In her introductory statement on the items under consideration, the Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs had informed the Committee that during the next programme budget period the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs would devote more resources to the study of how women could contribute to the establishment of an economic and political order and particularly how they could play a more effective role in promoting peace. Her delegation was therefore of the opinion that consideration of the proposed new declaration on women should be postponed until 1984, when the results of the study would be available.

31. Italy was one of the countries contributing to the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women. The Government's recent increase in its contribution to the Fund indicated the importance that Italy attached to concrete action to meet women's problems. The number of projects thus far financed by the

(Mrs. Kalyati, Malawi)

Fund was impressive and her delegation considered that the Fund should be not only a source of direct support for innovative and experimental activities benefiting rural and poor urban women but also a catalyst encouraging major agencies and funds to consider women's needs in their own programmes of development assistance.

32. With regard to the location of the Voluntary Fund, her Government's position, as indicated on page 4 of the annex to document A/36/647, was that the Fund should remain in New York, at least until the end of the Decade.

33. Her delegation welcomed the entry into force of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on September 3 1981, Italy's ratification of which was currently under consideration.

34. Mrs. KALYATI (Malawi) welcomed the decision by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs to organize an expert group meeting on women and the International Development Strategy. Although it was little more than a year since the adoption of the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women, her delegation was pleased to report that Malawi had taken some steps to enhance the status of women. In March 1981 a meeting of all governmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with women's affairs had been convened to discuss the results of the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace and to suggest ways and means of implementing the Programme of Action at the national level.

35. As a result of the meeting, a steering committee had been set up to look into the question of establishing a co-ordinating body on the integration of women in development. Malawi had continued to pay special attention to matters relating to women and to provide additional services to women in the fields of health, education and employment. For example, the immunization programme under the maternal and child health services covered over 50 per cent of the country; at the start of the current school year in October the enrolment of girls had doubled as a result of an increase in educational facilities and institutions for girls. The number of women members of Parliament had also increased.

36. Regarding the Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women, Malawi was committed to improving the status of women, particularly in the rural areas and to that end would be taking measures to ensure that women learned better methods of food production and to provide more health facilities and more comprehensive education to enable them to participate fully in the general development process. In that connexion, her delegation appreciated the work being done by the United Nations specialized agencies, in particular the efforts of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women which had ensured that financial and technical assistance reached the women in the remotest areas of the developing countries.

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The effectiveness of the Fund in the context of the current proposals to relocate it in Vienna must be carefully assessed.

37. Regarding International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, Malawi looked forward to the day when the Institute would be fully operational in the Dominican Republic. It expected that the Institute would offer unlimited scope for practical and action-oriented research.

38. Ms. SHARPE (Jamaica) said that Jamaica had traditionally approached the general question of women from a dual perspective: what was possible and necessary at the national level, and what should be sought through international action. The two aspects were interrelated and interdependent, and together they covered the entire world, since there was no problem on earth, and no initiative that could be taken to solve it, in which women were not involved.

39. However, women in any society were relatively powerless, less educated and less employed, which made it difficult for them to catch up, even in countries whose Governments were giving that aspect priority.

40. In Jamaica, for reasons connected with the social patterns established under a slave society, women had a tradition of resilience and strength. In recent years, successive Governments of Jamaica had worked not only to remove the residual barriers in law and practice against women's advancement, but also to provide social and economic programmes in which women could participate and which would reflect the great extent to which women were the actual heads of households. Those efforts had been widely recognized, but Jamaica had to acknowledge that the capacity to carry out such programmes depended not only on political will but also on economic resources.

41. That dilemma was the link to the other aspect of the dual perspective to which she had referred; what could international action do to accelerate the achievement of a better standard of life for women? In the years since the World Conference on the International Woman's Year, Mexico, a further question had arisen: how could women contribute to the process of development and possibly to the achievement of peace? The United Nations, by proclaiming the Decade for Women, had taken on a fundamental responsibility for the solution of those two problems.

42. Her delegation also considered that the time had come to set about rationalizing the way in which the General Assembly dealt with women's issues. The Third Committee discussed the Decade for Women, while the Second Committee dealt with the integration of women in development on the basis of different documents and might adopt decisions which would duplicate those of the Third Committee.

43. To the extent that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women could encourage positive action at the national and

international levels, Jamaica considered it important. To the extent that the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women could render the greatest degree of assistance to national and regional efforts to advance women, Jamaica thought that its future was a matter of importance.

44. To the extent that the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women could provide experimental resources to see whether women could be integrated into the major development programmes of the United Nations system, it could count on Jamaica's interest and good wishes. Her Government pledged that it would participate in the conference to be held in 1985 at the end of the Decade for Women, as it had in the Mexico and Copenhagen Conferences.

45. In conclusion, she said that Jamaica regarded the Fund as part of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs and therefore felt that it should be located in Vienna with the rest of the Centre.?

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

46. The CHAIRMAN reminded the Committee that the list of speakers on agenda item 83, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, would close on Friday, 13 November, at 6 p.m. The time-limit for submitting draft resolutions on that item would be 6 p.m. on Tuesday, 17 November.

47. He also reminded members that the time-limit for submitting draft resolutions on items 12, 129 and 138 would be 6 p.m., Friday, 20 November.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.

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